
Student Bullying and Harassment Policy

Reference: MC09
Issue No: 3
Approval Date: Jan 2024
Page: 1 of 6



Scope

Middlesbrough College has a firm commitment to equality and diversity and will not tolerate the bullying or harassment of any member of its community.

This policy is applicable to students, staff and visitors at Middlesbrough College. This policy is to outline the vision that the College has, to create a College community that is tolerant, inclusive and free from bullying and harassment, in all its forms. The College will treat all incidents and reported incidents of bullying extremely seriously and has a procedure that is transparent and reviewed and monitored regularly.

This policy is in conjunction with other policy documents including:

- Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy
- Behaviour Management Policy
- Learner IT Acceptable User Policy
- Health, Safety and Welfare Policy
- Equality Statement and Policy
- College Mission Statement and Strategic Priorities

Policy Content

Middlesbrough College is committed to ensuring that everyone is equally valued and treats one another with respect as part of the College community. Middlesbrough College is committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all our students. By its nature, bullying is contrary to these values and is unacceptable. The College will inform all students, parents, staff members of the Corporation and visitors that all types of bullying and harassment are unacceptable. All staff and students have a responsibility to ensure students feel safe and that all incidents of bullying and harassment are dealt with appropriately - both to address the behaviour of the alleged perpetrator and to provide support for the victim.

All complaints about harassment and bullying will be taken seriously and will be dealt with quickly and with respect for the people involved. Bullying, especially if left unaddressed, can have a devastating effect on individuals. It can be a barrier to learning and have serious consequences for their mental health.

Definitions of Bullying & Harassment Bullying

Bullying is defined as 'the persistent intentional harming of another person with an unequal power relationship'. (Bullying Intervention Group). Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either emotionally or physically.

Bullying differs from banter because there is a deliberate intention to hurt or humiliate, there is an unequal power balance and it is usually persistent or systematic. Bullying can be physical, verbal or psychological. It can happen face to face or online.

Examples of bullying can include:

- Verbal – threatening or intimidating behaviour, name calling, put downs and sexual and racist remarks.
- Physical – kicking, punching, hitting, spitting, biting, tripping someone up and damaging belongings or college work.
- Coercion – threats or forcing someone to do what they do not want to do.
- Emotional – rejection or isolating tactics, staring or threatening looks, playing on fears or sensitivities, remarks about personal appearance.
- Indirect – lies and rumour spreading, talking behind a person's back, using chatrooms or websites to spread or invite hatred.
- Cyberbullying – an aggressive and intentional act carried out by a group or individual, using electronic forms of contact repeatedly over time.
- Prejudice-driven bullying – when bullying is driven by negative attitudes towards another group of people or because the victim is seen as 'different' in some way. This can become more severe over time and can lead to hate crime. It can be related to race, religion or culture, special educational needs or disabilities, appearance or health conditions, sexuality or gender, perceived sexual orientation and any so-called perceived differences.

Harassment may include any of the above examples of behaviour, and in particular, a situation in which a person engages in unwanted conduct which has the purpose or effect of violating the others person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. Harassment can be 'one off' incidents or continuous behaviour.

Bullying and harassment may include behaviour on the grounds of any protected characteristic as identified in the Equality Act 2010, including:

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

Sexual Harassment

The definition of sexual harassment is 'unwanted conduct of a sexual nature' that can occur online and offline and both inside and outside of college. Sexual harassment is likely to: violate a student's dignity, and / or make them feel intimidated, degraded or humiliated and /or create a hostile, offensive or sexualised environment.

Whilst not intended to be an exhaustive list, sexual harassment can include:

- sexual comments, such as: telling sexual stories, making lewd comments, making sexual remarks about clothes and appearance and calling someone sexualised names;

- sexual “jokes” or taunting;
- physical behaviour, such as: deliberately brushing against someone, interfering with someone’s clothes and displaying pictures, photos or drawings of a sexual nature;
- online sexual harassment. This may be standalone, or part of a wider pattern of sexual harassment and/or sexual violence. It may include:
 - consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nudes images and/or videos
 - sharing of unwanted explicit content;
- upskirting
- sexualised online bullying;
- unwanted sexual comments and messages, including, on social media;
- sexual exploitation; coercion and threats.

Statutory Duties

The Equality Act 2010 requires the College to consider the needs of all protected groups (except marital and civil partnership status). The Act strengthens and simplifies existing equality legislation and brings together existing duties the College has, not to discriminate on grounds of race, disability and gender. It extends these to include duties not to discriminate on the grounds of age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and gender re-assignment.

The Equality Act 2010 outlines Middlesbrough College’s Public Sector Duty to have due regard to eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. These notions have been incorporated into this policy.

The College has a statutory duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of all students and will have regard to Keeping Children safe in Education and Working Together to safeguard Children.

The Roles of Staff

All staff have a responsibility to ensure students feel safe and that all incidents of bullying and harassment are dealt with appropriately.

The College’s response to bullying should not start at the point at which a student has been bullied. Staff need to be vigilant and identify issues between students which might provoke conflict and develop strategies to prevent bullying occurring in the first place.

If staff witness acts of bullying or harassment or are approached in confidence by students who are being bullied or harassed or by students who have witnessed such actions, the following members of staff should be informed as appropriate:

- Personal Tutor
- Assistant Principal / **Associate** Director
- The Safeguarding Team if the case is considered to be a safeguarding issue. Where there is ‘reasonable cause to suspect that a student is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm’, a bullying incident should be addressed as a safeguarding concern, **and if necessary action should be required by the academic department.**

These staff will take the appropriate course of action and can also be used as a source of advice or guidance or to provide support to a complainant or alleged perpetrator.

Procedure

Complaints of bullying or harassment could come from the following sources:

- Informal complaints
- Formal complaints
- Counter complaints
- Third party or 'witness' complaints
- Parent / carer complaints

Complaints regarding Bullying and Harassment

Quick and appropriate action can often lead to a problem being solved informally between those involved in a situation where someone perceives that they have been harassed or bullied. All those involved should make every effort to resolve a situation quickly and informally wherever possible.

Staff should respond positively to a request from a complainant to meet or speak about the complaint and seek an amicable and mutually acceptable solution, via mediation where appropriate. Further action may be taken depending on the incident/s reported. Support may be required or the student/s may be signposted to other services if appropriate. The disciplinary procedure may be initiated on the basis of evidence gathered.

Staff should keep a formal record of any reported incidents including dates, times, location, names of individuals involved (including witnesses), action they have taken and ways in which they have been affected by the situation. This should be shared with the safeguarding team to be recorded on CPOMS.

Students can also report bullying by texting *Safe to 60081*.

Any complaint should be taken seriously and every effort made to resolve it. Students should not automatically feel that the complaint is their fault or that there is nothing they can do about it. They can receive help and support from the same people listed earlier in this section.

The College, where possible, and in the context and nature of bullying incidences and age appropriateness, will take both a disciplinary and restorative stance to dealing with bullying incidents and of bullying prevention in the wider sense.

All parties, once the issue has been investigated and actions agreed, including sanctions, are encouraged to meet in a class, small group or 1:1 environment. These forums are used to look at triggers, the idea of blame and of taking responsibility and the impact of bullying on behaviour. It is an opportunity to apologise and accept the consequence of actions to influence future behaviours. It sets ground rules going forward, where everybody knows the consequences of non-compliance with agreed actions.

Complaints against a member of staff or member of the Corporation

If the complaint of bullying or harassment is against one of the above, the informal stages of this procedure may apply. However, if a formal complaint is received this will be dealt with using the Staff Disciplinary Procedure.

Allegations of a Serious Nature

If the allegation is sufficiently serious to warrant investigation by the Police, this should be referred immediately to a member of the Safeguarding Team.

7. Monitoring and Evaluation

Incidents reported under this policy will be monitored by the Vice Principal Students and Communications and reported annually to the College Senior Leadership Team and Governing Body as part of the Safeguarding review process. Bullying incidents reported via the Safeguarding Team are reviewed at a weekly Safeguarding meeting and records are stored confidentially. An annual safeguarding review examines the process and reflects on effectiveness and strategy of bullying intervention in order to promote and improve best practice.

Student Consultation and Feedback

Students are consulted at regular intervals throughout their course of study, to survey the effectiveness of bullying prevention and intervention and to assess the impact and effectiveness of the strategies in place.

Methods of consultation across the student body include:

- Twice yearly QDP survey for all students at induction and on programme.
- Regular targeted surveys via Student Voice mechanisms, including the Students' Union, Cross College Student Council, Focus Groups, Open Forums and Drop-ins.
- Targeted Thrive group work to ensure an inclusive approach to engage all students.

Prevention of Bullying

Middlesbrough College is dedicated to promoting and reinforcing a zero-tolerance policy towards all forms of bullying and harassment and promotes tolerance, respect, equality and diversity for all. Middlesbrough College fosters an inclusive community and culture of respect which is reinforced via a series of student led initiatives, including:

- A Student Ambassador Programme - Peer Mentoring scheme.
- Regular Students' Union campaigns which raise awareness and promoting equality and celebrates differences.
- Thrive input from Student Services and external support agencies.

- Thrive programme for all full-time students. This scheme focuses on helping students develop relevant skills with an emphasis on promoting citizenship, open mindedness and tolerance of others and other cultures.
- In July 2012 Middlesbrough College became the first FE College to achieve the Bullying Intervention Group (BIG) Award, and is still accredited. This externally verified award recognises excellence in anti-bullying practice and that schools, colleges and other services for young people take bullying and inclusion seriously.

Communicating our commitment to a zero-tolerance policy on bullying and harassment

To students through:

- Induction Process – Personal Tutors and Safeguarding and Welfare Officers
- Student's Union campaigns and activities
- Thrive
- Teams (VLE)
- Student Ambassadors - Peer Mentors
- Bullying Prevention Focus Group

To parents, visitors and the public through:

- College website - this policy is available in in the Student Services section under Safeguarding and Welfare.
- Course guides and marketing materials
- Publication of externally verified awards and quality marks such as the BIG Award and the North East Equality Gold Award

Copies of this policy will be available on Sharepoint Student Services and from the Faculty / Directorate Administrative areas.

The induction programme for students highlights the College's commitment to equality, the action to be taken by students who suffer bullying or harassment and the action to be taken against perpetrators of such behaviour.

Tutors will reinforce this information during induction week, Thrive and in the classroom, or work-based monitoring visits to work placement providers.