



# VIOLENCE AT WORK

SANDON PRIMARY ACADEMY

Mrs R Beckett (Principal)

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## Policy Statement

Sandon Primary Academy recognises that members of the public, other employees, pupils, etc, may expose some employees to the risk of violence.

It will, therefore, ensure that steps are taken to identify, take action to control or prevent the risk of violence occurring at work and to institute control measures to provide appropriate support should violence occur.

Sandon Primary Academy is committed to creating a safe working environment, one in which an employee will feel able to report violence against them and have confidence that the violence or risk of violence will be appropriately addressed.

Appropriate action will be taken against any person who uses abusive or offensive language, or who conducts themselves in a disorderly manner on premises or other workplaces that are on Sandon Primary Academy premises.

This could result in the person being escorted off the premises and/or reported to the police, and for legal action to be taken against them. If a person is abusive or offensive to a member of staff going about their duties at any time or in any location again this could result in them being reported to the police or legal action being taken against them.

Further guidance on violence in education is issued by the Department for Education – refer to the DfE website.

Where appropriate, formal action will be taken against offending individuals. Where threats of aggression are made to an employee and the perpetrator can be identified, Sandon Primary Academy will, in all appropriate cases, consider taking legal action; and will send a formal letter to the person(s) concerned, warning that legal action may be taken if a breach of the law occurs.

## Persons who have a responsibility to manage violence

Sandon Primary Academy and its staff have an interest in reducing violence at work. Violence can lead to poor morale and can affect the image of the organisation, making it difficult to recruit and retain staff. It can also mean extra cost, with absenteeism, higher insurance premiums and compensation payments.

For staff, violence can cause pain, distress and even disability or death. Physical attacks are obviously dangerous but serious or persistent verbal abuse or threats or bullying can also damage employees' health through anxiety or stress or other psychiatric conditions.

The Principal has a duty to ensure that a threat or hazard analysis is carried within the establishment and that a suitable and sufficient risk assessment is carried out.

Following risk assessment, risk controls and procedures should be developed to ensure that all possible measures are in place to limit anyone being exposed and/or affected by violence. The Principal is responsible for ensuring adequate procedures are developed and effectively communicated to staff.

## Definition of Violence

The Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) 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 types of incident. Physical attacks are comparatively rare.

Violence can include;

- verbal abuse
- rude gestures
- innuendo
- physical attack
- bullying

Sexual, racial and other forms of harassment are also included within the definition of violence.

## Persons who may be at risk

Staff whose job requires them to deal with the public can be at risk from violence. For example:

- Principal
- Senior Leadership Team
- Teachers
- Teaching/Learning Support Assistants
- Site Staff
- Trustees/Governors
- Reception staff

In addition, staff can be at risk from violence from interactions with other employees or members of staff. For example:

- bullying
- discrimination or attack
- harassment

## Victims of Violence

If there is a violent incident involving member(s) of staff, then a quick response is required to avoid any long-term distress to the workforce.

The following strategies can be used:

- debriefing - victims will need to talk through their experience as soon as possible after the event. Remember that verbal abuse can be just as upsetting as a physical attack;
- time off work - individuals will react differently and may need differing amounts of time to recover. In some circumstances they might need specialist counseling;
- legal help - in serious cases legal help may be appropriate;
- other staff - may need guidance and/or training to help them to react appropriately.

## Stalking

Stalking can be described as a series of acts which are intended to, or in fact do, cause harassment to another person. Stalkers can have a devastating effect on the lives of their victims, who are subjected to constant harassment at home, in public places and at work, to the extent that they feel they are no longer in control of their lives. The methods employed by stalkers can take many forms, for example threatening, abusive or obscene phone calls; using abusive and threatening language; or committing acts of violence. But even apparently harmless behaviour, such as following someone down the street or sending them flowers, can be intimidating if it is persistently inflicted on a victim against their will.

Stalking, as stated above, is a form of harassment and as such is seen as a criminal offence. Under English law stalking is covered by the Protection from Harassment Act 1997.

If staff are being harassed by a stalker they are advised to take the following steps: -

- Records should be kept of what happened, where, when every time they were followed, phoned, received post or e-mail.
- The more details the victim obtains the better, how the offender looked or sounded, what they were wearing, the make, and number plate or colour of their car.
- Letters, and parcels should be kept as evidence: even if they contain frightening or upsetting messages, they should not be thrown away and handled as little as possible.
- Copies of e-mails should be kept on disk and print out hard copies; the originals should not be deleted.
- Making notes in a diary is a good idea. Information should be written down as soon as possible, when events are still fresh in their mind.
- Telephone conversations should be recorded and kept on tape if possible.
- If the victim recognises the handwriting, letters or parcels can be kept as evidence without having to open them.
- Make sure that any stored messages (including text messages) or telephone numbers that are received on mobile phones and caller ID units are kept.
- Staff should be informed of what is happening, unless requested by the police or the victim.
- Photographic or video evidence of the stalker (especially if the stalker has already been warned by the police not to go near the victim).

## Responding to violence

Everyone has a right to defend themselves from an attack, using reasonable force. The law however doesn't allow carrying anything that can be described as an offensive weapon. The level of force must be commensurate with the threat.

When it comes to using force there are specific legal constraints placed upon people in a self- defense situation. It is very important to understand that when it comes to using force, individuals will be held accountable, both criminally and civilly for their actions, however, where deemed to have used reasonable force the Academy will support the individual. Excessive force is liable to result in criminal action against the individual.

It is important that all violent attacks whether verbal or physical should be reported, no matter how trivial they may seem, and that the appropriate follow up steps are taken.

## Physical Intervention and Restraint

When restraining someone the same rules apply as when responding to violence i.e. only reasonable force can be used that is commensurate with the level of force being threatened.

The Department for Education have produced guidance in order to clarify the powers of teachers, and other staff who have lawful control or charge of pupils, to use reasonable force to prevent pupils committing a crime; causing injury or damage; or causing disruption. Such powers already existed under common law but were often misunderstood. DfE guidance can be accessed on their website.

Neither the Act, nor the Department for Education guidance, authorise the use of corporal punishment in any circumstances. Nor is it intended to encourage the use of inappropriate force. The guidance:

- gives examples of circumstances in which physical intervention might be appropriate, and factors that teachers should bear in mind when deciding whether to intervene;
- discusses the meaning of 'reasonable force';
- advises that schools should have a policy about the use of reasonable force, and the school should tell

parents about it; and,

- advises that schools should record incidents in which force is used to control or restrain a pupil, and tell parents of any such incidents involving their child.

The Department for Education has also issued guidance to schools on dealing with intruders, trespassers or parents in relation to violence and the use of reasonable force. Refer to the Department for Education website.

## Reporting of Incidents

Any incident of violence even if it did not result in physical injury should be reported immediately in accordance with the Academy procedure for reporting accidents or incidents.

## Follow up and support

Immediate follow up and debrief by the Principal or Vice Principal is essential in order to take action to avoid recurrence and to provide the support that staff need. Staff may need some 'time out' or a short break away from their work environment in order to recover or in more serious incidents of assault medical treatment and the Principal should be sympathetic to this. In the case of serious assaults, the Principal may need to arrange for staff to attend their GP Surgery, or for them to be driven home.

The Principal should bear in mind that violence has both short term and long term emotional consequences. Wherever possible members of staff should be able to make an informed choice about where they wish to seek the support they may need. Confidential Counseling should be made available.

Where personal belongings (not cars) or other equipment have been damaged due to assault, enquiries in regard to replacement and/or repair should be directed to the school's insurance provider via the Principal.

## Unauthorised Persons

Whilst it accepted that for security reasons employees will challenge unauthorised persons, they must not put themselves at any risk and should inform the Police of potential risk.