

William Austin Junior School

Policy on Domestic Abuse



Adopted from LBC Policy

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The school recognises that its employees will be amongst those affected by domestic abuse and is committed to promoting zero tolerance of domestic abuse towards, or by, its employees. It is essential, therefore, that the working environment promotes the view that domestic abuse is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. This policy also covers the approach to be taken where there are concerns that an employee may be the perpetrator of the abuse.
- 1.2 This policy aims to ensure that all employees and senior leaders are aware of the impact that domestic abuse can have on an individual, a family or wider society, and that all staff know where to seek help and support if they, or a colleague, are affected by domestic abuse.
- 1.3 This policy is part of the school's commitment to employee wellbeing and seeks to retain and support valued employees; improve morale and performance and to challenge abusive behaviours.
- 1.4 Under the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1992) the school/trust recognises its legal responsibilities in promoting the welfare and safety of all employees.

2.0 Purpose and Scope

- 2.1 The purpose of this document is to:
- support employees experiencing domestic abuse
 - enable employees to remain productive and at work
 - aid headteachers seeking to help employees experiencing domestic abuse
 - assist colleagues of those experiencing domestic abuse
 - outline the approach to be taken where there are concerns that an employee may be the perpetrator
 - demonstrate that the school is prepared to support employees during difficult periods
- 2.2 This policy:
- applies to all employees of the school. The school will also offer support to agency and contract workers and volunteers as far as is reasonably possible
 - should be considered in conjunction with the school's Leave of Absence Policy, the Capability Procedure, the Disciplinary Policy, the Sickness Absence Policy and the Unfair Discrimination, and Harassment and Bullying Policy
- 2.3 The school will show empathy and understanding with victims or survivors of domestic abuse and be flexible in their responses to them.

3.0 Definition of Domestic abuse

- 3.1 For the purpose of this policy, domestic abuse is defined as 'any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling or coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality'.

- 3.2 This definition includes so-called 'honour' based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage.
- 3.3 This definition can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse:
- psychological
 - physical
 - sexual
 - financial
 - coercive control /emotional
 - exploitative
 - digital /online
 - stalking
 - harassment
- 3.4 Controlling behaviour is defined as a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or isolate them from sources of support, exploit their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.
- 3.5 Coercive behaviour is defined as an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish or frighten the victim.
- 3.6 Ultimately, domestic abuse is the abuse of power and control over one person by another.
- 3.7 It is important to recognise that both females and males can be subjected to domestic abuse from and by a current/ex-partner, their children (aged 16+) or a member of their family or people that they live with. Perpetrators and victims can be either male or female.
- 3.8 All employees:
- have a duty to follow the policy and, if they do not understand anything, to speak to the headteacher, a senior leader, or the designated person within school such as the school's mental health first aider (where appropriate). Alternatively, advice can be sought from the employee assistance programme provider or a trade union
 - should be supportive and non-judgemental towards colleagues
 - must maintain confidentiality – do not discuss or share sensitive information or colleagues' working or contact information
 - should report any incidents of unwelcome contact, harassment or intimidation which you become aware of at work by an alleged perpetrator
 - must discuss any safeguarding concerns with the headteacher and report them to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) or Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) team

4.0 Victims of Domestic Abuse

- 4.1 On average high-risk victims¹ live with domestic abuse for 2.3 years, and standard risk² victims for three years, experiencing 50 incidents before getting effective help.
- 4.2 Victims or survivors of domestic abuse may feel unable to talk to anyone about their situation. They may be afraid or worried about the consequences that this might have on themselves, their family, their home, their job or their income.
- 4.3 Whilst it is up to the victim to disclose what is happening to them, there are ways in which you may become aware that an individual is being subjected to domestic abuse. These may include:
- The employee may confide in their colleagues/ manager/ headteacher.
 - They may tell their colleagues/ manager/ headteacher something which makes them concerned for the employee's safety.
 - Employees may inform their manager / headteacher that a colleague is suffering from domestic abuse.
 - There may be obvious effects of physical abuse or injuries that don't match the explanation given (it is important not to make assumptions).
 - It may come to light as a result of enquiries into a drop-in performance or a significant change in behaviour.
 - A background to poor attendance.
 - Increased contact from a partner, ex-partner or family member to the employee during working hours.
- 4.4 Headteachers/managers who support employees in such matters will show empathy and support, ensuring that the employee is aware that support and assistance can be provided.
- 4.5 Employees are encouraged to disclose that they are at risk from domestic abuse in order to receive the help and support of the school/trust.
- 4.6 Spectrum.life are the schools Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) provider.

The Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) is a free, confidential counselling and wellbeing support service that provides support to all employees, their partner / spouse and dependent children over 16 still living at home.

The service is available 24/7, 365 days a year, and can help support employees with issues such as:

- health and well-being information
- stress at home or work
- financial issues including debt
- legal information
- career guidance
- family and relationship matters
- consumer issues

¹ High-risk; those assessed as at high risk of serious harm, injury or death

² Standard Risk; also known as complex / medium risk. Those assessed whose lives are seriously disrupted by domestic abuse

Employees can contact Spectrum.life on 0808 196 2016, or by accessing the online platform <https://app.spectrum.life/login>. The organisation code is LUTON.

5.0 Confidentiality and right to privacy

- 5.1 The school is responsible for the safety and security of all employees at work, including those affected by domestic abuse.
- 5.2 The school encourages employees at risk from domestic abuse to disclose this so that they can receive support. The school will seek to enable employees to disclose such facts by generating a supportive and open management culture.
- 5.3 The school recognises the employee's right to privacy. Whilst the school strongly encourages victims of domestic abuse to disclose domestic abuse for the safety of themselves, their family members and all those in the workplace, it does not force them to share this information if they do not want to.
- 5.4 Employees who disclose experiencing abuse can be confident that the information they provide is confidential and will not ordinarily be shared with other members of staff.
- 5.5 There are some circumstances in which confidentiality cannot be assured. These occur when there are safeguarding concerns about children or vulnerable adults or where the employer needs to act to protect the safety of employees or a crime has been committed.
- 5.6 In circumstances where the school has to breach confidentiality, it will seek specialist advice before doing so. If it decides to proceed in breaching confidentiality after having taken advice, the school will inform the employee why it is doing so and it will seek the employee's agreement where possible.
- 5.7 All records concerning domestic abuse will be kept strictly confidential. There will be no adverse impact on the employment records of victims of domestic abuse as a result of related absences.
- 5.8 Improper disclosure of information i.e. breaches of confidentiality by any member of staff will be taken seriously and may be subject to disciplinary action.
- 5.9 Employees may prefer to disclose their situation and seek advice direct from a third party, such as the agencies listed in section 7 of this policy.

6.0 Internal support

- 6.1 In order to support employees and/or managers who are seeking support in dealing with domestic abuse the school/trust will:
- offer employees experiencing domestic abuse access to independent support through the school/trust employee assistance programme (where available), access to occupational health support, advocacy, counselling, and by publicising the availability of this support regularly throughout the school.
 - raise workplace awareness of domestic abuse issues and sources of support.

7.0 External support

- 7.1 For anyone who feels they are at risk of abuse, it is important to remember that there is help and support available from the following agencies:

Bedfordshire Signpost Hub

call 0800 0282 887 (calls are free from landlines and mobiles) for more information

- email info@signpostforbedfordshire.com
- visit the Bedfordshire Signpost Hub website

Stepping Stones

- call 01582 457114
- email hello@steppingstonesluton.org.uk
- visit the Stepping Stones website

Specialist learning programmes to help victims of domestic abuse are available through Stepping Stones or Luton All Women's Centre.

Luton All Women's Centre

- call 01582 416 783 for more information
- email support@lawc.org.uk
- visit the Luton All Women's Centre website

Women's Aid Luton

Offers support and guidance to women's and children from all backgrounds and circumstances. Also offers refuges to women and support for children. An online chat service is available, 10am to 12pm on weekdays - see Women's Aid Live Chat.

- Call the helpline: 01582 391856 (10am – 5pm Monday to Friday)
- Visit the Women's Aid website

National Domestic Abuse Helpline for female victims of abuse

- Call 0808 2000 247

Men's Advice Line for male victims of abuse

- Call 0808 8010 327

LGBT+ National Domestic Abuse Helpline for LGBT+ victims of abuse

- Call 0800 999 5428

8.0 Role of the headteacher/manager

8.1 Headteachers/managers have a crucial role to play in enabling employees experiencing domestic abuse to seek help.

8.2 The role of the headteacher/manager is to:

- ensure that every employee has access to this policy.
- identify employees experiencing difficulties that could be as a result of domestic abuse (for example using regular check in processes or by fostering an open management culture that enables team members to disclose sensitive issues). Where domestic abuse is identified, respond appropriately and effectively.
- provide support in the first instance including specific advice on both the internal and external support options that are available. Headteachers/managers are not professional counsellors or experts and must recognise the limitations of their role.

- clarify with the employee what support/help they are seeking and signpost individuals to the professional support that is available and make it clear through the policy and their own actions, that employees will be supported.
- keep confidential notes of all discussions, ensuring confidentiality in maintaining records and discussing support.
- protect confidentiality in all instances (excepting the requirements of child protection/adult safeguarding).
- refer the individual to the appropriate internal or external source of help and support.
- ensure that the safety of all employees is protected and arrange appropriate risk assessments if necessary.
- enable the affected employee to remain productive and at work during a difficult period in their domestic life, for example by using the school/trust leave of absence policy and procedure.
- seek advice from the Luton HR Traded Services team if it becomes known that an employee has or is alleged to have committed an act of domestic abuse.

8.3 Headteachers may have to consider additional factors if incidents in the workplace relate to domestic abuse. For example, it might involve a violent partner, ex-partner or family member visiting the workplace, making abusive phone calls, sending e-mails, intimidating, or harassing the employee. Headteachers will also need to consider the implications for employees working from home if this is the location of where the abuse occurs.

8.4 Where there are issues such as these, the headteacher/manager should, with the victim, consider the following preventative and supportive measures:

- Support the employee to establish their own personal safety plan, taking into account who the employee would like to include in their support network.
- Improve security measures on entry to the school/building, ensuring no access is available to unauthorised visitors.
- Remind colleagues, including those receiving visitors and telephone calls not to divulge personal information about employees, such as addresses, telephone numbers or working hours.
- Where possible, offer temporary or permanent changes in working times and patterns which may minimise an employee's risk both at work and during their journeys to and from work. This could include relocating the individual within the school to ensure that they are not visible from reception points or ground floor windows. It may be possible within multi-academy trusts to consider, where appropriate, redeployment to another school within the trust.
- Where possible, offer a change in specific duties such as not requiring the employee to answer phones or work in reception areas, or in exceptional circumstances, consider redeployment to another post if an alternative option is not available.
- Agree how to make colleagues aware of how to respond if the perpetrator rings or calls at the workplace. With the victim's consent, provide colleagues with a description of the perpetrator and other relevant details such as car registration numbers. These steps will help to heighten awareness of security in the workplace.
- If there is a need for such discussions with colleagues, in agreement with the employee, the headteacher should remind colleagues that the information about the domestic abuse situation is confidential. Any unauthorised breach of confidentiality could lead to disciplinary action being taken against them.

- Ensure systems for recording employee's whereabouts during the day are adequate, and where work requires visits outside the school, consider how risks can be minimised. This could include a change in working duties, ensuring the employee is accompanied by a colleague and that a mobile phone is carried by the employee.
- Record any incidents of violence in the school, including persistent phone calls, e-mails or visits to the employee by their partner/ex-partner. A record should also be kept of any witnesses to these incidents as these records could be used in any criminal proceedings or civil action against the alleged perpetrator.
- When considering preventative and supportive measures, the headteacher may be required to take account of whether these are operationally appropriate, however ensuring the safety of employees should be of primary concern throughout this process.

9.0 Attendance

9.1 Where domestic abuse has been reported, headteachers will be flexible with unplanned absences and concerns about timekeeping.

9.2 Headteachers may offer employees experiencing domestic abuse reasonable paid or unpaid leave of absence for relevant appointments, including with support agencies, solicitors, to rearrange housing or childcare, and for court appointments.

9.3 Individual absences can be discussed and agreed between the employee and the headteacher, with HR support where appropriate.

10.0 Perpetrators of domestic abuse

10.1 Domestic abuse perpetrated by employees will not be tolerated under any circumstances nor will it be treated as a purely private matter. The school recognises that it has a role in encouraging and supporting employees to address violent and abusive behaviour of all kinds.

10.2 If an employee approaches the school about their abusive behaviour, information will be provided about the services and support available to them.

10.3 Where an employee has concerns about a colleague as a perpetrator of abuse they must report their concern to their manager or the headteacher.

10.4 The school will treat any allegation, disclosure or conviction of a domestic abuse related offence on a case-by-case basis.

10.5 The school code of conduct is intended to inform all employees of the standards of conduct expected of them, within and outside the workplace. It identifies a set of principles governing behaviour by which employees are expected to abide. Employees are expected at all times to present high standards of personal integrity and conduct that will not reflect adversely on the school and its reputation.

10.6 In some circumstances it may be deemed inappropriate for the employee to continue in their current role(s) due to a caution or conviction. The school views the use of violence and abusive behaviour by an employee, wherever this occurs, as a breach of the school's code of conduct for disciplinary purposes.

10.7 This policy may be applicable in cases where an employee has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed or threatened their partner, an ex-partner or a family member
- possibly committed a criminal offence against their partner, an ex-partner or a family member

- had an allegation of domestic abuse made against them
- presented concerns about their behaviour within a current or a historic intimate relationship or with a family member

10.8 The school is committed to ensuring that:

- allegations will be dealt with fairly and proactively with employees who use abusive behaviours
- all employees will receive guidance and support
- confidentiality will be maintained and information restricted only to those who have a need to know
- investigations will be thorough and independent
- all cases will be dealt with quickly avoiding unnecessary delays

10.9 The policy is intended to be safety focussed and proactive rather than punitive. However, any employee who is responsible for giving advice, or who comes into contact with, or supports those vulnerable people or children experiencing or potentially experiencing domestic abuse needs to be aware of the potential consequences if they are found to be perpetrators. In these circumstances, headteachers have a responsibility to inform the relevant safeguarding team of the concern. Where the employee's responsibilities and duties relate to children, the matter must be referred to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

10.10 If an employee is found to be knowingly assisting an abuser in perpetrating the abuse for example by giving them access to facilities or information such as telephone numbers, contact information or email, then they will be seen as having committed a disciplinary offence.

10.11 If an employee is found to have made a malicious allegation that another employee is perpetrating abuse then this will be treated as a serious disciplinary offence and action will be taken.

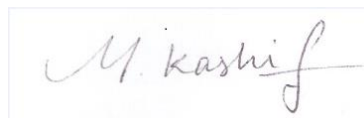
This policy will be monitored and reviewed by the school as it changes.

Policy updated: November 2022

Staff responsible: Sally Bacon

This policy was ratified by the Governing body on: 11 January 2023

Signed on behalf of the Governing Body:



(signature)

M. Kashif - Chair of Governors (printed)