

# School Model Policy

## Dignity at Work

Version	V0.3
Lead officer	J Spargo
Approved by	TLP
Approval date	Feb 2023
Effective date	Feb 2023
Review date	Feb 2025

# Southampton City Council - School Model Policy

## Dignity at Work

### Introduction

1. This model policy has been drawn up following consultation with head teacher groups and the recognised trade unions and associations: ASCL, GMB, NAHT, NASUWT, National Education Union and Unison.
2. Further advice and support on the application of the policy is available from the School's HR provider.
3. It is recommended that academies also adopt this model policy. Where an academy adopts this policy, the word 'school' should be taken to refer to the academy.
4. The term 'relevant body' has been used throughout this policy. In maintained schools this is the governing body. The differing structures of academies means that the academy trust will need to define the relevant body for the purposes of this policy.

### Scope

5. This policy applies to all employees working in schools. It also applies to all members of the relevant body.
6. This policy applies to everyone working for the school including agency or supply staff. It applies whether employees are working on school premises or at other locations and also covers work-related social events.
7. This policy addresses issues raised by an employee concerning another employee (or employees). Bullying or harassment by external parties will be dealt with as follows:
8. Trade unions recognised by the school take bullying and harassment seriously. An employee who is being bullied or harassed by a trade union official should bring this to the attention of an appropriate union officer or notify their manager or headteacher.
9. If an employee experiences offensive or unwelcome behaviour from a member of the public (e.g. parents) they should speak to their manager and will have their complaints investigated promptly by school management, but different procedures will apply to any action taken as a result. See the Safe Working Procedure – Preventing Workplace Harassment and Violence for additional guidance if the incident involves verbal abuse, threatening or physical behaviour by a member of the public.

### Context

10. The head teacher and relevant body are committed to providing a safe, healthy and productive work environment free from harassment, bullying and victimisation.
11. All complaints of bullying and harassment will be taken seriously and handled sensitively and discretely. Managers will take prompt action to investigate and respond to allegations. If allegations are made against the headteacher, the chair of governors will take responsibility for dealing with the allegations. Where bullying or harassment is found to have taken place, disciplinary action may be taken which could result in dismissal.
12. No employee will suffer detriment for raising a concern in good faith, or for assisting

## Southampton City Council - School Model Policy

### Dignity at Work

a colleague to do so.

13. Everyone should be able to work without the fear of mischievous or malicious allegations and anyone found to be making a deliberately false or vexatious complaint may be subject to disciplinary action.
14. School managers are committed to ensuring that everyone is treated with dignity and respect and:
  15. encouraged to meet their full potential
  16. treated without favouritism
  17. spoken to with courtesy
  18. accorded due professional trust
  19. recognised for their achievements
  20. consulted about any changes in their role
  21. given adequate time and resources for the successful discharge of their duties
  22. provided with appropriate training and development opportunities
  23. accorded respect for their individual privacy
24. This policy provides a framework to help prevent bullying and harassment and explains the procedure that should be followed when incidents occur.

### The law and definitions of bullying and harassment

25. Bullying and harassment are terms used interchangeably and cover a range of behaviours that undermine the right of others to be treated with dignity.
26. 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'. Source: Equality Act 2010.
27. The relevant protected characteristics in relation to harassment under UK law are: age; disability; race; religion and belief; gender reassignment, sex and sexual orientation.
28. Sexual harassment is also unlawful under the Equality Act 2010.
29. There is also legal protection against harassment based on an individual's membership or non-membership of a trade union.
30. Bullying is: 'offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient'. Source: Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS)
31. Both the school and individual employees can be held liable for unlawful discriminatory harassment or bullying.

## Southampton City Council - School Model Policy

### Dignity at Work

#### Behaviours that could be regarded as bullying and harassment

32. Bullying and harassment is not always verbal or face to face, but can involve written communications or visual images, such as pictures of a sexual nature or embarrassing photographs sent by text, instant messaging, email or social media.
33. Bullying and harassment may involve single or repeated incidents, ranging from extreme forms of intimidating behaviour, such as physical violence, to more subtle forms such as ignoring someone. It can often occur without witnesses.
34. Employees should be familiar with the school's position regarding the use of Social Media when posting messages and material that could be open to wider publication and circulation e.g. using Facebook, Twitter.
35. Examples of unacceptable behaviour include:
36. personal insults (particularly on the grounds of age, race, sex, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and religion or belief)
37. physical aggression or intimidation
38. practical jokes which embarrass or humiliate
39. verbal abuse, including personal insults, inappropriate stereotyping, offensive comments, taunts, threats, malicious gossip or innuendo
40. abuse of an individual's right to personal privacy, for example, intrusion into another employee's personal property or into their private life (this may also be a breach of the Data Protection Act 1998)
41. deliberate isolation or non-cooperation and exclusion from normal social or professional contact in the workplace
42. unwelcome sexual advances – assault, touching, standing too close, the display of offensive materials, making decisions on the basis of sexual advances being accepted or rejected
43. personal intrusion from pestering, spying and stalking.

***Please note that this list is not exhaustive.***

#### Legitimate management actions

44. School leadership and managers at times are required to make decisions that affect employees' jobs and ways of working and to speak to employees about their performance and expected standards. This does not constitute bullying and harassment. However, managers must carry out these functions fairly, consistently and in a professional manner.
45. In order to carry out their role it is necessary for managers to:
46. issue instructions to employees
47. set work-related objectives and monitor achievement

## Southampton City Council - School Model Policy

### Dignity at Work

48. set standards of workplace performance and monitor compliance with these
49. address poor performance or unacceptable behaviour

#### Unacceptable behaviour by managers

50. The following are examples of unacceptable behaviour by managers, over and above those already mentioned in paragraph 24:
51. Humiliation, for example reprimanding an employee in front of others
52. Singling out an employee, for example for unjustified criticism
53. Intimidation, for example aggressive behaviour or threats directed at an employee
54. Persistently placing excessive demands on employees, setting unrealistic work targets and/or changing targets which are outside the remit of the job.
55. Preventing individuals progressing by intentionally blocking promotion or training opportunities.
56. Making threats or comments about job security without foundation.

## Roles and responsibilities

#### Responsibilities of managers

57. It is the responsibility of all managers to behave in accordance with this policy and set an example to others.
58. Managers must make sure employees are aware of this policy and the workplace they are responsible for is one where employees feel able to talk to them about problems or concerns; where everyone is treated with dignity and respect and where any form of bullying or harassment is not tolerated.
59. Managers must prevent harassment and bullying wherever possible and take immediate action once it is identified. Where managers receive a report of unacceptable behaviour or observe it at first-hand they have a responsibility to take immediate steps to address the matter, whether or not a formal complaint has been made.
60. Managers must also:
  61. provide a good example of appropriate behaviour
  62. be alert to the possibility of bullying or harassment
  63. act promptly to correct behaviour which could cause offence or be seen to contravene this policy
  64. make sure all new employees are aware of expected standards of behaviour and remind employees at regular intervals
  65. record any incidents of harassment or bullying and the outcomes of any action or investigations

## Southampton City Council - School Model Policy

### Dignity at Work

66. treat all cases of harassment or bullying sensitively and with appropriate confidentiality
67. Due to the serious effects of bullying and harassment, managers may need to continue with an investigation or disciplinary process even when an allegation is withdrawn by an employee or the employee declines to make a formal complaint.

#### Responsibilities of all employees and members of the relevant body

68. It is the responsibility of all employees and members of the relevant body to maintain appropriate standards of behaviour and to ensure they support a positive working environment where affronts to dignity, bullying or harassment are not tolerated. All employees and members of the relevant body must:
  69. treat colleagues with dignity and respect
  70. be aware of the effect that their own behaviour can have on others
  71. dress appropriately for the workplace
  72. support colleagues if they experience bullying, harassment or singling out
  73. challenge inappropriate behaviour and report any incident to a manager
  74. set a positive example to others
  75. consider their language and attitudes and refrain from making personal comments to or about others
  76. co-operate with any investigation undertaken by the school into allegations of bullying and harassment

### How to handle bullying and harassment

#### Informal approach

77. Sometimes people make genuine mistakes or might not be aware their behaviour is unwelcome or offensive. If you feel able to, speak to the person concerned at the time of the incident, explain clearly that you find their behaviour offensive or unwelcome, and ask for it to stop.
78. It can be helpful to keep a diary of all incidents, a record of dates and times and the names of any witnesses.
79. Letting the person know their behaviour is unwelcome or offensive will give them the opportunity to stop.

#### Who else can you speak to?

80. If you find it difficult to approach the person directly, you should talk the matter through with your manager, or with:
  81. another manager in the school

## **Southampton City Council - School Model Policy**

### **Dignity at Work**

82. a trade union representative
83. the Employee Assistance Programme/ Occupational Health Service (where available)
84. If you are not sure who to speak to, you can contact your School HR Provider.

#### **Facilitated Discussion/Mediation**

85. Facilitated discussion and mediation are effective ways of resolving concerns/disputes, which can help avoid matters escalating and the need for formal procedures.
86. Facilitated discussion is an informal meeting(s), conducted by either a line manager or HR representative, to enable discussion between parties with support for these to be as constructive as possible. Facilitated discussion aims to assist greater understanding of perspective, develop harmony of viewpoint and prevent further disputes from occurring.
87. Mediation is a structured process conducted by an independent party that can be used at any stage and can address a range of issues including relationship and communication breakdown. Mediation will assist the parties to understand each other's point of view and help them look at options for resolving their dispute.
88. Facilitators and Mediators do not make judgments or determine outcomes - they ask questions that help uncover underlying problems.
89. Contact your School HR Provider to find out more about facilitated discussion and/or mediation.

#### **Making a formal complaint of bullying or harassment**

90. If it is not possible to resolve matters informally, or if you believe the situation is so serious as to warrant formal action, you can make a formal complaint using the formal grievance procedure.
91. You are advised to speak to your manager or Headteacher and/or trade union representative about raising a complaint of bullying formally.

#### **Confidentiality**

92. Throughout any proceedings under this policy the school shall seek to ensure that confidentiality is maintained and not broken without the consent of the complainant. This does not preclude the disclosure of information where necessary in order to ensure a fair process or as required by law, nor does it preclude, where appropriate, the School disclosing information about any outcome under this policy.
93. Members of staff should understand that in some circumstances, a request for absolute confidentiality may make it difficult for the School to effectively deal with the matters raised.
94. No-one must be victimised as a result of making a complaint or being subject to a complaint of bullying or harassment.

## **Southampton City Council - School Model Policy Dignity at Work**

### Disciplinary Procedure

95. Where bullying or harassment is found to have taken place, disciplinary action may be taken, the outcome of which may include dismissal.

### Support for employees

96. Allegations of bullying and harassment can be upsetting and stressful for all parties and managers have a responsibility for making sure all individuals involved are offered appropriate support. This can be provided by offering additional one to one meetings or by assigning a key contact for the employee.
97. Employees who are members of a trade union may wish to contact their representative for support.

### **Related Policies and Procedures**

- Grievance Policy and Procedure
- Disciplinary Policy and Procedure
- Equality & Diversity in the workplace
- Safe Working Procedure – Preventing Workplace Harassment and Violence
- Safe Working Procedure – Managing Wellbeing at Work

### **Further Advice and Support**

98. Further advice and support is available from:
99. Your School HR Provider
100. Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service [www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk) Tel 0300 123 1100
101. Equal Opportunities Commission [www.eoc.org.uk](http://www.eoc.org.uk)

### **Equality Monitoring & Accessibility**

102. If any aspect of this procedure causes difficulty on account of any disability that you may have, or if you need assistance because English is not your first language, you should raise this with your manager.
103. In introducing this policy an impact assessment has been undertaken to take account of the Equality Act 2010.