Managing and Preventing Student Harassment & Bullying

Policy/Procedure Title and Number	Managing and Preventing Student Harassment & Bullying
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Author (Name/Department/Curriculum area)	Nikkie Almond – Head of Student Engagement
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1. **Introduction & Scope**
   Abingdon & Witney College sets student wellbeing as its highest priority and is committed to taking action to prevent all forms of bullying in its provision and take all possible steps to protect students from harm. However, it recognises that bullying occurs in a range of settings, groups and guises and can be difficult to entirely eradicate, and as such this policy sets out the process for preventing and dealing with allegations of bullying amongst students of the College.

   The College includes all students, whether onsite or not, full or part time, and includes all age ranges. It expects that all students treat one another with respect regardless of protected characteristic or any other difference.

2. **Definition of Terms**
   2.1. Bullying
   The term bullying refers to a range of harmful behaviour, both physical and psychological. All bullying behaviour usually has the following four features:
   - It is **repetitive** and **persistent** — though sometimes a single incident can have the precisely the same impact as persistent behaviour over time.
   - It is intentionally harmful
   - It involves an imbalance of power, leaving someone feeling helpless to prevent it or put a stop to it.
   - It causes feelings of distress, fear, loneliness and lack of confidence in those who are at the receiving end.

   Bullying can take many and multiple forms. It is important to be aware of the following broad types:

   - Emotional - being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding books, threatening gestures)
   - Psychological – intentional and purposeful mental abuse, most likely to be indirect such as public mocking/humiliation but has a malicious intent
   - Physical - pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence
   - Racist - racial taunts, graffiti and gestures
   - Sexual - unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments
   - Homophobic – graffiti, gestures, language
   - Verbal - name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing
   - Cyber- all areas of internet and mobile communication, such as text, chat app, social media posts, email, misuse of associated technology, e.g. camera & video facilities

   2.2. **Harassment**
   Where a person (the harasser) for a reason which relates to the protected status of the victim (i.e. their gender, race, disability, pregnancy, sexual orientation, religion or belief or age), engages in unwanted conduct which has the purpose or effect of:
   - violating the victim's dignity

- creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them

  Can also include Stalking:

- Repeated, prolonged, unwanted texting of any nature, on-line stalking, constant monitoring of on-line activity. For example: can be a continuation of off-line harassment or lead to physical harassment and can include silent calls.

2.3. Prejudice-Based Bullying

Bullying may also take the form of singling out a person because they belong to a particular group. For example:

- **Racist and Religious Bullying**
Racist bullying can be defined as 'a range of hurtful behaviours, both physical and psychological, that make a person feel unwelcomed, marginalised, excluded, powerless, or worthless because of their colour, ethnicity, culture, faith community, national origin or national status' (*Safe from Bullying, DCSF, 2009).*

- **Sexual, sexist and transphobic bullying**
Sexist bullying includes behaviour either physical or psychological because the victim is female or male, based on singling out something specifically gender related. Transphobic bullying refers to bullying where someone is, or is thought to be transgender.

  Research shows that young people express an acceptance of sexual/sexist or transphobic insults because they are widely used, but these insults are often used to bully someone. Inappropriate touching can be a form of bullying. 'Jokes' about sexual assault or rape, if unchallenged can create an atmosphere where this behaviour is seen as more acceptable. Sexual harassment can lead to sexual violence.

- **Homophobic Bullying**
Homophobic bullying refers to bullying of someone because of their sexual orientation (or perceived sexual orientation). This can be difficult for a young person to report and is often directed at them in a sensitive phase of their lives when identity is being developed.

  The term 'gay' as an insult is unacceptable and should always be challenged as such use can lead to a person feeling denigrated and even hounded. The term 'gay' is sometimes used as a proxy for racist or disablist bullying as people believe this will go unchallenged.

- **Disablist Bullying**
This is targeted at people with disabilities and takes similar forms as other types of bullying.

NB. This list is not exhaustive but is intended to give context to the range of prejudice based bullying that can take place.

3. Guiding Principles

Respect for each other is inherent in the college values, and its student conduct expectations known as Ready, Respectful, Safe, and as such any incidents of bullying or harassment between students are wholly unacceptable.
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3.1. Aim

The aim of this policy is to set out the approach taken by the College to prevent cases of bullying and harassment between students, with student wellbeing foremost in our priorities.

It is important to understand that as an education provider, our overall aim is to ensure our students can access education and achieve in their chosen career pathway. Decisions and interventions made will always seek to ensure that every student has the opportunity to continue their education, however the reality is that in some instances it may not be possible to fully resolve incidents between individuals, and we may have no alternative but to suggest alternative means of completing qualifications, for example via another education provider, or by distance learning. Where this option is considered it will be done so as an absolute last resort, where no other suitable option can be found, and always in discussion with the student concerned.

3.2. Student voice

The College recognises that issues as described in this policy can affect individuals in very different ways, and as such individual students who are the victim of bullying may wish to take different approaches. Inevitably, incidents of bullying can be very difficult to challenge without some aspect of confrontation in relation to the behaviour, and it is not always possible to challenge the bullying whilst maintaining the anonymity of the complainant/victim. We place high regard on the voice of the student, and as such will always work with the student making the allegation to ensure that our actions do not make them feel more vulnerable or exposed, and that they are comfortable with actions we propose to take.

4. Strategy for Preventing

4.1. Education

The College recognises education as the best form of prevention and as such ensures that all full time students develop and awareness and understanding of its inclusive approach via student induction, Core tutorial sessions, themed weeks and events such as Anti-bullying Week, and other specific sessions as appropriate to their course of education.

Students will be informed of the mechanism to report any safeguarding issue through induction via their tutors. College website will be signposted.

The IT Services department and firewalls will monitor users accounts to ensure that access to inappropriate sites is denied. Inappropriate sites will be predetermined by the Head of IT Services and the Head of Student Engagement

All staff and students will be made aware at induction that there will be a monitoring system for Teams to safeguard against any harm to others. Staff training on recognising signs of bullying and harassment will be made available through an e-training module.

4.2. Ethos, values and culture

Respect and inclusion are embedded in the culture of the College by its very nature on account of the broad demographic of its student body. For example, young students aged 16 or under, students with disabilities, and adult learners accessing professional courses access college facilities alongside each other adhering to the Ready, Respectful, Safe Guidelines. Staff role model this behaviour at all times and can be seen visibly to challenge any instances where students do not uphold these values.

5. Procedures for responding to

Instances of bullying or harassment will be dealt with under the Student Performance Management and Disciplinary Procedure as 'misconduct', however there are several stages to our approach as set out in Appendix 1. Students will be supported and empowered to take whichever approach they feel most comfortable with and college staff will support them in this endeavour. Where a student is under the age of 18, college staff are obliged to keep parents informed of matters which could be impacting their wellbeing, however this will always be done in collaboration and consultation with the student.

5.1.1. Work Based Learner/ Work Placement or Volunteering

Where bullying or harassment is suspected we will engage with the organization to ensure the student is fully supported by a member of the college staff. The Industry Placement Co-Ordinator, Assessor or other relevant person should also be asked to support the student. The College will follow the procedures in line with the College's Safeguarding Policy.

5.1.2. Learners with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities

Where bullying or harassment is suspected, students and vulnerable adults who have difficulties in communicating should be given the chance to express themselves to a member of staff with appropriate communication skills and/or be provided with an advocate.

5.1.3. School Roll Learners

Where a student is attending a blended learning programme with us and remains 'on roll' at a local school, we will liaise with the school to decide who is best placed to respond to allegations of bullying. This will vary from case to case depending on where the bullying is taking place, the frequency of attendance at college and student voice or preference.

6. Further sources of advice or support

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following College procedures:

Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidelines
Safeguarding Covid-19 Amendment
IT Policy 2019
Multimedia, Audio and Visual Protocol
IT Services Monitoring Guidance

Other Reading and Websites:

Safe from Bullying: in further education college (DCSF, 2009)
Stay safe in cyberspace (anti-bullying alliance – http://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/bullyingalliance.org.uk)
Safe to Learn: Cyberbullying (DCSF)
Childnet: www.childnet.com
CEOP (The Child Exploitation Online Protection Centre) www.thinkuknow.co.uk
EACH (Educational Action Challenging Homophobia) www.eachaction.org
Stonewall www.stonewall.org.uk
MENCAP www.mencap.org.uk/dontstickit.

7. Review and evaluation

This policy will be reviewed every three years. Formal cases of bullying and harassment will be dealt with via the student disciplinary process and will be reported upon as part of these outcomes and reviewed at least annually at the Personal Development Behaviour and Attitudes Committee.

Appendix 1

Guidance for students

Bullying and Harrassment - Guidance for Students

What you should do if you think you are being bullied or harassed?

If you feel you are being bullied, you should talk to your Student Performance Manager (SPM) or your Course Leader.

When raising an issue, they may wish to follow either an informal route or a formal route - see below.

As the perception of harassment can change from individual to individual, in the first instance it should be made clear to the harasser that the behaviour is unwelcome, and that the person is asked to stop. In circumstances in which this is difficult or embarrassing you may ask another student or member of staff. You may wish to follow either of the routes below

The Informal Route

You may feel you want to choose a more informal route. The objective is to provide support to enable you to raise the complaint and to decide on a course of action. The case will be considered individually, and every effort made to solve the problem. You are advised to:

1. Keep a record of any incidents that occur

2. Tell the harasser to stop if you feel able

3. Confide in a friend if you feel it will help

4. Discuss any formal or informal actions you would like to be taken

The Formal Route

If the harassment continues and/or you decide it is appropriate, the complaint will be taken forward to the Curriculum Manager and a member of the safeguarding team by the student and the SPM/course leader. The case will then be formally investigated by impartial staff and a resolution will be discussed with all parties. It may even result in a Student Performance Management and Disciplinary Procedure meeting which will be recorded on ProMonitor. If an amicable resolution cannot be found, then formal mediation will occur.

However, if the bullying and harassment is of a nature where it is evident a crime has taken place then parents/guardians/ local authorities will be informed.