

## BISHOP WORDSWORTH'S SCHOOL

### **STAFF HARASSMENT AND ANTIBULLYING AT WORK POLICY**

*Definition: 'Is to', 'are to' and 'must' are obligatory. 'Should' is not obligatory but is good practice and is to be adhered to unless non-compliance can be justified.*

#### **STATEMENT OF INTENT**

1. As part of its overall Equal Opportunities Policy, Bishop Wordsworth's School (the School) is committed to ensuring that all employees are treated with dignity and respect while at work, irrespective of race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins, sex or marital status, disability, sexual orientation, age or religious beliefs and practices.
2. The Governing Body is committed to creating an environment of positive working relationships. To create and protect such an environment, the Governing Body follows policies and procedures (e.g. on grievance) which enable staff to raise concerns and for these to be addressed.
3. This Policy is concerned with the prevention of harassment and bullying in the workplace and aims to provide a remedy for unreasonable or unjustifiable behaviour. It is not intended to inhibit reasonable and effective management of staff.
4. No form of harassment or bullying will be permitted or condoned by the Governing Body and will be treated as a disciplinary offence.
5. Materials that may be deemed offensive or that violate the spirit of any of the equality laws of the UK (other than those which are legitimately used in teaching) are not to be kept, displayed or shown anywhere on the School site.
6. The Governing Body will promote and publicise this Policy amongst School staff.

#### **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT**

7. The Governing Body believes in equality of opportunity in employment. It therefore commits itself to developing policies, practices and procedures which promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practices. To this end, the Governing Body is committed to ensuring that job applicants or employees receive equality of treatment. No applicant or employee will receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, sex or marital status (including pregnancy and maternity), disability, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, age, religious beliefs and practices or through conditions or requirements which cannot be shown to be justifiable. Selection criteria and procedures will be regularly reviewed to ensure that individuals are selected, promoted and treated on the basis of their relevant merits and abilities. All employees will therefore be given equality of opportunity. The Governing Body will continue to undertake appropriate action to make the policy fully effective.

#### **APPLICABILITY OF POLICY**

8. All Governors and Employees have a responsibility to comply with the Policy. Management has a particular responsibility to implement this policy by creating a good working environment and by managing people in a professional and caring manner.

## DEFINITIONS – HARRASSMENT AND BULLYING

9. Harassment is defined in the Equality Act 2010 as unwanted conduct related to a relevant 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 the individual. Protected characteristics covered by the Act are age, sex, sexual orientation, race (which also includes nationality, colour, ethnic or national origins), disability, religion or belief, gender reassignment, and marriage, civil partnerships, pregnancy and maternity. It may be persistent or an isolated incident. The key is that the actions or the comments are viewed as demeaning and unacceptable to the recipient.

10. Sexual harassment can include:

- a. Physical conduct of a sexual nature, such as unwanted physical contact, including unnecessary touching, patting or pinching or brushing against another employee's body, assault, or coercing any form of sexual act.
- b. Verbal conduct of a sexual nature, such as unwelcome sexual advances, propositions or pressure for sexual activity, continued suggestions for social activity outside the workplace after it has been made clear that such suggestions are unwelcome, offensive, flirtations, suggestive remarks, innuendoes or lewd comments.
- c. Non-verbal conduct of a sexual nature, such as the display of pornographic or sexually suggestive pictures, objects or written materials, leering, whistling, or making sexually suggestive gestures.

11. Racial harassment can include:

- a. Ridiculing an individual because of cultural differences.
- b. Embarrassing or derogatory remarks, racist jokes and name calling.
- c. Written abuse and the display of offensive material.
- d. Deliberate physical and/or verbal abuse.
- e. Differential treatment, e.g. unfair allocation of work.

12. Bullying may be characterised as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour. It can arise through the abuse or misuse of power or position and involves any act designed to injure, intimidate, humiliate, ridicule or undermine a person's confidence.

13. Bullying can derive from supervisor/subordinate relationships in either direction; unacceptable pressure from peers or other groups can also amount to bullying.

14. Examples of bullying are:

- a. **Open bullying.** Such as displays of rage at staff in public and/or in private, (often over 'trivial' matters), personal insults and name-calling, persistent unjustified criticism and public humiliation.
- b. **Unseen bullying.** Such as setting objectives with unreasonable deadlines, unreasonably removing areas of responsibility, providing excessive menial tasks, constantly changing working patterns without justification, deliberately ignoring or

excluding an individual or talking only to a third party to isolate another, or applying automatic supervision methods if these are not universally applied to all.

15. The above lists are neither exhaustive nor exclusive and other forms of behaviour can constitute discrimination, harassment, victimisation or bullying. For example, what may emerge as a concern initially categorised as “aggressive management”, may, upon investigation, be considered a case of bullying.

16. A person who is subject to bullying or harassment may suffer from physical and/or emotional symptoms, e.g. disturbed sleep, feeling sick, sweating, shaking and/or lost confidence, lack of motivation and depression. Additionally, they can suffer in other ways, e.g. loss of training and development opportunities, or missed promotion opportunities.

17. Bullying and harassment can often be hard to recognise – symptoms may not be obvious to others, and may be insidious. Those on the receiving end may think ‘perhaps this is normal behaviour in this organisation’. They may be anxious that others will consider them weak, or not up to the job, if they find the actions of others intimidating. They may be accused of ‘overreacting’, and worry that they won’t be believed if they do report incidents. People being bullied or harassed may sometimes appear to overreact to something that seems relatively trivial but which may be the ‘last straw’ following a series of incidents. There is often fear of retribution if they do make a complaint. Colleagues may be reluctant to come forward as witnesses, as they too may fear the consequences for themselves. They may be so relieved not to be the subject of the bully themselves that they collude with the bully as a way of avoiding attention.

## **HARASSMENT/ BULLYING AND THE LAW**

18. The School and its employees are to act, at all times, in accordance with applicable legislation. The following is not intended to be an exhaustive list but is an indication of some of the directly relevant legislation and guidance currently in place.

19. Although bullying is not against the law, where it results in harassment it is. This is because harassment is held to be discrimination under the Equality Act 2010 (which merged the following: Sex Discrimination Act 1975, the Race Relations Act 1976, Race Regulations Amendments 2003, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, the Employment Equality (sexual orientation) Regulations 2003, the Employment Equality (religion or belief) Regulations 2003, the Employment Equality (age) Regulations 2006) and the Human Rights Act 1998.

20. In addition, the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 created the criminal offence of intentional harassment. The nature of harassment is not defined by the Act, so all kinds of harassment come within its scope.

21. Under the Health and Safety at Work Act etc 1974 employers are required to ensure the emotional and physical health of their staff.

22. Under the Employment Rights Act 1996, an employee may complain of constructive dismissal to an Industrial Tribunal where harassment or bullying has led her/him to leave the organisation.

23. Under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, an employee may complain of harassment if they have been caused alarm or distress resulting from a ‘course of conduct’ involving at least two occasions. Employers have a responsibility towards employees to

make sure that they do not suffer such harassment – and if found to have failed in this regard, employers can be liable.

24. From October 2024, the Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) 2023 Bill strengthens existing protection for workers against sexual harassment with a new preventative duty on employers to take 'reasonable steps' to prevent sexual harassment.

25. It is important to note that both the School and the individual can be held liable under this legislation.

26. If, during the currency of this Policy, any statute or statutory instrument is enacted that adds to, modifies or is in conflict with any provisions of the Policy, then the Policy will be deemed to include any such statutory provision to the extent necessary to make the Policy compliant with that provision.

## **HOW A COMPLAINT ABOUT HARASSMENT OR BULLYING IS TO BE MADE**

27. The Governing Body requires that any allegations of harassment are dealt with seriously and confidentially. Lack of confidentiality can harm both the complainant and also the person accused. The Governing Body recognises that employees may fear victimisation for making or being involved in a complaint and so is committed to ensure they do not suffer. In some circumstances, confidential informal advice from a person nominated for this purpose (by the Governing Body) or the employee's trade union or professional association may help an employee who is unsure of how best to pursue a concern about harassment or bullying.

28. Advice and guidance can also be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/workplace-bullying-and-harassment>.

29. Normally, whether raised individually or collectively, complaints of harassment or bullying should be pursued in the following way:

a. **Informal Resolution:**

- If an employee feels able, they are encouraged to make it clear (either verbally or in writing) to the individual responsible for the harassment or bullying that their behaviour is unwelcome and must stop. While addressing the issue informally is an option, it may not always be possible or appropriate to resolve the matter this way.
- Employees may find it helpful to keep **detailed records** of incidents they believe to be harassment or bullying, noting the **date, time, location, and any witnesses**. These records can assist in describing the problem and may also be used in any future formal actions. However, it is not expected that these records be kept indefinitely without raising concerns through formal channels, as described below.

b. **Reporting to Line Manager or HR Manager:**

- If the employee does not feel comfortable addressing the matter informally, or if the behaviour persists, they should report the issue to their **line manager** or **HR Manager**. If raising the issue with their line manager is inappropriate (for instance, if the manager is the person causing concern), the employee should approach the HR Manager or another **senior manager**.

- The **HR Manager** will ensure that the matter is handled with confidentiality, and the employee is supported throughout the process. They will also ensure that the organization's duty under the **Worker Protection Bill (2023)** to prevent harassment is fulfilled.
- c. **Escalation:**
- If neither of these approaches resolves the issue or the concern involves senior management or the Head of the organization, the employee should seek advice from the **Chair of the Pay & Staffing Committee**, their **trade union**, or **professional association**.
  - The **HR Manager** will remain involved to ensure that all processes are followed and that the employee is supported during any further steps, including investigations or formal actions.

30. A manager handling the complaint of harassment or bullying is likely, in the first instance, to discuss the complaint informally with the person causing concerns. This discussion is to take place without delay after the complaint has been made.

31. If the matter is not resolved informally, the manager is to initiate an investigation. Dependent upon the circumstances, it may be appropriate for the investigation to be conducted by an independent party who would report back to the manager.

32. Following an investigation as set out in Paragraph 28, the decision of the manager is to be confirmed in writing to the complainant and the person against whom the allegation has been made.

33. The complainant may appeal against the decision of the manager to the Appeals Panel of the Governing Body. Appeals must be lodged within ten working days of receipt of the letter confirming the decision in accordance with arrangements set out in the letter. The decision of the Appeals Panel is final.

34. As any form of harassment or bullying is regarded as a disciplinary offence, any investigation of allegations of harassment or bullying and any consequent disciplinary action is to be conducted as part of the School's Disciplinary Procedure.

35. Relocation within the School may be considered and if it is feasible, every effort will be made to relocate the harasser or bully and not the victim, subject to consultation with all parties.

36. Employees who feel they have been harassed or bullied or who have been the subject of allegations will be given access to appropriate support, e.g. counselling, if this is appropriate.

37. If, after an investigation (which may include medical enquiries), a period of absence is attributed to proven harassment or bullying at work, no absence shall be recorded against the entitlement to occupational sick pay but will be treated separately.

## **RESPONSIBILITY OF GOVERNORS AND STAFF (INCLUDING COMPLAINANTS)**

38. The Governing Body requires all governors and staff to maintain a high standard of conduct in relationships with colleagues and those who are under their direct authority.

39. The Governing Body will not tolerate intimidation, victimisation, retaliation or discrimination against an individual for filing a complaint or assisting in an investigation – whether or not the complaint is upheld. Where such action is alleged, the matter will be dealt with in the same way as an allegation of harassment or bullying.

40. Malicious complaints of harassment or bullying will not be condoned and will be regarded as a disciplinary offence and will be dealt with in accordance with the School's Disciplinary Procedure.

41. This Policy must not be used as a defence against reasonable management behaviour, e.g. action under capability or disciplinary procedure. Such procedures will be not be automatically suspended where a complaint of harassment or bullying is made.

42. This Policy further requires all governors and staff to act in eliminating any harassment or bullying in the workplace of which they are aware. Failure to do so will be considered a failure to fulfil all the responsibilities of their position. Harassment or bullying of any kind is not to be dismissed either by governors or staff as trivial or insignificant, as a matter of interest only to a minority or dismissed as action that can be excused as fun or as a joke.

### **TRADE UNION VIEWS**

43. This Policy has the support of professional associations and trade unions.

### **CHANGES IN LEGISLATION**

44. If, during the currency of this Policy, any statute or statutory instrument is enacted that adds to, modifies or is in conflict with any provisions of the Policy, then the Policy will be deemed to include any such statutory provision to the extent necessary to make the Policy compliant with that provision.

### **MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

45. This Policy will be reviewed annually by Governors. The last 3 years' update history is below:

16 <sup>th</sup> April 2021	Minor updates
13 <sup>th</sup> June 2023	Minor updates
4 <sup>th</sup> June 2024	Minor updates
17 <sup>th</sup> March 2025	Changes to comply with sexual harassment legislation