

Parkstone Grammar School



DIGNITY AT WORK POLICY

DATE APPROVED	June 2016
APPROVED BY	Personnel & Training Committee
NEXT REVIEW	2019
TYPE OF POLICY	Non-Statutory



DIGNITY AT WORK POLICY

AIMS OF THE POLICY

Central to the delivery of the highest possible quality education to the students at Parkstone Grammar School is a work environment where employees feel valued, recognised and safe. The promotion and maintenance of the dignity of all employees plays a key role in ensuring this environment.

For definitions and examples of behaviours which are considered unacceptable please see the Dignity at Work Guidance page.

SAFEGUARDING

The safety of students is relies on staff that themselves feel safe, well-informed and valued. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that leaders, managers and employees understand their responsibilities in relation to ensuring the dignity and respect of people at work and to know how to report and respond to incidents of unacceptable behaviour.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

The School's Commitment

The school is committed to ensuring all employees:

- are treated with dignity, respect and courtesy
- have a workplace that is free from bullying, harassment or victimisation
- experience no form of discrimination
- are valued for their different skills, qualities and abilities

Core school values

One of the school's three core values is compassion. Bullying and harassment are unlawful and will not be tolerated. If an allegation is proven it will be treated as a disciplinary offence. It is a responsibility of every employee to challenge or report any cases of unacceptable behaviour.

The school is committed to treating anyone who raises a claim, or is witness to a claim, sensitively and offering them appropriate support. The school will ensure that no detriment will be suffered by anyone who raises a claim in good faith and will take appropriate measures to ensure that they are protected from victimisation.

Appropriate support will also be offered to anyone who is subject to a claim against them. In the rare event that a claim is proven to have been made maliciously this will be taken very seriously and may result in disciplinary action.

Linked policies

- Staff discipline
- Whistleblowing policy
- Safer working practices



Bullying / harassment by non-employees

The school recognises that it has a responsibility to protect employees from unacceptable behaviour at work by members of the public. The school's HR provider can provide guidance on how to report such incidents and how to investigate and manage complaints.

WHAT AREAS ARE COVERED BY THIS POLICY?

- Responsibilities of all stakeholders
- Complaints procedure and outcomes

WHAT MUST EVERYONE DO TO UPHOLD THE POLICY?

Governors

- Act as a role model treating everyone with dignity and respect
- Agree and approve the this policy

Headteacher and Leadership Group

- Act role models treating everyone with dignity and respect
- Take all reasonable steps to prevent unacceptable behaviour within their area of line management responsibility
- Take appropriate and prompt action to stop unacceptable behaviour
- Act as an investigating officer or delegate to an appropriate manager
- Ensure leaders and managers undertake mandatory learning related to this policy
- Ensure leaders, managers and employees are aware of this policy and their rights and responsibilities

Staff

- Maintain a working environment in which the dignity of all individuals is respected
- Undertake mandatory learning related to this policy
- Discourage bullying and harassment by objecting to inappropriate behaviour
- Inform a leader or line manager if a colleague is being bullied or harassed

Students

- N/A

Parents

- N/A

Other – Human Resources provider

- Support the development of the policy
- Work jointly with Unions on the implementation of the policy
- Provide mandatory learning in respect of the policy
- Give advice and guidance to leaders and managers on the policy
- Assist in commissioning investigating officers / consultants
- Give general advice to employees about the policy
- Directing employees to appropriate support functions



COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Informal Advice and Support

Employees are encouraged to try and resolve issues informally wherever possible. Addressing issues quickly and in a low key way is much more likely to be successful and maintain effective relationships.

It is recognised, however, that in cases of serious bullying or harassment it may not be appropriate for the employee to approach the other party directly and the matter may need to be investigated formally from the start.

Employees who feel they are subject to unacceptable behaviour are encouraged to seek advice and support from someone who can listen to their concerns and support them in raising their complaint. Employees are entitled to seek such support within working hours.

Having sought advice and support the employee will need to decide if they wish to pursue the matter, and if they do, whether they this will be through the informal or formal route. Improved working relationships are more likely to result when matters are dealt with sensitively and informally. Employees are encouraged to either talk to the other party directly or request support from a manager to do so.

Informal Discussion

Any employee who feels that they are subjected to unacceptable behaviour should tell the other party that they are uncomfortable with the way that they are being treated. The other party may genuinely be unaware that their behaviour is unwelcome and causing distress. An informal discussion maybe sufficient to alert the person concerned to the effects of their behaviour. It may lead to both parties having a greater understanding of the issues and finding positive ways to improve their working relationship.

The employee may either approach the other party directly to make the person aware that the behaviour in question is unwelcome or request support from a manager in approaching the person.

The employee may find it helpful to rehearse what they intend to say to the other person. This will help the employee feel more confident about initiating the discussion and articulating the precise nature of the unacceptable behaviour and the effect it is having on them.

Discussion with a Leader or Manager

Where the employee is not confident about approaching the other party, or where a direct approach has not resolved the matter, the employee should request the support of an appropriate leader or manager.

This will usually be their direct line manager, unless they are the perpetrator of the unacceptable behaviour, in which case a more senior leader or manager should be approached.

The leader or manager may attempt to resolve the matter in a number of ways. They may:

- meet with both parties separately so that they can gain an understanding of the complaint and then hold a joint meeting to help the parties explore the issues and seek to end the unacceptable behaviour
- consider the use of mediation



- Consider if the matter is of a serious nature, if so the employee should be advised to raise the matter as a formal complaint, or if they need to investigate the matter under the disciplinary policy.

The leader or manager may wish to seek advice from the school's HR provider in making such decisions.

Mediation

Mediation is the preferred method under the Dignity at Work Policy for resolving complaints which relate to relationship issues. The objective of mediation is to resolve the matter quickly and confidentially without recourse to formal procedures and with the minimum of conflict and stress for the individuals involved.

Mediation requires the voluntary participation and co-operation of both parties in order to work effectively. Please see further guidance about mediation and how to arrange a mediator available from the school's HR provider.

If the mediation process does not produce a satisfactory outcome, the complainant may seek to have the matter resolved through the formal Dignity at Work Procedure. Any new information that emerges during the course of the mediation process remains strictly confidential and will not be disclosed as part of the formal investigation.

Note: Mediation may be attempted at any / all points in the procedure to try to resolve the matter.

Mediation may be attempted again during the formal investigation or following the outcome of the investigation.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Formal

Before making a formal complaint, there is an expectation, that where possible, the employee will have attempted to use the informal stage of this procedure including considering the use of mediation.

Written Complaint

An employee who believes that they have been the subject of unacceptable behaviour should formally report the alleged act in writing to their line manager (or a more senior leader or manager if necessary). A complaint may also be made via a trade union representative. It is important that the written complaint contains sufficient detail for the leader or manager to understand the nature of the complaint. It is recommended that the leader or manager seek advice from the school's HR provider at this stage.

Advice from the School's HR provider

In discussion with the manager, the school's HR provider can give advice on whether or not it is appropriate to progress the complaint under the Dignity at Work Policy. Consideration will be given to whether the matter should be dealt with using a different approach or procedure and if mediation has not previously been considered discuss if the case would benefit from mediation.



If the complaint is deemed not to come within the scope of the Dignity at Work Policy, the employee will be informed and advised on the appropriate procedure for dealing with the matter (e.g. grievance procedure).

If the complaint is deemed to come within the scope of the Dignity at Work Policy, the matter may be referred for mediation. If the matter cannot be resolved through mediation or another way, a formal investigation will be recommended.

Formal Investigation

The person the complaint has been made against will be advised that a complaint has been received and that it is the subject of a formal investigation. Both parties will be offered appropriate support and guidance.

All complaints will be investigated in a sympathetic, sensitive, timely and confidential manner.

Confidentiality will be maintained in so far as is consistent with progressing the investigation of a complaint. Employees will receive a fair and impartial hearing. All parties will be updated on progress made on a regular basis.

An appropriate person will be instructed to undertake the investigation. This may be the direct line manager, another leader or manager or in some cases an external investigator. The investigation may be supported by an HR Adviser.

Employees may be represented at meetings by a recognised companion.

The investigator will:

- interview the complainant to ensure they have full details of the complaint
- Interview the other party to give them an opportunity to respond to the complaint. The other party will be given the written complaint prior to the interview
- interview any other witnesses who may have relevant information
- produce written notes of each interview that the parties will be able to review and confirm as an accurate record
- consider whether there is any other information they need to gather which is relevant to the complaint

The investigator will produce a report detailing their findings. They may also make some recommendations for consideration.

Outcome of the Investigation

The appropriate leader or manager (normally the head teacher unless directly involved in the investigation, in which case the Chair of Governors) will consider the content of the report. A copy of the report (but not statements) will also be made available on a confidential basis to the complainant and the other party and their companions.

The leader or manager will arrange to meet individually with the parties to discuss the report, consider any representations the parties or their companions wish to make.

The leader or manager will confirm their decision in writing to all parties. This will include whether they uphold the complaint in part or in whole and their recommendations for any further action.



This might include:

- instruction, advice and guidance to the parties including recommendations for training
- recommendation that the parties consider mediation
- in serious cases a recommendation that the matter is dealt with within the context of the disciplinary policy

Written confirmation of the decision will normally be provided within 10 working days of the meeting. Where a complaint is not upheld, no action will be made against the complainant provided that the complaint was made in good faith.

In the interests of all employees any malicious or vexatious complaints will be treated very seriously and may lead to disciplinary action against the complainant. Victimisation or retaliation against a complainant, witness or any other party will constitute a serious disciplinary offence.

Right of Appeal

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the decision of the leader or manager in response to the investigators report they can lodge an appeal. To do so, they should write to the Clerk to the Governors within 10 days of receipt of the outcome letter. This letter should fully explain the reasons for the appeal.

The Clerk to the Governors will then arrange for an appeal hearing to be convened with the employee. Normally, a meeting will take place within 10 working days of receipt of the complainant's letter. An appropriate governor panel of three governors will consider the appeal, and they may be accompanied by a Human Resources Adviser.

Employees may be represented by a recognised companion. The arrangements for the appeal will be confirmed in writing. In order to make a fully informed decision the governor panel hearing the appeal will consider:

- the information that was gathered as part of the investigation
- the considerations of the leader or manager in reaching their decision
- whether there is any further information they need
- whether there is anyone else they need to speak to

The decision and recommendations of the hearing governor panel will be confirmed in writing within 10 working days of the meeting. The decision and recommendations made are final.

How do we know that the policy is working and is being upheld?

- Governors seek to develop link relationships to receive and understand any complaints
- Governors will receive information on complaints received under this policy

Who should people contact if they have a question about this policy or a suggestion for improvement?

- The Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher
- The Chair of the Personnel and Training committee.