



# **RICKMANSWORTH SCHOOL**

## **Anti-Bullying and Anti-Harassment Policy**

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**Table of Contents**

<b>OVERVIEW</b>	<b>1</b>
Purpose	1
Review Process	1
<b>Introduction and Scope</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>What is Bullying and Harassment?</b>	<b>2</b>
Bullying	2
Harassment	3
<b>Victimisation</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>False or Malicious Complaints</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Mediation</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>The Procedure</b>	<b>5</b>
The Informal Stage	5
The Formal Stage	6
Separation And Suspension Of Employees	6
Initial Formal Meeting	6
Investigation	7
Final Formal Meeting	7
Appeal	7
Right To Be Accompanied	8
<b>Support For Those Affected Or Involved</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Sensitivity And Confidentiality</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Appendix 1 – Employee’s Notice Of Bullying And Harassment Complaint</b>	<b>10</b>

## OVERVIEW

### Purpose

The Governing Body aims to create a working environment where every employee is treated with dignity and respect and where each person's individuality and sense of self-worth within the school is maintained.

The Harassment and Bullying Policy and the related procedure apply only to disputes between employees, although the duty of care to protect employees from harassment, including sexual harassment and bullying remains in all circumstances.

A reference copy of this document is kept on the shared drive and it will be brought to the attention of all members of staff.

### Review Process

This document will be reviewed in accordance with our policy review process every three years or on the introduction of new or amended relevant legislation. .



**Tony Walker**  
**CHAIR OF TRUSTEES**



**Matt Fletcher**  
**HEADTEACHER**

## **Introduction and Scope**

All employees 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 employee who is found to have bullied or harassed a colleague will be subject to disciplinary action and this could lead to dismissal if it is committed in any of the below contexts:

- in a work situation
- during any situation related to work such as at a social event with colleagues
- against a colleague or other person connected to the employer outside of a work situation, including on social media, or
- against anyone outside of a work situation where the incident is relevant to their suitability to carry out the role

This policy applies to all School staff and trustees. 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 our legal responsibility to ensure we as the employer take reasonable steps in preventing all types of bullying and harassment including sexual harassment in the course of their employment.

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 employee's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time.

## **What is Bullying and Harassment?**

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

### **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, verbal or psychological threats
- excessive 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.

### **Harassment**

Harassment is any "unwanted conduct" and all forms of sexual harassment. It is defined as behaviour which when specifically related to a protected characteristic, has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual. Harassment may be a single incident or a series of incidents and can include an omission or a failure to act.

There are three categories of harassment, which are unlawful under the Equality Act. We consider harassment on any grounds to be unacceptable:

1. harassment related to one of the following seven relevant protected characteristics; age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
2. sexual harassment, which is unwanted conduct of a sexual nature.
3. less favourable treatment because they have submitted to, rejected, or, in the past, refused to submit to, unwanted conduct of a sexual nature, or unwanted conduct related to gender reassignment or sex.

Any employee can raise concerns regarding behaviour that they find offensive even if it is not directed at them. In addition, an employee need not possess the relevant protected characteristic themselves, they can be harassed because of their association with a person who has a protected characteristic or because they are wrongly perceived to have a protected characteristic or are treated as if they do have one.

Aggravating factors such as abuse of power over a more junior colleague will be taken into account in deciding what disciplinary action to take.

Examples of types of harassment include, but are not limited to:

Physical harassment:

- unwanted physical conduct or 'horseplay', including hugging, touching, pinching, pushing, or grabbing.

Verbal harassment:

- persistent suggestions for social activity after it has been made clear that such suggestions are unwelcome.

- unwelcome sexual advances, suggestive remarks or gender related insults, innuendo or lewd comments, or asking questions about someone's sex life.
- racist, sexist, homophobic or ageist jokes, or derogatory or stereotypical remarks about particular ethnic or religious groups or gender.
- unwanted or offensive office 'banter', jokes, taunts or insults (including someone's appearance or dress) that are derogatory towards a protected characteristic.
- mocking, mimicking, or belittling a person's disability.
- revealing, or threatening to reveal someone's sexual orientation.
- gossiping, speculation or spreading malicious rumours about someone's sexual orientation or transgender status, or deliberately using the wrong name or pronoun for someone.

Non-verbal harassment:

- 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 / social media (including 'deep fake' imagery)).
- Excluding someone from a conversation or social event, or marginalising them from the group.

## **Victimisation**

Victimisation is when someone is treated unfairly because they made or supported a complaint to do with a 'protected characteristic', or someone thinks they did or might do this is unlawful under the Equality Act. Employees 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.

Third party harassment

Bullying and harassment, including sexual harassment, by third parties will not be tolerated. We will take reasonable steps to prevent all types of bullying and harassment of staff in the course of their employment.

It is important to understand that while an individual cannot bring a claim for third party harassment alone, it can still result in legal liability when raised in other types of claim.

If you are experiencing bullying or harassment by a third party you should report this to your line manager and follow the procedure set out in this policy.

## **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 employee(s) concerned.

## **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.

Mediation is a voluntary impartial process and can be used in cases where both parties are willing to participate, and the complaint is not at the serious end of the spectrum.

This will involve the appointment of a suitably qualified and impartial mediator. Mediation services are available via Herts for Learning.

## **The Procedure**

### **The Informal Stage**

Employees 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, the employee 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.

Addressing issues early and directly allows for concerns to be resolved quickly and for working relationships to move forward positively.

The employee should explain clearly to the other person(s) that their behaviour is not welcome and/or makes them uncomfortable and ask them to stop. If the employee finds this too difficult or embarrassing, they should speak to their line manager or Headteacher who can meet with them and provide confidential advice and assistance in resolving the issue informally.

If an employee does not want the person spoken to, the School will respect your wishes where possible. However, if the welfare or safety of an employee or others is at risk, or where allegations are particularly serious, the School may have to instigate a formal process.

Where discussions take place on an informal basis it may be appropriate for us to note the key points discussed, and any advice given. Where this occurs, it will be shared with the person spoken with and retained on file.

### **The Formal Stage**

Where an employee is unable to resolve matters informally, the nature of the concerning conduct continues, or the complaints are of a serious nature then the employee should submit a written statement (see Appendix 1) as soon as possible.

The written statement should be made to the employee'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 Trustees.

The written statement should clearly state the nature of the concern and provide as much detail as possible, in relation to the complaint(s) including the details of any steps already taken at the informal stage. Where the informal stage has not happened, the employee should clearly explain why they did not feel able to go through the informal stage

The statement may also outline any possible outcomes the employee feels may alleviate their concerns/complaint. An employee 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.

### **Separation And Suspension Of Employees**

On receipt of a written complaint consideration will be given to the most appropriate course of action which may include making temporary changes to working arrangements or suspending the alleged bully/harasser 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.

### **Initial Formal Meeting**

The manager or the person dealing with the complaint will arrange a formal meeting to discuss the complaint with the employee without unreasonable delay. Typically, this meeting would be within seven calendar days.

The purpose of the meeting is for the employee to explain the nature of the complaint and how it may be resolved. Consideration will be given to adjourning the meeting for any investigation that may be necessary. If no further investigation is deemed necessary

or appropriate then a decision will be reached as soon as reasonably practicable, and the employee will be informed of the outcome in writing.

### **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.

The investigation will be carried out objectively and confidentially. The manager will keep the employee reasonably informed of progress in conducting the investigation

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

### **Final Formal Meeting**

Where the initial formal meeting was adjourned for investigation, a final formal meeting will be arranged once the investigation is complete.

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 it is appropriate to instigate disciplinary action and should refer to the respective School's disciplinary policy.

### **Appeal**

Employees have the right of appeal against the outcome of their complaint. The appeal will be a review of the fairness of the original decision in the light of the procedure that was followed and any new information that may have come to light.

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 employee 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. Where this period crosses into a school holiday period, timescales may have to be extended.

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 employee in

writing within seven calendar days or as soon as reasonably practicable.

### **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.

### **Support For Those Affected Or Involved**

We understand that anyone affected by, or involved with, a complaint of bullying or harassment may feel anxious or upset and we will do what we can to support you.

If an employee feels they cannot continue to work in close contact with the alleged bully/harasser, the School will seriously consider any requested changes to working arrangements during our investigation into the matter.

For emotional support, employees can access free, confidential counselling from our Employee Assistance Programme (EAP). Contact our EAP by calling 0800 197 0655.

Anyone who complains or takes part in good faith in a bullying or harassment investigation will not suffer any form of detrimental treatment or victimisation. If an employee feels like they have suffered such victimisation, please inform your line manager, or more senior colleague where concerns relate to your line manager, as soon as possible.

Regardless of the outcome of a complaint, the School will consider carefully how to best approach any ongoing working relationship between you and the individual concerned. For example, depending on the specific circumstances, the School may consider amending the job duties, location or reporting lines of either you or the other person. Alternatively, the School may decide workplace mediation or counselling is appropriate.

### **Sensitivity And Confidentiality**

Anyone involved with an informal or formal complaint about bullying or harassment, including witnesses, must keep the matter strictly confidential and act with appropriate sensitivity to all parties.

If one is found to have breached confidentiality or acted without due care or sensitivity in a case of bullying or harassment, the School may take disciplinary action against you up to and including dismissal (or other appropriate action for non-employees).



## Appendix 1 – Employee’s Notice Of Bullying And Harassment Complaint

This form should be used to submit a bullying or harassment complaint in accordance with the formal Anti-bullying and Anti- 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 of complaint

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	Victimisation
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What happened?

*Please give full details and specific examples of behaviour including any times, dates and the frequency of events. Continue on a separate sheet if required.*

What impact has this behaviour had on you?

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

Name:		Role:	
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Name:		Role:	
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Name:		Role:	
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What action have you taken in an attempt to stop the unwanted behaviour:

Have you raised your concerns informally, either directly or through a manager, with the individual alleged to have demonstrated unwanted behaviour? If yes, please provide details of action taken: If no, please explain why:

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What potential outcomes are you seeking?

Would you consider mediation, and if not, please explain why you feel this may not resolve the problem or concerns you are raising?

Yes

No

***By signing this form, I confirm that I wish to submit a formal complaint in line with the School's Anti-Bullying and Anti-Harassment policy.***

Signature:

Date:

**Please send a completed copy of this form to the appropriate Manager (or Chair of Trustees where the complaint relates to the Headteacher)**