

Student Anti–Bullying and Harassment Policy

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1. Introduction

London South East Colleges is committed to the promotion and development of equality of opportunity. We aim to provide a working and learning environment which values individuals equally regardless of age, disability, ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, religious belief or trade union membership. In line with this ongoing commitment, London South East Colleges considers that all learners have a right to be treated with dignity and respect, and will not tolerate any form of bullying.

2. Scope of the Policy

This policy is intended to address issues arising between students. Other accusations of bullying are dealt with as follows:

- Staff accused of bullying students are referred through the Complaints Procedure;
- Staff accused of bullying staff are referred through the Staff Bullying and Harassment Policy;
- Students accused of bullying staff are referred through the Relationships and Positive Behaviours Policy.

This policy applies to when students are on College premises or on College related activities off site, for example apprentices and students on work experience placements or educational visits and also includes travelling to and from College.

This policy also applies to students who are involved in bullying and harassment of other students outside of college hours including online. The College will also act where behaviour could bring the College into disrepute and/or could endanger staff and students.

3. Definition of Bullying

The following definition is the starting point when applying the College policy:

“Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, usually repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group, physically or emotionally”

(Department for Education)

However, bullying does not only depend on the intention of the instigator, but also on the impact their behaviour has on others. Where one person may accept behaviours or deem it as ‘banter’ another individual may become distressed. Therefore, it is important that perceptions and the feelings of all persons involved are reflected on and awareness is raised through preventative education.

4. Definition of Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place over digital devices like mobile phones, computers, and tablets. Cyberbullying can occur through SMS, Text, and apps, or online on social media, forums, or gaming where people can view, participate in, or share content. Cyberbullying includes sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or mean content about someone else. It can include sharing personal or private information about someone else causing embarrassment or humiliation.

5. Definition of Harassment

Harassment may be directed at an individual or a group. Under the Equality Act 2010, harassment is defined as “unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual’s dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual.”

6. Diversity and Inclusion

Bullying is closely related to how we respect and recognise the value of diversity.

The college will be proactive about:

- Seeking opportunities to learn about and celebrate differences
- Increasing diversity within our staff, volunteers and students
- Creating a welcome and inclusive environment

7. Forms of Bullying and Harassment

Bullying can range from extremes, such as violence, to less obvious forms, for example deliberately ignoring someone. Whatever the form, it will be unwanted behaviour which is unwelcome and unpleasant and results in pain and distress to the victim.

Bullying can be:

- **physical** – pushing and shoving, tripping up, kicking, spitting or any other use of physical contact
- **emotional** – humiliating someone, name calling, using insulting names or comments, making derogatory remarks, intrusive questioning or goading
- **driven by prejudice** – bullying behaviour because of, or focusing on, diversity issues such as race, sexuality, disability, age, transgender identity, religion, gender. This may include inappropriate language or taunts, gestures, graffiti etc.
- **verbal** - name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, making derogatory remarks, intrusive questioning or goading
- **sexual** – unwanted physical contact or inappropriate sexual comments
- **indirect** – spreading rumours, whether true or not
- **online** – any form of bullying facilitated by using an electronic device to access the internet and distribute unwanted content, including chat rooms, social networking sites, instant messaging, camera/video facilities or email.

It may also be classed as bullying when:

- the same person or group always leaves someone out or excludes them
- someone makes threats of violence against someone else
- someone damages someone else’s possessions deliberately
- someone takes someone else’s belongings deliberately
- someone tries to force someone else to do something they do not want to do
- someone tries to force another to do something sexual they do not want to do

8. Prevention of Bullying and Harassment

We recognise that bullying causes real distress and affects a person’s health and development. Every student has the right to equal protection from all types of harm and abuse and everyone has a role to play in preventing and stopping all forms of bullying.

Through enrichment, student voice and tutoring activities the college will aim to raise awareness and understand the experiences of students to adapt and respond to current needs and concerns throughout the academic year.

The College recognises its responsibility to educate its students to counter bullying and harassment. This is achieved through a variety of means, including as appropriate:

- induction activities
- delivering group tutorials on bullying and e-safety (including cyber- bullying)
- the promotion of anti-bullying through the College's enrichment programme
- raising awareness of the Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy through the activities of the enrichment officers and Student Achievement Tutors
- ensuring that students and staff are aware of what constitutes bullying and the consequences for those involved
- raising awareness of cyber bullying through IT inductions
- ensuring, through induction processes, student handbooks and the virtual learning environment, that students are aware of whom to approach with a concern and their rights to confidentiality in this context
- displaying literature promoting anti-bullying and giving advice on what constitutes bullying and the support the College offers.

All staff are responsible for:

- being aware of the Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy and the procedures for reporting bullying;
- acting in line with this policy should they witness acts of bullying or harassment; or are approached in confidence by students being bullied or harassed; or by students who have witnessed such actions;
- treating all students with dignity and respect, ensuring their own conduct does not cause offence or misunderstanding; and challenging behaviour or the use of language which could cause offence.
- encouraging a culture of openness and transparency where students feel safe to share their experiences.

Students are required to:

- follow the student learning expectations (Ready, Responsible and Respect) under the Relationships and Positive Behaviours Policy ;
- be aware of the Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy; and
- report incidents of bullying either in person

Parents/Carers:

The College expects parents and carers to contact the College if they know or suspect their child is being bullied or is bullying others. It is also expected that parents/carers will work with College staff to resolve conflicts between students.

9. Reporting Incidents

An individual who feels bullied or intimidated has the right to expect any member of staff to listen and to act promptly and sensitively to deal with the issue. Bullying of any kind will always be treated seriously and the College believes that to do nothing is to condone the behaviour. Students may report bullying by:

- speaking to their Student Achievement Tutor / Teacher / a Safeguarding Officer or any other member of staff
- e-mailing safestudent@lsec.ac.uk

- Use whisper via QR codes on College posters or College app. The student must be informed that information will be recorded.

London South East Colleges undertakes to respond promptly and effectively to issues of bullying. When a student reports a case of bullying, the matter will be dealt with initially by the Curriculum department as quickly as possible.

Where there is believed to be a risk of significant harm the case will be referred to a designated Safeguarding Officer and dealt with through the safeguarding procedures.

If the allegation of bullying is against a member of College staff it must be passed to Human Resources for action.

10. Recording Incidents

When a student reports an incident of bullying, the following information should be gathered and added to Cjoms:

- date(s), time(s) and place(s) of incident(s)
- names or details of individuals involved
- names of any witnesses
- details of experiences and events
- how it made the student/s feel
- any action already taken e.g. reported to another member of staff or a restorative discussion has taken place
- original copies of any correspondence or written material connected with the issue must be retained
- where cyberbullying has taken place, printouts should be obtained wherever possible (e.g. of emails), or the member of staff taking the statement should sign it to say they have seen any text messages/call records on the student's mobile phone. The student should be advised not to delete messages which may be used as evidence and collect screenshots wherever possible.

11. Obtaining Evidence of Cyberbullying

When bullying and harassment takes place online it may be easy for evidence to be gathered and shared. This can be done by:

- creating screen shots of cyberbullying on a computer or phone
- saving conversations taking place on I.M. (usually called 'save chatlog').

Where cyberbullying occurs via text message. The member of staff shown the text message should log the following:

- name of individual the message has been sent to
- time and date the message was received
- number the message was sent from (and name if known)
- the wording from the text message.

Any information collected will inform the mediation and restorative process if it is decided to embark on this. It will also be used as evidence in any subsequent disciplinary proceedings. Staff should ask students to send any screenshots of evidence to their teams or work email.

If a member of staff observes cyberbullying in College the above steps for obtaining evidence should be taken. However, if this is being done via college communication methods, the name of any of the students involved should be passed to IT staff, who will be able to support gathering evidence.

All cases of suspected cyberbullying must be reported to the safeguarding team. The case should then be dealt with as per other forms of bullying. If no instigator is identified and the matter is ongoing, the student should be advised to contact the police as they are often able to trace electronic communication of such nature.

12. Cyberbullying and the Law.

There is no legal definition of cyberbullying within UK law. However, there are a number of existing laws that can be applied to cases of cyberbullying and online harassment, namely: Protection from Harassment Act 1997, Malicious Communications Act 1988, Communications Act 2003, Public Order Act 1986.

13. Confidentiality

As a general guideline, members of staff will respect the confidentiality of the individual as long as it is consistent with the College's Safeguarding Policy and our safeguarding duties under the Education Act 2002 and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024.

Where confidentiality has to be broken, this must be discussed with the student to ensure they understand the reason for this. In some cases, the individual may just want to talk about the bullying but may not wish to take matters further. Providing there is no requirement to do so under the College's safeguarding duties, a strategy should be developed with the student to help them address the situation.

14. Initial Meeting and Investigation

Curriculum staff member will initially meet with the student to discuss their concern and seek to resolve the matter.

The investigation may either be informal or formal depending on the needs of the complainant and the nature of the complaint. Often an informal and restorative approach at an early stage can offer the best solution before matters escalate.

Alternatively, it should be recognised that there will be instances where an individual talks on an informal basis, but because of the nature of the harassment and the risk of harm to self or others, a designated Safeguarding Officer must be informed. In such instances formal action may be taken although this will always be discussed with the student/s to gain their consent and/or understanding that the matter must be taken further.

Informal

The informal (restorative approach) stage will normally be undertaken by a Student Achievement Tutor / Teacher.

Formal

If the matter has to be resolved formally under the disciplinary procedure, the investigating member of staff should:

- carry out investigations within any timescales specified
- set up initial interviews with both parties separately and explain the College policy on bullying
- keep a written record of all interviews and decisions taken

- be sensitive to personal feelings and perceptions (just because you cannot understand why someone feels harassed this does not mean that they are not).
- Take appropriate decisions and actions as befits the nature of the offence
- enable the victim to discuss the incident and all possible courses of action to empower the victim to address the issue with the perpetrator i.e.
 - mediation
 - or invoking the student disciplinary procedure
- ensure the complainant is not victimised as a result of making the complaint.

A Safeguarding Officer should be notified of the outcome and logged on CPOMS/e-tracker.

Counselling can be offered to both parties; referrals can be made to the wellbeing and safeguarding team.

If the student is a victim of hate crime, they should be offered the opportunity and support to report this to the Police.

15. Mediation and Restorative Approaches

The mediator would ordinarily be a Student Achievement Tutor / Teacher or Safeguarding Officer. In some instances, where appropriate, it could be an officer from the Local Youth Policing Team. The mediator can help participants to resolve their dispute and to co-exist at the College, through using the following procedure:

- Both parties define the problem as they see it, individually with the mediator.
- The mediator identifies the key issues for both parties - these are recorded.
- At the end of the individual session with the mediator, the mediator ascertains whether or not the parties are willing to meet together, along with the mediator to try to move towards reconciliation.
- At the joint meeting, led by the mediator, both parties should be encouraged to speak and express their opinion with only one person allowed to speak at a time.
- The mediator needs to control the meeting firmly, to ensure it is conducted in a reasonable and non-aggressive way.
- The mediator sets up a plan of action which will satisfy each party and obtains agreement on this.
- If necessary, a follow up meeting is agreed and the situation monitored at agreed intervals.

The mediators should follow the approach outlined in the Relationship and Positive Behaviours Staff handbook which includes examples of conducting a restorative conversation.

16. Student Disciplinary Procedure

The student disciplinary procedure may be invoked in the case of serious incidents of bullying or, following mediation, where no satisfactory plan of action can be formulated, or if the perpetrator continues their bullying behaviour.

17. Supporting all students involved

There is often an underlying reason for bullying behaviour. Often bullying behaviour is a result of someone:

- Having previous experiences of bullying
- Being afraid of someone else
- Wanting to be accepted
- Having low levels of self-esteem and self-confidence
- Experiencing childhood trauma and having unmet needs

Support may be required to enable a student to identify and change their behaviour through wellbeing and counselling sessions, restorative discussions and building relationships with others and key adults in their lives.

Consideration should also be given to students who have witnessed bullying and harassment behaviour. They may also require support and space to reflect on what they have witnessed.

18. Monitoring and Review

All notified incidents of bullying must be recorded on CPOMS for tracking and monitoring.

The Head of Safeguarding will monitor the effectiveness and impact of the Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy annually and report to the Safeguarding Strategy Group.

19. Related Information and Links

- London South East Colleges Safeguarding Policy
- London South East Colleges Student Complaints Procedure
- London South East Colleges Student Positive Behaviour and Disciplinary Procedures
- London South East Colleges Social Media Policy
- London South East Colleges Internet Usage Policy
- www.childline.org.uk/explore/bullying
- www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk
- www.education.gov.uk
- <http://ceop.police.uk/>
- www.thinkuknow.co.uk/
- [Cyberbullying Advice from the DfE](#)