Promoting Positive Working Relationships Policy

Overley Hall School

Policy Reviewer	Liz Hyner/ Rachel Hawley	**Date of Review**	1/9/26
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Positive Work Environment Statement

Overley Hall (the Company) is committed to creating a harmonious and safe working environment, which is free from harassment and bullying and in which every employee is treated with respect and dignity. The Company strives to ensure that the different experiences, abilities and skills of each individual are valued by others. Inappropriate behaviour should and will be challenged. It is the Company's intention to encourage everyone to always behave in a proper manner.

Harassment or bullying causes stress, anxiety and unhappiness to individuals, creates an unpleasant environment in which to work and may be unlawful. This can reduce efficiency and may ultimately have an impact on the way in which services are delivered to our learners. For these reasons it is important that the Company, as an employer, and individual employees strive to achieve a working environment which is free from this type of behaviour.

You may be an individual or part of a group that receives unwanted attention. This potential harassment, bullying or victimisation may be a one-off incident or it may be a series of incidents. Your dignity at work may be affected by inappropriate behaviour, which causes offence, whether it is intentional, or not.

The Company is committed to ensuring that individuals do not feel apprehensive due to their race, religion or belief, disability, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy or maternity, gender reassignment, marriage/civil partnership or age as a result of being subjected to any inappropriate behaviour.

All employees can expect to:

- be treated with dignity, respect and courtesy;
- be able to work, free from unfair treatment, bullying, harassment or victimisation;
- be valued for their skills, abilities and experiences.

All employees are expected to:

- familiarise themselves with the content of this policy;
- treat all employees with dignity, respect and courtesy;
- contribute towards a positive working culture;
- challenge or report unacceptable behaviour;
- be mindful of others when expressing views; and
- co-operate with investigations into harassment and bullying.

Breaches of this policy will be considered unacceptable behaviour and will be treated as misconduct, which may include the giving of a gross misconduct notice warranting dismissal. All employees must comply with this policy.

The Company is committed to dealing with any issues quickly, positively and confidentially when and if they occur.

It is important to remember that while you may make comments outside of work, for example on social networking sites, the Company may use such evidence in investigations on bullying and harassment matters.

Professional Boundaries and Good Conduct

All staff are expected to work in a professional manner at all times in front of students and, in their absence, and also to ensure that they adopt a professional approach when dealing with parents, local authority officers and the general public.

“You should uphold the reputation of your profession at all times and be a model of integrity and leadership for others to aspire to. This should lead to trust and confidence in the profession from those receiving care, educators, other social care professionals and the general public.”

Definition of Harassment

Harassment is unwanted conduct, related to a relevant characteristic set out in the Equality Act 2010 that violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. The protected characteristics are race, religion or belief, disability, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy or maternity, gender reassignment, marriage/civil partnership and age.

Harassment may take many forms. It can range from extreme forms such as violence to less obvious actions such as persistently ignoring someone. The following, though not an exhaustive list, may constitute harassment:

- physical contact ranging from touching to serious assault;
- verbal and written harassment (including via email) through jokes, teasing or banter, offensive language, gossip and slander, or letters;
- sharing inappropriate images or videos;
- using racist slang, phrases or nicknames;
- isolation or non-cooperation, or exclusion from social activities; and

- intrusion by pestering, spying, following etc.

Employees may also be subject to harassment from third parties such as clients, customers, suppliers, the general public etc. where interaction with those third parties is a part of their role.

Definition of Bullying

Bullying is repeated inappropriate, offensive behaviour, which is often an abuse of power or position. It can be direct or indirect, either verbal, physical or otherwise, conducted by one or more persons against another or others in the course of employment, which could reasonably be regarded as undermining the individual's right to dignity at work.

The following examples may constitute bullying:

- threats, abuse, teasing, gossip or practical jokes;
- humiliation and ridicule either in private, at meetings or in front of customers/clients;
- name calling, banter, insults, devaluing with reference to age or physical appearance;
- setting impossible deadlines;
- imposing excessive workloads;
- making unjustified criticisms;
- excessive monitoring;
- removing responsibilities;
- allocating menial or pointless tasks;
- withholding information;
- refusing requests for leave, holiday or training;

It should be noted that it is the impact of the behaviour which is relevant and not the motive or intent behind it.

Employees' Responsibilities

All employees have a responsibility to help create and maintain a working environment that respects the dignity of employees. You should be aware of the serious and genuine problems which harassment and bullying can cause and ensure that your behaviour is beyond question and could not be considered in any way to be harassment or bullying.

No one should practise or encourage such behaviour and should make it clear to all concerned that you find it unacceptable. You should also support colleagues if they are experiencing harassment or bullying and are considering making a complaint. You

should alert a member of the Senior Leadership Team or Headteacher to any incidents to enable the Company to deal with the matter.

Managerial Responsibility

Senior Leaders and the Headteacher have a responsibility to ensure that harassment or bullying does not occur in work areas for which they are responsible. They are committed to the elimination of bullying and harassment and must be vigilant in preventing acts wherever possible.

Senior Leaders and the Headteacher also have a particular duty to set a proper example by treating everyone with dignity and respect and ensure that their behaviour is beyond question.

Senior Leaders and the Headteacher also have a responsibility to explain the Company's policy to their staff and take steps to promote it positively. They will be responsive and supportive to any member of staff who makes a complaint, provide full and clear advice on the procedure to be adopted, maintain confidentiality in all cases and ensure that there are no further problems or any victimisation after a complaint has been raised or resolved.

The Company will provide training to ensure that all Senior Leaders and the Headteacher and other staff are fully aware of this policy and the procedures for dealing with harassment and bullying.

Procedure for Dealing with Alleged Harassment or Bullying

Complaints can be made both formally and informally. Whichever route you decide to take, (and the decision will always be yours) you will be offered guidance and assistance at every stage to help you resolve the problem as soon as possible and to stop the harassment.

If you are comfortable doing so, in the first instance, ask the person responsible to stop the behaviour, explaining that you feel uncomfortable in the way they are acting towards you. Speaking directly to the person at an early stage will often be sufficient to stop the behaviour.

If you feel unable to do this, you may be able to ask your line Manager or a colleague to do this on your behalf.

If you decide to make a formal complaint you should do so through the grievance procedure as soon as possible after the incident has occurred. All complaints will be handled in a timely and confidential manner. You will be guaranteed a fair and impartial hearing and the matter will be investigated thoroughly. If the investigation reveals that your complaint is valid, prompt attention and action will be taken, designed to stop the behaviour immediately and prevent its recurrence. In such circumstances, if relocation proves necessary, every effort will be made to relocate the harasser or bully rather than you as the victim, however, the Company will endeavour to relocate you if this is your preference.

You will be protected from intimidation, victimisation or discrimination for filing a complaint or assisting in an investigation. Retaliating against an employee for complaining about harassment or bullying is a disciplinary offence.

Whilst this procedure is designed to assist genuine victims of harassment or bullying, you should be aware that if you raise complaints which are proven to be deliberately vexatious, you may become subject to proceedings under the disciplinary procedure.

Procedure for Dealing with Alleged Harassment or Bullying from a Third Party

Any form of harassment towards you from third parties during your dealings with them will not be tolerated by the Company.

We appreciate that a decision to report harassment from a third party may be difficult, particularly if the third party is a valuable client/customer or has a long-standing business relationship with the Company. However, we encourage you to report any instance of harassment from a third party so that the Company can take appropriate action.

You should follow the procedure set out above if you experience harassment from a third party, after which a meeting with you will be arranged and an investigation undertaken.

Our action, where a complaint is substantiated, will depend on the circumstances of the case and may include:

- speaking with the harasser and warning them that any future occurrence of harassment will result in the Company withdrawing provision of its services to the harasser;
- contacting the business for whom the harasser works and making a complaint against them. We will explicitly ask for this conduct to stop, and we may require that the harasser is removed from our account;
- refusing to continue to provide our services to the harasser; and
- re-assigning the provision of the Company's services to harasser to another employee.