

STUDENT RELATED POLICY: BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

This policy is annually reviewed to ensure compliance with current regulations

Approved/reviewed by	
Approved by: Executive Leadership Team Reviewed by: Assistant Principal: SEND and Inclusion	
Date of next review	September 2027

This policy and procedure is subject to The Equality Act 2010 which recognises the following as Protected Characteristics: Age, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion and Belief, Sex, Sexual orientation, and Disability.

1. Document Control

1.1. Document Details

Title	Bullying and Harassment (for Students)
Author	Adam Wardell
Version	5.0
Date	August
Status	Published

1.2. Revision History

Version	Date	Author	Comments
1.0	Dec 2019	Vicki Locke	Definitive Release
2.0	Feb 2022	Vicki Locke	Definitive Release
3.0	September 2023	Abid Hussain / Sharon Posey	Definitive Release
4.0	October 2025	Abid Hussain / Sharon Posey	Amendments to point 9.1. First bullet point added to point 7.2. Point 4.4 from the previous version has been removed. 'Learners' and 'VITAL' replaced by 'Students' and 'Pro Monitor' throughout.
5.0	August 2026	Adam Wardell	Multiple Amendments: • Job title changes throughout • Amends to points 1.2, 1.5, 1.7 (final 2 bullet points), 3.1, 4.1 (Non-verbal harassment and Sexual harassment), 4.2 (Cyber bullying), 6.3, 7.9, 8.4, 9.2, 9.7, 9.9, 10.2

1.3. Distribution

Name	Email	Organisation
All Staff	Uploaded to SharePoint	Boston College

This policy is to be read in conjunction with:

- Student Code of Conduct
- Safeguarding Students Policy
- Student Disciplinary Policy and Procedures
- IT Acceptable User Policy

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Boston College is committed to promoting and celebrating the diversity of its community maintaining a safe working environment which fosters positive working relationships and mutual respect. Bullying and harassment of any kind is unacceptable and will not be tolerated in our college. We take all incidents of bullying seriously and it is our duty as a whole college community to take measures to prevent and tackle bullying, harassment or discrimination. We aim to promote emotional health and wellbeing within all settings in the College so that bullying behaviour is unlikely and unable to prosper.
- 1.2 Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility therefore all students, staff, volunteers, contractors, work placement employers and visitors to the College will be expected to fully accept and implement this policy, whether in the workplace or outside of college premises, and must take responsibility to prevent, challenge and respond to bullying or harassment wherever it occurs.
- 1.3 This policy aims to provide guidelines and procedures to be followed in the event of a serious incident and any incident will therefore be acted upon promptly and appropriately. We recognise that bullying behaviour can involve complex issues and interpretations of events so that each case will be dealt with on an individual basis.
- 1.4 This policy also aims to raise awareness and create an ethos of collective responsibility where bullying behaviour is unacceptable, and fear of reprisal is removed. This will be achieved by whole college cross curricula activities, involving all those in the College community – students, staff, governors and parents/carers/guardians and other agencies where appropriate.
- 1.5 This policy should be read in conjunction with other key college policies and procedures, namely the Safeguarding Policy, I.T. Acceptable User Policy, Student Code of Conduct, Staff and Student Disciplinary Policies and Staff Professional Code of Conduct.
- 1.6 This policy will not discriminate either directly or indirectly against any individual on grounds of gender, race, ethnicity or national origin, sexual orientation, marital status, religion or belief, age, trade union membership, disability, socio- economic status, offending background or any other personal characteristic.
- 1.7 This policy has been written to meet the guidance and duties as detailed by legislation. This policy complies with: -
 - The Children Act (1989): Duty of care.
 - Section 175 Education Act 2002: places a duty on the College to make arrangements to ensure their functions are 'exercised with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children receiving education or training at the institution'. Tackling bullying is a key part of fulfilling this duty.

- Education and Inspection Act 2006 – All educational establishments must have measures to encourage good behaviour and prevent all forms of bullying amongst students.
- Equality Act (2010): Section 26 – Harassment.
- Other Legislation relating to the safeguarding and welfare of young people and vulnerable adults.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026
- Working Together to Safeguard Children

2. SCOPE

- 2.1 This policy applies to the whole college community and therefore includes students, staff, contractors, visitors, parents / carers etc. It applies to all college activities whether on college premises, within employment, business or workplace, or college activities such as educational and residential visits. In appropriate circumstances, the provisions of the policy will also extend to cover the conduct of staff and students when they are not on college premises and / or not under the control or supervision of a member of staff. Where an incident involves students from another organisation, staff will liaise with colleagues from the relevant organisation. With all incidents, external agencies will be involved where appropriate and necessary.

3. IMPLEMENTATION & MONITORING

3.1 Implementation

- The implementation of the policy is the responsibility of all staff and will be monitored by the Executive Leadership Team, and the Senior Leadership Team.
- The Assistant Principal: SEND and Inclusion has responsibility for the review of this policy and will report to the Executive Leadership Team and the Inclusion Committee on any incidences of bullying and harassment in relation to students.
- The College Management Team are integral to the implementation and adherence to this policy within teams.
- Each individual college staff member is responsible for recognising, reporting and supporting incidences of bullying and harassment in line with this and related policies.

3.2 Monitoring and Reporting

- Students can report incidents of bullying and harassment to their tutor, Success Coach or the Safeguarding and Wellbeing Team via safeguarding@boston.ac.uk
- Students can use the Anonymous reporting form in the Student Handbook to report incidents or concerns, however response and follow up actions may be limited due to anonymity

- The Assistant Principal: SEND and Inclusion is responsible for ensuring the systematic collection, collation and analysis of data.
- The number and types of formal bullying and harassment incidents will be monitored including the identification of those involving equality, diversity and vulnerable groups and any emerging trends.
- The Assistant Principal: SEND and Inclusion is responsible for ensuring that recording and reporting procedures are applied consistently.
- The effectiveness of the policy will be monitored through the use of both hard and soft data, including on-going use of 'Student Voice' strategies and the Inclusion Committee.

4. DEFINITIONS

4.1 Harassment

Harassment is a form of discrimination and may be directed at an individual or group. It may be related to age, gender, transgender or being a transsexual person, race, sexual orientation, disability, religion, nationality or any protected/personal characteristic of the individual(s) and the actions or comments are viewed as demeaning and unacceptable to the recipient. Under the Equality Act 2010 harassment is defined as:

'Unwanted conduct relating to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual'.

- **Physical** - unwanted contact, (e.g. unnecessary touching), assault or gestures, physical intimidation, aggressive behaviour.
- **Verbal** - unwelcome or aggressive remarks, suggestions and propositions, malicious gossip, jokes, banter or disrespectful comments.
- **Non-verbal** - this may include offensive literature or pictures, graffiti, computer imagery, image creation and/or sharing, including AI generated images, text messages, cyber impersonation, isolation or non-cooperation and exclusion from social activities.
- **Emotional** – humiliating someone, belittling someone, name calling, using insulting names or comments.
- **Social or psychological** – ignoring, alienating, excluding, spreading rumours, dirty looks.
- **Indirect** – Spreading rumours, including online whether true or untrue.
- **Sexual** – Unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. When determining whether conduct has this effect, the College will consider the person's perception, the circumstances of the case and whether it was reasonable for the conduct to have that effect. Conduct

does not need to have been intended as harassment, and a single incident may amount to sexual harassment.

These examples are not intended to be exhaustive. They are, however, indicative of conduct that would be considered unacceptable by the College.

Harassment (including Third Party harassment and harassment by association and perception), together with victimisation due to one or more of the following protected characteristics is unlawful under the Equality Act 2010: -

- age
- disability (physical or mental)
- gender reassignment
- race (including ethnic and national origins, colour and nationality)
- religion or belief (including lack of belief)
- sex (including sexual harassment)
- sexual orientation

4.2 **Bullying**

Bullying is a particular form of harassment. It is 'behaviour by an individual or group, usually repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally'.

Bullying may be verbal, non-verbal, social or psychological. It is persistent, deliberate, malicious, threatening, offensive, abusive, intimidating, and / or insulting behaviour. It may be linked to an abuse of power, position or knowledge. It may involve the use of unfair sanctions. It can happen in public or in private. What is important is not necessarily the intent of the perpetrator but that their conduct makes the recipient(s) feel upset, humiliated, vulnerable, or undermines their self-confidence.

The nature of bullying can be:

- **Physical** - such as hitting, or physically intimidating someone, or using inappropriate or unwanted physical contact towards someone
- **Attacking property** – such as damaging, stealing or hiding someone's possessions
- **Verbal** – such as name calling, spreading rumours about someone, using derogatory or offensive language or threatening someone
- **Psychological** – such as deliberately excluding or ignoring people
- **Cyber** – such as using text, email, AI or other social media to write or say hurtful things about someone. Using images, including AI generated images/videos to cause embarrassment or emotional harm.

Bullying can be based on any of the following things (this list is not exhaustive):

- Race (racist bullying)
- Religion or belief
- Culture or class
- Gender (Sexist bullying)
- Sexual orientation (homophobic or bi-phobic bullying) / online sexual harassment
- Gender identity (transphobic bullying)
- Special Educational Needs (SEN) or disability
- Appearance or health conditions
- Related to home or other personal situations
- Related to another vulnerable group of people e.g. young carers

Everyone in the college has a responsibility to report and deal with bullying and should be able to spot possible signs that bullying may be taking place. This includes and is not limited to:

- Being frightened of walking to or from college
- Not wanting to go on their usual mode of transport
- Changing their usual routine
- Being unwilling to go home
- Unwilling to attend college; having a poor attendance record or showing changes to a usually good attendance record
- Becoming withdrawn, anxious or lacking in confidence
- Self-harming behaviours
- Talking about feeling suicidal or attempting suicide
- Running away/going missing
- Having difficulty sleeping
- Showing signs that their college work is suffering
- Having personal possessions damaged or being taken/go missing
- Having unexplained physical injuries
- Becoming aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
- Bullying other students
- Showing changes in their eating habits
- Being frightened to say what's wrong
- Giving improbable excuses for any of the above
- Being afraid to use the internet or mobile phone
- Being nervous or jump when a digital message is received

4.3 Bullying is not confined to open, derisory remarks or aggression, but can also be subtle and devious, resulting in an individual being singled out, demeaned, devalued or being set up to fail. Some examples of bullying are:

- i Consistently undermining someone and their ability to do their work.
- ii Shouting or use of sarcasm at an individual to get things done.

iii Derogatory or belittling remarks in front of others regarding appearance, work or personal attributes.

4.4 Bullying may be face to face or may take the form of cyber-bullying – through mobile phones, email, social networking sites and gaming platforms etc.

4.5 The College will support the tackling of bullying outside of College where this may impact directly on relationships and behaviour within College and / or bring the reputation of the College into disrepute.

4.6 It is important to recognise some forms of bullying will constitute a criminal offence, and the College will support criminal proceedings where appropriate or required.

4.7 **Prejudice Based Bullying**

Bullying can be by singling out someone or a group of people because they belong to a particular group. This is prejudice-based bullying which can take many forms and will not be tolerated at the College: -

- **Racist bullying:** A range of hurtful behaviour, both physical and psychological, that makes a person feel unwelcome, marginalised, excluded, powerless or worthless because of their colour, ethnicity, national origin or national status.
- **Sexual bullying:** Any behaviour, whether physical or non-physical, where sexuality is used as a weapon by boys or by girls. It can be carried out to a person's face, behind their back or by use of technology.
- **Transphobic bullying:** Bullying because someone is, or is thought to be, transgender.
- **Homophobic bullying:** Targets someone because of their sexual orientation (or perceived sexual orientation).
- **Disablist bullying:** Bullying involving people with disabilities employs many of the same forms as other types of bullying, with name calling and pushing and shoving being common but the disability is the reason for the bullying.

4.8 **Other Key Terms**

- **Cyber bullying** – Any form of bullying using a mobile phone or the internet, chat rooms, gaming platforms, social networking sites, instant messaging or email.
- **Discrimination:** treating someone differently because of a real or perceived difference.
- **Hate incident:** any incident which is perceived to be racist, sexist, disablist, faith based, homophobic, transphobic etc by the victim or any other person.

- **Hate Crime:** any offence committed against a person or property which is motivated by the offender's hatred of people because they are seen as being different e.g. their sex, race, religion, disability or sexual orientation.

5. **Child-on-child abuse, harmful sexual behaviour, sexual harassment, and sexual violence**

- 5.1 Sexual violence and sexual harassment ('unwanted conduct of a sexual nature') can occur between two young people of any age and sex. It can also occur through a group of young people sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child/young person or group of children/young people.
- 5.2 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 sexual nature; and
 - Online sexual harassments such as non-consensual sharing of sexual images and videos, sexualised online bullying, unwanted sexual comments and messages, sexual exploitation; coercion and threats
- 5.3 Children/young people who are victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment will likely find the experience stressful and distressing. This will **likely** adversely affect their educational attainment. Sexual violence and sexual harassment exist on a continuum and may overlap; they can occur online and offline (both physically and verbally) and are never acceptable. It is important that all victims are taken seriously and offered appropriate support
- 5.4 Young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) are three times more likely to be abused than their peers. Additional barriers can sometimes exist when recognising abuse in SEND children. These can include:
- Assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child's disability without further exploration;
 - The potential for children with SEND being disproportionately impacted by behaviours such as bullying and harassment, without outwardly showing signs; and
 - Communication barriers and difficulties overcoming these barriers
- 5.5 Any reports of abuse involving children with SEND will therefore require close liaison with the safeguarding team and the SEND managers.

- 5.6 Young people who are lesbian, gay, bi or trans (LGBT) can be targeted by their peers. In some cases, a young person who is perceived by their peers to be LGBT (whether they are or not) can be just as vulnerable as young people who identify as LGBT.
- 5.7 Consideration must always be given when investigating bullying concerns around sexual violence and harassment. Any allegation or concern must be taken seriously and reported to the Safeguarding Team through the 'My Concern' system where it will be checked, recorded and dealt with appropriately.

6. EFFECTS OF BULLYING / HARASSMENT

- 6.1 Bullying and harassment can be unpredictable, irrational and may not be obvious to others. They can cause an individual to feel isolated, vulnerable or frightened and can have implications for physical, mental health and wellbeing. This can exhibit in poor motivation and relationships, poor performance, increased sickness, unauthorised absence levels and increased drop out.
- 6.2 Victims may fear retribution if they make a complaint. Others may be reluctant to come forward as witnesses and may collude with the bully as a way of avoiding unwanted attention themselves.
- 6.3 A person who brings a complaint in good faith or assists in an investigation should be protected from any form of victimisation regardless of the outcome.

7. RESPONSIBILITIES

- 7.1 College's have obligations under the Human Rights Act 1998 (HRA). It is unlawful for colleges to act in a way that is incompatible with the European Convention on Human Rights. These rights include:
 - Article 3: the right to freedom from inhuman and degrading treatment (an absolute right).
 - Article 8: the right to respect for private and family life (a qualified right) includes a duty to protect individuals' physical and psychological integrity;
 - Article 14: requires that all of the rights and freedoms set out in the Act must be protected and applied without discrimination; and
 - Protocol 1, Article 2: protects the right to an effective education. Being subjected to sexual violence or sexual harassment may breach any or all of these rights, depending on the nature of the conduct and the circumstances.
- 7.2 The college is required to comply with the relevant requirements as set out in the Equality Act 2010 (the Equality Act) and the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), which is a legal requirement for schools and colleges that are public bodies. Under the PSED, colleges

have a general duty to have regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity between different groups and to foster good relations between different groups. The duty applies to all protected characteristics.

The College Community: -

- 7.3 Everyone within the College community has a responsibility to safeguard the welfare of others by challenging, addressing and reporting incidents of bullying and harassment, including incidents that occur off site or online.
- 7.4 Everyone has the responsibility to acknowledge that views and opinions held by others may not always coincide with their own, and while such differences are unlikely to constitute harassment, personal views and opinions should be shared appropriately and responsibly.
- 7.5 Everyone has a responsibility to create a safe and welcoming environment for everyone
- 7.6 Every member of staff has a responsibility to ensure all College users and colleagues are treated with dignity and respect and to ensure their conduct does not cause offence or misunderstanding.
- 7.7 Members of staff should expect to act as role models for students, ensuring they exhibit no bullying behaviour in their own working practice and proactively challenge, address and report bullying or harassment.
- 7.8 Personal Tutors have a particular responsibility to support their students through any disclosure and investigations into allegations of bullying and or harassment, including liaison with Student Services.
- 7.9 All reports of bullying and harassment from Student are recorded centrally in Pro-Monitor using the Bullying and Harassment log.
- 7.10 Every student has a responsibility to treat other students, staff and members of the public with dignity and respect, and to ensure their conduct does not cause offence or misunderstanding.
- 7.11 Students should report to college staff any incidences of harassment or bullying they are subject to or aware of and co-operate fully with any investigations into allegations of bullying or harassment.

Manager Responsibilities: -

- 7.12 All Directors of Learning and Heads of Curriculum have a responsibility to promote a culture free from unacceptable behaviour relating to bullying and harassment.

- 7.13 All Directors of Learning and Heads of Curriculum have a duty to ensure that any allegations of bullying and or harassment made by students are treated seriously and are investigated thoroughly and the student disciplinary procedure is applied consistently.
- 7.14 The College will respect the particular sensitivity of bullying and harassment complaints and the need for confidentiality. All the parties involved should be reminded of their obligation to keep all matters relating to the complaint confidential. There may be occasions where confidentiality has to be broken, and this should be made clear to the complainant before any further action is taken. Likewise, there may be occasions where, if a complainant wishes to remain anonymous, it may not be possible to take any action. Where this is the case, this must be made clear to them.

8. PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS

- 8.1 If bullying behaviour does occur; all students should be able to report their concerns easily and know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. This means that anyone who knows that bullying is happening is expected to tell a member of the college staff or their personal tutor. Bullying and harassment is considered to be an act of gross misconduct and will be treated as such through the student disciplinary procedure
- 8.2 Staff should record incidents of bullying and harassment on Pro-Monitor. All incidents will be investigated in accordance with the student disciplinary procedure
- 8.3 If a student feels that they are being bullied by a member of college staff then they should be directed to the Designated Safeguarding Lead in the first instance.
- 8.4 The nature of cyber bullying in particular means that it can impact on students' well-being beyond the college day. Any incidents that occur outside of the college day must be reported on in the same way as outlined within this policy and may be dealt with in line with the student disciplinary procedure.

9. INITIATIVES TO PREVENT AND TACKLE BULLYING

- 9.1 The Student Code of Conduct outlines standards and expectations of behaviour expected in college
- 9.2 The induction and tutorial programme tackles topics related to bullying and harassment. These topics are regularly recapped throughout the year along with information about reporting routes.
- 9.3 Anti-bullying week is promoted throughout the college

- 9.4 The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion calendar of events and activities are promoted throughout the college
- 9.5 Differences and diversity are celebrated across the college through diverse displays, books and images.
- 9.6 Stereotypes are challenged in all lessons with a wide range of resources used that reflect our diverse society
- 9.7 The Enrichment programme and Student Experience Strategy include all groups of students and promote tolerance and respect
- 9.8 We work with parents/careers and in partnership with community organisations and employers to tackle bullying and harassment where appropriate and relevant.
- 9.9 Tutorial content on respectful relationship, consent and online behaviour.

10. RESPONSIBILITY FOR BULLYING AND HARASSMENT POLICY FOR STUDENTS

- 10.1 The Assistant Principal: SEND and Inclusion is responsible for the development of this policy.
- 10.2 All college staff are responsible for the implementation of this policy.

11. MONITORING

- 11.1 The Assistant Principal: SEND and Inclusion will monitor all sections of this policy. Regular reports and recommendations on all aspects of the policy will be provided to the Executive Team, Inclusion Committee and Corporation Board as appropriate. This Policy will be reviewed on an annual basis.