

Date ratified at Directors
Meeting
13 July 2026



Review
Resources, Audit & Risk
Committee

DIGNITY AT WORK POLICY

THE TRUST MISSION STATEMENT

Inspired by the life of Christ we provide an exceptional education in our Catholic schools which enables our children:

- to fully embrace all possibilities
- to flourish
- to develop their faith

and therefore to choose a path that enables them to be a positive influence upon our world.

‘Prepare the Way’ The Gospel of St Mark 1:3

St John the Baptist Catholic Multi Academy Trust
Company No: 7913261
Registered Office: Surrey Street, Norwich NR1 3PB



If you need this document in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or in a different language please contact the Company Secretary on 01603 611431 and we will do our best to help.

Contents

1. Introduction and Purpose.....	3
2. Application of policy	3
3. Definitions.....	3
3.1 Harassment.....	3
3.2 Bullying	4
3.3 Victimisation.....	4
3.4 Discrimination	5
3.5 What are the forms of harassment?	5
4. What Dignity at Work Looks Like.....	5
5. Examples of Unacceptable Behaviour	5
6. What This Policy is NOT About	6
7. Education	7
8. Responsibilities	7
8.1 The Trust Board and Local Governing Bodies	7
8.2 Headteachers and Leadership Teams	7
8.3 All Staff Members.....	8
9. If You Experience or Witness Unacceptable Behaviour	8
9.1 Immediate Steps You Can Take if you feel safe and able to do so:	9
9.2 Informal Resolution.....	9
9.3 Formal Complaint Process.....	9
The Trust's Grievance Resolution Policy provides detailed information on this procedure.	10
9.4 Support Available	10
10. Third Party Harassment	11
11. Malicious or Vexatious Complaints	11
12. Confidentiality and Record Keeping	11
13. Monitoring and Review	12
14. Related Policies.....	12
Appendix A - How to handle a complaint informally	13
Appendix B - How to handle a formal complaint	14

1. Introduction and Purpose

St John the Baptist Catholic Multi Academy Trust is committed to providing a working environment where every member of staff is treated with dignity and respect. Our Catholic values call us to recognise the inherent worth of every person and to build communities characterised by mutual respect, compassion, and justice.

This policy sets out our approach to harassment, bullying, and any behaviour that undermines dignity at work. It provides clear guidance on what constitutes unacceptable behaviour, how to respond if you experience or witness it, and the support available to you.

This policy exists to:

- Protect the dignity and wellbeing of all staff
- Create a culture where respect is the norm
- Provide clear procedures for addressing concerns
- Ensure fair and consistent responses to complaints
- Meet our legal obligations as an employer

2. Application of policy

This policy applies to the conduct of school members of staff in the context of their work, or which otherwise affects the working, learning or social environment of the school. This can include the way in which members of staff behave towards each other outside school premises on school-related social occasions. It can also cover conduct towards people who are not members of the school (such as contractors and other members of the public).

3. Definitions

3.1 (i) Harassment

Harassment is **unwanted conduct** that has the purpose or effect of:

- Violating a person's dignity, or
- Creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment

Harassment may be related to:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage or civil partnership
- Pregnancy or maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Key point: It doesn't matter whether the behaviour was intended to cause offence. What matters is the impact on the recipient and whether the conduct was reasonably considered to have that effect.

3.1 (ii) Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is **unwanted conduct of a sexual nature** that has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment.

Under the Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023, employers have a legal duty to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace.

Examples include (but are not limited to):

- Unwanted physical contact or sexual advances
- Comments about appearance that are sexual in nature
- Displaying sexually explicit images or materials
- Intrusive questions about someone's sex life
- Sexual jokes, remarks, or innuendo
- Sharing or threatening to share intimate images
- Requests or pressure for sexual favours
- Sending sexually suggestive emojis, GIFs, or memes
- Repeatedly messaging someone after they have asked for communication to stop
- Using personal or work social media to make sexual comments or advances
- Creating, editing, or circulating AI-generated or manipulated sexual images of a colleague

The Trust recognises that differences in seniority, job security, age, or other dynamics may prevent behaviour from being truly consensual. Conduct that appears “friendly” can still constitute sexual harassment if the recipient feels unable to object.

The Trust has a zero-tolerance approach to all forms of sexual harassment. Any incident—whether a single act or repeated behaviour—will be treated seriously, investigated promptly, and may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

3.2 Bullying

Bullying is **offensive, intimidating, malicious, or insulting behaviour** that represents an abuse or misuse of power. It is behaviour intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate, or injure the recipient.

Bullying can be:

- A pattern of behaviour over time, or
- A single serious incident

Examples include (but are not limited to):

- Shouting at or humiliating someone, especially in front of others
- Persistent criticism or fault-finding
- Deliberately excluding someone or spreading malicious rumours
- Setting impossible deadlines or constantly changing targets
- Undermining someone's work or taking credit for their achievements
- Threatening behaviour or aggressive language

3.3 Victimisation

Victimisation occurs when someone is treated badly because they have:

- Made a complaint under this policy
- Supported someone else's complaint
- Raised concerns about dignity at work
- Given evidence in a related process

Victimisation is a serious matter and will be treated as misconduct.

3.4 Discrimination

Discrimination means treating someone less favourably because of a protected characteristic (as listed in section 3.1).

Discrimination can be:

- **Direct:** treating someone less favourably because of who they are
- **Indirect:** applying a policy or practice that puts people with a certain characteristic at a disadvantage
- **By association:** treating someone less favourably because of their connection to someone with a protected characteristic

3.5 What are the forms of harassment?

Harassment may be directed at, and can be carried out by, an individual or a group.

Harassment can be unwanted conduct ranging from a series of two or more incidents or ongoing conduct. It can be physical or non-physical, deliberate or unintentional.

Members of staff can also complain of harassment even if it is not directed at them, if they can demonstrate that the behaviour creates an offensive environment for them in which to work.

Harassment may be unlawful as well as being damaging to individuals and to the school. It causes tension, conflict and de-motivation. This is disruptive and costly in terms of time, money, public reputation and the physical and emotional wellbeing of staff.

4. What Dignity at Work Looks Like

A workplace where dignity is respected is one where:

- People treat each other with courtesy and consideration
- Differences are valued and celebrated
- Communication is respectful, even during disagreements
- Feedback is constructive and delivered appropriately
- People feel safe to speak up without fear of reprisal
- Concerns are taken seriously and addressed promptly
- Leaders model respectful behaviour
- Everyone takes responsibility for maintaining a positive culture

5. Examples of Unacceptable Behaviour

The following are examples of behaviour that may constitute harassment, bullying, or other breaches of dignity at work. This list is not exhaustive:

Physical behaviour:

- Unwanted physical contact, including touching, pushing, or blocking someone's way
- Physical threats or intimidation
- Assault or threatening gestures

Verbal behaviour:

- Shouting, swearing, or aggressive language
- Derogatory remarks, insults, or name-calling
- Offensive jokes or banter
- Spreading rumours or malicious gossip
- Intrusive or inappropriate personal questions

Non-verbal behaviour:

- Offensive gestures or facial expressions
- Deliberately ignoring or excluding someone
- Staring or other intimidating behaviour
- Displaying offensive materials or images

Written or electronic behaviour:

- Offensive emails, texts, or messages on social media
- Sharing embarrassing or private information
- Cyberbullying or trolling

Work-related behaviour:

- Deliberately undermining someone's work
- Setting unrealistic targets or constantly moving goalposts
- Refusing reasonable requests for leave or development
- Taking credit for someone else's work
- Excessive monitoring or micromanagement
- Deliberately withholding information needed to do the job

Behaviour related to protected characteristics:

- Remarks about someone's appearance, accent, or background
- Mocking someone's religion or belief system
- Making assumptions based on stereotypes
- Refusing to use someone's correct name or pronouns
- Asking intrusive questions about disability or health conditions

Even low-level or seemingly trivial incidents can amount to harassment when repeated or part of a wider pattern. Staff are encouraged to report concerns early so that behaviour does not escalate.

6. What This Policy is NOT About

Reasonable management action is not bullying or harassment. Managers have a responsibility to manage performance, address conduct issues, and make decisions about work organisation. When done appropriately, this includes:

- Setting clear performance standards and monitoring progress
- Giving constructive feedback, including negative feedback when warranted
- Following capability or disciplinary procedures fairly
- Making legitimate work assignments and decisions
- Addressing attendance or conduct concerns
- Implementing organisational changes

The key is that these actions must be reasonable, carried out fairly, and in line with Trust policies.

Disagreements or personality clashes are not automatically bullying, though how people handle these situations matters. We expect all staff to communicate professionally, even when they disagree.

7. Education

All new starters must attend equality, diversity, and inclusion training as part of their induction.

Every current employee must attend regular equality, diversity, and inclusion training as well as training on preventing sexual harassment on at least a tri-annual basis.

Line managers and senior leaders will be provided with additional guidance in managing complaints and supporting colleagues in sexual harassment cases.

We expect all employees to participate in other ad hoc workshops and events organised by the school or Trust to educate themselves on equality, diversity and inclusion matters and how to help alleviate any challenges faced by others in the workplace.

8. Responsibilities

8.1 The Trust Board and Local Governing Bodies

The Board and Governing Bodies must:

- Champion a culture of dignity and respect
- Ensure this policy is implemented effectively
- Monitor complaints and trends across the Trust
- Address any concerns involving senior leaders appropriately
- Ensure resources are available for training and support
- Hold leaders accountable for maintaining standards

8.2 Headteachers and Leadership Teams

Leaders must:

- Model respectful behaviour at all times
- Create a culture where people feel safe to raise concerns
- Respond promptly and sensitively to any concerns raised
- Ensure all staff understand this policy and their responsibilities
- Provide or facilitate access to appropriate training
- Take action when behaviour falls below expected standards
- Support those affected by unacceptable behaviour
- Maintain confidentiality and handle matters fairly
- Keep appropriate records

- Report serious incidents to governors/trustees as appropriate

When concerns involve the Headteacher, these should be raised with the Chair of Governors, who will handle the matter (possibly with support from another governor or the Trust HR team).

8.3 All Staff Members

Every member of staff must:

- Treat colleagues with dignity and respect
- Behave in line with this policy and our Trust values
- Challenge unacceptable behaviour when they witness it (if safe to do so)
- Support colleagues who raise concerns
- Cooperate with any investigations
- Respect confidentiality
- Not participate in, encourage, or condone behaviour that breaches this policy

Active Bystander Responsibility

All staff are expected, where it is safe to do so, to take reasonable action when they witness sexual harassment or behaviour likely to lead to it. This may include:

- Interrupting or challenging inappropriate comments or behaviour
- Supporting the person targeted
- Reporting concerns to a manager or HR
- Not normalising or excusing inappropriate “banter”
- No member of staff will be penalised for raising concerns in good faith.

If you are told your behaviour is unwelcome:

- Take it seriously
- Listen and reflect
- Stop the behaviour immediately
- Apologise sincerely
- **Learn from the feedback**
-

8.4 Duty to Take Reasonable Steps to Prevent Sexual Harassment

In line with the Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023, the Trust will:

- Assess risks and identify situations where sexual harassment is more likely to occur
- Take active steps to reduce these risks
- Provide regular, evidence-based training
- Ensure reporting routes are accessible, confidential, and well-publicised
- Monitor trends and act swiftly on early warning signs
- Hold leaders accountable for promoting a safe culture

9. If You Experience or Witness Unacceptable Behaviour

We recognise that deciding whether and how to raise a concern can be difficult. You will be supported whatever approach you choose. Your wellbeing is our priority.

9.1 Immediate Steps You Can Take if you feel safe and able to do so:

- Tell the person their behaviour is unwelcome and ask them to stop
- Be clear and specific about what behaviour concerns you
- Explain the impact it's having on you
- You can do this in person, in writing, or with a colleague's support

Many situations are resolved at this stage when the person realises their behaviour is causing upset, especially if it was unintentional.

However, you are never required to confront the person directly, especially if:

- You feel unsafe or intimidated
- The behaviour is serious (e.g., assault, serious sexual harassment)
- There is a power imbalance
- Previous attempts haven't worked

9.2 Informal Resolution

If you're not comfortable addressing the person directly, or if this hasn't resolved the issue, you can seek informal support.

Talk to:

- Your line manager (if they're not involved)
- Another trusted manager or senior leader
- A trade union representative
- A colleague who can support you
- The Trust HR team

They can help by:

- Listening and providing support
- Advising on options available to you
- Speaking to the other person on your behalf
- Facilitating a conversation between you
- Arranging mediation if both parties agree
- Helping you access support services

Mediation involves an impartial person helping both parties reach a resolution. It's voluntary, confidential, and focuses on moving forward positively rather than apportioning blame. It can be very effective for resolving conflicts or misunderstandings.

Keep a record of incidents, including dates, times, what happened, and any witnesses. This will be helpful if you decide to make a formal complaint.

9.3 Formal Complaint Process

If informal resolution isn't appropriate or hasn't worked, you can raise a formal grievance under the Trust's Grievance Resolution Policy.

The formal process involves:

1. Submitting a written complaint to your line manager or Headteacher (or to the Chair of Governors if the complaint involves the Headteacher). Include:

- What happened (specific incidents with dates/times)
- Who was involved
- Any witnesses
- The impact on you
- What outcome you're seeking

2. Investigation: An appropriate person will be appointed to investigate. They will:

- Interview you and gather your evidence
- Interview the person complained about
- Interview any witnesses
- Review relevant documents
- Maintain confidentiality throughout

3. Outcome: You'll receive a written response explaining:

- Findings of the investigation
- Whether the complaint is upheld (fully or partially)
- Action being taken
- Your right to appeal

If your complaint is upheld:

- Appropriate action will be taken, which may include disciplinary action against the other person
- We'll consider what steps are needed to prevent recurrence
- Support will be provided to help you return to work comfortably
- In some cases, work arrangements may need to be changed

If your complaint is not upheld:

- This doesn't mean we don't believe you
- It means there wasn't sufficient evidence to conclude a breach of policy occurred
- We may still take steps to improve working relationships
- Support remains available to you

Right to appeal: If you're dissatisfied with the outcome, you can appeal to the appropriate body (Governors' Appeals Panel or Trust Directors).

The Trust's Grievance Resolution Policy provides detailed information on this procedure.

The Trust will take proportionate steps to protect the complainant from retaliation, including:

- Monitoring workplace relationships following a report
- Addressing any negative comments, gossip, or exclusion
- Considering temporary adjustments to duties or reporting lines
- Treating any retaliation as a disciplinary offence

9.4 Support Available

Throughout this process, you can access:

- Emotional support from the Trust's Employee Assistance Programme
- Trade union representation
- Support from a workplace colleague ("companion")
- Reasonable adjustments to working arrangements if needed
- Time off for appointments related to the matter
- Regular updates on progress

If you're supporting someone else or have been complained about, support is available to you too.

10. Third Party Harassment

Sometimes harassment comes from people who aren't Trust employees, such as parents, pupils (where age-appropriate), contractors, or visitors.

If you experience harassment from a third party:

- Report it to your line manager or Headteacher immediately
- Do not put yourself at risk by confronting the person
- We will take appropriate action, which may include:
 - Speaking/writing to the person
 - Restricting their access to school premises
 - Involving police if the behaviour is criminal
 - Conducting a risk assessment to keep you safe

Sexual harassment by third parties is unacceptable and will be treated with the same seriousness as harassment by employees. This includes harassment by parents, carers, visitors, volunteers, contractors, and (where age-appropriate) pupils.

11. Malicious or Vexatious Complaints

We take all complaints seriously and will always investigate concerns raised in good faith.

However, **making a complaint you know to be false or raising concerns maliciously** is a serious matter that:

- Damages trust and working relationships
- Causes significant harm to those falsely accused
- Wastes time and resources
- Undermines genuine complaints

Making a malicious or vexatious complaint will be treated as misconduct and may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

This does not apply to complaints that are not upheld. There is an important difference between a complaint made in good faith that cannot be proven, and one that is deliberately false.

12. Confidentiality and Record Keeping

Confidentiality:

- Information will only be shared with those who need to know
- We cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality as we may need to investigate or take action
- We'll discuss with you what information needs to be shared and why
- All parties must respect confidentiality

Record keeping:

- Records of complaints and investigations will be kept securely
- Documentation will be retained in line with data protection requirements
- Records may be kept on personnel files if disciplinary action is taken
- You have the right to access information held about you

13. Monitoring and Review

The Trust will:

- Monitor the number and nature of complaints under this policy
- Identify trends or patterns that need addressing
- Review the effectiveness of the policy every three years
- Report anonymised data to the Board and Governing Bodies
- Use this information to improve our culture and practices

Headteachers must report dignity at work concerns to their Local Governing Body as part of regular reporting on staff wellbeing.

14. Related Policies

This policy should be read alongside:

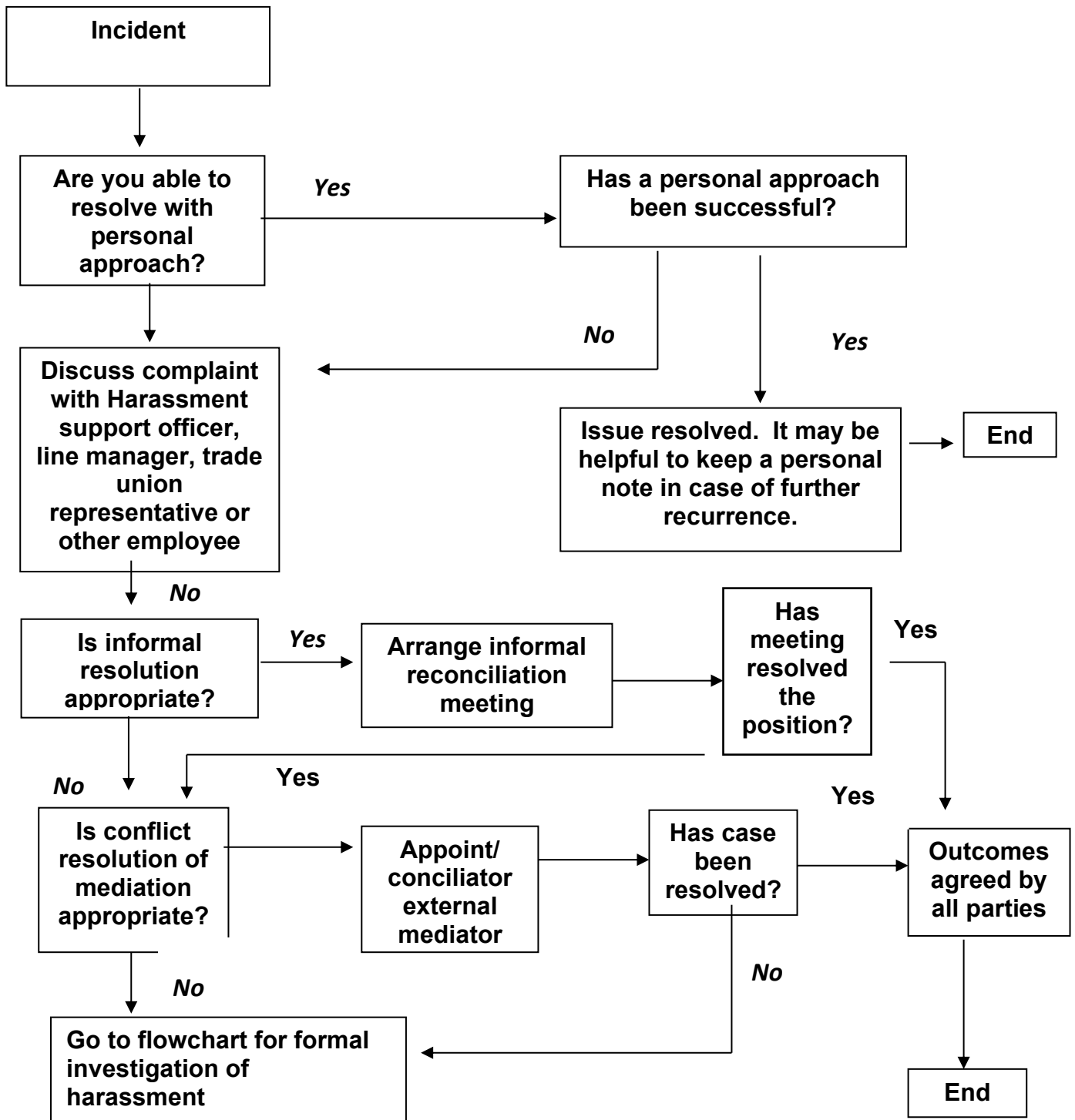
- Grievance Procedure
- Disciplinary Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Capability Policy
- Safeguarding Policy (for issues involving pupils)

15. Legal Framework

This policy is designed to ensure compliance with:

- Equality Act 2010
- Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023
- Employment Rights Act 1996
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Data Protection Act 2018 / UK GDPR

Appendix A - How to handle a complaint informally



Appendix B - How to handle a formal complaint

