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Headteachers/Principals of Schools & Colleges

Dealing with assaults on staff in school and college environments ¹

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This protocol is recommended as a good practice guide and is designed to combat violence at work and help the City Council and its senior managers discharge their duty of care to all employees. The protocol has been prepared by a “Violence at Work” Working Group of the Teachers’ Consultative Committee.

The LEA expects its schools and colleges to adopt this protocol or be able to evidence that they have alternative measures of equal status in place. Schools/colleges will, of course, also continue to have recourse to existing behaviour management policies and practices and these will need to be reviewed in the light of the operation of this protocol.

The Health and Safety Executive defines violence at work as *“any incident in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work”*. The LEA, its Professional Associations and Trades Unions, consider assaults upon staff unacceptable and are working in a positive partnership to reduce and eliminate these¹. The LEA believes this objective is shared throughout its schools, colleges and other establishments and requests the active co-operation of all colleagues in tackling this issue.

Following this guidance will help senior managers discharge their duty of care towards staff and ensure consistency of approach within their organisation and across the LEA.

The protocol will be widely publicised by the Local Education Authority and will be recommended to all teaching and non-teaching staff by their professional associations and trades unions. It is hoped that the protocol will provide a practical tool for addressing more serious incidents and deter repeat occurrences.

The protocol is designed to provide guidance to Headteachers and their staff in the management of difficult situations and is also intended to provide a framework within which assistance can be given to staff.

Following completion of the ten steps detailed in this protocol it is recommended that Headteachers and Principals review existing risk assessments in connection with teaching and learning environments to ensure that structural issues are addressed and further recurrences prevented.

¹. For the purposes of this document the use of the term “assault” should be taken as meaning verbal abuse, threats or the use of physical violence.

The Ten Steps

1. Schools/colleges should identify a single point of contact amongst senior staff to receive all reports of assaults and violence at work. This point of contact must have sufficient authority to release affected staff from their duties and re-deploy other staff as required.
2. Staff should be removed immediately from their current situation and medical assistance and emotional support offered should this be required.
3. Where the perpetrator of the alleged assault(s) is a student or pupil they should be removed from circulation and isolated as quickly as possible and dealt with in accordance with the institution's behaviour policy. Where the perpetrator is not a pupil or student (e.g. member of the public/ intruder), the matter should be referred to the police under existing procedures for "Dealing with troublemakers". Regardless of perpetrator type, when specifically requested by the victim, the police should be contacted immediately.

(Guidance on "Dealing with Trouble-makers" has been issued direct to all schools and colleges by the Home Office/ former DfEE in 1997 and should be available in your establishment. Alternatively it may be viewed on line/ downloaded at:

<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/schoolsecurity/dwt1intro.shtml>)

All staff should be notified that an assault has been reported and alerted to the management action taken and guidance issued in connection with the alleged perpetrators.

4. The single point of contact identified at (1) above should ensure completion of SO1/SO2 forms and also seek to co-ordinate the production of supplementary corroborative evidence as to the nature of the incident. Where incidents are perceived to be racially motivated then relevant reporting systems should also be operated.
5. A statement detailing the events in question should be obtained, at the earliest opportunity, from the member of staff concerned having allowed her/him sufficient time to recover from the immediate effects of the event. Staff members should be reminded of the desirability of having a staff representative, colleague or friend present when the statement is made or prior to the submission of the statement.
6. The identified single point of contact should offer to undertake a follow-up call that evening to the assaulted member of staff to check on her/his welfare should this be the staff member's wish.
7. The single point of contact should provide feedback to the member of staff concerned, and all other staff, on the follow-up procedures taking place in the school/college, including expectations around the management of the perpetrator/incident, and any conditions surrounding the return of the pupil/student if appropriate. This should take place prior to the return of the pupil or student.

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8. The agreed LEA Needs Assessment Procedure should be completed where the perpetrator is a pupil/student at the school/college in order to identify particular support needs and changes in working practices to reduce any further risks associated with this pupil/student.
9. Follow-up advice and guidance should be offered to the member of staff. This may include:
 - **'Teacherline'** – a free service open to all teaching staff independent of the LEA – telephone number 0800 562 561
 - **'Amica'** – a counselling service provided by Leicester City Council via referral from the Occupational Health Unit.
10. Consideration should be given to progressing any further action required by the school/college management and the governing body.

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