"Together, with Jesus, we can LOVE, LEARN and SUCCEED"

Ribchester St. Wilfrid's Church of England Primary School
LANCASHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
WORKPLACE BULLYING AND HARRASSMENT POLICY FOR ALL STAFF

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WORKPLACE AND WORK-RELATED BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

A MODEL POLICY FOR ALL STAFF IN SCHOOLS WITH DELEGATED BUDGETS (AND TEACHERS IN CENTRALLY MANAGED SERVICES)
(REVISED AUGUST 2026)

1. STATEMENT OF INTENT

1.1 This policy is concerned with the prevention of harassment and bullying in the workplace. It should be considered in conjunction with the model Bullying and Harassment Procedure. It is not intended to inhibit reasonable and effective management of employees or prejudice the rights of individuals to take legal action.

1.2 This policy has been adopted and is published as part of the staffing policies of the Governing Body of Ribchester St Wilfrid's CE Primary School.

1.3 The Governing Body:

- is committed to ensuring that all staff are treated with dignity and respect while at work.
- is committed to creating an environment of positive working relationships. To establish and protect such an environment, policies and procedures have been adopted which enable staff to raise concerns and for these to be addressed.
- will not permit or condone harassment and bullying in the workplace. Such behaviour will be dealt with in accordance with the school's disciplinary procedure.
- will not tolerate intimidation, victimisation, retaliation or discrimination against an individual for bringing a complaint of harassment or bullying or assisting in any investigation whether or not the complaint is upheld. Where such action is alleged, the matter will be dealt with in the same way as an allegation of harassment or bullying.

1.4 Malicious complaints of harassment or bullying will not be condoned and will be regarded as a disciplinary offence and dealt with in accordance with the school's disciplinary procedure.

1.5 Genuine complaints of harassment and bullying will be dealt with sympathetically with a view to a constructive outcome.

2. DEFINITIONS OF HARASSMENT AND BULLYING

2.1 There is no simple definition of bullying as it can take many forms. ACAS defines workplace bullying as unwanted behaviour that is either *"offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting an abuse or misuse of power that undermines, humiliates, or causes physical or emotional harm to someone."*

2.2 Bullying is closely related to harassment; the two often go together and the terms are often used interchangeably. However, there is an important difference in that, unlike bullying, harassment is a legal concept and is defined as *"unwanted conduct **related to a relevant characteristic** that has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or*

offensive environment for that individual." [Relevant protected characteristics are; age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation].

2.3 What is key with both definitions is that the actions or comments are viewed as unwanted and cause offence to the recipient rather than the intention of the alleged harasser. However it's also important to take into account the perception of the other person, all the circumstances of the case and whether or not it is reasonable for the conduct to have that effect in determining whether the actions could reasonably be considered bullying or harassment.

2.4 **Bullying**

2.4.1 Bullying can:

- be a regular pattern of behaviour or a one-off incident
- happen face-to-face, on social media, in emails, written communication or phone calls
- not always be obvious or noticed by others

2.4.2 Examples of bullying behaviour include (this list is not exhaustive):

- Spreading false/malicious rumours;
- Being put down in meetings;
- Not being allowed to go on training courses that everyone else has been on;
- Being given a heavier workload than everyone else;
- Not being included in work social events.

2.5 **Harassment**

2.5.1 By law, harassment is when bullying or unwanted behaviour is related to protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 (see 2.2). Harassment can include:

- a serious one-off incident
- repeated behaviour
- spoken or written words, imagery, graffiti, gestures, mimicry, jokes, pranks, physical behaviour that affects the person

2.5.2 Employees can complain of harassment even if the behaviour in question is not directed at them. This is because the complainant does not actually need to possess the relevant protected characteristic. An employee can complain of harassment if they experience:

- harassment because they are related to or associates with someone who possesses a relevant protected characteristic; or
- harassment by a colleague who has the mistaken perception that they possess a relevant protected characteristic; or
- witnessing harassment because of a protected characteristic and are upset by it.

2.5.3 Discrimination law also recognises sexual harassment as something separate to harassment on grounds of sex. Sexual harassment occurs when someone is subjected to unwanted conduct of a sexual nature or when a person is treated less favourably because they have accepted or rejected unwanted conduct of a sexual nature.

2.5.4 Schools should take steps to make sure that sexual harassment does not happen in the workplace. This may include:

- Making it clear to all employees and those who use the school's services that the school will not tolerate sexual harassment (e.g. as part of induction processes, training/updates regarding the staff Code of Conduct etc).

- Having a range of options for reporting a sexual harassment complaint (e.g. line manager, senior manager, TU Rep etc.)

- Reviewing the steps taken and considering if anything needs to change after dealing with a sexual harassment complaint.

- Understanding the risks – perhaps via staff or workplace surveys eg when trying to gather insights into matters such as staff morale and then completing a risk assessment.

- Offering training on recognising sexual harassment and encourage the reporting of this.

- Reinforcing the standards of workplace conduct and zero tolerance of harassment prior to workplace social events.

2.5.5 Employees also have the right to raise concerns if they believe that they have been bullied or harassed by a third party (such as visitors, parents, contractors etc). Schools should take reasonable steps to protect employees from third party harassment. This may include; encouraging the reporting of any third-party harassment (either as a victim or witness) and taking steps to remedy any complaint and prevent it happening again, taking active steps to prevent third party harassment (e.g. warning notices, parental behaviour policy etc) and encouraging staff to come forward with any areas they believe protection from third party harassment could be improved.

3. Effects of Bullying & Harassment

3.1 Harassment and bullying can undermine job security, interfere with job performance and/or create a threatening or intimidating environment. They affect working conditions, health and safety and undermine equality at work.

3.2 Harassment and bullying undermine attempts to improve education provision for all pupils because they:-

- present an unacceptable model for pupils' own behaviour;
- cause increased incidence of stress-related illness amongst staff;
- lead to high levels of staff turnover in individual schools;
- demoralise all staff working in schools where their colleagues are bullied, leading to poor employee relations;
- affect the ability of individuals to carry out their duties;
- affect the reputation of the establishment.
- take the time and effort of managers to investigate

3.3 Many individuals are unwilling to make a complaint regarding harassment or bullying. This can be for a variety of reasons including:-

- fear of adversely affecting promotion prospects;
- fear that others will consider the behaviour trivial;
- fear of retaliation or public humiliation;

- fear that the allegations will not be taken seriously;
- concern that no action will be taken against the harasser/bully;
- unfamiliarity with the appropriate procedure to follow.

4. HARASSMENT, BULLYING AND THE LAW

4.1 Anyone who harasses, victimises or discriminates against someone at work is responsible for their own actions. However, by law, employers must do everything they reasonably can to protect staff from harassment. Key points to note include:

4.2 Employees may bring a harassment claim to an employment tribunal under the **Equality Act 2010** if they can show that the harassment is linked to a relevant protected characteristic: age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.

4.3 From October 2024, employers have a proactive duty to take 'reasonable steps' to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace which was strengthened in the **Employment Rights Act 2025** and from April 2026, reporting sexual harassment qualifies as a 'qualifying disclosure' under whistleblowing legislation.

4.4 There is a right to mutual trust and confidence between employer and employee; if bullying or harassing behaviour are allowed to go unchecked, that could mean that such trust and confidence is lost which may lead to a claim of **constructive dismissal**.

4.5 Where an employee is bullied, the employer might be in breach of the **Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974**, which contains the duty owed by an employer to its employees to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, their health, safety and welfare.

4.6 An employee who suffers significant psychological harm as a result of bullying may make a **personal injury** claim in the civil courts.

4.7 There are rare occasions where bullying could be a **criminal offence**, e.g. bullying that involves violence or assault and should be reported to the police.

5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN DEALING WITH HARASSMENT AND BULLYING

5.1 A good working environment in school is one where it is clear to all staff, pupils, parents and governors that behaviour which may potentially cause offence is not acceptable.

5.2 The **Governing Body** requires all governors and staff to maintain a high standard of conduct in relationships with colleagues and those who are under their direct authority.

5.3 All **employees** have a responsibility to help ensure a working environment in which the dignity of all employees is respected. It is the duty of all employees:

- to comply with this policy and to treat colleagues with respect and dignity;
- to be aware of problems which harassment or bullying can cause and by ensuring that their own conduct does not contribute to incidents of harassment or bullying;
- to challenge by making others aware that certain conduct or behaviour is causing concern or offence to either themselves or a colleague;
- to provide support to a colleague who is being harassed or bullied;
- to ensure that complaints are dealt with in confidence, treated sensitively, seriously and where appropriate as a disciplinary matter.

5.4 The **Governing Body** and **Management of the School** will further assist by:

- ensuring that the ethos and staff welfare arrangements in the school are such that an individual who is complaining of harassment or bullying feels able to turn to colleagues for support;
- ensuring that complaints are dealt with in confidence, treated sensitively, seriously and where appropriate as a disciplinary matter.
- ensuring that everyone is aware of the formal procedures for dealing with harassment and bullying;
- ensuring that the school has a procedure for dealing with incidents of harassment by pupils;
- ensuring that suitable training is given on all aspects of the policy that can ensure its effective implementation;
- ensuring that investigations are carried out in a fair and consistent manner (including ensuring staff are trained before being asked to investigate a complaint).

5.5 This policy requires all governors and staff to act positively to eliminate any harassment or bullying in the workplace of which they are aware. Harassment or bullying of any kind should not be dismissed by either governors or staff as trivial or insignificant, as a matter of interest only to a minority, or as action that can be excused as fun or a joke.

5.6 **Role of investigating officer**

The role of the investigating officer is to:

- ensure that complaints of bullying and harassment are investigated thoroughly, in an open and transparent way, in accordance with the contents of the Complaint Form;
- prepare a report following the investigation into the complaint for consideration by the Headteacher or Chair of Governors (where the complaint relates to the actions of the Headteacher);
- attend subsequent hearings as a witness in relation to the investigation process and conclusions e.g. disciplinary hearing.

5.7 **Role of the recognised trade union representative**

The role of the recognised trade union representative is to:

- provide advice, guidance and assistance to their member in relation to the presentation of a complaint or defence of one, including attending meetings held under this procedure if required.

5.8 **The role of the Local Authority**

The Local Authority is responsible for:

- the production and review of this policy and its commendation to delegated schools;
- ensuring that the contents of the policy have been consulted on with the relevant professional associations.
- ensuring that the policy is made available to all schools/governing bodies
- providing training and offering further advice and guidance on the contents of the policy as required.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

6.1 All documentation and discussions at meetings within this procedure are confidential. The School processes personal data collected during informal complaints and the formal procedure in accordance with its data protection policy. In particular, data collected as part of informal complaints and the procedure is held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of responding to the complaints, seeking professional advice or conducting the bullying and harassment procedure. Inappropriate

access or disclosure of employee data constitutes a data breach and should be reported in accordance with the school's data protection policy. It may also constitute a disciplinary offence, which will be dealt with under the disciplinary procedure.

7. REVIEW

7.1 This policy statement will be reviewed after one year of operation and thereafter as required.

7.2 Schools will adopt an appropriate mechanism for feeding back to the Governing Body regarding use of this Policy without divulging the identity of individuals.