



## **Anti-Bullying and Harassment of Learners Policy**

**2025 to 2027**

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## Anti-Bullying and Harassment of Learners Policy

### Policy Statement

All learners and staff have a positive duty to maintain an environment free of bullying and harassment. The College believes that all learners have the right to live and be educated in an atmosphere where there is mutual respect and which is supportive, caring and safe. The aim is to create a working environment that respects the dignity and rights of all learners and where individuals have the opportunity to realise their full potential.

This policy provides the guidance and the process to follow in the instance of a bullying or harassment situation experienced by a learner.

### Definition of Bullying and Harassment

Bullying can take a variety of different forms from repeatedly ignoring a person or subjecting them to unwelcome attention, intimidation, humiliation, ridicule or offence. Bullying results in pain and distress to the victim.

Harassment occurs when an individual is subjected to unwanted conduct which has the purpose or effect (intentional or unintentional) of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual

Harassment is unlawful when it is on the grounds of sex, gender reassignment, race, ethnic or national origin, sexual orientation, age, religion/belief, or for a reason relating to a person's disability under the Equality Act 2010.

Bullying includes online bullying, cyberbullying, prejudice-based bullying (that relates to perceived or actual differences, and can lead to prejudice and discriminatory language or behaviour including racism, sexism, homophobia, biphobia or transphobia) and discriminatory bullying.

Bullying is anti-social behaviour which threatens the fundamental principles of the college. Although not defined legally it is described as aggressive, intimidating, malicious and/or insulting behaviour intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient

The College has a 'zero tolerance' approach to bullying or harassment in any form.

### What is Bullying?

Bullying can be:

- Emotional      Being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding books, threatening gestures)

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- Physical                      Pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence
- Racist                        Racial taunts, graffiti, gestures
- Sexual                        Unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments
- Homophobic              Because of, or focussing on the issue of sexuality
- Verbal                        Name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing
- Cyber                        • All areas of internet, such as email and internet chat room misuse.
- Social networking sites
- Mobile threats by text messaging and calls
- Misuse of associated technology, i.e. camera and video facilities
- Indirect                      • Spreading rumours, whether true or not

It may also be bullying when:

- A group of people or an individual who is isolating someone or deliberately leaving them out
- Threats of violence are made against someone
- A person's clothing or equipment are deliberately damaged
- Someone takes someone else's belongings deliberately
- A person is forced to do something that they do not want to do
- Someone tries to force another to do something sexual they do not want to do

Examples of unacceptable behaviour include:

- Offensive songs, remarks, jokes, e-mails or gestures
- Display of offensive posters, publications and graffiti
- Unwanted physical contact or advances
- Offensive remarks about a person's attire or appearance
- Offensive remarks about a person's race, gender, marital status, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender identity or age
- Shouting, abusive or intimidating language
- Spreading malicious rumours, allegations or gossip
- Excluding, marginalising or ignoring someone
- Intrusion by pestering, spying or stalking

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## Signs and Symptoms

A student may indicate by signs or behaviour that he or she is being bullied. Staff, parents and adult carers/guardians should be aware of these possible signs and that they should investigate if a student:

- Is frightened of the journey to or from college
- Doesn't want to go on public transport
- Begg to be driven to College
- Changes their usual routine
- Is unwilling to go to College
- Has a poor attendance record
- Becomes withdrawn, anxious or lacking in confidence
- Starts stammering
- Attempts or threatens suicide or runs away
- Has difficulty sleeping at night or has nightmares
- Feels ill in the morning
- Begins to do poorly in college work
- Has possessions which 'go missing'
- Asks for money or starts stealing money (to pay bully)
- Becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
- Is bullying other young persons or siblings
- Stops eating
- Is frightened to say what is wrong
- Gives improbable excuses for any of the above
- Is afraid to use the internet or mobile phone
- Is nervous and jumpy when a cyber-message is received

These signs and behaviours could indicate other problems, but bullying should be considered a possibility and should be investigated. The above list is intended to give a clear impression of the types of behaviour that the College considers to be unacceptable; however, it only contains examples and is not exhaustive.

## Why is it Important to Respond to Bullying?

Bullying hurts. No-one deserves to be a victim of bullying. Everybody has the right to be treated with respect. Students who are bullying need to learn different ways of behaving.

Colleges have a responsibility to respond promptly and effectively to issues of bullying.

All members of the College community must take appropriate action to ensure that bullying and harassment does not occur in their study environment.

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## **Victimisation**

Any individual has the right not to be victimised as a result of bringing his/her grievance to the attention of the alleged harasser/bully. Retaliation may be regarded as a serious breach of this policy and may lead to formal disciplinary action to be taken in the form of exclusion from the College.

## **The impact of bullying**

Learners who are being bullied may show changes in behaviour such as becoming shy and nervous, feigning illness, taking unusual absences or clinging to adults. There may be evidence of changes in work patterns, lacking concentration or absences from College. Learners must be encouraged to report bullying in College.

## **Support**

Advice and support is available from Safeguarding, Student Union, Welfare, Lecturers and Managers within the College.

Learners who allege they have been bullied will be supported by being offered an immediate opportunity to discuss the experience with a member of staff where they will be given reassurance that they did the right thing in speaking out and offered support such as counselling to assist with restoring of self-esteem and confidence.

## **Dealing with Allegations of Bullying or Harassment**

### **Informal Procedure**

The aim of this policy is to prevent or deter bullying or harassment from starting and to deal with it if it does and to minimise the opportunity for recurrence. Wherever possible and appropriate, every effort should be made to resolve a situation on an informal basis.

A learner who believes that they have been subjected to bullying or harassment should, in the first instance, ask the individual(s) concerned to stop. However, if they are too upset, frightened, embarrassed or believes that the bully or harasser(s) may be unapproachable or unreceptive; he/she should immediately seek advice from their Tutor or a member of the Safeguarding team.

In some cases, until it has been brought to their attention, the bully/harasser(s) may be unaware, or claim to be unaware, that their behaviour is perceived as inappropriate or offensive. It may occasionally happen that words or actions have been genuinely misconstrued.

It is the individual's perception of whether the conduct in question was unacceptable that is important in determining whether harassment occurred. Where the conduct in question is found to have been unintentional, it will be viewed as having the effect of harassment if this

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could be regarded as a reasonable conclusion when considering all the circumstances, including the complainant's perception.

Any approaches to the bully/harasser(s) to prevent further unwelcome behaviour should be recorded, indicating the date, what was said by those involved, and details of any witnesses to the behaviour. This is a precaution in case the informal stage is unsuccessful and the matter becomes more serious and/or is subject to the formal procedure.

### **Formal Procedure**

If the bullying or harassment continues following the request to stop it, or if the bullying or harassment is considered to be particularly serious or offensive, a formal procedure using the College's Learner or Staff Disciplinary Policy will be followed. This may lead to disciplinary action against the perpetrator if the accusation is upheld.

The learner's guardians/parents may also be involved in being made aware of the problems being encountered and how they can they support their son/daughter. Guardians/parents may be advised to report the matter to the Police depending on the seriousness of the bullying/harassment and will be supported by the college throughout this process.

Appeals against a disciplinary decision, involving bullying or harassment will be treated in the same manner as other appeals within the Disciplinary Procedure.

Learners who have been accused of bullying or have been found to have bullied another learner will be helped by discussing what happened, discovering why the learner became involved and establishing the wrong doing and need to change. This will include informing parents or guardians of the alleged bully to help change the attitude of the learner. In all cases parents will be kept informed if the learner is under the age of 18.

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