

BULLYING & HARASSMENT POLICY

1. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Our objective is to have an environment which is free from harassment and bullying and to ensure that all staff and students are treated with dignity and respect.

It is the responsibility of all staff and students to comply with this procedure and the particular responsibility of the Director and administration staff to ensure it is carried out, with a view to developing and maintaining an environment in which harassment and bullying are understood by all to be unacceptable.

The School will not tolerate any behaviour that could be classed as discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation.

2. THE SCHOOL'S POSITION ON BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

All staff members and students of The School have a duty not to bully or harass one another nor to help anyone else to do so.

We will not tolerate bullying or harassment whatever the seniority of the perpetrator. Neither will we tolerate retaliation against, or victimisation of, any person involved in the bringing of a complaint of harassment or bullying.

Allegations of bullying and harassment will be treated seriously. Investigations will be carried out promptly, sensitively and, as far as possible, confidentially. Employees or students who make allegations of bullying or harassment in good faith will not be treated less favourably as a result.

False accusations of harassment or bullying can have a serious effect on innocent individuals, therefore staff and students have a responsibility not to make such accusations. False allegations made in bad faith will be subject to disciplinary action.

3. DEFINITIONS

'Bullying' or 'harassment' are terms that apply to treatment from one person (or a group of people) to another that is unwanted and that has the effect of violating that person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment for that person.

Harassment can take many forms and can generally be described as behaviour which is viewed by the recipient as unwelcome. Both violent behaviour and ignoring a colleague or student can be classed as harassment. The main issue is that the individual feels harassed, not whether the perpetrator intends harassment.

Examples of bullying and harassment include:

- verbal abuse or offensive comments related to age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage, civil partnership, pregnancy, maternity, race, religion, belief, gender or sexual orientation;
- lewd or suggestive comments;
- display of explicit, pornographic, inflammatory or abusive literature or graffiti (unless such material is used or studied in the context of a production of a play);
- deliberate exclusion from conversations or activities;
- physical abuse such as hitting, pushing or jostling;
- rifling through, hiding or damaging personal property;
- subjecting a person to humiliation or ridicule.

Bullying does not include appropriate criticism of a student's work or proper performance management.

It is important to recognise that conduct which one person may find acceptable, another may find totally unacceptable. All staff and students must, therefore, treat one another with respect and appropriate sensitivity.

4. ACTION

If a student or staff member feels they are being bullied or harassed by another student or staff member at The School, there are two possible avenues to follow; informal or formal.

4.1 INFORMAL RESOLUTION

If a student or staff member is being bullied or harassed, they may be able to resolve the situation themselves by explaining clearly to the perpetrator(s) that their behaviour is unacceptable, contrary to our policy and must stop. Alternatively, they may wish to ask a tutor or a colleague to put this on their behalf or to be with them when confronting the perpetrator(s).

In either case, they can approach the Director or Administrator for advice and support. Any request for help will be treated confidentially. If the above approach does not work or if the individual does not wish to try to resolve the situation in this way, they should raise the issue with the Administrator, who will try to resolve the situation informally by telling the alleged perpetrator(s), without prejudging the matter, that: there has been a complaint that their behaviour is having an adverse effect on a student or colleague; such behaviour is contrary to our policy; and the continuation of such behaviour could amount to a serious disciplinary offence. It may be possible for the Administrator to have this conversation with the alleged perpetrator without revealing the name of the complainant, if necessary. They will also stress that the conversation is confidential.

In certain circumstances it may be possible to involve a neutral third party (a mediator) to facilitate a resolution of the problem and this option will be discussed with the complainant if it is appropriate.

If a complaint is resolved informally, the alleged perpetrator(s) will not be subject to disciplinary sanctions. However, in exceptional circumstances (such as a serious allegation of sexual harassment or in cases where the behaviour has occurred before) we may decide to investigate further and take more formal action notwithstanding that the matter has been raised informally. We would always consult with the individual raising the complaint before taking this step.

4.2 FORMAL COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

If informal resolution is unsuccessful or inappropriate, an individual may wish to make a formal written complaint about the harassment or bullying to the Administrator. A formal complaint may ultimately lead to disciplinary action against the perpetrator(s).

The complaint will first be investigated and the individual raising the complaint will need to co-operate with the investigation and provide the following details (if not already provided): the name of the alleged perpetrator(s); the nature of the harassment or bullying; the dates and times the harassment or bullying occurred; the names of any witnesses and any action taken to resolve the matter informally. The alleged perpetrator(s) would normally need to be told the name of the person making the allegation and the details of their complaint in order for the issue to be properly

investigated; however, we will carry out the investigation as confidentially and sensitively as possible.

After the investigation, we will meet with the individual to consider their complaint and the findings of the investigation. At the meeting, the complainant may wish to be accompanied by a colleague, tutor or fellow student.

After the meeting, we will write to the individual raising the complaint to inform them of our decision and to notify them of their right to appeal to the Director if they are dissatisfied with the outcome. This appeal should be in writing, explaining the reasons for their dissatisfaction with our decision. The appeal should be submitted within five working days of receiving written confirmation of our decision. Anyone submitting an appeal would normally be invited to attend a meeting to consider it and would subsequently receive notice in writing of our final decision.

Where we think that a disciplinary offence might have been committed, we will instigate disciplinary action and will keep the complainant informed of the outcome.