Dealing with Abuse, Threats and Violence Towards School Staff

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**Dealing with Abuse, Threats and Violence Towards School Staff**

1) **Aim**

The aim of this policy is to help encourage an ethos and environment that are caring, nurturing and supportive for all those who work in our School. Stradbroke High School expects mutual respect between those employed and those using the School. All School staff have the right to expect that their School is a safe place in which to work and that prompt and appropriate action will be taken on their behalf if they are subjected to abuse, threats or violence by parents or other adults on School premises. To this end the Governing Body and the Headteacher of this School institutes a policy for dealing with any such cases.

2) **Introduction**

The Governing Body and Headteacher of Stradbroke High School have a duty of care in relation to the physical and emotional well-being of all its employees. We believe that abuse, threatening behaviour and violence against School staff is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Where such behaviour occurs, the School will work with, when appropriate, the Suffolk Constabulary to take all reasonable and appropriate action in support of our staff.

This policy has been based upon the joint LA-Police guidance entitled “Dealing with Abuse, Threats and Violence Towards School Staff”. Copies of this guidance are available on request from the Headteacher. As a School, we fully support the guidance contained in this document.

This policy refers to abuse, threats and violence towards School staff from parents, guardians and other visitors. It does not deal with such behaviour on the part of pupils since separate guidance is available within the School and from the Local Authority on the handling of incidents involving children and young people.

3) **Definition of Abusive, Threatening and Violent Behaviour**

The most common example of unreasonable behaviour is abusive and aggressive language for which the most widely used remedy, where informal action is not considered to be appropriate or has proved to be ineffective, is the withdrawal of permission to be on school premises.

Where a person recklessly or intentionally applies unlawful force on another or puts another in fear of an immediate attack, it is an offence in law, which constitutes an assault. The LA would normally expect the Police to be contacted immediately in such cases and the Governing Body of Stradbroke High School will follow the same procedure.
There are three categories of assault, based on the severity of the injury to the victim:

a) **Common Assault**
   Involving the threat of immediate violence or causing minor injury (such as a graze, reddening of the skin or minor bruise).

b) **Actual Bodily Harm**
   Causing an injury, which interferes with the health or comfort of the victim (such as multiple bruising, broken tooth or temporary sensory loss).

c) **Grievous Bodily Harm**
   Causing serious injury (such as a broken bone or an injury requiring lengthy treatment).

There is also a racially aggravated form of assault, where there is a racial element to the offence, which carries higher maximum penalties.

It is important to note that **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.

Individual circumstances will influence the decision as to whether a particular incident should be reported to the Police. The Police would expect to be involved where there is a clear injury (whether physical or emotional) and acknowledge that other factors may need to be taken into account such as the previous behaviour of the offender and the likelihood of a repetition if action is not taken to prevent it.

4) **Measures to avoid, prevent and minimise incidents**

The Headteacher takes the lead in implementing, monitoring and revising this policy. The Chair of the Personnel and Pay Committee oversees the implementation of this policy on behalf of the Governing Body.

A risk assessment and related action plan will be conducted annually and in the light of any significant incidents.

A poster is displayed prominently in the Reception Area of the School making it clear that we will not tolerate abuse, threats or violence towards our staff.

(Appendix A).

**We welcome visitors to our School.**

We will act to ensure that it is a safe place for pupils, staff and all other members of the School community.

Any abusive behaviour or assault or threat of assault by a visitor will result in their removal from the premises and their possible prosecution.
The School makes use of the “School-Safe” training. Appropriate staff will have received this training within two years of joining the School. Existing staff are required to renew their training every four years. A record of this is to be maintained in each Professional Development Portfolio.

If staff are involved in an incident, the following are important general principles to follow:

- Anticipate potential problems and take steps to minimise incidents
- When alone, seek support from other members of staff at an early stage
- Do not wait for the problem to become serious
- If other members of staff are not immediately available, anticipate the response to potential problems by considering the use of a mobile telephone or an internal telephone
- Think about potential escape routes from which help can be sought
- Do not feel that you have to solve the problem alone
- Speak calmly and without raising your voice. If you do not feel able to do this, you should seek assistance
- Be assertive, but not aggressive. “I am happy to talk to you about this issue, but I shall put down the telephone unless you stop using such language”
- Think about your personal safety at all times. There is never any expectation from the School that you should put yourself at risk of being abused, threatened or assaulted.

The guidance within this Policy forms part of the induction checklist for all staff new to the School.

5) Action when an incident occurs

All staff are expected to be familiar with the advice in this Policy about how to deal with incidents and to follow procedures.

All cases of assault and all but the most minor of other incidents will be regarded as serious matters, which will be reported to the Police and followed up with due care, attention and rigour. The needs and views, feelings and wishes of the victim should be taken into account at every stage. Support is available from:

- the Headteacher and other colleagues
- the victim’s trade union
- the Employee Assistance Programme (08000 856148) for free advice and counselling
- “Teacher Line” (08000 562561)
- Victim Support or the Academy’s solicitor if evidence is to be given in court.
If the immediate attendance of a Police Officer is required, 999 should be called. Examples when this would be appropriate are where:

- there is a danger to life
- there is a likelihood of violence
- an assault is, or is believed to be, in progress
- the offender is on the premises
- the offence has just occurred and an arrest is likely.

If police involvement is required, but the incident is not thought to be an emergency, the Police Operations Room should be contacted on (101) or (01473 613500).

If a parent or other person behaves unreasonably on School premises a letter will be sent to them withdrawing the implied permission for them to be there. This letter will normally be sent by the Headteacher unless he has been personally involved in an incident and would prefer the letter to be sent by the Chair of Governors. As in all other matters referred to in this Policy, we follow the guidance and use the standard letters contained in “Dealing with Abuse, Threats and Violence Towards School Staff”.

6) Harassment

Very rarely staff find themselves subjected to a pattern of persistent and unreasonable behaviour from individuals which is not abusive or overtly aggressive, but which can be perceived as intimidating and oppressive. Staff may be faced with a barrage of constant demands or criticisms that can have the cumulative effect over time of undermining confidence, well-being and health.

If a member of staff feels that they are being harassed in this way, he or she should contact the Headteacher who will follow the guidance in “Dealing with Abuse, Threats and Violence Towards School Staff”.

Version Two