

Staff Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy

Policy Code:	HR41
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Please read this policy in conjunction with the policies listed below:

- HR3 Grievance Policy
- HR8A Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy for Staff
- HR9 Positive Handling and Safe Touch Policy
- HR12 Staff Disciplinary Procedure
- HR23 Whistleblowing Policy
- HR24 Allegations of Abuse Made Against Adults Policy
- HR37 Zero Tolerance Policy
- HR42 Low-Level Concerns Policy

1 Policy Statement

- 1.1 The Priory Federation of Academies Trust (the Trust) is committed to, and has a duty to provide a safe and healthy working environment that is free from bullying and/or harassment or any other behaviour that is objectively personally offensive. All staff and volunteers for The Trust should be treated with dignity and respect in accordance with the Trust values.
- 1.2 It is important for staff within the Trust to encourage, develop and maintain a culture where they all treat each other and are treated with dignity and respect.
- 1.3 This policy covers harassment and bullying by staff (which may include consultants, contractors and agency workers) and also third parties such as customers, volunteers, suppliers, or visitors to the Trust's premises.
- 1.4 References to the Trust or Academy within this policy specifically include all nursery, primary, secondary and special academies within the Trust, as well as Priory Apprenticeships and Lincolnshire ITT.
- 1.5 This policy does not form part of any member of staff's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time.

2 Roles, Responsibilities and Implementation

- 2.1 The People, Performance and Operations Committee has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy and for ensuring compliance with the relevant statutory framework. This committee delegates day-to-day responsibility for operating the policy and ensuring its maintenance and review to the Head of HR.
- 2.2 This policy is approved by the People, Performance and Operations Committee before being ratified at the next available Trust Board meeting. Approval and ratification is minuted, with records kept by the Clerk to Trustees.
- 2.3 Leaders and Managers have a specific responsibility to ensure the fair application of this policy and all staff are responsible for supporting colleagues and ensuring its success.
- 2.4 All staff have a personal responsibility for their own behaviour and for ensuring that they comply with the policy. Staff should disclose any instances of harassment or bullying of which they become aware to their line manager or the Head of Human Resources.
- 2.5 The Trust recognises that, as an employer, it has a duty of care to its staff. The Trust will ensure it provides effective support for anyone facing an allegation and will provide staff with a named contact if they are suspended.

3 Aims

- 3.1 To ensure a clear framework is set for understanding what constitutes bullying and harassment, the steps all staff should take to maintain a safe and healthy work environment and how to raise allegations of bullying and harassment.
- 3.2 To ensure that staff are aware of the options available to them to handle potential bullying or harassment, and that these remain confidential.

4 Bullying

- 4.1 Bullying can be described as unwanted behaviour from a person or group that is either:
- offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting; or
 - an abuse or misuse of power that undermines, humiliates, or causes physical or emotional harm to someone.
- 4.2 Bullying can be:
- be a regular pattern of behaviour or a one-off incident;
 - be face-to-face, on social media, in emails or calls;
 - happen at work or in other work-related situations; and/or
 - not always be obvious or noticed by others.
- 4.3 Examples of bullying at work could include:
- spreading malicious rumours about someone;
 - consistently putting someone down in meetings;
 - deliberately giving someone a heavier workload than everyone else;
 - excluding someone from team social events;
 - someone consistently undermining their manager's authority; and/or
 - putting humiliating, offensive or threatening comments or photos on social media.
- 4.4 Legitimate, reasonable and constructive criticism of a worker's performance or behaviour, or reasonable instructions given to workers in the course of their employment, will not amount to bullying on their own.
- 4.5 Bullying may be classed as harassment, if it is related to certain 'protected characteristics' under discrimination law (Equality Act 2010).

5 Harassment

- 5.1 Harassment is when bullying or unwanted behaviour may be related to a relevant protected characteristic: age, sex, race, disability, religion, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership or any personal characteristic of the individual, and may be persistent or an isolated incident. The key is that the actions or comments are viewed as demeaning and unacceptable to the recipient.
- 5.2 Whether intentional or not, unwanted behaviour is harassment when it violates the person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the person.
- 5.3 Harassment may include, in addition to the examples provided in Section 4, for example:
- unwanted physical conduct or "horseplay", including touching, pinching, pushing and grabbing;
 - continued suggestions for social activity after it has been made clear that such suggestions are unwelcome;
 - sending or displaying material that is pornographic or that some people may find offensive (including e-mails, text messages, video clips and images sent by mobile phone or posted on the internet);
 - unwelcome sexual advances or suggestive behaviour (which the harasser may perceive as harmless);
 - racist, sexist, homophobic or ageist jokes, or derogatory or stereotypical remarks about a particular ethnic or religious group or gender;
 - outing or threatening to out someone as gay or lesbian;
 - offensive e-mails, text messages or social media content; and/or
 - mocking, mimicking or belittling a person's disability.
- 5.4 A person may be harassed even if they were not the intended "target". For example, a person may be harassed by racist jokes about a different ethnic group if the jokes create an offensive environment.

6 Sexual Harassment

- 6.1 When referring to sexual harassment we mean 'unwanted conduct of a sexual nature' that can occur online and face to face. Examples of sexual harassment include, but are not limited to; any unwelcome sexual advances, unwelcome request for sexual favours, or other unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature which makes a person feel offended, humiliated or intimidated, and where that reaction is reasonable in the circumstances.
- 6.2 The Trust recognises that employers are required by law, to take all reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment of staff in the course of their employment. The Trust recognises that whilst there is no prescribed minimum on what an

employer can do to prevent sexual harassment at work, there are reasonable steps that can help prevent sexual harassment. Further information on this can be obtained from the Head of Human Resources.

- 6.3 Any report of sexual harassment, including that carried out by third parties, as well as staff employed by the Trust, will initially be dealt with in accordance with this policy, however, there may be cases where it is appropriate to deal with such matters under the Trust's HR23 Whistleblowing Policy.

7 Process for Allegations of Bullying and/or Harassment and Sexual Harassment

- 7.1 The Trust is committed to providing a safe environment at work for all staff that is free from any form of harassment and discrimination. The Trust will operate a zero-tolerance approach to any form harassment and discrimination in the workplace, promptly investigating any allegation.
- 7.2 The Employment Rights Act 2025 defines a disclosure that sexual harassment has occurred, is occurring, or is likely to occur, as a qualifying disclosure.
- 7.3 Harassment and bullying can damage the health, confidence, morale and performance of staff who are affected by it. Harassment is unlawful under UK Law. Harassment and bullying may also be civil or criminal offences and may contravene health and safety law.
- 7.4 Allegations of bullying and/or harassment against Trust staff or volunteers will be taken seriously and an individual will not be victimised for making such a complaint.
- 7.5 Allegations will be dealt with quickly in a fair and consistent way that provides effective protection for, and supports, the person who is the subject of the allegation.

Informal Steps

- 7.5 Individuals who feel that they are being bullied or harassed should consider if they can resolve the problem informally first, with the person responsible. The individual should explain clearly that the behaviour is not welcome and/or makes them feel uncomfortable. 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.
- 7.6 If the complainant feels uncomfortable speaking directly to the perpetrator, for whatever reason, they should seek support from their Line Manager or the Human Resources Department. It can then be established whether a facilitated conversation between the two or more colleagues might resolve the situation, or whether further assistance is required.

Formal Steps

- 7.7 If informal steps are not appropriate, or have been unsuccessful, the member of staff should follow the formal procedure set out below and/or refer to HR3 Grievance Policy.
- 7.8 If you wish to make a formal complaint about bullying, harassment or sexual harassment, you should submit it in writing to the Head of Human Resources, whose role is to achieve a solution wherever possible. If the matter concerns the Head of Human Resources, you should write to the Clerk to Trustees.
- 7.9 The Trust have a duty to conduct a fair investigation from the perspective of all parties concerned, including the reporter of the concern, any witnesses, and the alleged harasser. The Trust will investigate complaints in a timely and confidential manner. The investigation will be conducted by someone with appropriate experience and no prior involvement in the complaint, where possible. Details of the investigation and the names of the person making the complaint and the person accused must only be disclosed on a "need to know" basis. The Trust will consider whether any steps are necessary to manage any ongoing relationship between the complainant and the person accused during the investigation.
- 7.10 The investigation will be thorough, impartial, objective and carried out with sensitivity and due respect for the rights of all parties concerned. Once the investigation is complete, the Trust will inform the complainant of its decision. If the Trust concludes that the complainant has been harassed or bullied by a member of staff the matter will be dealt with under the HR12 Staff Disciplinary Policy as a case of possible misconduct or gross misconduct. If the harasser or bully is a third party, the Trust will consider what action would be appropriate to deal with the problem. Whether or not your complaint is upheld, the Trust will consider how best to manage any ongoing working relationship between the complainant and the person concerned.
- 7.11 Where an investigation is carried out relating to a current member of staff, the Trust may need to consider whether suspension of the alleged harasser is necessary or whether, pending the outcome of a suspension risk assessment, it is necessary to make other temporary changes to working arrangements. Further details relating to suspension from work can be found in the Trust's HR12 Staff Disciplinary Policy.
- 7.12 Where a report of bullying, harassment or sexual harassment is made regarding someone other than a member of staff, such as a third party, the Trust will consider what action may be appropriate to protect staff and anyone involved pending the outcome of the investigation, bearing in mind the reasonable needs of the academies and the rights of individuals. Where appropriate, the Trust will discuss the matter with the third party.

Witnessing Bullying or Harassment

7.11 Staff who witness bullying or harassment are encouraged to appropriate steps to address it. Depending on the circumstances, this could include:

- intervening where you feel able to do so;
- supporting the staff member to report it or reporting on behalf on their behalf;
- reporting the incident to a manager where the member of staff feels there may be a continuing risk if it is not reported; and/or
- cooperating in any investigation to the incident, as required.

7.12 All staff will be provided with appropriate support throughout any process.

8 Third Parties

8.1 The Trust will make third parties aware of this policy and ensure that it is readily available and accessible to all.

8.2 The Trust will not tolerate sexual harassment of its staff, and sets out the actions that the Trust may take if a third party sexually harasses a member of staff, including speak with or writing to the alleged third-party harasser or their superior (or both) about their behaviour or banning from Trust sites. Action taken may also include the termination of any business relationship with the third party, banning the person from the premises, reporting criminal acts to the Police and/or sharing the information in line with any statutory or regulatory body.

9 Protection and Support for those Involved

9.1 Staff who make complaints or who participate in good faith in any investigation must not suffer any form of retaliation or victimisation as a result. Anyone found to have retaliated against or victimised someone in this way will be subject to disciplinary action under HR12 Staff Disciplinary Policy. The reporting of sexual harassment will, depending on circumstances, amount to a qualifying disclosure under the Employment Rights Act 2025 and therefore carries additional protections.

9.2 Support and guidance can also be obtained from the following service, please note that this list is not exhaustive (and the Trust is not liable for the content on these external sites):

- The Equality Advisory and Support Service (www.equalityadvisoryservice.com)
- Protect (www.protect-advice.org.uk)
- Victim Support (www.victimsupport.org.uk)
- Rape Crisis (www.rapecrisis.org.uk)

- Rights of Women (England and Wales) (www.rightsofwomen.org.uk)
- ACAS (www.acas.org.uk)
- Equality and Human Rights Commission (www.equalityhumanrights.org.uk)

9.3 The Trust have an overarching Assessment of Risk document, which details the steps that the Trust take to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace, which is available upon request from: federationenquiries@prioryacademies.co.uk.

10 Record Keeping

10.1 Information about a complaint by or about a member of staff may be placed on the member of staff's personnel file, along with a record of the outcome, any notes or other documents compiled during the process.

11 Training

11.1 All new starters will be provided with Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training as part of their induction programme.

11.2 Current staff will be required to complete refresher Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training on an annual basis.

11.3 The Trust expects all staff to proactively support the Trust's equality, diversity and inclusion initiatives by attending events and workshops to educate themselves on the challenges faced by others, and how to help prevent and alleviate these issues in the workplace.

12 Policy Change

12.1 This policy may only be amended or withdrawn by The Priory Federation of Academies Trust.