Dignity at work

Prevention of Bullying and Harassment Policy

1 Our commitment

We are committed to providing a working environment free from bullying and harassment. It is important that across our Trust everyone feels safe and confident to be themselves at work.

We will not tolerate bullying, harassment and/or victimisation and we expect everyone working at or with the Trust (including supply staff, contractors and agency workers), as well as governors and trustees, parents, customers, visitors and guests, to behave respectfully towards others and never act in a way that could be regarded as bullying, harassment and/or victimisation.

The aim of this policy is to help prevent the occurrence of bullying, harassment and/or victimisation within the workplace and on work trips or at work-related events, social functions and in the digital space, for example, on social media, and to provide guidance on how to resolve complaints both informally and formally should such behaviour occur.

This policy can be used if you experience bullying, harassment and/or victimisation We encourage you to resolve any problems informally in the first instance but also recognise that there may be occasions that the formal route is more appropriate.

If you make an informal or formal bullying, harassment and/or victimisation complaint, you will be treated fairly, without victimisation or detriment.

If a vexatious or malicious complaint is made, it will be dealt with in line with the Trust Disciplinary Policy.

Our commitment to protect you and others is important, discrimination, victimisation or serious bullying and/or harassment are examples of gross misconduct, which are

acts so serious as to justify summary dismissal without notice. Where gross misconduct has been identified, it will be dealt with through the Trust Disciplinary Policy.

2. Who this policy applies to and where it applies

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, contractors, governors, trustees, and visitors. This policy applies to situations occurring on our sites, online and also off site when on Trust business, including school/college trips, academic/curriculum events, community engagement events, conferences/training events, and social functions.

This policy may also apply if the claimant is not a member of the Trust community, but the alleged bully or harasser is.

3. Definitions

3.1 Bullying

Can be described as unwanted behaviour from a person or group that is either:

- offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting
- an abuse or misuse of power that undermines, humiliates, or causes physical or emotional harm to someone.

Bullying might:

- be a regular pattern of behaviour or a one-off incident
- happen face to face, on social media, in emails or calls
- happen at work or in other work-related situations
- not always be obvious or noticed by others

It is possible someone might not know their behaviour is bulling. It can still be bullying even if they do not realise it or do not intend to bully someone. (ACAS)

Some examples of unwanted behaviours which could constitute bullying include:

- conduct which is, or is perceived to be, intimidating or threatening or where someone aims to hurt or injure you
- shouting at or humiliating someone
- picking on someone or conduct that attacks someone's character or reputation
- ridiculing or consistently undermining someone
- unjustified exclusion from work activities or victimisation

- acts of cyberbullying, including; sending malicious emails or messages using social media to spread rumours or inappropriate messages
- misuse of power or position such as deliberately undermining a competent worker by overloading and constant criticism.
- preventing individuals progressing by intentionally or unjustifiably blocking promotion or training opportunities for no good reason.
- making threats or comments about job security without foundation.

The above list includes examples and is not an exhaustive list.

3.2 Harassment

In discrimination law (Equality Act 2010) there are 3 types of harassment:

- harassment related to certain protected characteristics
- sexual harassment
- less favourable treatment as a result of harassment

Protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

To be harassment the unwanted behaviour must have either violated an individual's dignity, or created an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual.

It can be harassment if the behaviour:

- has one of these effects even if it was not intended
- intended to have one of these effects even if it did not have that effect.

Bullying and/or harassment are not necessarily always obvious or apparent to others, and may happen in the workplace without an employer's awareness. It can be between two individuals or it may involve groups of people. It might be obvious or it might be insidious. It may be persistent, there may be a pattern, or it may be an isolated incident. It can also occur in written communications, online/social media, by phone or through email, not just face-to-face.

We recognise that everyone is different and that something that doesn't offend one person might offend someone else. Just because something doesn't or wouldn't offend one person doesn't mean that it is an appropriate behaviour. If you are in any doubt about whether something is appropriate or not, please don't do it.

Examples of behaviour that could amount to unwanted conduct include:

- Using insulting or abusive gestures/ language
- Physical behaviour towards a person or their property
- Insulting or ridiculing someone, this could look like someone name calling or asking intrusive questions
- Making jokes or inappropriate remarks about someone
- Banter and mimicry
- Displaying or circulating offensive material (e.g., sexist or racist material), including messages, icons and graffiti
- Sending abusive or offensive emails or texts
- Microaggressions
- Posting abusive comments on social media sites or using AI to generate fake content/ images of a person.

The above includes examples and is not an exhaustive list.

The common feature of the different forms of behaviour that constitute bullying and harassment the behaviour is unwanted by the victim.

Please note there are many actions and behaviours that do not amount to bullying and/or harassment on their own.

For example:

- fair and reasonable criticism of your performance or behaviour
- a manager rejecting your personal request (such as a request for time off or for adjusted hours) because of a legitimate business need.
- constructive feedback
- not being invited to a meeting where you are not required
- being appropriately managed in accordance with any Trust policy, e.g., being placed on a performance plan where your performance is not of an appropriate standard

3.3 Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment occurs when someone is subjected to unwanted behaviour that is of a sexual nature. The conduct does not have to be sexually motivated to amount to sexual harassment. Sexual harassment can happen to men, women and people of any gender identity or sexual orientation. It can be carried out by anyone of the same sex, a different sex or anyone of any gender identity.

Examples of conduct of a sexual nature includes behaviour such as:

- sexual comments or jokes
- displaying sexually graphic pictures, posters or photos or sending sexual material by any means
- suggestive looks, staring or leering
- propositions and sexual advances
- making promises in return for sexual favours
- unwelcome touching, hugging, massaging or kissing
- basing decisions affecting a member of staff's career on their acceptance or rejection of sexual advances.

The above list includes some examples and is not an exhaustive list.

3.4 Victimisation

Is when someone treats you badly or subjects you to a detriment as a result of being involved with a discrimination or harassment complaint, for example because you complain about discrimination or help someone who has been the victim of discrimination.

Ways someone could be victimised include:

- being labelled a troublemaker
- being left out
- not being allowed to do something

4. Our responsibilities

Everyone working at the Trust has the right not to be subjected to bullying and/or harassment/ victimisation at work.

Everyone working at the Trust must comply with this policy.

You are required to respect others and you must not behave in ways which may cause offence, or which in any way could be considered to be harassment, bullying or victimisation.

You have a responsibility to help ensure everyone you work with and those visiting the Trust are treated with dignity and respect. Where you feel you can, you should actively discourage harassment, bullying or victimisation by making it clear you find such behaviour unacceptable.

You should support colleagues who suffer any such treatment and who are considering making a formal complaint.

You should alert a manager to any incident of harassment, bullying or victimisation to enable the Trust to deal with the matter.

Line managers and leadership teams have an obligation to tackle harassment, bullying and victimisation in the workplace.

5. What to do if you feel you have been subjected to bullying or harassment?

5.1 By another member of staff or a manager

In certain, less serious circumstances you may feel comfortable to try to resolve the issues informally as people may not always be aware of the impact their actions are having on you. If you wish to handle your complaint informally, you can describe to the other member of staff how their behaviour has made you feel including that it is unwelcome. Alternatively, you can also speak to your line manager, another colleague or your union representative to approach the person(s) on your behalf. If you would like help preparing for this conversation, please do speak to your line manager for support.

If your concern is about the behaviour of your line manager you may wish to speak to someone else, for example their manager or a member of the Trust People Team.

If the matter is too serious to be resolved informally, or you have tried to resolve it informally and the situation at work has not improved you can raise the matter formally through the grievance process/procedure. Anyone involved in the grievance process must treat all matters discussed with the strictest confidence, subject to any legal obligations.

Any allegations of bullying or harassment by a member of staff will be investigated thoroughly in line with our grievance and / or disciplinary policies as appropriate.

If you have concerns for your safety please speak to your line manager as soon as possible, if you can or a member of the Trust People Team.

5.2 By a third party, such as a contractor, supplier or supply teacher/agency worker

We will not tolerate any form of harassment by a third party to one of our team. If you believe you have been harassed by a third party and you wish to handle the complaint informally you can do so following the advice in the previous section of this policy. If the matter can't be resolved informally or if you consider the matter to be too serious to raise informally then you can raise this with their line manager who will raise this with the Headteacher / Executive Head / and for the Central Trust team, a member of the Executive Leadership Team who will then raise this through the appropriate channels, for example to ask the Agency to investigate and follow their own processes.

5.3 By a parent/ carer or other member of our school/college/Trust community

If you believe you have been bullied or harassed by a parent/carer or other member of our community you should raise this with your line manager or another available senior manager and we will take all necessary steps to bring this to the attention of the parent / carer or other customer. In addition to bringing this to their attention, in some circumstances we may also bar them from attending our sites.

5.4 By a governor or trustee.

If you believe you have been bullied or harassed by a governor or trustee you should raise this with:

- The Local Governance Officer (for complaints about a governor). Their contact details can be found on the relevant school / college website.
- The Trust Governance Officer (for complaints about a Trustee)
  E: gaby.willis@ivyeducationtrust.co.uk T: 01626 870317

6. How can I raise a complaint under this policy if I am a third party working with the Trust community?

If you are a third-party person with a working relationship with one of our schools / colleges or the Trust and you believe you have been harassed by one of our team you should raise this with your line manager who will bring it to the attention of the trust or, for sole traders, with the person who contracted you to work for the Trust.

If you believe that your concern could be resolved informally then please indicate this to the manager you have raised the complaint with who will support

you.

Any formal complaints of bullying or harassment by our staff received will be investigated in line with our Disciplinary policy.

7. Support

The following sources of help and advice/ support are available to employees who raise informal and / or formal complaints under this policy:

Counselling service: As a Trust we have an Employee Assistance programme all staff can access. This service includes financial guidance, legal enquiries and access to general help. Confidential help can be accessed 24/7, 365 days a year on 08000 856 148. Counselling sessions can also be provided through this service https://www.educationsupportpartnership.org.uk/helping-you/telephone-support-counselling

Trade unions: All the trade unions for teachers, school leaders and support staff can offer guidance and support on harassment and workplace bullying.

Samaritans: A volunteer led service with a free confidential 24-7 (www.samaritans.org) Helpline. Tel: 116 123

Citizens Advice: Free confidential and impartial advice (https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk) Tel: 03444 111444

Mediation: Mediation is a voluntary process (for all parties) and involves individual and joint meetings to help identify the root cause of a problem. Mediation may or may not be appropriate in your case, it will depend on the particular circumstances. You and the other person have a choice about whether you want to participate. Mediation can be very successful if you and the other person are willing to participate fully in the process and genuinely want to resolve the issue between you. For further information please speak your line manager or the Trust People Manager.

8. Associated documentation / points of reference

Staff Code of Conduct (available from the Trust People Team)
Trust EDI Policy (available on our website)
Trust Disciplinary Policy (available on our website)
Trust Grievance Policy (available on our website)
Trust Complaints Policy and Procedure (available on our website)
Parent/Carer Code of Conduct (available on individual school websites)

ACAS – Freephone helpline – 0300 123 1100

UK government – Workplace bullying and harassment - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

9. Monitoring, review and evaluation

We will monitor the type and frequency of complaints made under this policy.

This policy will be reviewed annually, and the Trade Unions will be consulted about any proposed changes.

This policy does not form part of employment contracts and may be amended at any time.

POLICY AMENDMENT HISTORY

Date	Reviewed by	Nature of Change	Adopted by Trust Board	Next Review
Oct 2024	EWO/P&V Committee	New policy	10.12.24	Oct 2025 or sooner if required.
Sept 2026	EWo	Reviewed and no material change.		Oct 2027