



Woodlawn
School

Bullying & Harassment Guidance

Reviewed – February 2020
Revised – April 2016

Guidance

1 Introduction

101 This document has been produced to give advice to employees working in school who feel they may be experiencing, witnessed, or been accused of bullying and/or harassment, as well as other individuals who may become involved in dealing with such situations.

102 It is applicable to individuals under a contract of service or apprenticeship whether full time, part time, permanent or temporary. This guidance does not apply to individuals based at the School under a contract for service/third party arrangements or individuals employed by the Council whose employment relationship is not directly managed by the School.

2 Defining Bullying

201 There is no legal definition of bullying. However, it's usually defined as behaviour that is: repeated and intended to hurt someone either physically or emotionally.

202 Although there is no exhaustive list of behaviour that may constitute bullying, the list below gives some examples:

- spreading malicious rumors,
- unfair treatment,
- picking on someone,
- regularly undermining a competent worker,
- preventing someone's training or promotion opportunities,
- regularly and deliberately ignoring or excluding someone.

This can happen: face-to-face, by letter, by email or by phone.

Technology has seen the development of new ways in which to bully, harass and abuse workers. As a result, cyber bullying, which is defined as 'any use of information and communications technology to support deliberate and hostile attempts to hurt, upset or embarrass another person' can occur

If employees complain they are being bullied or harassed, then they have a grievance which must be dealt with regardless of whether or not their complaint accords with a standard definition.

3 Defining Harassment

301 Harassment can be defined as unwanted conduct which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an interrogating, degrading, hostile offensive or humiliating environment for the employee in question. Such actions can occur through physical, verbal and non-verbal conduct.

302 Individuals or groups can be harassed on grounds of their gender, gender identity or reassignment, marital status, full/part time/fixed term employment status, sexual orientation, race, language, ethnic or national origins, faith/religion/belief,

disability, age, Trade Union/Professional Association membership or activity, together with any political view or affiliation.

303 Although there is no exhaustive list of behaviour that may constitute harassment, the list below gives some examples of what could be deemed as harassment in line with the definition given above:

- Threatening behaviour,
- Comments that are demeaning, derogatory or offensive,
- Physical contact,
- Making offensive jokes,
- Display of inappropriate publications or materials,
- Staring,
- Damage to personal items.

4 Key Principles

401 Bullying and Harassment is unlawful and will not be tolerated at the School.

402 Actions by school will be guided by the following principles:

School environment - All employees should expect to work in an environment free from bullying, harassment, discrimination and victimisation. Employees should therefore aim to work to achieve and maintain high standards of work and behaviour, promoting the values and objectives of the School. Therefore, any incidents of bullying or harassment that occur will be considered unacceptable and appropriate action taken.

Third parties - Bullying and harassment of school employees from third parties e.g. contract workers; members of the public, partner organisations, suppliers etc will not be tolerated. If an employee is subject to bullying or harassment from a third party then it should be reported to the school leadership team to determine appropriate action.

Social activities – Where work-related social functions are undertaken the school will expect staff to continue to maintain high standards of behaviour. Therefore, any incidents of bullying or harassment that occur during such functions are considered unacceptable and appropriate action taken.

403 To ensure a positive culture in school, where bullying and harassment are not acceptable and will not be tolerated, it is expected that all individuals take responsibility to ensure bullying and/or harassment does not take place. All employees should therefore inform an appropriate person in the leadership team of any concerns if they suspect bullying and/or harassment is occurring.

404 Line managers will set a good example through their own standards of behaviour.

405 Line Managers have a responsibility to ensure that bullying and/or harassment does not take place and that incidents are dealt with in a, fair, sensitive, timely and confidential manner.

5 Informal Resolution

501 Employees may wish to discuss the situation with the person involved in at

attempt to resolve the matter. If this is not possible, employees may contact their Line Manager/Headteacher or where the concerns relate to the Headteacher or a member of the Governing Body the individual should contact the Chair of Governors in the first instance. Employees may also wish to seek support from a Work Colleague or Trade Union/Professional Association representative.

502 It is always advisable to achieve resolution of any issues at an early stage and at an informal level. This can enable concerns to be resolved effectively as soon as possible and prior to them escalating further. This is likely to include working through any issues by discussing the situation with parties involved and agreeing a positive way forward. Whilst it is not possible to give a precise timescale for the resolution of such concerns, it is expected that these would take no longer than 2 weeks to discuss and resolve – unless another timescale is agreed between the parties.

503 When attempting resolution informally then an initial no blame approach should be taken in the first instance. In doing so every effort will be made resolve any issues informally. Employees who are accused of bullying and/or harassment may also wish to discuss the matter with an appropriate person in School or contact their Trade Union/Professional Association representative.

6 Where Informal Resolution has failed or is Not Appropriate

601 In instances where it has not been possible to deal with a matter informally, employees should progress the issue using the School's "Resolving Grievances at Work Policy & Procedure".

602 In accordance with the Section Two of the schools "Resolving Grievances at Work Policy & Procedure" individuals who feel that their concerns relating to bullying and/or harassment have not been resolved at the informal level should submit a Grievance in accordance with this document. The Grievance relating to bullying and/or harassment will then move out of the Bullying and/or Harassment Guidance and move into this formal procedure.

603 Where it is established that bullying and/or harassment has taken place, Managers/the Governing Body will treat this as a serious matter and it may be necessary to invoke the schools Disciplinary Policy & Procedure. In such cases, bullying and/or harassment could be deemed as gross misconduct and may result in dismissal.

7 Accused of bullying

If you have been accused of bullying at work, it's important to cooperate with the schools procedure and any investigations. If you are accused of workplace bullying, even if you don't believe it's justified, it's important to be open-minded and listen to the other person's perspective.

- Remain calm if someone approaches you about your behaviour. Although it can be extremely upsetting to be accused of bullying, getting angry will only aggravate the situation.
- If you believe that the accusations are false, speak to a senior level employee. In many cases where bullying stems from a misunderstanding,

- the matter can be resolved with mediation from a third party
- Be prepared to change your behaviour or style of communication. It may be that a few modifications to your actions or manner of communication is all that's needed to resolve the situation. It's important not to get defensive and to stay open to any constructive feedback you receive.

8 Witness

You may not have experienced bullying or harassment directly, but believe you have witnessed someone else being bullied or harassed.

Witnessing this type of attack on a fellow co-worker can be traumatic and an individual may feel powerless to take any action. They may have concerns around repercussions for themselves and may be reluctant to come forward.

- Write down the details of the mistreatment soon after you witness it.
- If you observe a pattern of bullying then share what you know with a line manager.
- Remember that if a formal complaint is made, you may be called upon to give evidence.

9 Malicious Accusations of Bullying and/or Harassment

701 Any malicious accusations of bullying and/or harassment should be treated as serious breaches of discipline, and dealt with via the School's Disciplinary Policy & Procedure. In such cases, this could be deemed as gross misconduct and may result in dismissal.

10 Other Support

801 In addition to making contact with their Manager/Headteacher or their Trade Union/Professional Association representative, it may also be beneficial for employees to access support from the Council's Occupational Health Unit, which can be arranged by talking with the Headteacher or an appropriate member of the Senior Leadership Team in School who will seek advice from the school's Link HR Business Partner.

11 Contacts

901 The following information can be obtained from the school Link HR Business Partner.

- A current list of trade union/professional association representatives.

Alternatively, information relating to contact details may also be obtained by accessing the Intranet or via the Staff Notice Board.