



Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy

September 2023

Version 1.0
Approved by the Board of Governors

Introduction

The Vantage College's ("Vantage" or "College") is wholly committed to fostering an environment in which all students, regardless of their background and personal circumstances should be treated with dignity, respect and fairness.

The College recognises that bullying and harassment can have a serious detrimental effect on the confidence, morale, performance and health of those affected, and may in extreme circumstances ultimately lead to students withdrawing from studies. The College believes that this situation should never be permitted to materialise and will treat all reports of bullying and harassment seriously.

Definition of Harassment and Bullying

Bullying can be defined as 'behaviour which is offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting, an abuse or misuse of power through means intended to undermine, humiliate denigrate or injure the recipient.'

Bullying takes on a discriminatory aspect and becomes harassment when the behaviour is directed at a person or group because of age, gender, race, disability, religion or beliefs, sexual orientation or nationality, and the behaviour is unwanted by the recipient(s).

In these circumstances the recipient(s) of such behaviour is protected under the range of anti-discrimination regulations and has recourse to the relevant laws.

Harassment is any behaviour that is unwelcome and affects the dignity of those subjected to it. For the purposes of this Policy, the Vantage will use and apply the following definition of Harassment as being: 'Unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic which has the purpose or effect of:

- a. violating a person's dignity; or
- b. creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.¹

Conduct which constitutes harassment may be persistent or may arise from a single incident. A key test of whether behaviour constitutes harassment is whether it is viewed as demeaning and unacceptable by the person to whom it is directed and whether a reasonable person would think the conduct amounted to harassment. It is not necessary to prove that there was an intention to harass (see further The Protection from Harassment Act 1997).

Harassment may also be a criminal offence and may contravene Health and Safety legislation. Complaints of this type of harassment can also be brought under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997.

¹ Section 26 of the Equality Act 2010

All further references to harassment in this policy should be taken to include bullying.

Scope of Advice and Help

If a student believes they are being harassed there are a number of options to consider. Every situation is different and the action the student takes depends on their particular circumstances. The student can decide to seek advice or discuss the matter with their Personal Tutor or another member of staff, the Student Support Services, or Students' Union. Students are advised to act promptly and should not feel that the unwanted behaviour is their fault, or that they have to wait until the situation becomes frequent or increasingly distressing.

Strict confidentiality should be maintained where reports of bullying and harassment are made. Where it is necessary to interview witnesses, the importance of confidentiality will be emphasised. It should be explained to everyone involved in the process that any breach of confidentiality may lead to disciplinary action. However, there are times when confidentiality will need to be broken under the terms of the Data Protection Act 1998, such as in the event of an identified risk or a criminal investigation where individuals may be required to give evidence.

Policy Statement

The College commits to ensuring that:

- a) All reasonable steps will be taken to ensure that the College meets its statutory obligations to eliminate and prevent harassment and bullying by addressing inappropriate behaviours and discussing concerns promptly to prevent issues from escalating.
- b) No student will feel threatened or intimidated on the grounds of their age; disability including physical impairments, long term health conditions, mental health concerns and learning difficulties; gender reassignment and gender identity; race and ethnicity; religion or belief; sex; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy, maternity, paternity and adoption; sexual orientation whether it be from a fellow student, a College employee or a supplier, contractor or visitor to the College.
- c) All members of the College community will be treated with respect and dignity, and harassment and bullying will not be tolerated. Robust procedures are provided for students and for staff in the Employee Handbook to deal with any allegations of harassment and bullying in a fair, impartial and timely fashion.
- d) Appropriate support will be provided to anyone involved in a harassment or bullying incident.

- e) The whole College community will be made aware of this policy and their responsibilities to which they are expected to comply.
- f) No member of the College community will be disadvantaged for reporting an incident or making a complaint in good faith. Malicious complaints may, however, lead to separate disciplinary action being taken.
- g) Awareness sessions will be used as a means of communicating appropriate behaviours under this policy.

Policy Review

This Policy will be reviewed every year, unless there are internal or legislative changes that necessitate earlier review. The Policy will be approved by the College's Board of Governors.

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