



## **Bullying & Harassment Policy**

### **Introduction**

It is in everyone's interests that we work to be harmonious and respectful. Although we would like to think that this is always the case, this policy recognises that inappropriate behaviour, which may include harassment, can take place. This policy aims to ensure that if inappropriate behaviour does occur during the course of your employment it is dealt with in a serious, sensitive and confidential manner so that the matter can be resolved as quickly as possible for all concerned. We are committed to tackling incidents of inappropriate behaviour swiftly and decisively.

### **Identifying Harassment**

Different things affect us all in different ways, and therefore what one individual might think of as harmless could be felt to be harassment by another. It is important to remember that harassment is defined by the way that someone feels about your behaviour, and not by your intentions. For example, you tell a joke that you think is funny. Although it was just a bit of fun and you did not intend to upset anyone, one of your colleagues finds it offensive. This individual may have a valid claim that they have been harassed.

It is important to note that the question of whether or not behaviour constitutes harassment rests with the person on the receiving end of the behaviour. Friendly, welcome and reciprocated actions are fine, but great care should be taken when interacting with others to distinguish between behaviour that is viewed as welcome and behaviour that is unwanted and potentially offensive to another person.

A single incident can constitute harassment, if it is sufficiently serious. Alternatively, a series of relatively minor incidents or actions can be collectively viewed as harassment, in particular if the behaviour persists after the individual has expressed an objection to it or asked for it to stop. The Pre-school's position is that no harassment of any kind should take place and all employees have a responsibility to ensure at all times that their own behaviour does not offend others.

It is important to remember that harassment:

- depends on the view of the individual on the receiving end of another person's behaviour
- does not depend on the severity of the behaviour - a joke or a throw-away comment could be perceived as harassment by anyone who hears it
- can include behaviour that you hear or see, even if it is not directed at you and has nothing to do with you (for example where you feel that your working environment is hostile or offensive because of the way in which another person is treated)

## **Bullying**

Bullying is regarded as any behaviour, occasional or persistent, by anyone that intimidates or oppresses another person, possibly through misuse of authority or power. It invariably has a negative effect on the victim's self-confidence, self-esteem and general well-being. It can be subtle in nature and is intended to hurt. It can take place with your work colleagues in public or in private, at work or socially.

Examples of bullying may include:

- shouting or swearing at an individual
- persistent, excessive, unfair or unjustified criticism
- public humiliation and/or insults
- persistent undervaluing of a person's effort
- constant ignoring of opinions
- withholding information without justification that would be beneficial to an individual
- unjustified, excessive monitoring and/or supervision
- setting someone up to fail - for example, setting a target/objective that simply cannot be achieved
- constant changing of targets for no justifiable reason
- unreasonably blocking requests for leave
- aggressive communications
- intimidating or threatening behaviour.

## **Behaviours that may constitute Harassment**

When considering the following characteristics; gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, disability or age this may include the following actions relating to such characteristics:

- jokes or banter or remarks that are demeaning or derogatory, either to an individual or about them, or any family member or their partner (even when it is just speculation and not known)
- threats or assault
- office gossip or detrimental speculation
- coarse or vulgar humour
- isolation of an individual
- teasing of an individual
- displaying materials in any way eg on computers, clothes, that can be treated as offensive
- using your status in the workplace to threaten an individual's job security without grounds to do so

## **Preventing Harassment**

We all have a responsibility to discourage harassment and prevent it from taking place by:

- being aware of the problems that harassment can cause, and ensuring that our behaviour does not cause others to feel harassed

- making our colleagues aware that certain conduct or behaviour is causing concern or offence to ourselves or to others

Managers have a particular responsibility to prevent harassment taking place by:

- being alert to the possibility that harassment may be happening in their area
- using their judgement to correct behaviour that could be considered offensive, and reminding employees of the Pre-school's policy on this matter
- taking prompt action to stop harassment as soon as it is identified
- dealing with all incidents quickly, seriously, sensitively and in confidence.
- taking appropriate steps to ensure that employees are not subject to harassment at work from third parties (e.g. customers, suppliers etc)

## **Dealing with Bullying and Harassment**

The Pre School will deal with all complaints of bullying and harassment promptly, fairly, sensitively and in confidence.

Most people who complain that they are being bullied or harassed simply want the behaviour to stop. Where appropriate, they can be encouraged to take charge of the situation themselves by informing the bully/harasser that his or her behaviour is unacceptable and that it must stop.

If you feel that you are unable to deal with a particular situation without support, you should ask your line manager to explain to the person causing offence that their behaviour is unwelcome and must stop.

If this initial approach is inappropriate in the circumstances or fails to resolve the problem, you can use the Pre-school's Grievance Procedure.

Disciplinary action will be considered in all cases where a claim of bullying or harassment is substantiated.

This policy was adopted at a meeting of Trustees held on .....

And was checked and re-affirmed on .....

Signed on behalf of The Little Pennies Pre-school

.....(Chairperson)