Dignity at Work Policy	
Date updated:	**Brief summary of changes:**
November 2026	Policy reviewed and no changes.

Scope

This policy applies to all employees of Wincle CE Primary School.

This policy and procedure applies to all employees, officers, consultants, casual workers, agency workers and volunteers. It does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and may amend it at any time, following consultation with the recognised trade unions.

Policy Statement

The purpose of this policy and procedure is to set out the school's standards on how to behave towards each other in the workplace (including virtual settings) and provide a framework for dealing with any bullying and harassment.

The school is committed to building a positive workplace culture and creating an inclusive and welcoming work environment where everyone is treated with dignity and respect. In particular, the school will not tolerate bullying, harassment, or victimisation of any kind under any circumstances. Such behaviour can not only have serious effects on individuals, in terms of their mental health and wellbeing, but it can also lead to loss of morale, staff turnover, poor work performance and undermine the reputation of the school. In certain circumstances, the behaviour may also be unlawful, placing the school at risk of legal action.

The principle underlying this policy is that employees have the right to feel safe, welcome, and comfortable in their day-to-day work. They have the right to enjoy a work environment that is free from bullying and harassment. Employees should feel empowered to raise challenges and make complaints if they experience any behaviour that falls below this standard.

This policy and procedure explains:

- What employees can expect from the school and what the school expects of them.
- The behaviour employees are expected to demonstrate at work.
- What bullying and harassment and means.
- What employees need to do if they think they are being bullied or harassed at work.

What employees can expect from the school

The school will:

- Ensure that everyone who works for us is aware of their responsibilities towards each other and understands the impact that their behaviour may have on colleagues.
- Seek to ensure that employees' mental health and wellbeing is always treated as a priority and ensure that they are supported if they are facing such issues.
- Promote a working environment where bullying and harassment is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.
- Provide sources of advice and support to help employees understand what they can do if an issue arises.
- Provide the means for employees to formally raise a complaint where it has not proved possible to resolve the issue informally or through mediation.
- Treat all complaints seriously and sensitively and ensure that they are dealt with in strictest confidence and in a consistent, fair, and timely manner.
- Provide protection against victimisation for anyone raising a complaint.
- Ensure that matters raised are fully investigated and that those involved have the opportunity to put their side of the story before any decision is made.
- Treat everyone with dignity and respect at all times.
- If issues arise with regard to the unacceptable behaviour of employees from other organisations that the school/academy does business with, or customers or visitors to our premises, the school/academy will take appropriate action to address such issues.

The headteacher is key to enabling the school's commitment to them.

What the school expects of employees

The school expects employees to:

- Treat everyone with dignity and respect at all times.
- Be aware of how employees' own behaviour may affect others and change it, if necessary – employees should have an understanding that behaviour can still cause offence even if it is considered to be 'only joking.'
- Make it clear to others when behaviour is considered unacceptable, e.g., inappropriate jokes or comments.
- Challenge unacceptable behaviour, where appropriate, if employees see it directed towards a colleague and promptly report any incident to stop bullying and harassment.
- Offer support to anyone who may have experienced bullying and harassment at work.
- Wherever possible, seek to resolve issues informally in the first instance, for example by discussing the matter privately with the colleague or headteacher concerned.
- Submit a complaint in writing where there is a wish to pursue it on a formal basis. Employees can, of course, ask someone to help them with this.
- Treat private matters in strictest confidence, and refrain from participating in, encouraging or condoning gossip related to cases of alleged or actual bullying or harassment.

- Support the school's policy by co-operating or participating if requested, for example by acting as a witness or, if they are a headteacher, undertaking a specific role under the procedures in line with their job responsibilities.

Bullying and harassment

Bullying is offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, and/or the misuse of power that can make a person feel vulnerable, upset humiliated, undermined or threatened, or causes physical or emotional harm to someone. Power does not always mean being in a position of authority but can include both personal strength and the power to coerce through fear or intimidation. It may be obvious, or it may be insidious. Whatever form it takes, it is unwarranted and unwelcome to the individual.

Harassment is any unwanted physical, verbal, or non-verbal conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. A single incident can amount to harassment.

It also includes treating someone less favorably because they have submitted or refused to submit to such behaviour in the past.

Unlawful harassment may involve conduct of a sexual nature (sexual harassment), or it may be related to age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partner status, pregnancy or maternity, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation. Harassment is unacceptable even if it does not fall within any of these categories.

A non-exhaustive list of examples of bullying and harassment can be seen at Appendix 1.

Bullying or harassment by a third party

Where employees believe that they have been bullied or harassed by a third party, for example – by an employee/agent of a supplier/partner organisation, self-employed contractor/consultant, volunteer, or a member of the general public, they should raise the matter with the headteacher. Their headteacher should investigate the matter in line with the principles of this procedure and consider what action would be appropriate to deal with the issue.

The school will take reasonable steps to protect employees from sexual harassment by third parties. This may include warning letters, restricting access to premises, withdrawal of services, reporting matters to the police or terminating contractual arrangements where appropriate.

Sexual Harassment Prevention Duty

From 2025, employers of any size in England, Wales and Scotland have a specific duty to take all reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment of workers in the course of their employment.

The school will take reasonable and proactive steps to prevent sexual harassment, including regular staff training, risk assessment of workplace factors, clear reporting mechanisms, prompt investigation of complaints and appropriate action where concerns are substantiated.

Exceptions

A number of the school's policies (e.g., disciplinary, capability, sickness absence etc.) carry their own separate rights of appeal. In these circumstances, the relevant appeals process should be followed. This Dignity at Work Policy and Procedure should not be used to avoid or to supplement those appeal processes.

The school also reserves the right to decline to open a fresh formal procedure in respect of previous complaints made within the last 12 months where the complaint has already been investigated and heard under this procedure, and the facts of the matter and/or circumstances have not altered substantially. Further dialogue with the employee would normally take place in these circumstances.

The following concerns and complaints are also dealt with more appropriately under alternative policies and procedures.

- Concerns regarding parents, pupils, consultants, volunteers, contractors or employees of other organisations. These should be raised with the headteacher.

- Complaints relating to a statutory or financial matter – such concerns over which the school/academy has no jurisdiction should be dealt via relevant external organisation, e.g., Pensions, HMRC, (PAYE or National Insurance) etc.

- Grievances at work – other general work matters, other than dignity at work e.g., terms and conditions of employment, health and safety matters, new working practices, working environment and/or organisational change, should be dealt with under the school's Grievance Policy and Procedure. Where a formal complaint includes both dignity at work (i.e., bully and harassment) as well as general work issues, it may be necessary for the different aspects of the complaint to be investigated and heard separately but consideration to this will be given on a case by case basis.
- Reporting of suspected wrongdoing or dangers in relation to school activities – (e.g., conduct which is an offence or breach of law, health and safety risks, damage to the environment, the unauthorised use of public finds, possible fraud and corruption, or unethical conduct) should be raised and dealt with under the school's Whistleblowing Policy.

Reporting incidents of bullying and harassment

If employees believe that they have been bullied or harassed, they are encouraged to come forward and share their concerns with the school so the matter can be resolved. All such complaints will be taken seriously and, providing that the employee acts in good faith and their complaint is genuine, they will be protected and will not be penalised or victimised in any way. Bullying and harassment can be dealt with in various ways, ranging from informal to more formal procedures as set out below.

Employees do not have to be a recipient or target to make a complaint about bullying or harassment. If employee's see it happening or become aware of any issues of bullying and harassment, there is the right to complain. Tackling bullying and harassment is everybody's responsibility.

Some people may be unaware that their behaviour in some circumstances is bullying or harassment. If it is clearly pointed out to them that their behaviour is unacceptable, the issue can sometimes be resolved. With this in mind, this policy includes an informal as well as a formal procedure to deal with complaints of bullying and harassment.

Informal resolution

It may be possible to resolve matters informally, for example, the colleague may not know that the behaviour is unwelcome or upsetting. An informal discussion may help them to understand the effects of their unacceptable behaviour and agree to change it. Employees may feel able to approach the person themselves, or with the help of their headteacher, trade union representative or another colleague.

If this is too difficult, the employee should speak to their headteacher, who can provide confidential advice and guidance in resolving the issue formally or informally. If the employee feels unable to speak to their headteacher because the complaint concerns them, then they should speak informally to an alternative manager. If this does not resolve the issue, the formal procedure outlined below should be followed.

If employees are not certain whether an incident or series of incidents amounts to bullying or harassment, they should initially contact their headteacher informally for confidential advice.

While the informal resolution of complaints is encouraged it is recognised that it may not always be successful in resolving the matter, or employees may feel that they are not able to deal with the issue in this way, or they may think the situation is too serious to be dealt with informally, in which case employees may want to consider making a formal complaint as set out below. In some circumstances mediation may be considered as an option.

Mediation

Sometimes it can be helpful to involve an independent third party or mediator to help resolve Dignity at Work issues.

Mediation is a voluntary process whereby the Mediator helps two or more people in dispute to attempt to reach an agreement. It can only take place where all the parties involved agree to do so. Any agreement comes from those in dispute, not from the Mediator. The Mediator is not there to judge, to say one person is right and the other wrong, or to tell those involved in the Mediation what they should do. The Mediator is in charge of the process of seeking to resolve the problem but not decide the outcome.

If employees think that mediation may provide a suitable option to resolve a dignity at work issue, they should speak to their headteacher in the first instance.

If the other party declines the invitation to participate in mediation, the employee will be informed of this. They may then wish to consider the option of making a formal complaint.

Formal procedure

Making a formal complaint

If the employee's complaint has not been resolved informally or through mediation, they are dissatisfied with the informal action taken or the situation is too serious to be dealt with informally, the matter should be raised formally in writing.

If employees wish to make a formal complaint of bullying or harassment, they must do so in writing by completing form DAW1 (see Appendix 2) and sending this to their headteacher or to the Chair of Governors if the headteacher has been involved at the informal stage or is the subject of the complaint. The complaint should be acknowledged within 5 working days of receipt. In some situations, employees may be asked to provide further information.

Investigation

The headteacher (or Chair of Governors) will appoint an independent person to act as the 'Investigating Officer' and they will conduct an investigation to gather information about the complaint. In some circumstances the headteacher (or Chair of Governors) may look into the complaint themselves. Alternatively, it may be considered appropriate to appoint an Investigating Officer who is external to the school. The investigation may include examination of any documentary evidence (including electronic media), and interviews with the employee, the person(s) involved and any relevant witnesses.

The employee and the person against whom the complaint is made have the right to be accompanied by a fellow school colleague, a trade union representative or an official employed by a trade union at any formal meeting (in person and virtual) dealing with their complaint.

The investigative interview meetings may be conducted in person or remotely via a video platform (e.g., Microsoft Teams). Individual rights will not be affected, and the procedure will remain fair and reasonable for all parties involved.

If the employee advises the school that they have any disability related needs that need to be considered to enable them to participate in such a meeting, then any reasonable adjustments that are necessary will be made, to enable them to do so. If possible, the school will try to ensure that the employee and the person against whom the complaint is made are not required to work together while the complaint is under investigation. This could involve giving the option of them working from home, where operationally feasible, or remaining at home on special leave, if agreed. In the case of serious allegations, the school may suspend the employee against whom the complaint is made for a temporary period while the investigation is being carried out.

The Investigating Officer will also meet with the person against whom the complaint is made to hear their account of events. The employee has a right to be told the details of the allegations against them, so that they can respond.

It may be necessary to interview witnesses to any of the incidents mentioned in the employee's complaint. If so, the importance of confidentiality will be emphasised to all involved. The Investigating Officer will adopt an objective and balanced approach to the information gained as a result of the investigation and produce a detailed Dignity at Work Investigation Report. The report will be given to the headteacher (or Chair of Governors), who will arrange a meeting with the employee in order to discuss the outcome and what action, if any, should be taken. The aim is to hold this meeting within 30 working days of receipt of their original complaint. The employee has the right to bring a colleague or a trade union representative to the meeting.

A copy of the report and the findings will be given to the employee and to the person against whom the complaint is made.

Action following investigation

If the headteacher (or Chair of Governors) considers that bullying or harassment has occurred, prompt action will be taken to address it.

Where the bully or harasser is an employee, the matter will usually be dealt with as a case of possible misconduct or gross misconduct under the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure. If the bully or harasser is a third party such as a contractor or other visitor, the school/academy will consider what action would be appropriate to deal with the issue.

It is not always possible to arrive at a decisive finding of ‘upheld’ or ‘not upheld’ since employment situations are not always clear-cut. Sometimes the outcome may include an acknowledgement of the employees’ concerns and/or an agreed action plan (including mediation, if appropriate) to address them.

Whether or not the employee’s complaint is upheld, the school will consider how best to manage and support any ongoing working relationship between the employee and the person concerned. It may be appropriate to arrange some form of mediation and/or counselling, or to change the duties, working location or reporting lines of one or both parties.

The outcome and any action/s to be taken will be confirmed in writing.

Appeal

The employee who raised the complaint has the right to appeal against the outcome of the investigation. If the employee wishes to appeal, they must do so in writing, including the reasons for the appeal within 10 working days of receipt of the letter confirming the decision and send this to the Chair of Governors in the first instance. The appeal letter should clearly state the full grounds of their appeal, i.e., the basis on which they consider that their grievance has not been satisfactorily resolved. If their grounds of appeal are unclear, school may ask them to clarify these before holding a dignity at work appeal hearing.

Appeals will be dealt with impartially and will be heard by either the Chair of Governors or a panel of Governors with no previous involvement in the process and will take place no less than 30 working days following the receipt of their appeal. Their decision will be final.

The employee will be given the opportunity to put forward their case and explain why they are not satisfied with the outcome. Employees have the right to be accompanied by a fellow school colleague, a trade union representative or an official employed by a trade union.

Malicious or vexatious complaints

The school accept that all formal complaints should be accepted in good faith and investigated accordingly. However, where an investigation finds that an employee deliberately provided false information or otherwise acts in bad faith as part of an investigation, they may be subject to action under the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

Timescales

In the best interests of both the employee who has raised the complaint and the person against whom the complaint is made, it is important that the investigation and resolution of the other complaint are completed as promptly as possible and both parties should be notified of the estimated timescales.

Employees are encouraged to raise complaints within three months of the event occurring, or final event where there is a sequence of events. However, this should not deter them from highlighting issues which occurred prior to this timescale, which form a sequence or pattern or events and give substance to the complaint.

All those involved in the Dignity at Work process must give appropriate priority to the complaint and adhere to any specified time limits to enable expedition of the process.

Exceptionally, there may be circumstances where it may be necessary to extend timescales. In these circumstances, employees will be updated on a regular basis on progress and any revised timescales.

Recording of meetings

A written record of all meetings conducted under this procedure will be made, either by the person holding the meeting or by an additional person arranged by the school to take notes.

Employees, or any person acting on their behalf, are not normally permitted to record electronically any meeting held under the dignity at work procedure. This is to encourage openness and full participation. Any breach of this provision may lead to disciplinary action.

In certain limited circumstances, it may be permitted to record a meeting electronically, for example where it is a reasonable adjustment for an employee with a disability. If recording a meeting is required for adjustment purposes, this should be raised with the manager/headteacher at the earliest opportunity.

Where a remote meeting is recorded, the school will comply with data protection obligations and obtain prior consent from all attendees.

Data protection

The school processes personal data collected during informal and formal complaints in accordance with its data protection policy. In particular, data collected as part of informal complaints and the dignity at work procedure is held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of responding to the complaints or conducting the dignity at work procedure. Inappropriate access or disclosure of employee data constitutes a data breach and should be reported in accordance with the council's data protection policy immediately. It may also constitute a disciplinary offence, which will be dealt with under the school/academy's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

Advice and support

The school recognise that issues around bullying and harassment can be difficult and extremely stressful for all concerned, both for colleagues who feel they have been the victim of bullying or harassment, but also for those complained about. The school will extend the same support to all employees involved to seek to ensure that they are treated fairly, calmly and receive the appropriate help.

Employees may seek support from their headteacher and their trade union representative who can give informed advice in confidence.

Equality

The school is committed to promoting equal opportunities in employment. Harassment may be related to one or more protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. This means that the application of the policy and procedure may need to be adjusted to cater for the specific needs of an individual including the provision of information in alternative formats where necessary.

Monitoring and review

The school will monitor this policy to ensure that it is operating fairly, consistently, and effectively. The policy will also be reviewed in the light of operating experience and/or changes in legislation.

Appendix 1 - Examples of bullying and harassment

Examples of Bullying can include (but are not limited to):

- Physical conduct ranging from unwelcome touching to serious assault.
- Spreading malicious rumours or insulting someone
- Cyber-bullying, e.g. sending detrimental messages or posting malicious comments/images of colleagues on social media.
- Ridiculing someone
- Putting an individual down in meetings
- Someone giving the employee a heavier workload than everyone else
- Someone has put humiliating, offensive, or threatening comments or photos on social media
- Someone at the same or more junior level as the employee keeps undermining their authority
- Excluding someone from social activities
- Isolation or non-cooperation at work
- Picking on someone or setting them up to fail e.g. by imposing unrealistic targets
- Shouting and/or swearing at someone or the use of obscene gestures
- Persistent negative and unwarranted criticism and consistently undermining someone and their ability to do their job; and any other inappropriate and manipulative behaviour (known as 'Gaslighting' – see National Bullying Helpline)

Bullying can also happen from an employee towards a more senior employee, a headteacher/manager, or an employer (this can be called 'upward bullying' or subordinate bullying'). It can be from one employee or a group of employees.

Examples of upward bullying can include:

- Showing continued disrespect
- Refusing to complete tasks
- Spreading rumours
- Doing things to make them seem unskilled or unable to do their job properly

Examples of harassment can include (but are not limited to):

- Unwanted physical conduct or 'horseplay,' including touching, pinching, pushing, and grabbing
- Continued suggestions for social activity after it has been made clear that such suggestions are unwelcome
- Sending or displaying material that is pornographic or that some people may find offensive (including emails, messages, video clips and images sent by mobile phone or posted on the internet).
- Unwelcome sexual advances or suggestive behaviour (which the harasser may perceive as harmless)

- Racist, sexist, homophobic or ageist jokes, or derogatory or stereotypical remarks about a particular ethnic or religious group or gender
- Outing or threatening to out someone for their sexual orientation
- Offensive emails, messages, or social media content
- Mocking, mimicking, or belittling a person's disability

A person may be harassed even if they were not the intended target. For example, a person may be harassed by racist jokes about a different ethnic group if the jokes create an offensive environment.

Appendix 2 - FORM DAW1

This form should only be used where you wish to make a formal complaint of bullying or harassment under the school/academy's Dignity at Work policy. The completed form should be sent to the manager/headteacher or to the Chair of Governors if the headteacher has been involved at the informal stage or is the subject of the complaint.

Name	
Position	
Name of line manager	
Trade Union (if a member)	
Details of complaint. Please include below: • the name of the person(s) responsible for the alleged behaviour • the nature of the behaviour; • where possible details of specific incidents; • names of witnesses to any incidents; • any action already taken by the complainant to stop the behaviour; • details of the outcome you are seeking (attach a separate sheet if necessary)	

Signature _____Date: _____