



Dame Alice Owen's School
The Dame Alice Owen Foundation - 1613

Policy to safeguard staff against Bullying and Harassment*

Policy agreed by the Governing Body
Personnel & Remuneration Committee
To be reviewed
(To be reviewed every 2 years)

October 2020
Autumn 2022

{ based on the Hertfordshire County Council model policy}*

To be monitored by the Governing Body Personnel & Remuneration Committee

Introduction and scope

All staff have the right to be treated with dignity and respect. Bullying and harassment are not acceptable forms of behaviour and will not be permitted or condoned. Any staff member who is found to have bullied or harassed a colleague will be subject to disciplinary action.

This policy applies to all school staff and governors. Allegations of bullying and harassment made by visitors, consultants, suppliers and agency workers will be separately addressed through the School's complaints procedure.

The aim of this policy is to ensure that any complaint of bullying or harassment is effectively and speedily dealt with and that appropriate action is taken to ensure as far as possible that it does not occur again. It is important that the rights of both the complainant and the alleged/harasser are protected throughout the process.

This policy does not form part of any staff member's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time.

1. What is bullying and harassment?

Bullying and harassment can take the form of physical, verbal and non-verbal conduct.

1.1. Bullying

Bullying is offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour involving the misuse of power that can make a person feel vulnerable, upset, humiliated, undermined or threatened. Power does not always mean being in a position of authority, and can include both personal strength and the power to coerce through fear or intimidation.

Bullying may include, by way of example:

- physical or psychological threats
- overbearing and intimidating levels of supervision
- inappropriate derogatory remarks about someone's performance

Legitimate, reasonable and constructive criticism of a worker's performance or behaviour, or reasonable instructions given to workers in the course of their employment, will not amount to bullying on their own.

1.2. Harassment

Harassment is any unwanted conduct specifically related to a protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual.

The relevant protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

A single incident can amount to harassment. It also includes treating someone less favourably because they have submitted or refused to submit to such behaviour in the past.

Harassment may include, by way of example:

- unwanted physical conduct or 'horseplay', including touching, pinching, pushing or grabbing
- continued suggestions for social activity after it has been made clear that such suggestions are unwelcome
- sending or displaying material that is pornographic or that some people may find offensive (including emails, text messages, video clips and images sent by mobile phones or posted on the internet)
- unwelcome sexual advances or suggestive behaviour (which the harasser may perceive as harmless)
- racist, sexist, homophobic or ageist jokes, or derogatory or stereotypical remarks about particular ethnic or religious groups or gender
- outing or threatening to out someone as gay or lesbian
- offensive emails, text messages or social media content
- mocking, mimicking or belittling a person's disability

A person may be harassed even if they were not the intended 'target'. For example, a person may be harassed by racist jokes about a different ethnic group if the jokes create an offensive environment.

2. Victimisation

Staff who make complaints or who participate in good faith in any investigation must not suffer any form of retaliation or victimisation as a result. Anyone found to have retaliated or victimised someone in this way may be subject to disciplinary action.

3. False or malicious complaints

All complaints of bullying and harassment will be taken seriously. Evidence of false or malicious complaints however, may result in formal disciplinary action being taken against the staff member(s) concerned.

4. Mediation

Depending on the nature of the complaint, it may be appropriate to explore the use of mediation. Mediation focuses on a person-centred, compassionate and values-based response that can help schools deal with complex conflict in a meaningful and sustainable way and build positive, respectful workplace cultures where people can go to work without fear. This will involve the appointment of suitably qualified and impartial mediator. Mediation services are available via Herts for Learning.

5. The Procedure

5.1. Stage 1: the informal stage

Staff who believe they are being bullied or harassed should first consider whether they feel able to raise their concerns informally with the person(s) involved. If necessary, staff may request the involvement of the appropriate line manager who can provide confidential advice and assistance in resolving the issue(s) informally. If the complaint is about the line manager, they should speak to a more senior manager.

This allows for concerns to be resolved quickly and for working relationships to move forward positively.

Staff should explain clearly to the other person that their behaviour is not welcome or makes them uncomfortable. If the staff member finds this too difficult or embarrassing, they should speak to their line manager or Headteacher who can provide confidential advice and assistance in resolving the issue informally.

5.2. Stage 2: the formal stage

Where a staff member is unable to resolve a complaint informally or the nature of the concerning conduct continues, the staff member should submit a written statement (see Appendix 1).

The written statement should be made to the staff member's line manager or a more senior manager, where the complaint is about the line manager. Where the complaint is about the Headteacher, the complaint should be raised with the Chair of Governors.

The written statement should clearly state the nature of the concern and provide as much detail as possible, including the details of any steps taken at the informal stage. Where the informal stage has not happened, the complainant should clearly explain why they did not feel able to go through the informal stage. The statement may also outline any possible outcomes the complainant feels

may alleviate their concerns/ allegations. A complainant will not be discouraged from using the formal process where that is their preferred option.

Allegations concerning issues that are more than three months old will not usually be considered unless related to a current issue or there are exceptional circumstances.

5.2.1. Separation and suspension of staff

On receipt of a written complaint, consideration will be given to suspending the alleged bully/harasser or making other temporary changes to working arrangements pending the outcome of the investigation if circumstances require.

The School will consider reasonable alternatives to suspension where they exist however, there may be instances where suspension with pay is necessary whilst investigations are carried out.

5.2.2. Formal meeting

The manager or the person dealing with the complaint will arrange a meeting, without unreasonable delay, to discuss the complaint with the staff member.

The purpose of the meeting is for the staff member to explain their nature of the concerning conduct and how it may be resolved. Consideration should be given to adjourning the meeting for any investigation that may be necessary. A decision will be reached as soon as is reasonably practicable and the staff member will be informed of the outcome in writing.

5.2.3. Right to be accompanied

Both parties have the right to be accompanied at any meetings within the formal stage of the procedure, by a work colleague or an accredited professional association/trade union representative.

It is important that all parties have advance access to any written statement or evidence to be referred to at the meeting. This should be in sufficient time to enable full consideration of the material.

5.2.4. Investigation

The manager or person dealing with the complaint will make necessary steps to investigate appropriately. The timing and nature of any investigation will differ depending on the content of the complaint. It is at the discretion of the manager to decide what is appropriate in each case. Where the investigation takes longer than specified at the formal grievance meeting, the manager will keep the staff member informed.

The investigation will be to establish the facts and whether, on the balance of probabilities, the allegations have foundation.

5.2.5. Outcome

The manager or the person dealing with the complaint will inform the alleged bully/harasser and the complainant of the outcome of the investigation, without unreasonable delay. The manager or the person dealing with the complaint will decide whether or not it is appropriate to instigate disciplinary action and should refer to the School's disciplinary policy.

5.3. Stage 3: Appeal

Staff have the right of appeal against the outcome of their complaint. Appeals would ordinarily be by way of review of the original decision and may, at the discretion of the School, be a complete re-hearing where appropriate.

New evidence will only be considered if relevant and there is a good reason why this had not been included as part of the original formal meeting.

Any staff member who wishes to appeal the outcome of their complaint should do so in writing within seven calendar days of receipt of the outcome letter to the person named in the letter, stating clearly the grounds for appeal.

Wherever possible the appeal will be heard by an appropriate individual, or panel of individuals, who have had no prior involvement in the process.

The appeal hearing will take place without unreasonable delay.

The decision of the appeal hearing will be final. It will be confirmed to the staff member in writing within seven school days or as soon as reasonably practicable .

Appendix 1 - Notice of Bullying and Harassment complaint - STAFF ONLY

This form should be used to submit a bullying or harassment complaint in accordance with the formal bullying and harassment policy.

You are encouraged to clearly state the nature of the complaint and provide as much detail as possible, including the outcomes you are seeking and additional information to substantiate your complaint.

Section 1 - Personal Details

Name:		Role:	
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Section 2 - Details of the alleged incident and person(s) alleged of bullying/harassment

Name(s):		Role(s):	
Date and time:		Location:	

Please circle how you perceive this behaviour or incident.	Bullying	Harassment
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What happened?
Please give full details and specific examples of behaviour. Continue on a separate sheet if required.

What impact has this conduct had on you?

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Please include details of any person(s) who witnessed the incident here:

Name:		Role:	
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Name:		Role:	
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Name:		Role:	
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What actions have you taken so far, and any outcomes of this? e.g. informal

What potential outcomes are you seeking?

Have you considered mediation?	Yes	No
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By signing this form, I confirm that I wish to submit a formal complaint in line with the School's Bullying and Harassment policy.

Signature :		Date :	
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Please send a completed copy of this form to the appropriate Manager, or to the Chair of Governors (where the complaint relates to the Headteacher)