



# GUILDFORD HIGH SCHOOL

## 2-13 STAFF PROTECTION POLICY

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## SCOPE OF THIS POLICY

All our staff have the right to work in an environment that is free from abuse. This policy outlines the School's approach to protecting its staff from behaviour from parents of pupils and visitors) which causes distress and/or harm (including physical and/or psychological).

### I DEFINITION OF BEHAVIOUR WHICH CAUSES DISTRESS

- 1.1 The School expects all those who engage with our staff to be respectful, reasonable and courteous in all their communications, including the tone, content, volume and/or nature of such communications.
- 1.2 Unacceptable behaviour may take the form of:
  - 1.2.1 verbal or physical abuse (whether actual or threatened)
  - 1.2.2 bullying type behaviour, including harassment and victimisation
  - 1.2.3 aggressive behaviour
  - 1.2.4 inappropriate language including swearing
  - 1.2.5 any other unreasonable conduct (whether one off or persistent) which causes distress or harm (including physical and/or psychological).
- 1.3 Unacceptable behaviour may take place in various contexts:
  - 1.3.1 In person (both one-to-one or in public)
  - 1.3.2 On the telephone
  - 1.3.3 In writing (including emails, texts and Instant Messaging)
  - 1.3.4 Online (including posting malicious comments on websites and social media sites or messaging apps and other acts of "internet trolling".)

### 2 RATIONALE

- 2.1 All staff have the right not to be subjected to abuse or harassment.
- 2.2 The School has a duty of care and a legal responsibility to take reasonable steps to protect its employees from all forms of abuse and any behaviour causing concern whilst carrying out their day-to-day duties.
- 2.3 The School is opposed to any abuse, and takes a firm stance against bullying, harassment or victimisation in all its forms.

### 3 AIMS OF THIS POLICY

- 3.1 To improve understanding about the standard of behaviour expected of all those who come into contact with our staff by providing parameters and guidelines for all.
- 3.2 To protect all staff from abuse or harassment and any unreasonable and unwanted behaviour which causes distress and/or harm.
- 3.3 To outline the procedures for how the School will respond to any behaviour which breaches this policy.
- 3.4 In the event of an allegation made against a member of staff (including the Headmistress) and supply staff, then the procedures set out in the School's Safeguarding Policy shall be followed.

### 4 GENERAL PRINCIPLES ON COMMUNICATIONS

- 4.1 All communications should be:
  - 4.1.1 Polite and courteous (in tone, volume and content)
  - 4.1.2 Respectful of professional integrity
  - 4.1.3 Illustrative of our common purpose
  - 4.1.4 Mindful of any time pressures under which individuals operate.

### 5 PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH BEHAVIOUR WHICH CAUSES DISTRESS

- 5.1 The School recognise that in our community (as in life) there will be times when frustration about what may have been said or done can occur. We understand the pressure that, for example, parents feel at times and are committed to helping resolve difficulties when they arise in a sensitive and helpful manner. Just as we demand the very highest standards of courtesy and professionalism from our staff, we also expect all those who engage with us (such as parents and visitors) to follow the general principles listed above with regard to the tone and content of communications with us.
- 5.2 Managing unreasonable behaviour, including abusive and threatening behaviour
  - 5.2.1 All incidents of unacceptable behaviour towards staff must be reported in writing immediately to the Headmistress who will discuss the incident with the member of staff. The police will be contacted if it is deemed necessary.
  - 5.2.2 No physical attack or injury needs to have occurred for a common assault to have taken place. It is sufficient for a person to have been threatened with immediate violence and put in fear of a physical attack for an offence to have been committed.
  - 5.2.3 The Police will likely be involved where there is clear evidence of an injury

(whether physical or emotional) and may take account of previous behaviour of the alleged perpetrator and the likelihood of a repetition if action is not taken.

5.2.4 If the alleged perpetrator is a visitor to the School, the relevant member of staff should ask them to leave the premises immediately. They should be accompanied off site.

5.2.5 If the incident involves a parent of a pupil, the Headmistress (or Chair of the LGB, as appropriate) may write to the parent and initiate the Senior Management procedure set out in paragraph 6 below.

**5.3** Verbal Abuse may be defined as “the repeated improper and excessive use of language or tone of voice to humiliate someone, or to undermine someone’s dignity” including swearing. Verbal abuse which is related to a protected characteristic, such as race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, faith, or age, may constitute hate speech. The School will normally involve the Police where hate speech has occurred.

**5.3.1** Verbal Abuse:

5.3.1.1 All incidents of alleged verbal abuse on staff must be reported to the Headmistress, at the earliest possible opportunity.

5.3.1.2 Any member of staff subject to verbal abuse may terminate the conversation or, if appropriate, look to defuse the situation and politely ask the individual to remain calm, and ask to discuss the matter (ideally with another member of staff present). Should the abusive behaviour continue, the member of staff should terminate the conversation.

5.3.1.3 Any member of staff subject to verbal abuse should make a record in writing regarding the nature of the conversation, who was involved, any witnesses and examples of the alleged abuse as soon as possible.

5.3.1.4 A member of the Senior Management Team may initiate the Senior Management procedures set out in paragraph 6 below.

**5.3.2** Verbal Abuse at a sports fixture:

5.3.2.1 All incidents of alleged verbal abuse against staff must be reported in writing to a member of the Senior Management Team at the earliest possible opportunity.

5.3.2.2 If a teacher is subject to verbal abuse by parents or visitors when refereeing or coaching a sports fixture, the teacher should:

5.3.2.2.1 Politely ask the individual to calm down and, if possible, offer to discuss the matter elsewhere (ideally with another member of

staff present).

5.3.2.2.2 Pause the game

5.3.2.2.3 Warn the parent/visitor and if it continues ask them to leave the touchline

5.3.2.2.4 If abuse persists the game is to be suspended

5.3.2.3 Any member of staff subject to verbal abuse should record the nature of the incident, who was involved, any witnesses and examples of the alleged abuse as soon as possible.

5.3.2.4 A member of the Senior Management Team may initiate the Senior Management procedure set out in paragraph 6 below.

5.3.2.5 In the case of visitors from other schools, the Headmistress may write to the Headteacher of the visiting school to inform them of the incident and any action that the School is taking (see paragraph 7 below).

## 5.4 Correspondence

5.4.1 All correspondence that is unacceptable in tone, volume or content must be passed immediately to a member of the Senior Management Team at the earliest possible opportunity without replying to the individual.

5.4.2 The member of the Senior Management Team will reply to the individual and may initiate the Senior Management procedure set out in paragraph 6 below.

## 5.5 Vexatious, malicious or defamatory behaviour

5.5.1 The School takes very seriously any action (such as by a parent and/or visitor) which, after careful consideration, is deemed vexatious, malicious, defamatory, or which sets out to undermine the reputation of the School and its staff, and/or which, on the balance of probability, may be found to have been intended to cause upset or distress to a member of staff.

5.5.2 All behaviour deemed vexatious, malicious or defamatory must be reported immediately to a member of the Senior Management Team at the earliest possible opportunity without discussion with the alleged perpetrator.

5.5.3 The employee or teacher concerned should provide the member of the Senior Management Team with the evidence (e.g. screenshots from Social Networking sites, notes from the relevant conversation or the email concerned etc.)

5.5.4 The member of the Senior Management Team may initiate the Senior Management procedure set out in paragraph 6 below.

## 6 SENIOR MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE

The Senior Management **Five Step Procedure** for following up on unacceptable behaviour towards staff is as follows. This is a guideline only and may be adapted to the circumstances of each case:

- 6.1 Step One – Initial phone call/meeting with Headmistress.
- 6.2 Step Two – Further phone call/meeting with Headmistress if the behaviour has not improved or been addressed, followed by a formal warning letter.
- 6.3 Step Three - Meeting with Headmistress and/or Chair of the LGB, as appropriate, followed by a final warning letter.
- 6.4 Step Four - Required removal or exclusion of pupil.
- 6.5 Serious abusive behaviour (such as physical abuse, career-threatening malicious and defamatory comments about teachers, or egregious cases of verbal abuse) may be dealt with at Stage Three, without going through the prior stages.
- 6.6 If the abuse is directed at the Headmistress, the Chair of the LGB may manage the process above.

## 7 SANCTIONS

The following sanctions may be applied to breaches of this policy.

- 7.1 Warning letters to parents or visitors.
- 7.2 Permission to attend School functions may be withdrawn, including (but not limited to):
  - 7.2.1 Sports matches.
  - 7.2.2 Cultural activities.
  - 7.2.3 Parent-teacher meetings.
- 7.3 Restrict all communication with the School through a named member of the Senior Management Team.
- 7.4 Permission to be on School premises, or to access online presentations or events, may be withdrawn.
- 7.5 Required removal or exclusion of the pupil from the School.

## 8 SUPPORTING MEMBERS OF STAFF

The School recognises that staff may need additional support when subjected to distressing behaviour. This may be obtained from line managers, SMT, school counsellors and CIC, our confidential information, support and counselling service.