

HEART OF THE FOREST COMMUNITY SPECIAL  
SCHOOL

DIGNITY AND RESPECT POLICY



<b>Approved by:</b>	HOF Governing Body	<b>Date:</b>	May 2024
<b>Last reviewed on:</b>	May 2024	<b>Next review date:</b>	May 2025
<b>Website</b>	Yes	<b>Type:</b>	Non-Statutory



## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The School is committed to ensuring dignity and respect in the workplace, and providing dignity and respect in relation to access to services for the communities it serves.
- 1.2 This policy applies to all teaching and support staff employed directly in the school.

## 2.0 Harassment

- 2.1 Harassment is any unwanted behaviour that violates the dignity of a person or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.
- 2.2 The key consideration is the impact on the individual experiencing harassment, not the intention of the person they are complaining about.

2.3 Harassment can take many forms. It may involve non-verbal, verbal or physical abuse and could be based on:

- 2.3.1 sex
- 2.3.2 race
- 2.3.3 religion
- 2.3.4 sexual orientation
- 2.3.5 gender reassignment
- 2.3.6 disability
- 2.3.7 age
- 2.3.8 marriage and civil partnership
- 2.3.9 pregnancy and maternity.

2.4 Harassment is unacceptable, and may still be considered and addressed under this policy even if it does not fall within any of the defined categories above. Examples of unacceptable behaviour in this school may include:

- 2.4.1 Insulting someone verbally or through offensive behaviour
- 2.4.2 Physical or psychological threats
- 2.4.3 Spreading malicious rumours
- 2.4.4 Sharing information about an individual with others who do not need to know
- 2.4.5 Ridiculing or demeaning someone
- 2.4.6 Picking on someone or setting them up to fail
- 2.4.7 Misuse of power, such as overbearing supervision or deliberately undermining a competent worker
- 2.4.8 Unwelcome sexual advances
- 2.4.9 Making unfounded threats or comments about job security



2.4.10 Preventing an individual from progressing by intentionally blocking promotion or training opportunities

2.4.11 Putting humiliating, offensive or threatening comments or photos on social media This list is not intended to be exhaustive.

2.5 Harassment, bullying or victimisation may occur:

2.5.1 Face to face

2.5.2 Through written communication

2.5.3 Using visual images

2.5.4 Via email

2.5.5 Via phone

2.5.6 Via social media

This list is not intended to be exhaustive.

### **3.0 Bullying**

3.1 Bullying is a form of harassment when someone abuses their authority or power, damaging dignity, self-confidence or self-esteem. Examples may include:

3.1.1 Using someone as a scapegoat when anything goes wrong

3.1.2 Constantly and unnecessarily finding fault with someone

3.1.3 Intimidating or humiliating someone

3.1.4 Persistently singling someone out and treating them less favourably

3.1.5 Homophobic bullying.

3.2 Everyone has a right to be treated with respect at work. Managers are responsible for setting and monitoring reasonable standards of behaviour, performance and objectives. Objective feedback designed to improve performance is expected and necessary and is separate from unjustified bullying.

3.3 If an employee believes they are being bullied they should speak to their manager on an informal basis straight away. Where the alleged bully/harasser is the manager, the employee should approach the head teacher or another senior member of staff. Where the alleged bully/harasser is the head teacher or a governor, the employee can approach the chair of governors. If they prefer, they may speak with their trade union representative.

3.4 Employees should do this as soon as reasonably practical, normally no later than three months after any incident has taken place. This minimises the negative impacts, leaves more scope to resolve the situation informally, prevents working relationships from breaking down and may raise levels of understanding.

3.5 It may be possible for a confidential discussion to take place between the parties with agreed outcomes recorded.



3.6 If the informal approach is unsuccessful in resolving the issue then formal mediation or grievance procedures are available.

#### **4.0 Formal Mediation**

4.1 Mediation may be offered with the aim of securing a lasting solution to the complaint. Mediation can only happen with full agreement of both the complainant and the person complained about. HR can supply an ACAS Trained and Accredited Mediator (for further information including costs please call ContactUs HR). For further information about mediation, see the mediation policy.

#### **5.0 Grievance Procedure**

5.1 Employees should try to resolve their grievance informally in the first instance. If this process fails, they should lodge a written account of the grievance with their manager with a copy to the head teacher and chair of governors. The account must detail the allegation(s) and set out how the employee wishes the situation to be resolved. In some circumstances the manager may advise the employee that the concerns raised will be better managed through an alternative procedure e.g. if the concerns have arisen through action under another policy/procedure. Otherwise a grievance resolution meeting will then be arranged and the outcome communicated, for further details see the school's grievance policy.

#### **6.0 Victimisation**

6.1 Victimisation is when an individual is intimidated or discriminated against because they have raised a complaint about any aspect of their employment or they have given evidence to support a colleague's complaint. This is a form of harassment and may also be unlawful.

#### **7.0 The school's position**

7.1 The governing board will not tolerate any form of harassment or bullying. It is a clear breach of the employee code of conduct and can also result in breaking the law.

7.2 Any employee who is found to have harassed, bullied or victimised another person may be subject to disciplinary action.

#### **8.0 Who is legally responsible for acts of harassment**

8.1 In cases of harassment on the grounds of race, disability, religion and belief, sexual orientation, age, sex and gender reassignment, legal proceedings could be brought against the person complained about as well as an organisation. Claims which are found to be proven in these cases have no upper limit for compensatory payments.

#### **9.0 Ensuring a safe environment**

9.1 It is everyone's responsibility; the governing board, managers, employees and colleagues. Unacceptable behaviour by parents, visitors and service users will also not be tolerated.



## 10.0 Handling malicious claims

10.1 As allegations of harassment and bullying are very serious, the school will respond appropriately. The school will also treat very seriously any allegations proven to be malicious – complainants making malicious allegations may be subject to disciplinary action.

10.2 Confidentiality will be maintained as far as possible. However, if an employee decides not to take action to deal with the problem and the circumstances described are very serious, the school reserves the right to investigate the situation. The school has a duty of care to ensure the safety of all employees and service users who may be adversely affected by the alleged behaviour.