



## **Managing violence and aggression by children and young people**

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## **Policy Summary**

Pitcheroak School believes that, regardless of the reason, violence is an unacceptable behaviour in any form and that no member of staff should consider suffering violence against them to be an acceptable part of their employment.

Assaults against members of staff will be treated seriously.

Violence at work is not acceptable and should not be seen as part of the contract of employment. It is work related, arising directly due to the circumstances in which a staff member has to work.

The risk of work-related violence is often foreseeable, e.g., where previous incidents have occurred/ known history of pupils. All pupils at Pitcheroak have a risk assessment and behaviour management plans and risk reduction plans are in place to remove risks where possible, and where it is not possible strategies are used to try to control risks.

## Policy Aims

The aims of this policy are to:

- Prevent violence and aggression at a school level as far as reasonably practicable
- Give guidance to all members of the school community so they can contribute towards a safe school environment.
- Provide information about roles and responsibilities, the legal framework and good practice in this area.
- Encourage and facilitate incident reporting and recording.

This document does not provide an authoritative statement of the law.

## Policy Statement

The Governing Body of Pitcheroak School believe that all ~~school~~ staff have a right to expect that their school is a safe place in which to work and that prompt and appropriate action will be taken if they are subjected to abuse, threats or violence by children and young people on school premises and in exercising their duties off site.

For the purposes of applying the provisions of the policy and associated guidance, school staff includes volunteers.

This document sets out the whole school policy on managing violent or aggressive behaviour towards staff by children and young people.

This policy is published in line with the school's health and safety policy.

The Governing Body accept the following definition of violence:

*"Any incident, in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work".*

Violence at work can be an occupational hazard for staff in special schools. Physical assaults are the most serious form of violence but it also includes verbal abuse or threats as well.

## Scope of the Policy

This policy deals only with violence by pupils and applies to aggressive or violent behaviour on the part of pupils who are on roll at Pitcheroak School aged 4-19. It does not cover bullying, harassment and violence by colleagues and staff.

### Roles and Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of the Governing Body, Headteacher and staff are set out below.

Staff also have a responsibility to protect their own safety and that of their colleagues and anyone else who may be affected by the work they do.

Volunteers should follow school procedures.

Staff must contribute actively in hazard and risk assessment, and familiarise themselves with policies, guidelines, control measures, instructions and reporting procedures. All staff should participate positively in appropriate training. Depending on their role some staff may also have a legal responsibility to participate in additional higher-level training.

All incidents of violence and aggression (as defined above) must be reported, recorded and investigated. Appropriate action will be undertaken by the Head teacher with the aim of reducing the risk of a recurrence.

### Support and Guidance

Access to confidential, counselling facilities and other appropriate support will be available to staff who are faced with violence or aggression in the course of their employment. They will also be encouraged to contact their Teacher Association, Trade Union representative or Safety Representatives.

Appropriate guidance will be made available to staff to enable them to deal with any incidents of violence or aggression. Staff will be given access to appropriate training and support by the Head teacher.

### Policy review

This policy and associated guidance will be reviewed regularly by the Governing Body.

### **Definition of the term 'violence at work'**

In order to address the issues of violence at work, it is important to have a clear understanding of what 'violence at work' is. This is an essential step in the investigation, management, and prevention of work-related violence.

For the purpose of this policy 'violence' is defined as *"incidents where persons are abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work, involving an explicit or implicit challenge to their safety, well-being or health"*.

Violence at work may include assaults or verbal abuse by pupils, members of the public or co-workers.

Examples of violence includes:

- Verbal abuse, offensive language
- Racist and sexist remarks
- Obscene gestures
- Stalking
- Physical attacks including spitting and throwing objects
- Damage to property, fixtures etc resulting in unsafe environments
- Damage to clothing

## **Guidance**

The Governing Body believes that all members of the school community (including pupils, staff and volunteers) have a right to expect a safe school environment.

As part of the school's ongoing commitment to health and safety, Governors have adopted this policy which is also available on the school's website.

This document provides practical guidance to Headteachers, Governors, staff and volunteers on dealing with violence and aggression by children and young people in the school context.

## **Employer's Legal Duties**

There are no specific laws relating to violence at work, but the general duty set out in the Health & Safety at Work Act (1974) to protect the health and safety of staff.

In addition, the management of H & S at work regulations require employers to assess health and safety risks in order to identify measures needed to reduce them. Where the risk of violence is identified, it must be reduced to the lowest level possible.

## **Prevention of violence against staff**

Effects of violence towards the individual may include:

- Physical harm
- Stress
- Emotional trauma
- Feelings of powerlessness
- Demotivation

Consequences for the employer include:

- Higher staff turnover
- Increased absenteeism and sickness absence
- Low morale
- Difficulty in recruiting staff
- Higher insurance costs

Risk assessment, prevention through pupil specific control measures and minimising harm to staff after violent incidents; are all essential elements of effective management of violence in schools by children and young people. Though it is not necessary to be a legal expert to be able to put effective measures in place, a basic knowledge of the legal position will be helpful when identifying appropriate management measures.



## **Risk assessment, prevention and protection**

The risk assessment process is the starting point for dealing with violence. It allows for the identification of potentially violent situations and leads schools to consider all aspects such as the environment, the situation itself, any background information which may be of assistance, the staff member and any other individual(s) concerned. Once all this information is to hand, a strategy for dealing with a situation appropriately and keeping everyone safe can be developed.

Managing the risk of violence: key points

- Find out if you have a problem
- Decide what action to take
- Take action
- Check what you have done is working
- Provide feedback
- Assessing the risk and reducing the potential for violence

There are precautionary and preventative steps that schools can take which help to avoid, prevent, minimise or mitigate incidents where staff can be subjected to violence or abuse by children and young people. Talk to staff; they may have noticed things that are not immediately obvious. To assist in gathering accurate information it may be useful if staff complete a simple questionnaire.

It is important to foster a security-conscious culture amongst all staff and pupils, maintaining a sense of proportion in relation to the assessed risk.

When managing risks, issues that should be considered as part of the risk assessment include the identification of:

- Staff vulnerability due to age, gender, ethnicity, disability etc (this is not intended to isolate certain staff but it must be recognised that pupils may have different triggers that could make them more vulnerable than others).
- Distinction should be made between intent and non-intent due to levels of ability in regard to their SEND.
- Identification that some jobs/ tasks/ locations/ times of the day/ season/ special events could make staff more vulnerable when working with certain pupils.

Risk Assessments should be reviewed and revised after every incident.

## **Risk Assessment Procedure**

### **Step 1 – Look for the Hazards**

The purpose of carrying out a risk assessment is to identify the extent and nature of the risks and consider what changes to implement in order to eliminate or control the risks. ~~You~~The person conducting the risk assessment needs to consider the elements which may contribute to the risk of violence and the effect they have on each other. Where the risk assessment shows a possibility of violence occurring, action must be taken to remove or minimise that risk.

Consider the following:

- The role of the individual staff member in relation to children and young people.
- Who they come into contact with, on and off site.
- Have you identified the behaviour patterns of children and young people who might present a risk to staff? Are there identifiable triggers for this behaviour?
- Are staff fully aware of the disabilities of the pupil that may impact on their behaviour towards staff?
- Staff working alone, in remote buildings, on sports fields or carrying out home visits.
- Are strategies for behaviour and work instructions and procedures being communicated and followed?
- Are all staff made aware of any changes and procedures in working practices including for example: positive physical intervention, handling strategies, care and control policies, behaviour management policies.
- Do your accident/ incident records reflect a true picture?
- Are there security/ access restrictions of the premises?

### **Step 2 – Who might be harmed and how?**

If this part of the assessment is to be of practical value you need to identify all staff who might be affected. It is not simply a matter of saying all those that have direct contact with X. Consider the frequency, context and nature of interactions with children and young people when determining the extent to which staff could be at risk.

### **Step 3 – Evaluate the risk and your existing precautions**

The most effective precaution is to avoid risks altogether. Obviously this is not always possible, therefore you need to consider what you need to do to reduce and minimise the risk. When considering the likelihood and severity of harm, think about the most serious risks and those that affect the most people first.

- Do you need to change the way people carry out their duties or where they work?
- Have you taken account of the site layout and the knowledge of the immediate working environment?
- How is the site and buildings used by others?
- Incident recording and response to incidents.

- Do you have any information, reports, involvement with other agencies such as the police and children's social care?
- What information is provided for staff, how is it communicated?
- Is the right level of training provided to relevant staff?

#### Step 4 - Record your findings – Take action to minimise the risk

The main (significant) findings of the risk assessment must be recorded and where necessary written work procedures and instructions provided for staff. The assessment should include:

- High risk children and young people, activities and areas.
- Existing preventative measures and evaluation of the remaining risks.
- Additional preventative and control measures identified, including timescales.

## **Communication, co-operation, and training**

### **Communication**

All staff are communicated with as standard practice following an incident of violence or restrictive physical intervention. Headteachers, managers and staff ensure that there is effective communication and systems in place regarding risk assessments, control measures and hazardous situations. Concerns regarding violence at work should be discussed with the respective line manager of the employee.

### **Co-operation**

The effective co-operation of all staff can best be achieved by fully involving them in assessments and discussions on the nature of risks, control measures and review. Co-operation is particularly important in relation to the reporting and recording system for violent incidents. If staff are not consulted it is likely to fall into disuse resulting in inaccurate statistics and potentially inadequate control measures. Some staff may accept too easily risks which they see as part of their job; they may co-operate more readily if they see that this will help reduce the risk to others.

### **Staff Training**

Training is not a substitute for safe systems of work, but it is an essential part of any strategy to reduce work-related violence. Most staff at Pitcheroak have been trained in Team Teach. Team Teach incorporates a range of verbal and non-verbal strategies to assess and de-escalate potentially violent and threatening situations. Refresher training is given every 2 years. Additional support and training is available through the Positive Behaviour Team for specific individuals should the needs of a young person sufficiently change the level of risk.

Levels of competency, including such things as positive behaviour management and handling skills required for particular roles, should be determined during the risk assessment and appropriate training given where necessary. Competence needs to be considered, for example at the point of recruitment, placement, change of job/duty and employment of supply staff.

Staff who may be exposed to violence need to be aware of the risks they face and be capable of recognising the potential danger either to themselves or to others within the school. Consider all staff who may be affected such as; teachers, administrative staff, lunchtime supervisors, cleaners, site staff and assistant teachers.

Headteachers and managers should identify appropriate training dependent upon the level of foreseeable risk of violence and aggression. Induction should always include the arrangements in place to prevent and deal with incidents of potential violence and aggression. In many cases the risk to staff may be low and basic in-house information and instruction at staff meetings, may be all that is required.

A staff training programme could include:

- School policy and safe working procedures for dealing with behavioural incidents and potential violence (induction).
- Risk assessments and signposting staff to them.
- Safe working practices
- Triggers/ patterns/causes of violent and aggressive behaviour by children and young people and measures to avoid this.
- What to do when feeling threatened with violence and abuse.
- Managing confrontation by using positive behaviour management and de-escalation strategies.
- Using the schools' support systems including the assistance of other colleagues.
- Post-incident action: reporting, recording, investigation, support and de-brief.
- Refresher training should be provided at regular intervals.

## **Managing incidents effectively**

### **Reporting and recording**

It is essential that all incidents of violence and aggressive behaviour are recorded.

All incidents of behaviour are recorded on the SLEUTH system at Pitcheroak School.

Recording and reporting incidents involving abuse, threats or violence to members of staff is important because it can enable the school and staff to:

- Meet their statutory duties in compliance with the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and associated Regulations, the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) and Social Security Regulations.
- Inform policy reviews and future risk assessments.
- Assist the School's insurers if a claim for compensation is made.
- Inform safeguarding protocols.

All cases of violence must be reported to the Headteacher. In some cases, the incident may need notification to external agencies.

### **Incident Reporting, Investigation and follow up**

The development and implementation of reporting procedures are among the essential steps in the planning process to deal with workplace violence. This is an avenue through which staff can report incidents of violence, and management's support of the process and encouragement for reporting incidents is vital so that appropriate support can be provided and any corrective action can be taken.

It is recognised that individuals will have a different opinion on what is deemed unacceptable behaviour and would require reporting, however the effect of that behaviour on colleagues should be considered and for the sake of consistency it should be agreed with staff what is reportable. By recording what is perceived as 'minor' incidents of violence management has the opportunity to take action and prevent any further escalation of violence. The process of recording and classifying incidents of violence can help to further tailor and improve preventative measures by highlighting important patterns and trends.

It is important that the school determine who will investigate reports of violence and provide them with the necessary skills.

- The accident book should be completed as soon as possible after the violent/ abusive event. A record should also be made on SLEUTH.
- If the incident results in a major injury you should contact the HSE without delay (for example; by telephone) and within 10 days follow this up with a completed accident report form. The school will also send a completed form to WCC within 10 days if a staff member is off work for more than 3 days due to an act of physical violence.
- Complaints and reports should be investigated swiftly (and confidentially where appropriate).

- What happened, who was involved, what triggered the incident, place, conditions, time of day, witnesses
- Witness statements should be collected as soon as possible by the manager investigating the accident.
- Management must investigate the underlying causes of the incident and record remedial actions required to minimise and control the risks. This will include appropriate sanctions.
- If staff are Health & Safety reps then they can also carry out investigations.
- Investigations must not be looking to assign blame but to learn from an incident how to improve the response if it occurs again and prevent a situation escalating into abuse or violence
- Staff must be instructed if any changes are made to pupil risk assessments, behaviour management plans and/ or risk reduction plans. Staff should be involved in the RRP assessment.
- Management must check that new procedures have been implemented, are being followed and are effective.

#### Reporting serious assaults to the police

A member of staff that has been physically assaulted may speak to the police, but it is also their right not to if they feel unhappy to do so. If the incident is not reported however, they will have no access to the criminal injuries compensation scheme at a later stage.

## **Monitoring, Review and Evaluation**

### **Monitoring**

Schools should monitor the effect of methods used to control violence to find out how successful they have been. They can then identify strategies that are not working, or which have unforeseen consequences, and modify or replace them.

Active monitoring involves checking that systems and procedures are working without waiting until something goes wrong.

Reactive monitoring involves looking at incidents after the event and sickness absence analysis. It depends on an effective system of reporting and recording incidents and ill health.

It is only through analysing information on incidents that patterns can be detected and strategies developed to manage unexpected situations.

Monitoring is only effective if those involved understand what is expected of them therefore procedures need to identify clearly what is to be monitored, by whom and how often.

### **Review**

The Headteacher is responsible for regularly undertaking trend analysis of all reports of violence.

A review process works best if it is part of the day-to-day management of health and safety and should also take forward the results of the monitoring described above. Reports by the Headteacher, safety representatives, safety committee and staff training records may provide useful information. The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations require risk assessments to be reviewed when they may no longer be valid, when circumstances change significantly and when change is planned. The overall review process helps identify the need for changes in risk assessments.

### **Evaluation**

The Headteacher will report any health and safety matters to the Governing Body. The report could include information about:

- An overview of the areas for which risk assessments have been carried out.
- Results of staff member questionnaires
- Details of control measures which have been put in place to safeguard staff. For example: IEP's, BMP's.
- Statistical information from monitoring systems and procedures, reporting and recording of incidents.
- Training which has been provided and an evaluation of how effective this has been.
- Planned actions.



- Information contained within the report should maintain the confidentiality of individual staff, children and young people who should not be identified.

## **Staff Support**

### **Supporting staff-after an incident**

Staff harmed physically or psychologically by violence may need support. Experience has shown that the immediate care and concern of managers and colleagues is much appreciated and may limit or prevent any serious long-term effects. The support framework needs to be flexible to respond to the needs of individual staff.

- Acknowledge and respect the staff member's feelings whether this is anger, fear, resentment or guilt.
- Inform the staff member of the Employee Assistance Programme for confidential counselling and welfare services if necessary.
- Consider and consult the staff member on whether a change to work area is appropriate for those staff who may be constantly exposed to violence and abuse.
- Demonstrate a team/ shared concern for the staff member's welfare.
- Be aware of any need for 'time out', either away from the scene of the incident or perpetrator involved.
- Maintain support if the staff member is absent from work. Offer an Occupational Health referral service or discuss this as part of the routine absence management meetings.
- Take a lead from the staff member concerned as to how they can best be helped to recover and return to normal functioning.
- Monitor staff member well-being through line-management meetings and team meetings.
- Record any action taken on the debrief sheet.

### **Employee Assistance Programme**

The effects of violence and aggression can be severe, some people cope more easily than others and some people may experience emotional ill-health, such as post-traumatic stress.