WANDLE LEARNING TRUST

Third Party Harassment Policy



This policy was approved by the Trust Board:	
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Member of staff with responsibility for review	Graham Wolfe Head of H.R.
Latest edits	

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1. Introduction

The Trust is committed to providing a working environment in which all staff are treated with dignity, courtesy and respect. Everyone has the right to work in an environment that is free from harassment, abuse, intimidation and discrimination.

The Trust recognises that inappropriate conduct towards staff can sometimes arise from individuals who are not employed by the Trust, including parents and carers, visitors, contractors, suppliers, governors, members of the public and other third parties. Such behaviour can have a significant impact on the health, wellbeing, safety and performance of staff.

The Trust adopts a zero-tolerance approach to third-party harassment and will take all reasonable steps to prevent such behaviour, support affected staff and take appropriate action when incidents occur. This policy sets out the standards expected of third parties, the responsibilities of staff and leaders, and the procedures for reporting, investigating and responding to incidents of third-party harassment.

2. Key definitions

This policy incorporates the following schools or organisations within Wandle Learning Trust (WLT or the Trust):

- Chestnut Grove Academy
- Chesterton Primary School
- Fircroft Primary School
- Grovelands Primary School
- Hellingly Primary School
- Kensington Avenue Primary School
- Norbury High School
- Paxton Academy
- Ravenstone Primary School
- Swaffield Primary School
- Thomson House School
- Wandle Learning Partnership
- Little Wandle Letters and Sounds
- Centrally employed Trust staff
- Any other schools or organisations that may join WLT from time to time as not listed, unless otherwise specified.

The terms Academy, School, Organisation and Trust are considered interchangeable in the context of all Trust policies.

Term	Definition
"Executive Leaders"	means the co-Chief Executive Officers (co-CEOs) and the Chief Operating Officer (COO) who provide trust-wide strategic and operational leadership, oversee Trust-wide improvement, ensure consistency, and deliver the Trust's mission, values and priorities across all academies and services.
"Staff Directors"	provide executive leadership for defined areas within the Trust, translating the strategy into effective delivery, and continuous improvement across the academies, WLP, and Little Wandle.
"Executive Headteacher"	provides strategic and operational leadership across more than one academy, driving school improvement, supporting senior leaders, and ensuring consistent delivery of the trust's vision.
"Headteacher"	is responsible for the day-to-day leadership and management of the academy, delivering high-quality education, ensuring pupil welfare, and implementing trust policies and priorities.
"Head of School"	leads the day-to-day operational and educational running of the academy, under the direction of an Executive Headteacher, with a focus on teaching quality, behaviour, and pupil outcomes.
"Head of Service" (including the Head of Governance)	lead and develop trust-wide specialist functions, delivering high-quality operational support, consistency and expertise to schools in line with the Trust's strategy and policies
"Trustees or Trust Board"	responsible for the overall strategic leadership, accountability and stewardship of the Trust, ensuring statutory compliance, strong governance, effective use of resources, and sustained improvement in educational outcomes across all academies.
"Chair of the Trust Board"	provides strategic leadership of the board, ensures effective governance and decision-making, holds executive leaders to account, and acts as the Trust's senior ambassador and link with key stakeholders.

3. Purpose

This policy sets out the Trust's approach to preventing, identifying, reporting and responding to third-party harassment. It explains the responsibilities of the Trust, leaders, managers and staff in creating a working environment free from harassment and outlines the action that may be taken where inappropriate behaviour occurs.

Harassment by pupils should be managed through the school's Behaviour Policy and associated procedures unless there are exceptional circumstances that warrant additional action under this policy.

This procedure does not form part of employee's contract of employment and we may vary or amend it at any time.

4. Key principles

The Trust is committed to providing a safe, respectful and inclusive working environment for all staff. This includes protection from harassment by third parties such as parents/carers, contractors, visitors, suppliers and members of the public.

5. Alignment with Wandle 2030 Strategy

This Policy is aligned to the Trust's Five-Year Strategic Plan: Wandle 2030, and in particular to the People Pillar, which commits the Trust to recruiting, retaining and developing exceptional staff at every career stage. The policy supports the Trust's ambition to be an employer of choice by ensuring that staff are able to work in an environment where they are treated with respect and dignity by third parties.

6. Scope

This policy applies to all staff directly employed by the Trust whether on permanent, fixed-term or temporary contracts. It should also be followed in respect of any casual workers, agency workers, volunteers or other individuals who may work within the Trust, but who are not directly employed by the Trust.

It applies to conduct:

- On Trust or academy premises
- During Trust or school-related activities (e.g. trips, meetings, events)
- In any work-related communication, including email, phone, and online platforms

7. Statutory responsibilities

The Trust recognises its responsibility to ensure that all workers should undertake their roles free from an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

This policy seeks to ensure that the Trust follows it relevant statutory requirements. In particular, the Trust will ensure compliance with, but not limited to, the following:

- Equality Act 2010
- Employment Rights Act 2025
- Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

8. Expectations of Third Parties

All parents, carers, and visitors are expected to:

- Treat staff with courtesy and respect
- Communicate respectfully in all online and offline interactions
- Refrain from posting inappropriate or defamatory content
- Use official communication channels appropriately

9. Definition of Third-Party Harassment

Third party harassment occurs where a member of staff is subjected to unwanted behaviour by someone who is not a Trust employee, and where that behaviour:

- Violates their dignity, or
- Creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment

This includes (but is not limited to):

- Offensive, abusive, or threatening language
- Swearing
- Shouting unnecessarily
- Discriminatory remarks related to protected characteristics (e.g. sex, race, disability, religion, sexual orientation, age)
- Physical intimidation or assault
- Inappropriate sexual behaviour
- Inappropriate contact or intrusive behaviour

- Repeated unreasonable complaints or communication

Harassment may be a single serious incident or a series of less serious incidents. The effect of the conduct on the recipient will be considered alongside all other circumstances when determining whether harassment has occurred.

10. Online Harassment

The Trust recognises that third party harassment can occur through digital and online channels. The same standards of behaviour apply to all online interactions connected to the Trust.

Online harassment includes unwanted conduct via digital means that meets the criteria outlined in above.

This may occur via:

- Email or messaging platforms
- Social media
- Parent communication systems
- Online meetings or virtual learning platforms
- Public forums or review sites

Examples include:

- Abusive or threatening messages
- Discriminatory remarks
- Persistent or excessive contact
- Posting harmful or misleading information about staff
- Sharing images or personal information without consent

11. Preventative Measures

The Trust will take proactive steps to reduce the risk of third-party harassment, including:

- Clear expectations of behaviour for parents/carers and visitors (e.g. Code of conduct for parents)
- Training for staff on managing challenging situations
- Messaging and communication to reinforce respectful behaviour across the Trust community, e.g. emails, posters in public areas.
- Risk assessments in higher-risk situations, e.g. meetings with parents who may present challenging behaviours
- Using code words to alert colleagues to an escalating situation

12. Reporting and Responding to Third-Party Harassment

Depending on the circumstances, staff who experience or witness harassment should utilise some of the Practical Response Techniques in Appendix A, which includes the following actions:

- Professionally challenge the behaviour of the third party, reflecting back the behaviour(s) (e.g. shouting, aggressive behaviour, swearing, etc.), advising them that the school/service do not tolerate such behaviour(s) by adults and that, if the behaviour(s) continue, the member of staff is not willing to continue to engage with the third party.
- If the behaviour does not cease, withdraw from the situation and seek the support of a senior member of staff.
- Involve a senior member of staff.
- In more serious cases the police should be called, e.g. where an individual feels physically threatened or there is a physical risk to others or to property being damaged.
- If the member of staff's line manager or senior leader does not become involved in the matter they should report the incident to them as soon as possible after the incident.
- Provide details and evidence, e.g. a written statement, where possible. For issues relating to online harassment staff should preserve screenshots or similar evidence.
- All incidents should be recorded using the following questionnaire Third Party Harassment – Fill in form.

The Trust will ensure:

- Reports are taken seriously
- Issues are handled promptly and sensitively
- Confidentiality is maintained as far as possible
- Referral to co-CEOs in more serious cases
- Involvement of external agencies (e.g. Local Authority, police)

Staff may also:

- Use grievance procedures (e.g. where concerns are not acted upon)
- Seek trade union support

The Trust may take the following actions against third parties:

- Issue formal warnings
- Restrict communication channels
- Request removal of content
- Banning from Trust premises where necessary
- Escalate to platform providers or external agencies

Where consideration is being made of banning a third party from the Trust premises the following steps should be undertaken:

- Establish and document the facts
- Assess risk and consider alternative responses
- Notify the individual in writing of the decision and the reasons for it, and give them an opportunity to make representations before the final decision is taken. If there are immediate safeguarding concerns, a temporary ban could be put in place up until the point that the parent is able to make representations.
- If a restriction is put in place, it should be reasonable and proportionate, and it should be subject to review within a reasonable period.
- It should make clear that a ban from the premises would not remove a parent's right to communicate with the school, receive information about their child, or access the complaints procedure.

Where the alleged harassment involves the employee's line manager, Headteacher or another senior leader, the employee should refer to the Trust's Bullying and Harassment, Grievance or Whistleblowing policy, as appropriate.

13. Support for Staff

The Trust will provide:

- Senior leadership support
- Opportunities to debrief and reflect following incidents
- Adjustments to working arrangements where appropriate
- Access to wellbeing services
- Check ins with affected colleagues

14. Monitoring and Record Keeping

The Trust will maintain records of reported incidents, actions taken and outcomes. Incidents must be recorded using the monitoring form Third Party Harassment – Fill in form. Information will be monitored periodically to identify trends, recurring issues, locations of concern and any additional measures that may be required to fulfil the Trust's duty to take reasonable steps to prevent harassment.

15. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Trust, or sooner in response to legislative changes or emerging risks.

16. Related Policies

- Staff Code of Conduct
- School Behaviour Policies
- Complaints Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Bullying and Harassment Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Grievance Policy
- ICT Acceptable Use Policy
- Social Media Policy
- Trust Parent/Visitor Code of Conduct

Appendix A

Harassment - Practical Response Techniques

Manage Your Self

Try to remain calm, brief, and professional. Be clear about what behaviours are unacceptable. Be firm and assertive when needed.

Acknowledge

Acknowledge that the individual may be upset or angry, e.g. "I can see you're frustrated."

Reflect Behaviours

Identify the behaviours that the individual is displaying and reflect them back to them, e.g. “You’re shouting at me. There is no need to do that”

Set Boundaries

Make it clear to the individual that you are not prepared to engage with them if they continue to behave in the way that they are, e.g. "I want to help, but I cannot continue the conversation if abusive language is used."

Take a Break

Consider having a short break, by withdrawing for a few minutes to give the individual time to reflect and become calmer.

Refocus

If the individual calms down, seek their verbal agreement that they feel able to carry on the discussion in a reasonable manner. "Thank you for being calmer. Do you feel you are now able to continue the discussion without being aggressive?” “Let's focus on the issue you would like to discuss."

Warn

Inform the individual you will end the discussion if they do not act calmer, e.g. “If this behaviour continues, I will end the meeting/call."

Escalate

If appropriate, seek the support of a senior colleague "I am ending this conversation now and will refer this matter to a senior leader."

Withdraw

If the situation continues to worsen and the individual shows no sign of behaving appropriately, they should be asked to leave the premises. Staff should withdraw to a distance that they feel safe at.

Police Intervention

In the most extreme cases, where an individual is extremely threatening or aggressive, and/or they have been asked to leave the premises but refuses, then the police should be called.

Report

Ensure you report the matter to a senior leader via this online form [link to form].

What Not to Do

- Argue with the individual.
- Respond emotionally.
- Raise your voice to make yourself heard.
- Continue a discussion once abuse begins.
- Excuse or minimise the behaviour of the individual, e.g. “That’s just how they are”.
- ‘Instruct’ the individual how to behave, e.g. don’t say something like “You need to calm down!”