

The Minerva Learning Trust



VIOLENCE AT WORK POLICY

Adopted by the Board of Trustees of the Minerva Learning Trust

Minerva Learning Trust
Bridport Primary School
Burton Bradstock CE Primary School
St Mary's CE Primary School
The Sir John Colfox Academy

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Policy Written by

The Minerva Learning Trust

Ratified by
The Minerva Learning Trust Board

6 March 2017

Date for Review

March 2020

Signature of Chair

Violence at Work Policy

Policy Statement

The Minerva Learning Trust recognises that there are no circumstances in which violence towards any employee is acceptable and no employee shall be expected to accept exposure to violent behaviour as part of their role.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines work-related violence as: 'Any incident in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work'.
- 1.2 This definition is taken to include verbal abuse or threat, threatening behaviour, any assault, any serious or persistent harassment, including racial or sexual harassment and extends from what may be seen to be minor incidents to serious assault and threats against the employee's family.
- 1.3 This policy is based on a model policy form Dorset County Council which has been agreed following consultation with the recognised Trades Unions.

2 Scope

- 2.1 This policy is applicable to all employees of The Minerva Learning Trust who suffer physical or verbal abuse during the course of their duties from pupils, parents and members of the public.

3 Legal Requirements

- 3.1 Health and Safety law applies to risks of violence, just as it does to other risks from work. The main relevant legislation is:

- **The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (HSAW Act)**

Employers have a legal duty under this act to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of their employees while they are at work.

- **The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999**

Employers must consider the risks to employees (including the risk of reasonably foreseeable violence); decide how significant these risks are; decide what to do to prevent or control the risks; and develop a clear management plan to achieve this.

- **The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrence Regulations 1995 (RIDDOR)**

Employers must notify their enforcing authority in the event of an accident/incident at work to any employee resulting in death, major injury or incapacity for normal work for more than three days. This includes any act of non-consensual physical violence against a person at work.

4 Policy

- 4.1 The Trustees of The Minerva Learning Trust believe that all violence to employees is unacceptable and is committed to providing full support to any employee who suffers violence in the course of, or arising out of, their official duties.
- 4.2 Information will be available to members of the public in the form of a statement that violence is unacceptable and the Trustees of The Minerva Learning Trust will take legal proceedings if necessary to maintain the safety and well-being of its employees.
- 4.3 All incidents of verbal abuse or physical violence will be treated seriously and responded to appropriately. On no account will such incidents be treated lightly or dismissed as part of everyday life, nor will a violent incident be viewed as a reflection on an individual employee's ability.
- 4.4 All incidents of verbal abuse or violence must be reported to the appropriate leader and investigated; and appropriate action taken to minimise the risk of a recurrence. This may include the need to share information with colleagues and across schools to establish any pattern of violence from particular areas. Where it is verbal abuse or violence from parents or members of the local community rather than students, the Headteacher should be informed immediately.
- 4.5 Guidance on the reporting of incidents and reporting forms can be found in the Accident Reporting Policy and Procedure in each school
- 4.6 Where serious threats are made to an employee in the course of his/her employment, the Headteacher and/or Chair of Governors will take appropriate and supportive action to prevent any recurrence. This may include sending a formal letter to the person concerned warning that legal action will be taken if a breach of the law occurs (Appendix 1 refers)
- 4.7 An employee who has been harmed in any way, including threats or psychological damage or who has suffered damage to their property, should be actively encouraged to report the matter to the Police. Every opportunity should be taken to prosecute offenders either by the Police, or in certain circumstances, individuals may wish to initiate legal proceedings themselves. The Minerva Learning Trust will ensure that employees are supported through the prosecution process.

5 Risk Assessment

- 5.1 By looking at the roles employees undertake, and the context in which they work, it is possible to identify the potential for violence. When undertaking a risk assessment it is essential to identify individual causes of risk, and equally important to recognise that these risk factors rarely occur in isolation and when combined will have the potential to increase the risk of violence. As such, employees may face a series of combined risk factors such as threatening behaviour from pupils which may be supported and/or influenced by the parent/carer.
- 5.2 Risk Assessments should be carried out where violence poses a significant risk to employees. Any recommendations arising out of the assessment should seek to eliminate or reduce the risk to the lowest reasonable practicable level. Where the risk assessment identifies that the risk(s) may not be contained within the setting of the

school, it may be appropriate to share information with colleagues as outlined in Paragraph 4.4 above.

- 5.3 It is recognised that the behaviour of some pupils may present particular challenges to employees. Specific information and guidance has been developed relating to pupils with complex needs.

6 Legal position

- 6.1 Physical restraint used in self-defence is acceptable in law, but only with the minimum force necessary. This means that it is reasonable for employees to use sufficient force to stop or control violent situations, or prevent themselves or other people from being injured. Risk Assessments should be carried out in each school where violence poses a significant risk to employees (see Paragraph 5). Whilst the risk of an employee being in a situation where the only way to protect themselves is to cause harm to the violent person is unlikely, it is accepted in law. In deciding whether the force used was reasonable, the courts will consider all of the circumstances surrounding the violent situation.
- 6.2 There is no legal definition of when it is reasonable to use force as this will always depend on the precise circumstances of individual cases. To be judged lawful, the force used would need to be in proportion to the consequences it is intended to prevent. The degree of force used should be the minimum needed to achieve the desired outcome. Use of force could not be justified to prevent trivial misbehaviour. However, deciding whether misbehaviour is trivial will also depend on circumstances.

7 Aftercare and support

- 7.1 The Minerva Learning Trust is committed to providing full support, including aftercare, to employees who have suffered violence in the course of their duties. Support will include:
- Line management support/debrief to ensure the incident is discussed, recorded appropriately and consideration is given to further action.
 - Staff Counselling is offered by Zurich, our insurance company where this would be appropriate.
 - Where appropriate, access to Trades Union Welfare Officers.
- 7.2 Immediately after reporting a violent incident, the individual who has been attacked should be offered local support to ensure their needs are met. This should include consideration as to whether it is appropriate for the employee to remain at work following the incident. Debriefing should take place as soon as possible after the event to minimise the risk of longer-term trauma and harm. The purpose of the debriefing session is to enable the individual to talk about his/her feelings of distress. It is normal for people to feel vulnerable, helpless or powerless to react, and there may be feelings of guilt, anger and fear of another attack. These feelings may not manifest themselves immediately and may take time to come to terms with. Individuals should be encouraged to talk openly about their experiences; what happened, how they responded and how they felt.
- 7.3 Even the most sophisticated policies and procedures relating to violence and personal safety cannot guarantee that a violent incident will never occur. It is important therefore, that post incident support is available to anyone subjected to violence in the course of their work. Such services ensure that support, practical help and access to sources of specialist help are provided subject to availability.

7.4 The following policies, which are available on the Website, also provide advice and guidance when dealing with incidents of violence at work:

- Behaviour for Learning policy (including Use of Reasonable Force)
- SEND policy

8 Review

8.1 This policy will be reviewed every three years by The Minerva Learning Trust.