



# The Diocese of Chelmsford Vine Schools Trust Grievance Procedure

This policy is a mandatory policy for all Vine Academies and must be implemented with no amendments.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This Procedure explains what staff should do if they have a grievance, including if they feel they are being bullied, harassed or victimised, and how issues should be dealt with.

### 1.1 Policy Statement

The Trust Board:

- Is committed to being a fair and equitable employer, as set out in the Equality and Diversity Policy, which asserts its commitment to an employment culture in which people can feel confident of being treated with fairness, dignity and tolerance, irrespective of their individual differences;
- Will not tolerate harassment or bullying within the workplace;
- Expects the workplace to be an open environment and one in which everyone is able and willing to challenge unreasonable behaviour;
- Expects grievances to be dealt with sensitively, professionally, speedily and fairly.

1.1.1 This procedure accords with employment and education legislation and takes due account of the ACAS Code of Practice.

### 1.2 Definitions

- A grievance may be defined as concerns, problems or complaints raised by a staff member about their work, working conditions or relationships with colleagues.
- Harassment may be described as unwanted behaviour, practice or conduct which cause an individual to feel uncomfortable, distressed, stressed, alarmed, humiliated or frightened or affects their dignity or confidence.
- Bullying is an extreme form of harassment and will often involve persistent, maybe deliberate, harm, intimidation or humiliation. Bullying is often, although not always, related to the misuse or abuse of power or position.
- Victimisation may occur when a person is treated less favourably than another person because they have made, or supported, a complaint of harassment, bullying or discrimination.

Harassment and bullying take on many forms and are therefore difficult to define, and the definitions above are broad. Some specific examples are given at Appendix B.

## 2. SCOPE OF THE PROCEDURE

### 2.1 To whom it applies

The procedure applies to all employees in the workplace and may be used by individual employees. The procedure is to be used for matters affecting people personally. Concerns regarding the conduct of other staff should be reported to the line manager to deal with appropriately. Line Managers should not normally raise a grievance against one of their direct reports – this should be dealt with as a management issue. Exceptionally conduct of a subordinate which may constitute bullying, harassment or victimisation may be dealt with as a grievance

Where harassment, bullying or victimisation is experienced, witnessed or reported by a volunteer or third party, the employer will discuss the matter with the alleged victim and follow the grievance procedure as appropriate.

Where a group of employees have a grievance this will be dealt with under a relevant collective disputes procedure.

## **2.2 Where the procedure does not apply**

- In relation to issues which are outside the responsibility or control of the Trust Board in its role as an employer e.g. income tax, application of the pension scheme, national security.
- To appeals against selection for redundancy – these should be dealt with through the Redundancy Procedure – although re-deployed employees may raise a grievance.
- To appeals against salary/pay/grading - these should be dealt with through the Pay Policy.
- To grievances concerning Health, Safety or Welfare – these should be dealt with by the Safety Co-ordinator in the first instance. Where there is a failure to resolve the matter, however, then such grievances can be considered under this procedure.
- To Trust Board policy.
- To protected disclosures within the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (see the Code of Conduct).
- To complaints of discrimination from applicants for positions or ex-employee. Such matters will be dealt with through the Complaints Procedure.

## **2.3 Disciplinary and capability matters**

An employee may raise a grievance in the course a disciplinary or capability procedure, related to the case. This may be because s/he feels that the action being taken for some other reason than his or her ability to do the job or his/her conduct.

In such cases, where the written grievance is submitted prior to the appeal hearing, the grievance will normally be dealt with as part of the formal disciplinary/capability process. The onus is on the manager to ensure that the matters raised in the grievance are appropriately dealt with through the disciplinary/capability procedure and that any decision is fair and free of discrimination.

Conversely, it is possible for a grievance to lead to disciplinary proceedings if matters arise during the course of the hearing which warrant such action.

## **2.4 Bullying and harassment by pupils**

The employer has in place policies and procedures for dealing with pupil behaviour and misconduct and these will be used to their full effect where pupils harass or bully staff, in the same way as when they act inappropriately against other pupils.

## **2.5 Bullying and harassment by adults other than employees**

While employers do not have the same 'control' over other adults, as they do over employees, managers will take all appropriate steps to protect staff from inappropriate and unacceptable conduct and behaviour by them.

## 3. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

### 3.1 Collective responsibility

The responsibility for preventing and dealing with harassment and bullying lies with the whole community. All members of the education community have a responsibility to challenge inappropriate behaviour (see Appendix C for guidance).

All issues of bullying, harassment and victimisation, whoever the perpetrator, must be reported. This does not prevent the matter being dealt with informally yet enables the employer to fulfil its responsibilities to eliminate inappropriate conduct.

Individuals, employers, and individual managers can all be liable for disciplinary action, and in some cases prosecution, where employees are harassed, victimised or bullied. Individual managers may be liable where they knew, or should have known, about any incident in areas under their control and took no action.

### 3.2 Responsibilities of the Trust Board delegated to the Local Governing Body

- establish, maintain and monitor relevant policies and procedures;
- ensure that cases are dealt with effectively and fairly;
- record information;
- set standards of behaviour and conduct which do not allow harassment, bullying or victimisation to occur;
- ensure appropriate action is taken where these standards are not met;
- ensure governors and staff have appropriate training;
- deal with appeals and to nominate a governor to deal with cases where it would be inappropriate to involve a manager.

### 3.3 Responsibilities of Line Managers

- promote an open environment, free from harassment, in which everyone is treated fairly and reasonably;
- provide appropriate induction and training and support;
- manage staff in a fair and professional way;
- ensure all concerns are taken seriously;
- provide mediation where appropriate and implement the formal grievance procedure in a timely and effective manner;
- prevent victimisation;
- monitoring and reporting.

### 3.4 Responsibilities of Staff

- treat all members of the community with fairness and respect and in accordance with policies and procedures;
- challenge and report instances of bullying or harassment or other unfair or unreasonable treatment, involving themselves and others.

### 3.5 Support for employees

Your employer will fulfil its obligations to protect their staff from inappropriate conduct and where it does occur, will offer and provide where needed, support to employees. Support may take the form of:

- Counselling

- A period of leave of absence
- Additional management support for a period
- Assignment of a mentor
- Training

3.5.1 Assistance will be offered to any employee who has difficulty raising their grievance in writing due to disability or language barriers.

## 4. RECORD KEEPING

It is important in the interests of both the employer and employee to keep written records throughout the grievance process.

4.1 Grievance records should include:

- the nature of the grievances;
- notes of any meeting or action;
- a copy of the written grievance;
- the employer's response;
- action taken;
- reasons for actions taken;
- whether there was an appeal and if so its outcome.

4.2 Records of incidents of harassment, bullying or victimisation should include

- date of complaint;
- name of complainant (and if different, victim) and perpetrator;
- details including times of incident(s);
- nature of complaint;
- names of any witnesses;
- details of action taken;
- feedback and follow up.

4.3 Records will be treated as confidential and kept in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

4.4 The aggrieved employee and the person against whom the grievance is raised will receive copies of any records, including any formal minutes, of meetings where they were in attendance. In certain circumstances (i.e. to protect a witness) it may be appropriate for the manager to seek advice about the release of information where a third party is referred to.

## 5. THE PROCEDURE

The procedure is summarised at Appendix A.

5.1 **Personal resolution**

5.1.1 Grievances are best resolved informally and it is expected that employees will seek to discuss his/her concerns with the other employee/s directly with a view to amicably settling the matter. If an employee feels anxious about this process, s/he might seek support from their union, a friend or colleague.

Some additional guidance to help employees manage this process is at Appendix C.

- 5.1.2 If you feel you are being bullied, harassed or victimised you must report this to your line manager (or another manager where the concerns relate to your line manager). This does not prevent you from seeking to resolve the matter through direct dialogue with the person concerned.
- 5.1.3. It is advisable for employees to keep details of all incidents and issues, including any informal discussions (see 4.). It is recognised that it may be the cumulative effect of another's conduct or behaviour which constitutes a grievance rather than a single incident.
- 5.1.4 Where an individual feels unable to make a personal approach, or this approach is unsuccessful in resolving the matter, individuals should seek support from their line manager or another manager to facilitate discussions with a view to resolving the grievance informally.

## **5.2 Raising a grievance**

- 5.2.1 An employee may raise a grievance verbally or in writing, although in law, a formal grievance must be in writing and must explicitly state that it is a grievance.
- 5.2.2 Grievance should be raised with an appropriate manager as follows:
- Where a grievance is against a colleague who is not the employee's line manager – the line manager
  - Where the grievance is against the employee's manager – a more senior manager
  - Where the grievance is against a Headteacher – the Chair of Trust Board or a Local Governor nominated specifically for this purpose.

If an employee has a grievance against a Governor, the procedure should be managed by a nominated Trustee.

Grievances are not usually raised against a subordinate by their line manager. See 2.1

## **5.3 Informal Stage**

- 5.3.1 However they are raised, all complaints or concerns will be taken seriously and the manager will discuss the concerns with the employee in the first instance with a view to resolving the matter informally, not least to avoid any escalation of the problem and to resolve matters at the earliest possible stage.
- 5.3.2 The informal stage will normally involve the manager talking to the complainant, the person/s identified in the grievance and where appropriate any witnesses. A written submission may be sought from the person/s identified in the grievance. Where appropriate a joint meeting will be arranged.
- 5.3.4 The manager will confirm the outcome of these informal discussions in writing.

## **5.4 Formal Stage**

- 5.4.1 If the conduct which gave rise to the complaint continues after informal resolution or the matter could not be resolved through informal action, employees should raise the matter formally and promptly under the grievance procedure.

At this stage the employee must put their concerns in writing to an appropriate manager. Form GR1 (See appendix D) may be used for this purpose. In the letter, the employee should

- be clear that they are raising a grievance
- provide concise and factual information about the nature of their grievance
- avoid language which may be considered insulting or abusive
- indicate the redress s/he seeks

If an employee needs help writing their grievance s/he should seek advice from a friend, colleague or representative. A copy of the formal grievance documentation will be given to all relevant parties.

#### 5.4.2 Investigation

On receiving a written grievance the manager will make such enquiries as are necessary to gather relevant information to reasonably consider the grievance. This may involve discussion with witnesses, and normally, the person/s identified in the grievance. Any such discussions will not be in the context of a formal meeting. Consideration will be given to accepting any request for these employees to be accompanied by a friend or trade union representative at any such meeting.

Any relevant information gathered during this enquiry stage will be considered at any formal grievance meeting.

Where appropriate and where both parties agree, a joint discussion with all parties may take place at this stage with a view to resolving the grievance.

This stage will be completed as quickly as possible.

#### 5.4.3 The formal meeting

Where it is not possible to resolve the matter under 5.4.2 on conclusion of the investigation the manager will invite the employee to at least one formal meeting at a reasonable time and place at which the grievance can be discussed. This meeting will be arranged as soon as practicable.

At least 5 working days' notice will be given of the meeting. The employee has the right to be accompanied at this meeting by a representative, friend or colleague and must make his/her own arrangements for this.

Such representatives should make themselves available to accompany the employee concerned within a reasonable period of time. If however, the employee's chosen companion is not available, for a reason that was not reasonably unforeseeable, at the time proposed for any meeting or hearing, one alternative date will be set, normally no later than five working days from the original date.

The person/s identified in the grievance may be asked to attend, together with appropriate representation. Witnesses may also be asked to attend.

#### 5.4.4 The purpose of the meeting is for the employee to set out the basis of his/her grievance and the remedy s/he is seeking and for the manager to formally consider and respond to these matters.

The manager may adjourn the meeting for the minimum period necessary, to allow further investigation and to seek further information.

5.4.5 The decision of the manager, and the reasons for it, will be confirmed in writing to the person raising the grievance and the person whom the grievance is raised against, within 5 working days of the meeting. Form GR2 may be used for this purpose. The employee will be informed of their right of appeal. The form GR2 can be completed by the employee either accepting the decision or appealing.

### **Resolution**

Clearly, the desired outcome of the implementation of the procedure is that the behaviour or conduct complained of, ceases. However, whatever stage the procedure reaches, and without presupposing the outcome of any formal proceedings, there may be a range of possible remedies where a complaint is upheld, including:

- Formal apology
- Training
- Mediation
- Occupation Health Support
- Counselling
- Changes to work methods/styles
- Redeployment within the school
- Formal disciplinary action against the perpetrator

Employees raising a grievance should be aware that where their grievance is upheld, the need for confidentiality may mean that they are not given details about any action taken, especially where this involves action involving another person.

## **5.5 Appeal Stage**

5.5.1 If the employee wishes to appeal s/he must confirm this intention in writing to the Chair of the Trust Board within five working days of receipt of the written notification of the outcome of the formal stage, clearly stating the grounds upon which the appeal is made. This may be done on Form GR2. The Chair of the Trust Board will convene an Appeals Panel as soon as practicable.

5.5.2 The appellant will be given at least five working days' notice of the appeal meeting in writing. The employee should take all reasonable steps to attend this meeting and again has the right to be accompanied. If however, the employee's chosen companion is not available, for a reason that was not reasonably unforeseeable, at the time proposed for any meeting or hearing, one alternative date will be set, normally no later than five working days from the original date.

5.5.3 The Appeal Panel will be provided with minutes of the original meeting and any relevant papers/information gathered by the manager who dealt with the formal stage and the outcome.

The person/s identified in the grievance may be asked to attend, together with appropriate representation. Witnesses may also be asked to attend.

5.4.4 The Chair of the Appeals Panel will advise the employee in writing of the outcome of the appeal as soon as possible and in any event within 5 working days of the hearing. Form GR3 may be used for this purpose.

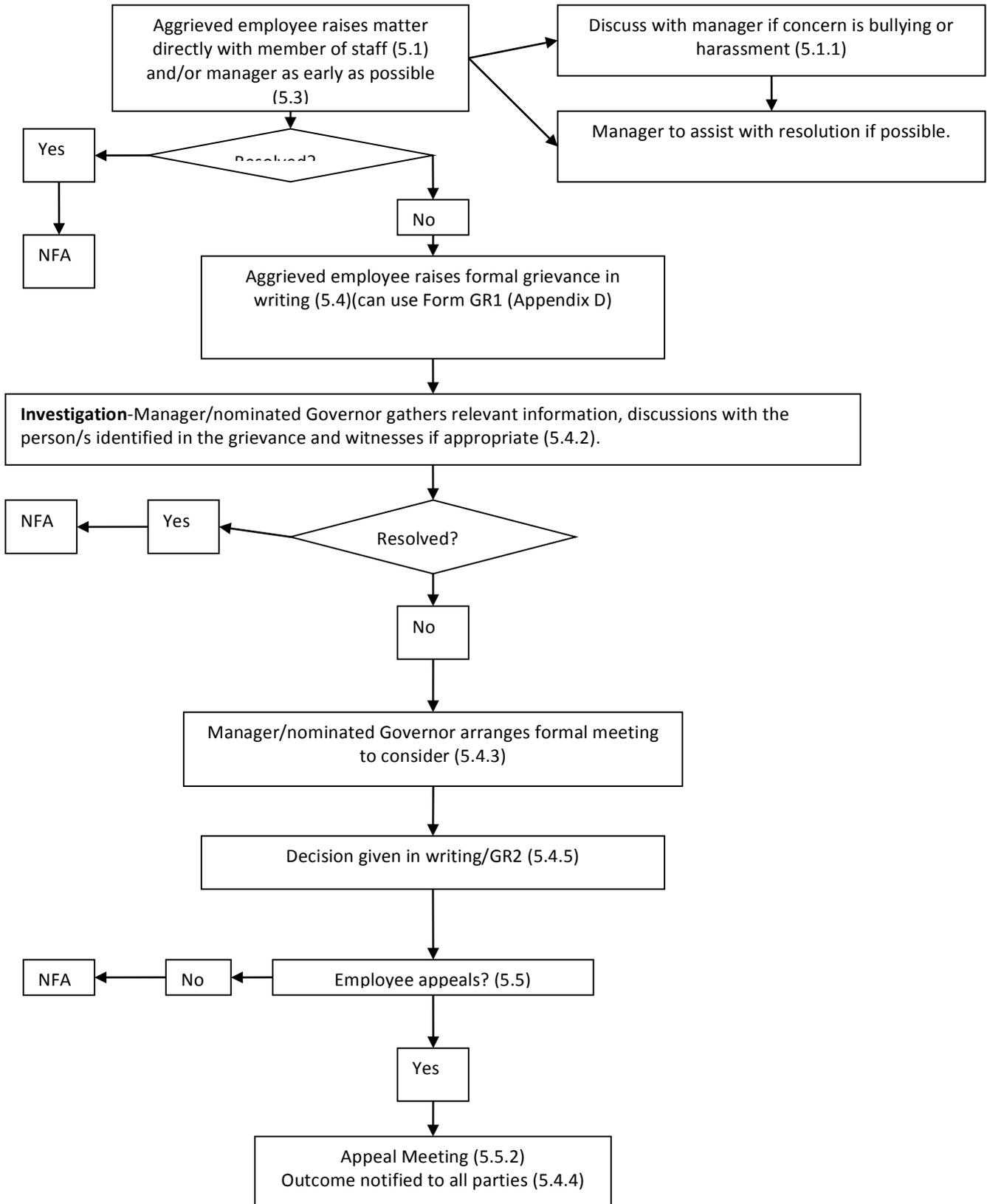
5.4.6 There is no further internal appeal after the Appeal Panel has reached and notified a decision.

## **5.6 Withdrawal of a grievance**

If an employee withdraws their grievance at any stage of the procedure, the reasons will be clarified and fully recorded.

**THE GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE AT A GLANCE**

(brackets refer to relevant paragraph of the Procedure)



## TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF HARASSMENT AND BULLYING

- I** Harassment and bullying are often based on prejudice but may equally arise from ignorance or intolerance. They can take many forms, from overt physical or verbal abuse to more subtle psychological ill-treatment such as ostracism. The effects of bullying and harassment on an individual's mental and physical wellbeing, and ultimately on their performance are often profound. Bullying and harassment have emerged as significant factors in workplace stress and organisational efficiency.
- II** Harassment and bullying by their very nature are 'experiential', which means that the same behaviour may be interpreted in different ways by different people. It may also be that the same behaviour, practised by different people, will be interpreted quite differently. For example, what is acceptable from a close friend or colleague, may not be acceptable from another person.
- III** It is also important to remember that at times we all feel harassed in its colloquial sense i.e. hassled, for example by pressures at work or outside or perhaps because we are unwell or unable to cope for other reasons. It is therefore appropriate to examine our feelings and perceptions carefully to distinguish between genuine and intentional harassment by others and those issues which relate to personal or professional management of time, workload, etc. In the latter case there are other procedures and processes in place to support staff and employees should discuss these concerns with their line manager.
- IV** Harassment and bullying take on many forms and are thereby relatively difficult to define. However, harassment is defined in terms of how it makes the recipient feel and common sense should be used by all to avoid situations which could lead to accusations of harassment.

Broad definitions and some examples are given below. These are not intended to be exhaustive.

**V** **Origins of harassment and bullying**

Sexual and Racial harassment are perhaps the most common, widely acknowledged and legislated against forms, but harassment and bullying occur for innumerable reasons, for example:

- Gender, sex, sexual orientation, marital or parental status;
- Race, ethnic origin, nationality, skin colour;
- Religion, political convictions etc.;
- Disability, sensory impairment, learning difficulties, intellect, education;
- Physical appearance, e.g. size/weight;
- Health, hygiene, HIV/AIDS;
- Trade union or other organisation activity/membership;
- Criminal record;
- Age (or youth);

- Addiction (drugs, smoking, alcohol);
- Social or work position/status.

## **VI Examples of harassment and bullying**

- Physical contact ranging from touching to physical assault.
- Visual displays e.g. sexually explicit posters, graffiti, emblems or obscene gestures.
- Verbal e.g. offensive language or jokes, gossip, slander, sectarian songs, ridiculing, name-calling/insults, lewd remarks, sexual innuendo, unjust or public criticism, destructive sarcasm, shouting.
- Written e.g. letters, emails, social networking sites, texting, graffiti etc.
- Isolation or non-co-operation at work, ostracism, removing responsibilities, withholding information.
- Intrusions e.g. spying, pestering, following, constant observation, staring/leering.
- Coercion e.g. pressure to participate, keep quiet, support.
- Pressure e.g. impossible deadlines, constantly changing work demands/expectations, pressure to return from sick leave, blackmail.

## RESOLVING GRIEVANCES PERSONALLY

Whether you are the victim or a witness, it is recognised that you may be uncertain or apprehensive about how to deal with an incident and may tell yourself that you have imagined it or that the harasser did not mean it. You may feel that it would be disproportionate to pursue the matter and not want to get the other person into trouble or you may feel scared about the consequences of raising the matter. Alternatively, you may feel harassed but be unsure about the cause of those feelings.

### Seeking support

As a first step, you might find it helpful to talk to someone you trust about your situation. An objective perspective may:

- help to clarify your perceptions and/or the root of your feelings;
- help you to identify any personal issues which need to be addressed;
- enable you to articulate your concerns, feelings etc.;
- give you confidence to deal with the matter;
- provide the support you need to move forward.

However you should avoid discussing widely as this may make the situation worse.

You must report incidents of bullying and harassment to your manager or their manager if they are the perpetrator.

Irrespective of whether the matter can be resolved informally or moves to the formal stage you can ask your manager for support which may include:

- Counselling
- A period of leave of absence without detriment
- Additional management support for a period
- Assignment of a mentor
- Assertiveness training.

### As an individual

If you feel able to do so, approach the party/ies directly. Speak to the person calmly and make it clear that the conduct complained of is unwelcome and unacceptable. Tell them precisely what was offensive / upsetting and that you want it to stop. Alternatively put it in writing and keep a copy.

Some timescales are included in the procedure; all incidents should be dealt with without undue delay.

### As a witness

You will need to make a judgement about what approach would be appropriate. If in doubt, you should discuss what you saw with your line manager.

If appropriate and where you feel confident to do so, approach the party/ies directly. Tell them what you witnessed and explain your concerns.

Where you have an appropriate relationship with the individual, you could discuss the matter with them. Where appropriate you could direct the person to this procedure and encourage them to follow it.

### Keeping records

It is important to keep notes of incidents and action you take. You should record:

- the nature of the concern, including how it affected you;
- dates and times of incidents;
- any witnesses;
- any discussions you have with any parties to try to address the issue;
- any discussions you have with managers;
- any written communications you send.

**GRIEVANCE FORM GR1**  
*(To be completed by aggrieved employee)*

If your grievance has not been resolved informally, you may move to the formal stage by setting out your grievance in writing you line manager or another manager/nominated Governor/Trustee. If you are a Headteacher or the grievance is against the Headteacher, this form should be sent to the Chair of the Trust Board. You may use this form.

**A. THE GRIEVANCE**

Employee's name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**B. Please state nature of the grievance (continue on separate sheet if necessary)**

Please be concise and factual and avoid inflammatory or insulting language.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**C. What attempts have you made to resolve this informally?**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**D. What redress do you seek?**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**E. I agree that the above accurately reflects my grievance.**

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ signed by the aggrieved

Date \_\_\_\_\_

