



## Dignity at Work Policy (incorporating Bullying, Harassments and Sexual Harassment at Work)

This policy is designed to give guidance to all staff on the behaviour expected to ensure a working environment where everyone is treated with dignity and respect; in line with school's values. It also provides information about the strategies in school and the support available to staff and the processes to be followed for dealing with unacceptable behaviour.

Willow Wood Community Primary School is committed to inclusion in everything we do. We ensure dignity and respect for children and all adults and this is a core value. We endure to promote equality, diversity and respect for the human rights of others whilst ensuring that we challenge any form of inequality, discrimination and harassment.

Willow Wood community Primary School will not tolerate discrimination, harassment or bullying under any circumstances and particularly because of a protected characteristic. This is supported by our commitment to the Equality Act 2010.

### Introduction

All employees and visitors to school have the right to be treated with consideration, dignity and respect and we all have a responsibility to set a positive example by treating others with respect and to act in a way which is in line with school's values.

Willow Wood Community Primary School is committed to work towards a more inclusive and supportive working environment for all of our staff, parents and visitors. This includes providing an environment that is free from harassment, bullying and discrimination or abuse from colleagues or service users.

Willow Wood Community Primary School will not tolerate bullying, harassment or discrimination in any form. We recognise that we have a legal responsibility to prevent harassment related to age, disability, caring responsibilities, pregnancy, marital status, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, sex, sexual orientation and gender identity.

### Purpose

This policy has been developed to ensure that everyone knows:

- The sort of behaviour we expect to see to ensure dignity at work for all
- The sort of behaviour which is not acceptable
- What support is available to staff who feel bullied, harassed or discriminated against
- What steps you can take if you feel that you are not being treated with dignity and respect including how to make a formal or informal complaint
- What will happen during these processes



## Scope

The policy applies to all employees of Willow Wood Community Primary School as well as agency workers, pupils, trainees, sports coaches, contractors, volunteers and anyone who is not directly employed by the school but is carrying work out either in school or on behalf of the school.

Where a student or trainee wishes to raise a concern about the unacceptable behaviour of a Willow Wood Community Primary School employee, they should use this policy. Their university or educational body will be kept informed. If their concern relates to a fellow student or trainee then they should follow the policy of the University or educational establishment.

## Definitions

Willow Wood Community Primary School expects all staff to work in ways which reflect our values at all times.

We will **inspire** others to try hard in all they do. We try to be role models in our work so that others are inspired to be the best that they can be every day.

We **believe** that we are capable of achieving great things and try to inspire others to believe the same for themselves.

We **challenge** ourselves and others to work hard and be the best versions of themselves so that they are inquisitive and resilient learners and challenge ourselves and others to think differently and challenge perceptions.

We **achieve** great things through our work and positive attitudes to learning and by working collaboratively.

## Unacceptable Behaviours

Willow Wood Community Primary School defines unacceptable behaviour as any form of conduct or behaviour of a physical, verbal or non-verbal kind which has all or some of the following elements –

- Is unwanted, unsolicited, unreasonable and is personally offensive to the recipient; irrespective of its intentions
- Creates an intimidating, hostile or humiliating work environment for the recipient affecting their dignity at work
- Fails to both respect the rights and recognise the impact of such behaviours may have on others
- Threatens job security or disadvantages the recipient in any way.

## Harassment

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 that individual.

It is regarded as any conduct related to sex, race, colour, ethnic or natural origin, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender (including gender reassignment), religion, belief or any other personal characteristics that is unwanted by the individual.

## Bullying

ACAS defines bullying as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour which makes the recipient feel upset, threatened, humiliated or vulnerable and which undermines self-confidence and may cause suffering and stress.

## Discrimination

There are several types of discrimination defined under the **Equality Act 2010** and the most straight-forward is discrimination. This means treating someone less favourably than someone else because of age, disability, gender (or gender reassignment) marital status, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation or pregnancy and maternity.

## Cyber-bullying

Cyber-bullying can be defined as bullying, harassment and victimisation conducted through social-media such as blogs or social networking. Examples include:

- Posting offensive or threatening comments directed at another person
- Posting inappropriate photographs, or the posting of sensitive personal information of or about another person
- Pressuring staff or others to join online groups.

## Sexual Harassment

Sexual Harassment is a specific type of harassment under the law. It is unlawful and Willow Wood Community Primary School will not tolerate any type of unwanted behaviour of a 'sexual nature'.

## Freedom to Speak Up and Raise Concerns

Speaking up is about raising concerns where you think something is wrong, negligent, improper or illegal. Some such concerns could include the behaviours of colleagues or parents, the work environment or whether there has been a fair process. If you have a concern, people should speak to the headteacher or a member of the Senior Leadership team. Where there are concerns about the conduct of the headteacher, people need to speak to the chair of governors.



It is up to all of us to speak up and speak out against bullying, harassment, discrimination and any unacceptable behaviours. If we all speak up when we see this sort of behaviour we can make it clear that it is not acceptable and will not be tolerated.

Everyone who works for Willow Wood Community Primary School has a duty to raise genuine concerns if they think that something is happening at work which is wrong, illegal or is making someone unhappy or uncomfortable.

Anyone who is concerned about harassment or bullying can ask for support from their headteacher, Senior Leadership Team or the chair of Governors. They can also ask for support from the following –

- Their union (helpline posters can be found in communal areas around school)
- The staff insurance support line (helpline posters can be found in communal areas around school)
- HR
- Occupational Health

Support is available to all whether they are experiencing harassment or bullying at work or believe that they have seen this happen to someone else, as well as if you have been accused of bullying or harassment.

### Duties, Roles and Responsibilities

Each member of staff is responsible for their own behaviour and for ensuring that their conduct is in line with the standards set out in this policy and our school values. We expect people to:

- Set a positive example by treating others with respect
- Not accept behaviour that may be offensive to us or to others and to take positive action to make sure that we speak up about acceptable behaviour and report it
- Be supportive of colleagues who may be the subject of bullying, harassment or abuse
- Be aware of this policy and comply with it

All members of staff are encouraged to report incidents of bullying, harassment or abuse to the headteacher even if they are not the victim in order to get the victim support.

***Members of staff all have a responsibility to challenge and prevent bullying and harassment.***

### Leaders and Phase Leaders

All managers have a responsibility to implement the policy and to bring it to the attention of all staff in the school and in their phases in order to establish and maintain a work environment which protects and promotes dignity at work and is free from harassment, bullying, discrimination or abuse. They are expected to:



- Set a positive example by treating others with respect and setting standards of acceptable behaviours
- Protect the dignity of all employees and individuals
- Provide advice, information and support that protects the dignity of all school staff and anyone on our work premises
- Promote a working environment where harassment, bullying and abuse is unacceptable and is not tolerated
- Tackle, and where possible, resolve incidents of harassment, bullying or abuse
- Treat each complaint seriously and sympathetically and with an open mind; and deal with it promptly and confidentially, giving the individual and alleged perpetrator full support during the whole process
- Consult with HR Business Partners at any time for advice and support and follow the processes laid out in this policy and any other policies adopted by the Governing Board
- Where included in their job roles, review all policies and procedures so that they are consistent with the principles of justice, fairness and respect for employees and the organisation.

### HR Business Partners

HR Business partners have a responsibility to ensure that the policy is followed fairly and consistently. Their duties include:

- Advising and providing support for the headteacher, governors and staff who are involved in incidents of harassment, bullying or abuse in the course of their employment
- Advising and supporting the headteacher and others in the application of the policy
- Ensuring the effective implementation of the policy
- Monitoring incidences of bullying and harassment and initiating appropriate action
- Delivering training and advice which would support the amending of this policy as necessary

### Policy Statement

All staff are entitled to work in an environment where they are treated with dignity and respect. Pressures at work or outside of work are not acceptable reasons for treating others without respect.

Willow Wood Community Primary School commits to:

- Ensure the dignity at work of all employees
- Respect and value differences
- Make full use of the talents of our workforce
- Show our commitment to equal opportunities for all
- Prevent acts of discrimination, exclusion, unfair treatment and other unacceptable behaviours
- Be open and constructive in our communications
- Be fair and just in our dealings



- Promote positive behaviours throughout school

## Unacceptable Behaviour

The school will not tolerate the unacceptable behaviours described in the definitions. Although sometimes it is very clear when someone's words or actions are not acceptable, it is important to remember that if an individual feels that behaviour is offensive to them that it could be bullying or harassment- even if it was not intended to cause offense. This may include:

- Spreading malicious rumours, or insulting someone by word or behaviour
- Copying memos that are critical about someone to others who do not need to know
- Ridiculing or demeaning someone- picking on someone or setting them up to fail
- Exclusion or victimisation
- Unfair treatment
- Overbearing supervision or other misuse of power or position
- Unwelcome sexual advances- touching, standing too close, display of offensive materials, asking for sexual favours, making decisions on the basis of sexual advances being accepted or rejected
- Making threats or comments about job security without foundation
- Deliberately undermining a competent worker by overloading and constant criticism
- Preventing individuals progressing by intentionally blocking promotion or training opportunities

Bullying and harassment is not necessarily face to face, it may occur through written communications, visual images (E.g. pictures of a sexual nature or embarrassing photographs of colleagues etc) email, phone and automatic supervision methods such as computer recordings of downtime from work or recording telephone conversations – if these are not universally applied to all workers.

## Bullying and Harassment

Bullying and harassment can have a devastating effect on people at work, often causing anxiety and loss of confidence which can result in ill health and absence from work. It can also have a damaging effect on the working environment; creating tensions in the workplace which can lead to poor quality work, low morale and high staff turnover.

The Equality Act 2010 uses a single definition of harassment to cover the relevant protected characteristics. Employees can complain of behaviour that they find offensive even if it is not directed at them. Harassment is –

***“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 that individual.”***



The relevant protected characteristics are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender
- Gender reassignment
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex and
- Sexual orientation

What is / is not bullying?

Sometimes behaviours and actions which cause us to feel distressed are not examples of bullying, even though they are unpleasant and often require action by an employer or manager. There are some common situations that can be confused with bullying.

The Difference Between Fair and Firm Management and Bullying.

The difference between a manager who is firm and fair and a manager who is bullying and harassing staff can sometimes seem ambiguous. The difference can sometimes be explained as:

Firm and Fair Management	Bullying and Harassment of Staff
Consistent and fair.	Aggressive, inconsistent and unfair.
Determined to achieve the best results but is reasonable and flexible.	Determined to achieve the best results but unreasonable and inflexible.
Knows their own mind and is clear about their own ideas, but is willing to consult with colleagues and staff.	Believes that they are always right, has fixed opinions, believes that they know best and not prepared to value other people's opinions.
Insists on high standards of service in quality of work and behaviour in the team.	Insists on high standards of service and behaviour but blames others if things go wrong.
Will discuss in private any perceived deterioration before forming views or taking action and does not apportion blame when something goes wrong.	Loses temper, degrades people in front of others, threatens official warnings without listening to any explanation.
Asks for people's views, listens and assimilates feedback.	Tells people what is happening and does not listen.
Shares credit appropriately.	Plagiarises, takes credit for other people's work and ideas.
Respectful and considerate.	Disrespectful and inconsiderate.
Demonstrably values others and their contributions.	Devalues or ignores the contribution of others.

It is important to differentiate between bullying and an employer's legitimate authority to direct and control the way work is done. It is reasonable for employers to allocate work and



for managers and supervisors to give fair and reasonable feedback on a worker's performance.

Conflict with colleagues at work – people are bound to have occasional differences of opinion and these are a normal part of working life. Disagreement can leave people feeling upset but they should not be confused with bullying behaviour. However, these should not be ignored – if left unresolved, conflict may develop into a bullying situation.

### **Good Working Relationships**

Good working relationships are important to creating a culture of dignity and respect. Willow Wood Community Primary School is committed to encouraging good, honest, open communication at all levels in the working team and recognises the need to provide support for staff who work in or feel that they work in isolation. Poor working relationships can contribute to or cause workplace stress.

### **Seeking Resolutions**

#### **Informal Approach**

Informal methods of dealing with unacceptable behaviours are often the quickest and most effective approach. If you think that someone is bullying you or behaving in another way that is not acceptable and you feel that you can talk to them about it; explain to them how they are making you feel and ask them to stop. Sometimes individuals do not realise the effect their behaviour is having on other people so this approach may make them stop and think. You may ask a work colleague or senior leader for advice on how to construct the difficult conversation.

#### **Discussion With A Manager**

You can tell your headteacher, member of the senior leadership team or a trusted colleague about what has been happening and ask to have a meeting with them and the individual whose behaviour is causing the problem. This meeting should be arranged at the earliest opportunity. If your concern relates to the headteacher, tell the chair of governors ([pstewart@wwprimary.org.uk](mailto:pstewart@wwprimary.org.uk)) and ask for support in arranging a resolution meeting. At this meeting, the issues should be discussed and if possible, a resolution reached.

#### **Facilitated Meeting**

This is a meeting between the person who feels that they have been the subject of unacceptable behaviours and the person that they are complaining about, with an appropriate person there to facilitate it (make it easier). The appropriate person might be an independent member of the senior leadership team or a HR Business Partner. They will make sure that the issues are discussed in a safe, confidential and supported way with the aim of reaching a resolution.

If a facilitated meeting is appropriate, a HR Business Partner will contact an appropriate person to request the meeting and will let you know that they have done so. If the meeting is not set up in a reasonable time, the HR Business Partner will follow this up with the person



who has been contacted. At this meeting, the issues will be discussed and, if possible, a resolution reached. If necessary, more than one facilitated meeting can be arranged to resolve the issue and this may be with a different appropriate person facilitating the meeting.

Where at all possible, this would be the preferred way to resolve the matter in the timeliest way and with the least distress and disruption to those involved.

## Mediation

If it has not been possible to reach a resolution through a facilitated meeting then a more structured mediation process might be appropriate. However, this is an optional stage. Mediation is completely voluntary and confidential form of alternative dispute resolution and involves an independent, impartial person. Mediation can be used at any stage in a dispute but is most effective before positions become entrenched. The overriding aim of workplace mediation is to restore and maintain the working relationship wherever possible. This means that the focus is on working together to go forward, not determining who was right or wrong in the past.

If it is decided that mediation is appropriate and should be arranged, the mediator will contact the individuals involved to explain the process. Where an agreement can be reached and the mediator and all parties have a reasonable belief that the matter has been satisfactorily resolved, no further formal action will be taken.

## Formal Processes

If a resolution can not be reached through the informal steps or if the allegations are more serious than can be addressed by the informal processes, or if an informal approach is inappropriate, then a formal process must be undertaken.

If a formal complaint was raised, school's HR Business Partner would be contacted, as would any relevant union representative should either party wish to involve them in the process. It would be made clear to them that a formal complaint of harassment, bullying or unacceptable behaviour had been made and required investigating.

It would be made clear that the complaint was being raised formally and any informal steps that had been taken and tried would be explained. In raising the complaint, the following would need to be included (see appendix 1):

- The name of the person or people the complaint is about
- The nature of the behaviour
- Dates and times
- Details of any witnesses

The written complaint should be sent to the appropriate manager or person who will acknowledge receipt in writing within 5 working days.

The HR Business Partner or senior manager will arrange for the complaint to be formally investigated by an appropriately trained person in a timely manner and where possible make these arrangements within 15 days from receipt of the written complaint.



The investigator, with advice from the HR Business Partner will also consider whether any other steps should be taken to support everyone involved. This might include members of staff being moved as a temporary measure.

All parties will be advised that this is a formal investigation into a complaint of harassment, bullying or unacceptable behaviour and what the next steps will be.

The complaint will be investigated in accordance with school policy and with support from school's HR Business Partner. They will meet separately with all parties and witnesses involved.

The report will make recommendations about how to resolve the situation and where there is enough evidence, to take the complaint to a formal stage involving a governor panel.

## Outcomes

The decision about the next steps will be made by the appropriate senior manager to whom the report has been given. The senior manager will consider the report and reach a decision that either:

- The investigation has established that there is sufficient evidence for the matter to be considered at a formal resolution hearing.

The complainant should be written to by the senior manager or the clerk to the panel within 5 days to confirm the outcome (please note the outcome of the formal hearing may not be shared with the complainant for reasons of confidentiality).

Or

- The investigation has established that there is not enough evidence to be considered at a formal hearing but there are concerns which need to be addressed and the recommendations made in the report to resolve the situation should be followed.

Or

- The investigation has established that there is not enough evidence to be considered at a formal hearing, nor has it established any concerns to be addressed. In these cases, there may still be recommendations to resolve the situation that led to the initial concerns being raised and encourage positive working relationships moving forward.

If it is decided that the matter will not go to a formal hearing, separate meetings should be arranged with the person who has made the complaint and the person about whom the complaint has been made. These meetings will be to explain the findings of the investigation as laid out in the report, and the recommendations which have been made, and must be confirmed in writing. There must be a follow-up letter which lays out:

- the agreed actions
- who is responsible for them and
- when they should be completed



Staff who take part in investigations / hearings in good faith must not suffer any retaliation or victimisation as a result. Anybody who is found to have victimised another member of staff in this way will be subject to formal investigation.

***Anybody who is found to be making vexatious or malicious complaints will be investigated formally.***

### **Appeals and Satisfaction with Outcomes**

It is important to acknowledge that, at times, the outcome of any of the above processes can be disappointing for one or more of the parties involved and may not entirely resolve issues between colleagues. For example, someone raising a complaint of bullying or harassment may feel strongly that the person they are raising the complaint against should be subject to formal resolution and then find it disheartening when this is not the case due to the factual findings of the investigation, or still feel strongly when no evidence is found against an allegation that the behaviour they have experienced is bullying and harassment rather it is firm and fair management. Equally it can be challenging to move on from challenges with colleagues whether the desired outcome is reached or not.

The end of any of the processes outlined in this policy are not the end of the support available to staff; all of the support options outlined earlier in the policy will still be available after the closure of the complaint, as well as a wide range of well-being support. If anyone is struggling to move on after raising a complaint, they need to speak to the headteacher, a senior leader, their union representative or HR Business Manager.

Additionally, if you raise a complaint of harassment, bullying or unacceptable behaviour which is investigated, and the result is disagreement with the outcome or dissatisfaction an appeal can be heard. The request for an appeal must be received within 10 days stating why there is disagreement with the decision. A further panel will be convened with the chair of the first panel presenting the information to the appeal panel. Once the appeal has been heard, there will be no further right to a further review or appeal.

There is a key difference between the right to appeal under the Dignity at Work Policy and an appeal through the Appeals Policy following formal resolution.

The person against whom the complaint is made does not usually have the right to appeal against an outcome of an investigation, but does have the right to appeal against the decision of a formal resolution hearing. Once an appeal has been heard, there is no further right of appeal.

### **Representation**

At all formal stages of the process, the person making the complaint and the person the complaint is about have a right to be accompanied by a colleague or a trade union representative.



This policy should be read in conjunction with the following HR policies:

- Code of Conduct Policy
- Grievance Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Staff Non-Negotiable Policy

Policy Written by L Robertson

Date: 12.03.2025



Appendix 1 – Formal Notification of Complaint

Name of employee	
Job title	
Location	
Name of manager	
Name of Trade Union Rep	
Email address of Union Rep	
Date	
Please say what your complaint is about (if you need more space, please continue on another page and make sure you send any relevant information with this form.)	
What action(s) do you think would resolve your complaint?	
If the complaint has been considered formally before, please provide details.	



Please tell us about the informal steps that have been taken to seek resolution, who has been involved in this process and the dates of any meetings you have had.

Employee's signature:

Date:

