

# XXX SCHOOL POLICY DOCUMENT

## VIOLENCE

Violence at work is any incident where a person is abused, threatened, or assaulted at their work, and which endangers their safety, health, well-being or work performance. It covers insults, threats, or physical or psychological aggression. There may be a racial or sexual dimension to the violence.

Workers in school can find themselves more at risk because the job involves:

- Dealing directly with pupils and/or their guardians
- Working late or alone
- Making off site or home visits
- Working with pupils with special needs

The school has a responsibility to protect staff from foreseeable risks of violence and will carry out the following:

1. Identify if there is a problem
2. Carry out a risk assessment which may include an overview of the following areas: Physical & Security aspects of the premises; Working practices/patterns: Visits away from the workplace;
3. Ensure all staff are informed of the results of risk assessments and provided with necessary information and training
4. Implement appropriate control strategies to reduce the risk of incidents
5. Prepare an emergency plan
6. Provide appropriate support for victims.
7. Ensure all incidents are reported and fully investigated
8. Ensure adherence to the schools procedure for dealing with violence {enter policy/procedure/statement of intent details}

## WORK RELATED VIOLENCE

The School recognises its statutory obligations to provide a safe working environment and safe working practices for all its staff and, particularly in this context, those whose work may have an identifiable level of risk of threatening or violent behaviour by others.

The School also recognises its responsibilities to provide workplaces which minimise the risk of violence occurring and to ensure that methods of work are safe.

**The School takes a serious view of any incident of violence against its employees.** As an employer the {LEA/School} will support any employee who is assaulted or threatened in the course of their duties and it is the responsibility of the Head teacher to ensure that staff are adequately trained and competent to

fulfil their duties in a manner which will not escalate or promote the likelihood of violence occurring.

The School also acknowledges that no person should have to work in fear of assault and that an incidence of violence should not be seen as a reflection of an employee's ability.

## DEFINITION OF WORK RELATED VIOLENCE

The Health and Safety Executive's definition of work related violence is 'any incident in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work'.

Verbal abuse and threats are the most common type of incident. Physical attacks are comparatively rare.

Violence covers many areas including:

- Physical attack by a person or an animal belonging to a person
- Threatening behaviour or abusive language
- Rude gestures, innuendo
- Sexual or racial harassment or bullying
- Damage to staff property, e.g. car or personal effects

## RISK ASSESSMENT

To deal with violence issues the Head teacher will carry out a risk assessment and then implement controls to remove or reduce the risk of exposure to reasonably foreseeable violence.

### Who is at Risk?

Some examples of activities carried out in school can give rise to a reasonably foreseeable risk of violence to staff. Examples of these are set out below:

Work Activity	Staff
Working with and supervising pupils or young people with challenging behaviours	Teachers, Teaching Support Staff, Midday Supervisors, Volunteers
Dealing with angry/difficult members of the public	Receptionist, Head teacher, Other staff
Lone working	Head teacher, Teachers, Support Staff, caretakers, cleaners
Evening working	Caretakers, cleaners
Cash handling	Admin staff

In order to ascertain if there are problems with violence in school, we require all incidents to be reported. The Head teacher will investigate such reports, which may highlight areas of concern. The following practical control measures may be put in place once discussed and agreed with all those concerned.

## Control Measures

To be effective control measures should be based on a suitable assessment of the risk. Measures will need to be specific to a particular location.

Staff are likely to be more committed to the measures if they help design and agree them and put them into practice. A mix of measures often works best. Concentrating on just one aspect of the problem may make things worse in another.

Areas to consider include:

- Physical aspects of the premises
- Work practices and patterns
- Staff training and information

## Physical Aspects

The school should consider carefully the design of the building and how it could be improved to reduce the likelihood of incidents of violence. Some suggestions are:

### a) Reception Areas

Easily identifiable reception areas or entrances which allow staff to receive visitors, direct them to their destinations, answer queries etc. go a long way towards reducing people gaining unauthorised access or becoming frustrated or angry due to confusion etc. You should consider the following factors:

- The location of reception areas should be close to the main entrance
- They should be clear and unambiguous and adequate signage should be used to direct persons
- They should be well lit and contain appropriate furniture. Reading materials may be required if visitors have to wait to be seen
- They should not isolate reception staff from assistance if required
- If the risk of violence is perceived to be high, consideration should be given to fitting alarm systems and/or protective screens. There are some indications, however, that obvious alarm systems/protective screens can encourage violence. An alternative to screens may be to fit wider counters providing a safe distance to prevent an attack without giving security a high profile. Concealed panic buttons may also be a suitable alternative to more obvious alarm systems.

b) Interview/Meeting Rooms

Simple steps to minimise risk include altering the layout so that staff are seated between the client and the door to maintain an escape route if required. Interview rooms should not be totally isolated and vision panels in the doors fitted unless good reasons exist for not fitting these.

c) Security

Being able to identify people and to secure the premises as much as possible can be achieved by considering the following:

- Use of identity cards or visitor passes etc.
- Minimising the number of entrances to the premises
- Installation of fencing at strategic places
- Ensuring landscaping does not act as a screen for potential intruders

### Work Practices and Patterns

The Head teacher must ensure that safe working practices are created and followed. Your risk assessment may have identified particular jobs or activities that have potential for violence.

a) Home Visits and Lone Working

An area of higher risk is where visits are undertaken away from the workplace, e.g. home visits. The Head teacher should ensure that staff record places to be visited, people to be met and the estimated timescale (adhere to lone working risk assessment and procedure)

b) Separating Fighting Pupils or Young People

Many of the violent incidents that do occur involving staff at school premises, stem from attempts to separate fighting pupils or young people.

It is not reasonable to set a blanket policy on this matter as clearly there will be times when such action will be necessary. However, there will also be occasions when the risk to the personal safety of the member of staff will be perceived by them as being too great, therefore staff are not required to intervene unless they consider their own safety in advance. Refer to school disciplinary/behaviour code for pupils which makes clear that violence towards and abuse of any member of staff will not be tolerated.

## Training and Provision of Information

We will ensure all staff are trained so that they can spot the early signs of aggression and either avoid it or cope with it. All potential incidents of violence will be appropriately risk assessed, with the findings communicated to all staff.

This may also include any specific information on an individual with a history of violence; or to anticipate factors that might make violence more likely. Information that will be of use may include past history, remedial steps taken (e.g. medication) and how best to approach the person.

## Recording, Reporting and Investigation

This is crucial in order to identify the scale of the problem and to devise and monitor preventive strategies. All violent incidents involving staff (and governors/volunteers) must be reported to the Head teacher and an incident report completed.

*Some staff may be reluctant to report incidents of aggressive behaviour which make them feel threatened or worried. They should not feel that accepting abuse is part of the job. **Encourage staff to report incidents promptly and fully and let them know that this is what you expect.***

The Head teacher will investigate all incidents of violence against staff and record the results on the Incident Report Form

The incident investigation should establish:

- What happened and why?
- Could it have been prevented?
- Is there a likelihood of a recurrence in similar situations?
- Is a change in working arrangements necessary?
- Is any formal change in your violence risk assessment necessary?

Feedback on the outcomes of the investigation will be given to the employee(s) involved.

Serious violent incidents will be investigated by the LEA health and Safety Advisers and support and advice provided to the staff involved.

If a known person is responsible for intimidating behaviour, the Head teacher will send a formal warning letter to the individual and consider informing the Police. If someone is persistently displaying violent or aggressive behaviour towards one or more members of staff, staff should consult with the Head teacher to review the service to that person. As a last resort withdrawal of service may be contemplated but such a decision would be made by the LEA.

## The Role of the Police

If there is a severe disturbance, assault or threat of violence, the Head teacher will call the Police. Following other incidents the Head teacher will decide whether to involve the Police and if appropriate consultation should take place with the employee(s) involved in making this decision.

If the Police are involved, it may be decided by the Crown Prosecution Service to prosecute an assailant. If, however, the Crown Prosecution Service decides not to prosecute, the employee has the option of pursuing the matter by taking private legal action against the assailant.

### **Support for Staff**

If an employee is injured in, or otherwise suffers as a result of a violent incident in the course of their work, the School will provide support as summarised below.

- If the employee is injured or in shock, assistance should be given with arranging medical treatment.
- Support will be given to the employee, however, over and above medical attention
- Supervisors should talk through the incident as soon as possible.
- Staff should be advised of the legal options open to them and in some circumstances it may be appropriate to refer to their trade union for legal advice.
- Counselling should also be offered either by the School or professional counsellor, depending on the circumstances and the wishes of the employee. The person concerned may wish to make their own counselling arrangements either through their trade union or independently. If this is the case the employee should be supported and compassionate leave allowed accordingly. If private counselling is arranged, either through the School or directly by the individual, the School will meet reasonable costs for up to five counselling sessions. This may be extended when necessary.