North Hertfordshire College

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Date published	August 2025
Scheduled review date	August 2026
Accountable member of Group SMT	Sarah Robins
Document author	Emma Masters

PURPOSE

The policy helps us ensure that:

- The Group's commitment to creating and sustaining a positive and supportive working environment and an excellent learning experience for our students is reinforced.
- All students and apprentices within Hart Learning Group have the right to learn in a safe and secure environment without fear of being bullied. Bullying is anti-social behaviour and affects everyone. It is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

SCOPE

- All governors, teaching and non-teaching staff, students, apprentices, employers and parents/carers should have an understanding of what bullying is.
- All governors teaching and non-teaching staff should know what the policy is on bullying and follow it when bullying is reported.
- All students, apprentices, employers and parents/carers should know what the policy is on bullying and what they should do if bullying arises.
- Bullying will not be tolerated.

DEFINITIONS

There are a wide range of actions and behaviours that constitute bullying including those that are repeated and/or intended to hurt someone physically or emotionally. Each situation is different and will be handled on a case-by-case basis. However, behaviours considered to contravene the group anti-bullying policy include the following:

- Physical - pushing, punching, kicking, hitting or any use, or threat of use, of violence (see appendix A - Responding to a Physical Incident)
- Racist – racial taunts, remarks or actions
- Sexual - unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments or harassment. This includes directly, indirectly and via electronic means.
- LGBTQ discrimination - homophobic taunts/language, transphobic comments – any negative comments, gestures or actions against members of the LGBTQ community.
- Verbal - name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing, derogatory comments of a personal nature – this may be directly or indirectly (e.g. within earshot).
- Electronic - threatening or unwanted mobile phone messages/calls or emails, insults/abuse/threats/rumours via online chat and network sites (see appendix 2 – Inappropriate use of Social Network sites)
- Emotional - being unfriendly/unkind, excluding, tormenting
- Behaviours that contravene the Equality Act in respect of the 9 Protected Characteristics.

PROCESS

All staff and students have a responsibility to maintain an environment in which students feel safe and confident to learn. This means that anyone who knows that bullying is happening is expected to tell a member of staff and that member of staff is expected to deal with it promptly and effectively.

The Group will introduce an anti-bullying ethos by:

- Activities for tutors to use with groups where appropriate
- Activities for assessors to use with individuals where appropriate
- Advice and information through the plasma screens, screen savers
- Topic-specific events across college
- Informing students about the anti-bullying policy and Positive Behaviour Policy during induction and reminders throughout the academic year.
- Informing staff about the anti-bullying policy in the induction programme

- Staff will be mindful of cliques forming within classes and organise activities to integrate groups as much as possible.

The following steps will be taken when dealing with incidents of bullying

- If bullying is suspected or reported the incident will be dealt with immediately by the member of staff who has been approached
- A clear account of the incident will be recorded and given to the Head/Deputy Head of Curriculum and Student Services Support Coach for that academic area, or relevant assessor for apprenticeships.
- Deputies, coaches or assessors will conduct interviews with all concerned
- Tutors will be kept informed and, if the bullying persists, the tutor should advise the Head of curriculum.
- Where appropriate, assessors will liaise directly with employers to implement relevant company procedures.
- This process utilises our Positive Behaviour Policy and Engagement Support Plans

Students who have been bullied will be supported by:

- Offering an immediate opportunity to discuss the experience with their personal tutor and/or a member of the Student Services team
- An appointment with a mental health inclusion assistant or referral/signposting to counselling services if appropriate.
- Reassurance
- The offer of continuous support
- The opportunity to have a mediated meeting with the person they feel bullied by, if they feel this would benefit them and both parties agree.

Students who have bullied will be helped by:

- Discussing what happened
- Discovering why the student became involved
- Establishing the impact of bullying on the others and the need to change
- Informing parents, carers or employers to help change the attitude/understanding of the student
- Informing tutors to help change the attitude/understanding of the student

It is important to note that in some cases both parties will feel bullied and it is important that staff do not pre-judge a situation based on one account of events or concerns. In all cases, staff will discuss carefully with everyone involved to ascertain what happened and what

circumstances lead to these events. This will then inform how the bullying is dealt with and resolved.

Where required, a risk assessment and action plan will be implemented to ensure all parties can feel safe whilst continuing their studies.

Bullying will be dealt with within the Positive Behaviour Policy, which can lead to:

- Emerging concern logs
- Formal Engagement Support Plans
- Suspension
- Permanent exclusion

In accordance with the Positive Behaviour Policy, continued instances of bullying will lead to escalation to the next level of the Engagement Support Plans.

Where required, the investigating team will liaise with other external agencies, including police or Prevent team, for advice and guidance. Where an issue is reported to police, internal investigations may need to be suspended pending the external investigation. In each instance, guidance will be sought from the relevant assigned officer to any case.

MITIGATING FACTORS

North Hertfordshire College and Hart Learning and Development adopt a trauma-informed approach to supporting students with their behaviour. Whilst every effort is made to help students in need, the duty of care owed by the organisation to the wider student community and to staff takes priority where the behaviour of a student with complex personal or mental health difficulties causes significant disturbance or distress to others.

Efforts will be made to resolve such problems through discussion with the individual concerned and to point out the negative effect that their behaviour is having on others. However, if these efforts are unsuccessful, alternative strategies will be considered, including, if necessary, requesting the student to withdraw from the course for a suitable period.

Withdrawal will also be necessary if the student's mental condition is such that they are unable to meet course requirements, notwithstanding the support of the college and local health services. In these instances, the Positive Behaviour Policy and procedures will be implemented.

When determining targets and support for inappropriate behaviour, the relevant Head or Director must consider whether:

- the student has the ability to control his or her behaviour,
- the student has the ability to understand the foreseeable consequences of his or her behaviour, and
- the student's continuing presence on programme does or does not create an unacceptable risk to the safety of any other individual.

If a student does not have the ability to control his or her behaviour, or does not understand the foreseeable consequences of his or her behaviour, the Director may also need to refer to the Health and Safety Policy and or engagement with relevant external professionals working with the student.

CONTACTING PARENTS/CARERS

In any situation involving bullying it is advised the Head/Deputy of Curriculum or Course Team Leader should involve the students' parents/carers and explain how the group intends to respond to the incident and to the student's needs. Where the group suspects that to do this might put the student's safety at risk, or if there is any other cause for concern for the student's safety at home, then the group must exercise caution when considering involving parents/carers.

In any situation where a student may need protection from the possibility of abuse, refer to the group Safeguarding procedure and the designated safeguarding lead (DSL).

REVIEW AND MONITORING

- The group will review this policy annually and assess its implementations and effectiveness. This will include input from the student body.
- Serious cases of bullying will be reported as part of the weekly safeguarding update to senior managers.

RESPONSIBILITIES

- The Corporation Board, the Group's governing body, has overall responsibility for ensuring that the Group complies with the Anti-bullying Policy
- All members of the Group are expected to act in accordance with this policy and to challenge cases of bullying at all times.
- All students should understand they can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, in the course of their studies, against fellow students, staff and visitors.

LINKED POLICIES / PROCESSES

- Positive Behaviour Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Safeguarding, Child Protection & Prevent Policy
- HLG IT User Guide

APPENDIX A

Responding to a physical incident

The organisation has a responsibility to protect students from any actions that either deliberately or unknowingly causes a person harm. This includes physical bullying as defined within this policy.

When a violent incident occurs between students, staff are advised to take extreme caution and not attempt any action which may result in themselves/other members of staff/students being injured.

The decision as to whether or not to physically intervene is down to the professional judgement of the staff member concerned and should always depend on the individual circumstances. Reasonable restraining action can be used to prevent students from hurting themselves or others but should only ever be considered as a last resort.

In the first instance contact:

- On site Director and/or DSL/Deputy DSL
- Estates to help provide additional support
- Other staff members in the immediate vicinity to provide support until further back up is provided by the above
- In cases of emergency contact 999 immediately

Ensuring their own safety at all times, staff should remove the perpetrator from the environment and isolate them as quickly as possible where they will be dealt with in accordance with the Positive Behaviour Policy. If it is not possible to remove the perpetrator, all other students should be removed from the area to ensure their safety.

First Aid

First Aid should be offered to all parties involved in accordance with the First Aid policy. All incidents of injury must be recorded, regardless of whether first aid treatment was required or not. An Accident Report Form (ACC1), available from Reception, must be completed in full. If a First Aider was present it is their responsibility to complete the form, otherwise it is the responsibility of the line manager or tutor. All ACC1 forms must be returned as soon as possible to the Estates Office.

Incident Record

Staff should record all violent incidents on an incident report form which will should then be shared with the Head of Curriculum. These cover the following:

- Details of person assaulted
- Details of the perpetrator/s (if known)
- Details of the incident (include Accident Report Form)
- Action taken (police intervention, support from Student Services, actions from managers/DSL)
- Possible contributing factors/improvements

APPENDIX B

Inappropriate use of Social Network sites

Social networking, and chat related apps, raise issues for the organisation.

It is of concern that students can be unaware of the implications of their comments/postings. A comment that might be throwaway when spoken face to face can become something much more powerful when saved online and viewable by a wider circle.

Students need to understand that as members of a wider group community they do not have total freedom to express themselves as they wish, should the behaviours expressed contravene our values and policies. The following types of communication are not allowed and will lead to action using the Positive Behaviour Policy:

- Posting any comment that could be viewed as bullying or harassing another member of the college community: student or member of staff. It will be viewed as particularly serious if a student sets up a site or page which has the clear purpose of criticising, bullying or harassing another member of the group community. It will also be viewed as particularly serious if a student makes libellous statements about any other member of the group community.

- Posting any comment that conflicts with the group's own values in relation to equality, inclusion and safe learning environments

- Posting any comment that explicitly encourages other members of the college community to actively break the law. It will be viewed as particularly serious if a student actively encourages others to take prohibited substances or commit violence.

- Students are reminded that material posted on the internet can be very hard to remove. They would always be well-advised not to post photographs of themselves or other members of the community that they might not wish others to see, now or in the future. They would also be well-advised not to make written comments that could be used against them in future.

Students who are experiencing bullying should be advised to keep a copy of any abusive texts, emails, comments or messages that they receive and record the date and time they were sent. With this form of bullying there is always a trail and keeping records can be very useful when it comes to reporting the bullying and initiating any disciplinary procedures and/or investigation.

As noted, where necessary, the Group will liaise with relevant external professionals for guidance and/or referral.

Opportunities for learning and development on the above themes are including with the Personal and Academic Development sessions and Onefile information. In making students and apprentices more aware we aim to reduce the number of potential bullying incidents in a proactive manner.