



STOCKPORT
METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Dignity at Work Model Policy and Procedure

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Dignity at Work Policy

1. Introduction

The Governing Board of Stockport School is committed to creating a work environment free of harassment and bullying, where everyone is treated with dignity and respect. The purpose of the Dignity at Work procedure is to ensure that bullying (including cyber bullying) and harassment is managed in an effective and fair manner throughout the School. It explains the difference between harassment and bullying and clarifies the procedure for dealing with complaints informally and formally.

2. Scope of the Policy

- 2.1 The Policy applies to all employees of Stockport School including the Headteacher. It can extend to behaviour on or off the premises.
- 2.2 This policy is written in accordance with the Equality Act 2010; Health and Safety at Work Act 1974; Protection from Harassment Act 1997 and Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

3. Policy statement

- 3.1 Stockport School views all forms of harassment and bullying as unacceptable, and will not tolerate such behaviour.
- 3.2 All employees have the right to be treated with dignity and respect. Complaints will be taken seriously and dealt with quickly.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

This section outlines the roles and responsibilities for the main parties involved in creating a work environment free of bullying and harassment. These lists are not exhaustive.

4.1 Senior Managers (Chair of Governors, Headteacher or equivalent)

Senior managers play a lead role in tackling bullying and harassment. They are responsible for ensuring that:

- employees are aware of this policy and associated procedures and the standard of behaviour which is expected of them;
- they set a good example by their own behaviour;
- all allegations of bullying and harassment are investigated and any necessary action taken;

- employees who make an allegation in good faith are not victimised;
- appropriate disciplinary action is taken against senior managers who fail to investigate and manage incidents of bullying and harassment in line with this policy.

4.2 Employees

In order to achieve the consistent application of this policy and its associated procedures the main responsibilities of employees is to:

- set a good example through their own behaviour;
- be sensitive to the potential impact of their behaviour on colleagues and change it, if necessary;
- treat their colleagues with dignity and respect;
- report harassment or bullying to an appropriate manager;
- challenge unacceptable behaviour demonstrated by colleagues;
- intervene, if possible to stop harassment or bullying and support colleagues who experience bullying or harassment;
- not prejudge or victimise a complainant or alleged harasser if a complaint of harassment or bullying is made.

4.3 Human Resources

Human Resources play an important role in supporting the school to create a work environment free of harassment and bullying. Their role is to:

- support managers and employees on the interpretation and application of this policy;
- support the investigation of claims of harassment and bullying;
- provide skills and knowledge-based training to enable managers to fulfil their responsibilities under this policy.

4 Links with other policies and procedures

In dealing with complaints of harassment and bullying, managers should be aware of and comply with the terms of other relevant policies and procedures including:

- Employee Relations Procedure
- Guidance Notes for Managers - Employee Relations
- Safer Working in Schools
- Managing Stress – Model Policy Statement for Schools
- Model School Equality and Diversity Policy

Dignity at Work Procedure

6. Harassment

Harassment is defined as unwanted conduct with a purpose or effect of violating the employee's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that employee (Equality Act, 2010).

6.1 Grounds of Harassment

People can be subject to undignified behaviour on a wide variety of grounds including:

- Race
- Sex or gender
- Sexual orientation
- Gender reassignment
- Willingness to challenge harassment (leading to victimisation)
- Membership, or non-membership of a trade union
- Disabilities
- Age
- Health
- Physical characteristics
- Personal, religious and cultural beliefs
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity

This list is not definitive or exhaustive.

6.2 Forms of Harassment

Harassment and bullying can range from extremes such as violence to less obvious forms like ignoring someone. Whatever the form, it will be unwanted behaviour, which is unwelcome and unpleasant.

Forms include:

- Physical contact;
- Harassment via social media – offensive postings on social media sites;
- Jokes, offensive language, gossip, slander, obscene gestures and sectarian songs;
- Posters, graffiti, letters, flags, emblems and offensive screen-savers;
- Isolation or non-co-operation and exclusion from social activities;
- Coercion for sexual favours;
- Pressure to participate in political/religious groups;

- Intrusion by pestering, spying and stalking.

7. Bullying

Bullying may combine a variety of different approaches. It is **persistent** and often unpredictable harassment and can be experienced from Manager to subordinate, peer to peer, or one group of staff to another individual. It is insidious and undermines the ability and confidence of the person who is suffering from it. It can lead to fear, de-motivation, isolation, poor concentration, reduced work output, symptoms of stress and a high sickness absence level.

The following points need to be taken into account when considering whether the pattern of behaviour constitutes bullying:

- Legitimate and effective performance management does not constitute bullying;
- Bullying is not about an occasional angry response, but is about persistent and deliberate undermining and psychological crushing.

7.1 Obvious Bullying

Examples may include:

- A person using strength and power to coerce others by fear;
- Attempting to make others toe the line by singling out, demeaning and de-valuing.
- A culture that endorses a "macho" style of management.
- Shouting.
- A gradual wearing down process of undermining, having to comply with the manager's inappropriate style.
- A personal style that is dominant, overbearing, obsessive, reprimanding, disapproving, humiliating, and punishing.
- Using abusive language and aggressive body language.
- Personal insult, name calling and snide remarks
- Continuous references to someone's sexual orientation, use of homophobic language, spreading rumours or gossip about someone's sexual orientation
- Instantaneous rages often over trivial matters.
- Spreading rumours, which are often unfounded and spread maliciously.
- Never listening to another's point of view.

7.2 Less Obvious Bullying

Bullying differs from harassment and discrimination in that the focus is not usually based on gender, race or disability etc. The focus is often on competence, or rather the alleged lack of competence of the bullied person. Examples may include:

- Making life difficult for those who have the potential to do the bully's job better than the bully does.
- Shouting
- Persistently picking on people in front of others, or in private.
- Making jokes or comments at the expense of others.
- Deliberately ignoring or excluding individuals from activities.
- Blocking promotion and/or pay progression.
- Constant criticism
- Removing responsibilities
- Imposing unreasonable deadlines
- Setting unachievable targets
- Imposing an excessive workload.

The above list is not exhaustive, bullying can occur in many different ways.

8 Dealing with a complaint informally

An employee may:

- consider keeping a diary of events so that you can determine the extent of the problem.
- Ask the person to stop.
- talk to someone unconnected with their immediate situation e.g. their trade union representative before taking further action
- Seek mediation.

9. Dealing with a complaint formally

Complaints of harassment or bullying should be dealt with under the formal stages where:-

- An informal approach has failed to redress the complaint and/or
- it is the preference of the complainant and/or
- the complaint is of serious harassment and/or
- the allegation is of unlawful behaviour.

Complaints of harassment and bullying will be dealt with formally under the grievance section which is documented in the Employee Relations Policy and Procedure.

10. Malicious Complaints

If it is evident that the complaint has been made maliciously then the complainant may be subject to disciplinary action. This should not deter genuine complaints of harassment and bullying, which will be taken seriously.

11. Confidentiality

All parties must maintain confidentiality. Failure to do so will lead to disciplinary action being taken.

Confidentiality may be breached when an employee makes a serious allegation of harassment but does not wish to pursue this complaint. In this event discretion must be used to determine whether or not other individuals may be at potential risk in the future from the alleged harasser/bully, in which case it must be reported because of the duty to protect individuals.

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