



# Acceptable Behaviour Policy

The King's School  
Cadhay Lane  
Ottery-St-Mary  
Devon  
EX11 1RA



## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The King's School is committed to working towards creating a working environment in which all staff, governors and visitors are treated fairly, with dignity and respect and unacceptable behaviour will not be tolerated. The King's School encourages close links with parents and the community. We believe firmly that students benefit when the relationship between home and school is a positive one.

Unacceptable behaviour has a detrimental and negative effect on individuals and ultimately an organisation's efficiency. This policy applies to all employees, governors, volunteers, contractors, Parents/carers and visitors to the school. These groups will be collectively referred to as 'individuals' within this policy.

All individuals' have a clear role to play in helping to create a positive working environment. In particular, individuals' should be aware of their own conduct and behave in a manner which ensures and promotes acceptable behaviour. Headteachers, Governors, managers and supervisors have a responsibility to raise awareness of this issue and challenge and stop unacceptable behaviour in the workplace.

All individuals' should be prepared to take appropriate action if they observe or have evidence that a colleague is being subjected to unacceptable behaviour and/or observe a colleague demonstrating unacceptable behaviour.

To preserve and protect a positive working environment the school has existing policies that set clear standards of conduct which must be observed and enable employees to raise concerns. These include the Behaviour Policy; Equality; The Grievance Policy, The Conduct Policy and the Whistle Blowing Policy. In addition teachers have standards of conduct set by their registered body.

## **2. POLICY STATEMENT**

The organisation is committed to tackling behaviour deemed inappropriate in working relationships. In most instances issues can be resolved informally, however where issues are very serious or occur repeatedly, formal conduct procedures may be invoked.

This policy defines a number of principles and sets out procedures that ensure that behaving in a professional manner is the accepted standard for all people working within the organisation.

Any unacceptable behaviour directed towards another, including harassment based on age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage & civil partnership, pregnancy & maternity, race (colour, nationality & ethnic or national origins), religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation is unlawful and will not be tolerated in any form by this organisation. Action may be taken under the Conduct Policy.

## **3. AIMS & OBJECTIVES**

This policy aims to help individuals and their managers resolve problems informally and in a positive manner where appropriate.

- The objectives of this Policy are to:
- Ensure that all individuals are aware of the types of unacceptable behaviour and their responsibilities for preventing such behaviour;
- Ensure that all individuals understand what action may be taken to prevent unacceptable behaviour, including formal conduct action where appropriate;
- Promote a climate where individuals feel confident to bring forward issues of unacceptable behaviour without fear of victimisation;
- Ensure that all issues of unacceptable behaviour are responded to quickly, positively and in confidence where appropriate.

## **4. DEFINITIONS**

People behave acceptably when they:

- Afford dignity, trust and respect for everyone and themselves;
- Have awareness of the effects of their behaviour on others and only make reasonable and manageable demands;
- Communicate honestly and openly, clearly stating what they need and expect of others;

- Provide and are receptive to honest feedback based on evidence;
- Challenge discriminatory language and behaviour in an appropriate way;

In relation to unacceptable behaviour, the definitions and principles adopted in this policy are in line with the Equality Act 2010 and are as follows:

### **Protected characteristics**

The Act offers protection to people with 'protected characteristics'. These are:

age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion and belief; sex and sexual orientation.

**Discrimination** is to treat someone less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic they have or are thought to have or because they associate with someone who has a protected characteristic or where it is perceived that an individual possesses a protected characteristic. Indirect discrimination can occur where a provision, criteria or practice is applied which unfairly disadvantages someone on these grounds. Discrimination is unlawful.

**Harassment** is unwanted conduct relating to a protected characteristic (except pregnancy & maternity and marriage & civil partnership), which may also be based upon association or perception, that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. E.g. harassment based on a person's association with their disabled child or harassment based on a perception that a person holds a religious belief. It includes unwanted conduct of a sexual nature, verbal, non-verbal and physical conduct.

An individual may complain of harassment even if they don't possess the protected characteristic or the harassment is not directed at them. In addition, an individual is protected from third party harassment. Such harassment occurs where a third party harasses an individual in the course of their employment. This is outside the scope of this policy, which focuses on acceptable behaviour within the organisation. Within schools, it is essential to keep a record of any incidents that could be deemed as harassment of staff, to take appropriate action and to record the measures put in place to stop the harassment.

When defining behaviour in cases of harassment, it is appropriate to place emphasis on the recipient's experience rather than the motivation of the person complained about.

**Bullying** is a type of harassment, which consists of persistent actions, criticism, or personal abuse in public or private, which humiliate, intimidate, frighten, undermine or demean the individual. People affected by bullying often feel the matter appears trivial or that they have difficulty in describing it. Bullying can be defined in many ways but is generally behaviour that is identified as a misuse of power. Behaviour that is acceptable to some individuals may cause embarrassment, distress or anxiety to others.

## **5.0 UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR FROM PARENTS/CARERS**

The vast majority of parents, carers and others visiting our school are keen to work with us and are supportive of the school. However, on the rare occasions when a negative attitude towards the school is expressed, this can result in aggression, verbal and/or physical abuse towards school staff.

Our school expects and requires its staff to behave professionally in these difficult situations and attempt to defuse the situation where possible, seeking the involvement as appropriate of other colleagues. However, all staff have the right to work without fear of violence and abuse and the right, in an extreme case, of appropriate self defence.

We expect parents and other visitors to behave in a reasonable way towards school staff. Section 547 of the Education Act 1996 makes it an offence for any person to be on school premises to cause or permit a nuisance or disturbance and allows for the removal and prosecution of any person believed to have committed an offence.

A parent of a child attending a school normally has implied permission to be on school premises at certain times and for certain purposes, but if the parent's behaviour is unreasonable, this permission may be withdrawn. They could have a ban imposed on them. Then they would then become a trespasser on the school site.

## **5.1 Behaviour**

Types of behaviour that are considered serious and unacceptable are listed below and will not be tolerated nor will malicious or vexatious accusations against staff. These will be dealt under the school's grievance/conduct policies. This is not an exhaustive list but seeks to provide illustrations of such behaviour:

- Shouting at school staff, either in person or over the telephone
- Physically intimidating a member of staff, eg standing very close to her/him
- The use of aggressive hand gestures
- Threatening school staff
- Shaking or holding a fist towards another person
- Swearing at a member of school staff
- Using any electronic media to send abusive communications
- Pushing
- Hitting, eg slapping, punching and kicking
- Spitting
- Racist or sexist comments
- Breaking the school's security procedures
- Unacceptable behaviour will result in the Police being informed of the incident.

Likewise any such behaviours perpetrated by staff against parents/carers will be dealt with under the school's conduct or complaints policy.

## **5.2 Procedure**

When a parent or member of the public behaves in an unacceptable way towards a member of the school staff the headteacher or appropriate senior staff will seek to resolve the situation through discussion and mediation.

If necessary, the school's complaints procedure should be followed. Where all procedures have been exhausted, and aggression or intimidation continue, or where there is an extreme act of violence, a parent or carer may be banned by the headteacher from the school premises for a period of time, subject to review.

Prior to being banned the following steps will be taken:

- The parent/carers will be informed, in writing, that s/he is banned from the premises, subject to review, and what will happen if the ban is breached, eg that an injunction application may follow.
- Where an assault has led to a ban, a statement indicating that the matter has been reported to the Police will be included.
- The Chair of Governors will be informed of the ban.
- Where appropriate, arrangements for students being delivered to, and collected from the school gate will be clarified.

The Governing Body, in conjunction with the Headteacher, will take the lead in authorising the removal of a person believed to be causing a nuisance or disturbance, and, if necessary, will bring legal proceedings against them.

If it is felt that if an individual is likely to cause further threats or harm to staff, an immediate temporary ban would be imposed for a specified period, with an opportunity given to explain, after which a decision would be taken whether to remove or extend the ban.

In other circumstances, the individual would be advised in writing that following the incident of unacceptable behaviour, a ban is being considered and they would be given an opportunity to explain their actions, after which a decision would be made about imposing the ban.

If after a ban has been imposed, and the individual comes on to school premises, the Police would be called immediately. The Governing Body would then decide, in conjunction with their Solicitors whether to consider taking out a Court Injunction preventing this from happening again.

## **6.0 MANAGING EMPLOYEES PERFORMANCE**

Legitimate, constructive, fair and evidenced criticism of an individual's performance or behaviour at work is not bullying or harassment.

It is important to acknowledge that views and opinions held by others and decisions made by managers and supervisors, may not always coincide with the individual's. It must be recognised that those in positions of management have both a contractual right and responsibility to discharge managerial duties.

Managers may have to deal with capability, conduct or performance issues as part of their management duties or responsibilities. If the concerns are not clearly evidenced to the individual, the individual may perceive criticism as bullying, harassment or discrimination. In such an instance mediation may provide a way of both parties gaining understanding of each other's responsibilities and concerns.

It is unacceptable to condone bullying behaviour under the guise of a management style. Whilst recognising that effective management may call for a firm and assertive style to achieve desired outcomes, it should be ensured that individuals are treated with dignity and respect.

## **7.0 WHO CAN EXPERIENCE UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR AT WORK?**

Any person regardless of age or disability, gender re-assignment, marriage & civil partnership status, pregnancy, maternity status, race (colour, nationality & ethnic or national origins) religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation may experience unacceptable behaviour towards them from work colleagues.

Unacceptable behaviour can occur at any level within the organisation and some people may suffer a multiple burden of bullying, harassment and discrimination.

In cases of harassment, it is very often behaviour perceived by others as being innocuous which is most difficult to deal with and most distressing for the recipient. The recipient may feel this behaviour is intended to harass or bully them, but will be aware that it could be described and interpreted otherwise.

### **The key question is:**

Is the individual experiencing discomfort, distress, or unhappiness at work as a result of the actions of another person?

Subject to normal Appraisal practice, if the answer to this question is yes, then it is likely they are feeling bullied, harassed and/or discriminated against by someone at work. However, this will always be considered in the light of normal and professional appraisal practices

## **8.0 Bullying within the Organisation**

Examples of what this organisation regards as unacceptable behaviour include:

- Using aggressive language, threatening, ridiculing, ignoring people or repeatedly shouting;
- Telephoning people at home unnecessarily (for example, demanding work when the person is absent due to sickness or ill health);
- Focusing only on weaknesses;
- Bringing up details of someone's private life inappropriately;
- Leaving impossibly long lists of tasks and making unreasonable demands;
- Criticising people or maliciously gossiping about them in their absence;
- Ridiculing or demeaning someone – picking on them or setting them up to fail;
- Comments or jokes, about distinctive peoples and nationalities;
- Frequent comments about aspects of physical appearance or using forms of address that are demeaning;
- Threatening or implying, without reason, that, as a colleague, you will cause the person to lose his/her job or fail to get a promotion or suffer some other form of career difficulty or financial disadvantage;
- Coercing someone to join the harassment/bullying of another person;
- Excluding or marginalising someone or refusing to engage with them appropriately.

This list is not exhaustive. It is simply a guide to help individuals consider their own and others behaviour and gain understanding of what behaviours are unacceptable in the workplace.

It is also recognised that an occasional raised voice or heated debate regarding work-related issues in itself may not be unacceptable behaviour but is communication between colleagues, usually over issues that individuals feel passionate about,

and can be a driver in the workplace for developing new ideas and better practices. However, it should be noted that at any time, an individual may believe that the boundary between 'heated debate' and unacceptable behaviour has been crossed and may wish to address the issue.

## **9.0 ACTIONS & PROCEDURES**

Unacceptable behaviour should not be tolerated and employees are recommended to seek advice and support at the earliest opportunity. This policy suggests a number of options to deal with unacceptable behaviour in the workplace and these are identified below:

### **9.1 Self Help**

Self help is an informal procedure, which may include access to external advice lines, leaflets, posters, the Internet and Intranet, where further information is available. Self Help is not done in isolation; recipients of unacceptable behaviour must have other avenues. Individuals can access further help through the Trade Unions and their friends, Teachers can also contact the Teachers' Support Network.

Self help is individual action to resolve unacceptable behaviour through dialogue with the other party. In many ways this is the ideal solution for the recipient(s). It involves bringing the unwanted nature of the unacceptable behaviour to the attention of the other party with the intention of stopping the behaviour that is causing the problem and agreeing more acceptable ways of behaving. This would ideally be in person or perhaps by writing to the individual or through a third party.

Individuals can make use of the policy and the definitions of acceptable/unacceptable behaviour. In many instances no further action will be required when the unacceptable behaviour and its effect is recognised by the other party who can then vary their behaviour accordingly.

### **9.2 Reporting Behaviour to the Manager**

Individuals may talk over their concerns with their Headteacher/manager/supervisor in the first instance. Individuals should make it clear that they wish to deal with the matter under this policy and not lodge a formal grievance at this stage. The Headteacher manager/supervisor will act or advise according to the situation, which might involve some initial investigation and/or contact with the school's Personnel Services. The Headteacher/ manager/supervisor might talk through how the individual could manage it informally face to face or perhaps through mediation, before any recourse to the formal grievance procedure. Where the issues are serious the Headteacher/ manager/ supervisor may have to invoke the conduct policy if the actions/behaviour of the other party is so unacceptable as to be deemed misconduct.

Anyone can use the Whistle Blowing Policy to report direct or indirect concerns

If the concerns relate to the Headteacher's behaviour, individuals are advised to contact their trade union and the Governing Body.

### **9.3 Mediation**

For mediation to be successful both/all parties must agree to participate.

Mediation is essentially a voluntary and informal solution focussed process whereby qualified and trained mediators facilitate individuals to reach their own solutions. It may be used prior to the formal Grievance Procedure and in some circumstances, the Conduct Procedure, which may completely prevent recourse to formal processes, e.g. mediation may be available to help resolve less serious cases of harassment, such as those not considered to be acts of potential gross misconduct.

There are numerous benefits of using mediation, particularly at an early stage where it can help improve working relationships and resolve issues that, although may not reach any formal stages, can be detrimental to productivity and harmony.

### **9.4 Invoking the formal Grievance Procedure**

The formal grievance procedure is available for use by employees who wish to bring a complaint against another employee where the informal procedure, including mediation, has been ineffective.

## 9.5 Advice to People Accused of Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination

Subject to any informal or formal action taken initially to resolve unacceptable behaviour Personnel Services may also provide information to people who are accused of bullying, harassment and discrimination. They will be given impartial information so that the individual can decide the course of action best suited to him/her at that time. Staff may well find that their first course of action is to consult their Trade Union.

Being accused of behaving in unacceptable ways can be equally concerning to the individual. In many cases the individuals are unaware that their behaviour is the cause of another person's distress or discomfort or that it may be unacceptable to others in the workplace.

Malicious or vexatious accusations of bullying or harassment will be dealt with under the school's grievance/conduct policies

## 9.6 Witnesses to Unacceptable Behaviour

An individual can make a complaint of harassment where he or she is offended by behaviour even if it is not directed at him or her. The individual does not need to possess the relevant protected characteristic.

## 10.0 EQUALITY STATEMENT

All employees can obtain a copy of the relevant policies referred to in this policy through the web site, The Headteacher, the clerk to the Governors (Mr Laurence Evans) or the policies folder in the Staff room.

The King's School is committed to the principle of equal opportunities in employment regardless of a person's age, disability, gender re-assignment, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy, maternity status, race (including colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins), religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

## 10.1 HELPFUL LINKS

The Andrea Adams Trust Bullying at Work Helpline (01273-704900) and website <http://www.andreaadamstrust.org/>  
Bully On Line <http://www.bullyonline.org/>

Workplace Bullying.Net <http://www.workplace-bullying.net/>

The Trades Union Congress information on bullying at work [http://www.tuc.org.uk/tuc/rights\\_bullyatwork.cfm](http://www.tuc.org.uk/tuc/rights_bullyatwork.cfm)

Guide to language <http://www.devoncountyunison.org.uk/equalities/applang/index.html>

Equality & Human Rights Commission <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/>

NUT – [south-west@nut.org.uk](mailto:south-west@nut.org.uk) - 01392 258028

NASUWT – [rc-southwest@mail.nasuwt.org.uk](mailto:rc-southwest@mail.nasuwt.org.uk) - 01392 822500

ATL – [www.atl.org.uk](http://www.atl.org.uk) and use the "contact your branch" link - 020 7930 6441

Voice - [www.voicetheunion.org.uk](http://www.voicetheunion.org.uk) –

NAHT – [www.naht.org.uk](http://www.naht.org.uk)

ASCL – [www.ascl.org.uk](http://www.ascl.org.uk)

Unison – [www.devoncountyunison.org.uk](http://www.devoncountyunison.org.uk)

GMB – [www.gmb-southern.org.uk/dcc](http://www.gmb-southern.org.uk/dcc)

Unite – [www.unitetheunion.com](http://www.unitetheunion.com)