

# Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College

## DIGNITY AT WORK

The purpose of the dignity at work policy is to ensure a culture of working relationships in which everyone is treated with dignity and respect, where harassment is known to be unacceptable and individuals have the confidence to deal with and challenge harassment or bullying without fear of ridicule or reprisals.

The policy applies to all employees of the College. Students' rights and responsibilities are detailed in the Student Behaviour and Disciplinary Policy

### Policy

The College is committed to tackling behaviour deemed inappropriate in working relationships. In most instances issues can be resolved informally. However, any complaint will be taken seriously and investigated promptly.

### Definitions

- Harassment is unwanted conduct in working relationships affecting the dignity of employees. It is actions or comments that are viewed as demeaning and unacceptable to the recipient or that create a hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for a member of staff. Harassment includes any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct including that of a sexual nature
- Bullying can be defined as persistent, offensive, abusive, intimidating or malicious behaviour, abuse of power or sanctions which makes the recipient feel threatened, humiliated or vulnerable and which undermines self-confidence.
- Certain behaviour or actions may be acceptable to one individual while unacceptable to another. It is the deed and the impact on the recipient, which constitutes harassment. The recipient has a responsibility to make their colleague aware that they find it unacceptable and ideally to explain why.

### Responsibilities

Everyone has a responsibility to behave in a way that is not offensive to others and to acknowledge that views and opinions held by others, and decisions made by managers and supervisors, may not always coincide with their own. Such differences are unlikely to constitute harassment. All staff must be alert to the impact of their behaviour on others and be prepared to listen and respond if someone asks them to alter their behaviour because it is offensive in some way.

It must be recognised that those in positions of authority have both a right and responsibility to discharge managerial duties. In so doing they may need to adopt a firm or assertive style, but they should take care not to demean, devalue or intimidate colleagues.

Individual employees and the College have responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010, which gives protection against discrimination and harassment, and a duty of care under Health and Safety

# Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College

legislation. It is important that any allegations of harassing/bullying behaviour are carefully considered and addressed when brought to the attention of anyone in a supervisory position.

## **Procedure**

All complaints will be dealt with confidentially as far as possible. However, the College has a duty of care to all employees and it may be necessary to investigate and take action regarding a complaint without the consent of the complainant.

## **Informal procedure**

In some cases it may be possible to rectify matters informally. Sometimes people are not aware that their behaviour is unwelcome and an informal discussion can lead to greater understanding and an agreement that the behaviour will cease. The employee should feel free to ask for support from their Line Manager or the HR Manager at any time.

If the harassment continues the Line Manager or HR Manager should be informed and the matter investigated. In agreement with the complainant one of the following courses of action may result:

- To take no further action at this stage, but to record any future incidents and to keep the situation under review.
- Informal resolution through a mediation meeting with the Line Manager, complainant and the alleged perpetrator. Notes of the meeting, signed by all parties, should be given to the HR Manager as they may form evidence in any future investigations.
- If informal methods do not resolve the problem, a formal complaint can be made.

## **Formal procedure**

If this informal process has been ineffective, or for more serious incidences of bullying or harassment, the College's Grievance procedure should be used to bring a formal complaint against another employee. A copy of the Procedure can be found in the personnel office.

An employee should keep a written record of any incidents, such as what happened, when and where it occurred, whether there were any witnesses or names of others who have been treated in a similar way. It is also helpful to consider how the situation may be resolved.

Should a grievance relating to a serious incidence of bullying and harassment be upheld, this might result in disciplinary procedures being invoked against the member of staff involved and could lead to disciplinary sanctions including dismissal.

# Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College

## **Malicious complaints**

Any employee found to be making mischievous or malicious complaints is likely to be subject to the College's disciplinary procedure.

## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS**

- (i) Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- (ii) Acceptable Use of IT Policy
- (iii) College's Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures