United Learning Staff Protection Policy

Scope

The policy and procedure set out in this document applies to all staff employed by United Learning[1].

We are a values-led organisation which puts children first, expects the best from everyone and aims to bring out the best in everyone.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the United Learning Equality Guidelines.

Introduction

1.1 All our staff have the right to work in an environment that is free from abuse, harassment and victimisation. This policy outlines United Learning's approach to protecting its staff from unacceptable behaviour (physical and/or psychological) from parents/carers of students and visitors.

1.2 United Learning is opposed to any abuse, and takes a firm stance against bullying, harassment or victimisation in all its forms.

1.3 Unacceptable behaviour by students and staff should be dealt with under the school's behaviour policy or the United Learning Disciplinary Policy respectively.

1.4 Schools should also refer to their Lone Working and Violence at Work Policy and conduct any risk assessments as necessary.

2. Definition of Unacceptable Behaviour

2.1 United Learning expects all those who engage with our staff to be respectful, reasonable and courteous in all their communications, including the tone, content, volume and/or nature of such communications.

2.2 Unacceptable behaviour may take the form of, including but not limited to:

a) Verbal abuse;

b) Physical abuse (whether actual or threatened);

c) Bullying type behaviour, including harassment and victimisation;

d) Aggressive behaviour;

e) Inappropriate language, including swearing;

f) Undermining professional integrity and/or abilities;

g) Pressure to alter grades or give awards/responsibilities to students;

h) Any other unreasonable conduct (whether one off or persistent) which causes distress or harm (physical and/or psychological).

2.3 Unacceptable behaviour may take place in various contexts, including but not limited to:

a) In person (both one-to-one or in public, such as at a sports match or parents evening);

[1] The two companies (United Church Schools Trust and United Learning Trust) are referred to in this policy by their trading name, 'United Learning'.

b) On the telephone;

c) In writing (including emails, texts and Instant Messaging);

d) Online (including posting malicious comments on websites and social media sites or messaging apps, other acts of "internet trolling", and misuse of images/footage).

2.4 Schools should communicate and clearly display to parents/carers and visitors the expectation that all staff should be treated with respect, and that there may be sanctions for breaching this expectation.

2.5 United Learning supports staff against unacceptable behaviour and all such behaviour will be responded to appropriately by schools.

3. Verbal Abuse

3.1 Verbal Abuse may be defined as "the repeated improper and excessive use of language or tone of voice to humiliate someone, or to undermine someone's dignity" including swearing. Verbal abuse which is related to a protected characteristic, such as race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, faith, or age, may constitute hate speech.

3.2 Any member of staff subject to verbal abuse should firstly look to defuse the situation and politely ask the individual to remain calm and ask to discuss the matter (ideally with another member of staff present). Should the abusive behaviour continue, the member of staff should terminate the conversation.

3.3 Any member of staff subject to verbal abuse should record the nature of the incident, who was involved, any witnesses and examples of the alleged abuse as soon as possible. The incident should then be raised with the Senior Management Team (see section 7).

4. Correspondence

4.1 All correspondence that is unacceptable in tone, volume or content must be passed immediately to the relevant member of the Senior Management Team (such as the Headteacher, or Line Manager) at the earliest possible opportunity without replying to the individual.

5. Online Abuse

5.1 Any member of staff who receives inappropriate and abusive contact online e.g. emails, social media, direct messaging, etc. should raise the matter as soon as possible with the relevant member of the Senior Management Team.

5.2 Individuals should not respond to the inappropriate contact and should maintain a record of evidence e.g. frequency and time of contact, screen shots, etc.

5.3 Individuals should refer to any Social Media Policy in place at their school or workplace.

6. Vexatious, Malicious, Discriminatory or Defamatory Behaviour

6.1 United Learning takes very seriously any action (such as by a parent/carer and/or visitor) which, after careful consideration, is deemed vexatious, malicious, discriminatory, defamatory, or which sets out

to undermine the reputation of United Learning, the School and its staff, and/or which, on the balance of probability, may be found to have been intended to cause upset or distress to a member of staff.

6.2 All behaviour deemed vexatious, malicious, discriminatory or defamatory must be reported immediately to the relevant member of the Senior Management Team (Headteacher or Line Manager) at the earliest possible opportunity without discussion with the alleged perpetrator.

6.3 The member of staff concerned should provide the relevant member of the Senior Management Team with the evidence (e.g. screenshots from Social Networking sites, notes from the relevant conversation or the email concerned etc.).

7. Procedure for Dealing with Unacceptable Behaviour

7.1 All incidents of unacceptable behaviour towards staff must be reported immediately to the relevant member of the Senior Management Team (Headteacher or Line Manager) and be followed up in writing as soon as practical.

7.2 If the alleged perpetrator is a visitor to the School, they should be asked to leave the premises immediately and be accompanied off site.

7.3 The Headteacher (or Chair of the LGB, as appropriate) will follow up the incident with the parent/carer or visitor involved by phone call or meeting. Appropriate sanctions may be applied and will take into account the severity and frequency of the incident(s).

7.4 The police will be involved as necessary to protect staff and others, and/or if an offence has been committed. United Learning will press charges in cases of staff being assaulted.

7.5 The member of staff involved will be kept informed during the process, unless this is not appropriate due to confidentiality or may hinder any investigation.

7.6 If the member of staff involved is not satisfied with the outcome of this procedure, they have the right to appeal through the United Learning Grievance Procedure.

8. Sanctions

8.1 The following sanctions may be applied:

a) Warning letters to parents/carers or visitors.

b) Permission to attend United Learning and/or School functions may be withdrawn, including (but not limited to):

(i) Sports matches.

(ii) Cultural activities.

(iii) Parent-teacher meetings.

c) Restrict all communication with United Learning/the School through a named member of the Senior Management Team.

d) Permission to be on United Learning/School premises, or to access online presentations or events, may be withdrawn. For further guidance on controlling access to school premises, please refer to the DfE Guidance.

e) Required removal or exclusion of the student from the School (Independent Schools only).

9. Supporting Members of Staff

9.1 United Learning recognise that experiencing and managing unacceptable behaviour can be distressing, and we will ensure appropriate support is provided for all staff involved. Staff are encouraged to seek support and advice from their trade union representative.

9.2 Our Employee Assistant Programme offers free and confidential information, support and counselling on a wide range of work and personal issues (www.well-online.co.uk, 0800 0851376).

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