

Torfield and Saxon Mount Academy Trust



Dignity At Work Policy

March 2021

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Date: March 2021

Document summary

Guidance on ensuring that colleagues are treated with respect and dignity in the working environment.

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About this document:

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Dignity at Work

Key points

- The Torfield and Saxon Mount Academy Trust (The Trust) is committed to ensuring that all employees are treated fairly, consistently and with dignity whilst at work. We will continue to promote a working environment that values the contribution all employees can make to the efficient delivery of quality service.
- The Trust will not condone or support bullying or harassing behaviour.
- Managers and staff are responsible for ensuring dignity at work is upheld, and there are steps that should be taken where this expectation is not met.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Academy Trust values the contribution all its employees make to the provision of quality services. We recognise that such a contribution is most effective in conditions where employees are able to work in an atmosphere that values them as individuals.
- 1.2. The Trust also recognises that it has a responsibility to protect employees from bullying and harassment at work.
- 1.3. The Trust is committed to eliminating intimidation in any form. The fundamental principle underpinning this guidance is that any indication of discrimination, harassment or bullying will be investigated and action will be taken where it is seen to exist. This action will be supported by disciplinary measures.
- 1.4. Discrimination bullying and harassment all breach the Trust's [Promoting Diversity and Equality in Employment Policy](#) and are classified as a serious offence which may result in summary dismissal under the [Disciplinary Procedure](#).
- 1.5. However, where it is possible and appropriate to do so, managers and staff should seek to resolve workplace relationship problems informally, or via mediation. Our [Grievance and Workplace Conflict Policy](#) and staff code of conduct exist to support this process. By acting to create and maintain a positive working environment, we can maintain a preventive approach to workplace relationship difficulties.
- 1.6. This guidance applies to all employees of the Torfield and Saxon Mount academy Trust. The principles of this guidance will also apply to any dealings employees might have with County Councillors, service users, contractors and members of the public.

2. Bullying and harassment

- 2.1. Interpretations of what constitutes bullying or harassment vary. However, they can be defined as follows:
 - Bullying is the intimidation or belittling of an individual or group of employees through the misuse of power or position that leaves the recipient feeling hurt, upset, vulnerable or helpless. It is intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient. It can happen anywhere in or away from the workplace. It may be face to face, via phone, or in written communications, email, social media etc. Whatever form it takes, it is unwarranted and unwelcome to the individual.

- Harassment can be defined as uninvited, unreciprocated and unwelcome behaviour that is offensive to the person involved and causes that person to feel threatened, humiliated, patronised or embarrassed. Under equality legislation, harassment can be considered to have occurred if the person concerned perceives it to have occurred even if this is not the intention behind it. As with bullying, harassment can take place in a variety of places, and take a variety of forms.
- 2.2. It may not always be clear whether particular behaviour constitutes bullying or harassment. Unwarranted behaviour can sometimes be subtle and not immediately obvious to others. Equally, colleagues may not be aware of the unintended impact that their behaviour has on others. In any case, employees are encouraged to raise concerns with their manager, if they experience behaviour that meets the definitions above.
 - 2.3. Bullying or harassment related to a protected characteristic such as race, sex or disability will be considered a breach of the Equality Act 2010. This carries considerable legal consequences for both the Council and individual employees. However, all instances of bullying or harassment should be taken seriously, regardless of the individuals concerned or whether the circumstances vary from the definitions given above. Bullying can be a form of harassment.

3. Managers responsibilities

- 3.1. Managers have a particular responsibility to ensure that within their area of control, everyone is treated with dignity and respect. Managers have an additional responsibility to be exemplars of acceptable behaviour.
- 3.2. Managers must respond to complaints of bullying and harassment swiftly, sensitively and objectively, and should be aware of behaviour that might cause offence. This might include reminding employees of expected standards.
- 3.3. If managers are aware that there are relationship problems within their teams it is their responsibility to address these issues immediately on an informal basis, before they escalate and formal action ensues. This may include mediation. Mediation is a voluntary process where a mediator helps two (or more) people in dispute to find a solution to the issue that they can both agree to. The mediator does not take sides or tell those in disputes what to do. Both parties must enter into the process voluntarily, with an aim to repair their working relationship. The Grievance, Workplace Conflict and Mediation intranet page provides guidance on mediation, as well as the process for resolving such problems on a formal basis.
- 3.4. As with any other sensitive personal matter, managers should ensure that they consider confidentiality when responding to relationship difficulties. If an employee raises concerns about bullying or harassment, the manager should discuss with them how they think the matter can best be resolved. This should include agreeing what information can be shared with a third party, such as a more senior manager, or the Executive Headteacher. In cases where it is possible to resolve the matter informally, there will usually be no need to share any information beyond those colleagues immediately involved.
- 3.5. However, there may be instances where the matter is so serious that consent is not required e.g. where there are Health and Safety implications or physical violence has occurred. Where this is the case, all parties should be informed of the reason for disclosure.

3.6. Managers must ensure that employees are aware of this guidance, If necessary, managers should also follow the formal procedures set out in our Grievance and Workplace Conflict Policy, or our Disciplinary Policy.

4. Employees responsibilities

- 4.1. An individual can deal with bullying or harassment in various ways, ranging from asking the person to stop the behaviour, to informal discussions with a manager, to raising a formal grievance.
- 4.2. You do not have to be a recipient or target to make a complaint about bullying or harassment. If you see it is happening you have the right to complain. If you become aware of the problem, you have the right to complain about it. Tackling harassment and bullying is everyone's responsibility.
- 4.3. Some people are unaware that their behaviour may be considered bullying or harassment. If it is clearly pointed out to them that the behaviour unacceptable, this can sometimes resolve the problem.
- 4.4. If an employee experiences bullying, harassment or another working relationship problem, this should be raised informally with their line manager in the first instance. Should this not be possible for whatever reason, employees can also raise the matter with a more senior manager, ideally whoever their line manager reports to.
- 4.5. Every employee has a personal responsibility to behave in a way that is not offensive to others. Any employee found to be discriminating against, harassing or bullying colleagues or not complying with expectations set out in the staff code of conduct, may be subject to the Trust's [Disciplinary Policy and Procedure](#). In certain cases, such acts may be regarded as Gross Misconduct and may lead to summary dismissal.
- 4.6. An employee who becomes aware of harassment or bullying occurring to themselves or another member of staff should bring the matter to the attention of his/her manager.
- 4.7. Employees are encouraged to support colleagues who may be experiencing harassment and are considering raising the matter.

5. Support networks

- 5.1. The Trust provides a number of resources to support employees. As described above, employees experiencing harassment, bullying or working relationship problems should raise this with their line manager. However, the following groups can provide additional advice and/or emotional support:
- The staff counselling and employee assistance service can provide advice and support on a wide variety of personal problems. The service is completely anonymous, and is available 24 hours a day – contact details are available from Marion Booth, Director of Finance and Resources or Kayla Quinnell, Assistant Director of Finance and Resources.
 - Recognised unions also provide advice and support to members if there are issues of bullying and harassment at work.

6. Review and monitoring

- 6.1. This policy will be reviewed on a 3 yearly cycle.
- 6.2. Reviewed: March 2021
- 6.3. Next due: March 2024