

Schools - Preventing Sexual Harassment Policy

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HR Version 1.0

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1.0 Policy statement

- 1.1 Everyone has a part to play in being aware of, preventing and dealing with sexual harassment. The Policy sets out the expectations for the behaviour of our colleagues as well as what we can do to protect all staff from sexual harassment.
- 1.2 We will not tolerate any form of sexual harassment in the workplace and will treat all incidents seriously. We are committed to creating a safe and respectful environment for all employees and will promptly investigate all allegations of sexual harassment. Importantly, there is no time constraint for reporting an incident under this policy. Any issues raised will be addressed either through our Grievance Policy, which allows individuals to express their concerns and seek resolution, or our Disciplinary Policy, which outlines the procedures for handling violations of conduct. Our approach ensures that all parties involved are treated fairly and that appropriate actions are taken to resolve the matter effectively. We encourage anyone who experiences or witnesses' sexual harassment to come forward, knowing that their concerns will be handled with confidentiality and sensitivity.

2.0 Who this policy is for

- 2.1 Milton Keynes City Council (MKCC) is committed to providing an inclusive, supportive, and safe environment for everyone who works here. This Policy applies to colleagues in Community Schools and Voluntary Controlled Schools.
- 2.2 The aim of the Policy is to prevent sexual harassment, respond to incidents that arise, and implement long-term change.
- 2.3 A colleague may raise a concern just before leaving their school. Wherever possible we will apply this procedure in full.
- 2.4 This policy applies to work-related activities or events including non-work-related events whether during working hours or held outside normal working hours and regardless of whether on or off school premises. For example, usual work duties, social events, celebrations, working lunches, team building activities, training, phone, and digital communications (including on social media platforms).

3.0 What sexual harassment is

- 3.1 Sexual harassment includes any unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature that affects a person's dignity or creates an unpleasant environment. It is irrelevant if it was intended or not. This could be in the form of comments, jokes, unwanted touching, or sharing inappropriate images. It can happen in person or online.
- 3.2 Sexual harassment can be a one-off incident or an ongoing pattern of behaviour. It can happen in person or in other ways, for example online through things like email, social media, or messaging tools.

3.3 Examples include:

- Making sexual remarks about someone's body, clothing, or appearance
- Standing or sitting too close to someone
- Asking questions about someone's sex life.
- Telling sexually offensive jokes
- Obscene, suggestive, or offensive communications, including electronic mail and social media/WhatsApp.
- Making sexual comments or jokes about someone's sexual orientation or gender reassignment.
- Displaying or sharing pornographic or sexual images, or other sexual content
- Touching someone against their will, for example hugging them
- Sexual assault or rape

3.4 What some people consider as joking, 'banter', or part of their workplace culture can still be sexual harassment.

3.5 Sexual harassment is usually directed at an individual, but it is not always the case. Sometimes there can be a culture of behaviour that is not specifically aimed at one person – such as sharing sexual images or 'banter'. Someone should still make a complaint of sexual harassment in this situation.

4.0 Who can experience sexual harassment?

4.1 It is possible for a person of any gender or sexual orientation to be a victim of or to be a perpetrator of sexual harassment.

4.2 You could experience sexual harassment from anyone you meet because of your job, including:

- Someone you work with such as a colleague, an agency worker, or a contractor.
- A manager, supervisor, or someone else in a position of authority.
- Someone that has a high profile or is influential.
- A customer, client, or member of the public.

5.0 The law on harassment

5.1 The Equality Act 2010 protects people against sexual harassment and harassment related to 'protected characteristics', for example a person's sex.

5.2 The Worker Protection Act 2023, an amendment to the Equality Act 2010, requires employers to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment.

- 5.3 Schools (on behalf of Milton Keynes City Council), together with any senior leaders who fail to take steps to prevent sexual harassment or investigate complaints, may be held liable for unlawful actions, and be required to pay damages to the victim, as will the colleague who has committed the act of sexual harassment.
- 5.4 No employee or volunteer should be treated unfairly because of rejecting unwanted advances. Disciplinary action will be taken against anyone who victimises or retaliates against a person who has complained of sexual harassment, or against any employee or volunteer who has been alleged to be a harasser.
- 5.5 Any person who has been sexually harassed whilst at work may bring a claim in the Employment Tribunal against both their employer and the individual harasser.

6.0 Prevention of sexual harassment

- 6.1 All colleagues are asked to:
- remain vigilant and proactive in identifying any signs of inappropriate behaviour or misconduct.
 - report any incidents of sexual harassment and any situation where you felt at risk, even if nothing happened.
- 6.2 Schools (on behalf of MKCC) will take the following measures to prevent sexual harassment:
- **Communication:** Regular updates and reminders about the policy and its importance.
 - **Training:** All colleagues will undergo training to recognise, report, and prevent sexual harassment. This training will be completed annually.
 - **Monitoring:** Review the record of complaints and reports of situations where colleagues felt at risk, to identify any patterns of unwarranted behaviour.
 - **Risk Assessment:** Identify and mitigate potential risks for harassment in the workplace. There will be a risk assessment completed which will identify potential risks to colleagues.
- 6.3 As a Headteacher and along with Senior Leaders, it is your responsibility:
- to actively monitor the workplace environment and ensure it upholds a culture of respect and dignity free from sexual harassment.
 - identify and mitigate potential risks for harassment in your school. This may require you to undertake a risk assessment(s) for a specific colleague, team, or task.
 - to actively monitor the workplace environment and ensure it upholds a culture of respect and dignity free from sexual harassment.

- to challenge such behaviour immediately, addressing it directly and decisively, to maintain a safe and supportive workplace for all employees.
- promote awareness and understanding of sexual harassment policies among your team, encouraging open communication, and providing a safe space for individuals to raise concerns.

Remember, your actions set the standard; your commitment to preventing sexual harassment is essential to fostering an inclusive and respectful organisational climate.

7.0 If you have been sexually harassed at work

- 7.1 If you have been sexually harassed during the course of your employment, you are encouraged to raise this as soon as possible. Your complaint will be handled with confidentiality, sensitivity, and respect.
- 7.2 It's beneficial to make a note of what has happened. This should include dates, times, and names, including any witnesses. Making a note can be especially helpful if you find talking about the experience particularly distressing.
- 7.3 **Who can I report it to?**
- Your line manager
 - Headteacher or another member of the Senior Leadership Team
 - Chair of Governors or a nominated governor
 - School's Human Resources Provider or on site Human Resources representative
 - MKCC HR Representative SchoolsHR@milton-keynes.gov.uk
 - Trade Union Representatives
 - Protect on 0203 117 2520 or whistle@protect-advice.org.uk Protect (formerly PCAW) are an independent charity and information provided to Protect is protected under the Public Interest Disclosures Act. Their helpline is where their lawyers provide confidential advice free of charge [www.pcaw.org.uk].
 - The Police
- 7.4 Once an incident of sexual harassment is reported, it will be thoroughly investigated in accordance with the School's Grievance policy or Disciplinary Policy whichever is deemed the most appropriate. The investigation will be conducted confidentially and with the utmost sensitivity, ensuring that all impacted colleagues receive appropriate support throughout the process. This ensures a fair and structured process is followed to address and resolve the issue appropriately and effectively.

8.0 If you witness sexual harassment

1. **Assess the Situation:** If it is safe, you can step in and directly address the behaviour.
2. **Support the Affected Person:** Offer support and suggest to them that they may want to report the incident. You can signpost them to this policy.

3. **Note It Down:** As for direct victims, note down what you witnessed.
4. **Report It:** You can make a report as a witness, which can support the person affected, or if you feel it has impacted you personally.

9.0 Effectiveness and monitoring

- 9.1 The school will maintain records of all complaints, investigations, outcomes, and any training sessions conducted, while ensuring compliance with data protection laws. This policy will be reviewed annually by Milton Keynes City Council, or as needed, in line with changes in the law or organisational requirements. Feedback from employees will be taken into consideration to improve its effectiveness.
- 9.2 We are dedicated to fostering a workplace culture where everyone feels respected and safe. Please contact the Headteacher or Chair of Governors for clarifications or to discuss any concerns regarding this policy. Together, we can ensure a harassment-free work environment.

Appendix 1: Support available

We recognise that sexual harassment can be a traumatic process and as a school we offer the following internal support to all colleagues affected:

- Trade Union Representatives
- Occupational Health
- Employee Assistance Programme – where available

Please speak to the Headteacher or your line manager in the first instance if you need help to access support.

Help after sexual assault or rape

You can get help and information from:

- [Galop](#) – LGBT+ sexual violence support
- [Rape Crisis England and Wales](#)
- [Rape Crisis Scotland](#)
- [The Survivors Trust](#)
- [SurvivorsUK](#) – for men and non-binary people affected by rape and sexual abuse
- [Victim Support](#) – in England and Wales
- [Victim Support Scotland](#)

[Find out about other help after rape and sexual assault on the NHS website](#)

To contact the police:

- call 999 in an emergency
- call 101 if it's not an emergency
- [report a crime online in England and Wales](#)

When you're reporting a crime, you can ask to speak to a specialist officer who's trained to deal with sexual violence.

Version Control

Version	Date	Updated by	Comments
V1.0	May 2025	Schools HR Team	New policy