



# Dignity and Respect Policy (anti-Bullying and Harassment)

Version 1

<p><b>Note:</b> This policy can only be considered current and valid when viewed on the VNHTT portal and website. If this document has been printed or saved from another location, you must check the version number matches that of the online copy.</p>	
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<p><b>Review Date:</b></p>	<p>Feb 2027</p>
<p><b>Target Audience:</b></p>	<p>Trainee Teachers and Candidates for the ITT Programme All mentors, tutors, trainers and staff working for VNHTT</p>
<p><b>Related Documents:</b></p>	<p>VNHTT Trainee Agreement VNHTT Equalities policy VNHTT Cause for Concern policy VNHTT Well-being Policy VNHTT Safeguarding Policy VNHTT Complaints Policy VNHTT Quality Assurance Policy VNHTT Concerns Form</p>

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## 1. Policy Statement

Vantage North Humber Teacher Training (VNHTT) is committed to creating a professional, inclusive, and respectful environment that promotes the development of ethical, effective, and inspiring teachers.

All members of our community — trainees, mentors, tutors, placement staff, and core training personnel — must be treated with dignity and respect. Harassment, bullying, victimisation, or any behaviour that undermines professional respect is unacceptable.

This policy aligns with the **Equality Act 2010**, **DfE guidance**, and **NASBTT standards**, and demonstrates VNHTT's moral and legal commitment to fostering a safe, supportive, and thriving learning and working environment.

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## 2. Purpose and Scope

This policy aims to:

- Promote professional and respectful behaviours
- Define unacceptable behaviours, including harassment, bullying, victimisation, and discrimination
- Provide clear guidance on raising, supporting, and resolving concerns
- Outline roles and responsibilities for prevention and response

### Scope:

This policy applies to:

- All VNHTT trainees, mentors, tutors, and core training staff
- Placement school staff in their professional capacity
- Any third parties engaged by VNHTT in an official role

It applies in all contexts: on-site, off-site (including trips, visits, and social events), and online interactions.

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## 3. Key Definitions

**Dignity:** Treating all colleagues with fairness, respect, and recognition of their value and professional identity.

**Harassment:** Unwanted conduct that violates dignity or creates a hostile, degrading, or offensive environment. May relate to protected characteristics (Equality Act 2010) or personal characteristics.

**Bullying:** Repeated, intentional, or persistent behaviour that undermines, humiliates, or intimidates others. Can be verbal, physical, psychological, or digital.

**Victimisation:** Unfair treatment because someone has made or supported a complaint or participated in an investigation.

### **Understanding Bullying and Harassment**

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that is intended to cause harm, distress, or intimidation to another person, either emotionally or physically (DfE, *Preventing and Tackling Bullying*, 2017). Within the SCITT/ITT context, this might occur between trainees, mentors, staff, or other school-based colleagues and is recognised as a form of **peer-on-peer abuse**. It can have significant negative effects on professional confidence, wellbeing, and the ability to meet the **Teachers' Standards**.

Bullying can take many forms, including:

- Name-calling, mocking, teasing, or offensive comments
- Taunting or deliberately embarrassing others
- Physical actions such as pushing, hitting, or taking belongings
- Damaging property or resources
- Spreading rumours or gossip
- Excluding colleagues or trainees from activities, groups, or meetings
- Using online or digital platforms to intimidate, harass, or humiliate

Cyberbullying is included in this definition and may involve sending offensive messages, sharing inappropriate images or content, or targeting someone through social media, messaging apps, online forums, or games.

### **Types of Bullying**

#### **Emotional Bullying**

Actions that negatively affect the emotional wellbeing of colleagues or trainees include:

- Using unkind language, teasing, or making negative personal remarks

- Excluding someone from conversations, meetings, or professional activities
- Ridiculing or humiliating individuals in person or via digital platforms
- Taking possessions, hiding resources, or using gestures, social media, or messaging to provoke distress

### **Physical Bullying**

Any form of physical aggression or threat of violence, including:

- Hitting, kicking, pushing, slapping, punching, or using objects to cause harm
- Stealing or damaging property, resources, or materials
- Intimidation through physical presence or threatening behaviour

### **Harmful Sexual Behaviour**

Any unwanted sexual behaviour or contact, including:

- Making sexually explicit remarks or comments
- Inappropriate touching or physical contact
- Sexual intimidation or threats
- Coercive or exploitative sexual behaviour
- Sexual harassment, including forcing others to view sexual images

### **Online Bullying & Misuse of Technology**

Cyberbullying or online harassment may include:

- Threatening or offensive messages via text, email, messaging apps, or calls
- Misusing cameras, video, or online tools to intimidate or humiliate
- Group chats designed to target a trainee or colleague
- Sharing offensive content online, including discriminatory, racist, sexist, or extremist material
- Sharing sexualised content (including sexting)
- Using social media to harass, threaten, or intimidate colleagues or trainees

- Targeting SCITT staff or mentors through social media to cause distress or offence

### **Prejudice-Based Bullying**

Prejudice-based bullying targets individuals because of a characteristic integral to their identity. It often reflects broader negative attitudes towards a wider group. Characteristics include:

- **Race or ethnicity** – targeting skin colour, ethnicity, or national origin
- **Gender** – bullying based on sex or sexist behaviour
- **Sexual orientation or gender identity** – homophobic, biphobic, or transphobic bullying
- **Religion or belief** – prejudice against faith or spiritual beliefs
- **Learning difficulties or disabilities** – targeting individuals with additional learning needs
- **Physical or mental disabilities** – including mobility, visual, hearing, or chronic conditions
- **Refugee or asylum-seeking background** – bullying due to immigration status
- **Gypsy, Roma, or Traveller background** – bullying related to being part of travelling communities

### **What Is Not Bullying**

#### **Isolated Incidents**

Bullying is typically persistent and repetitive, but a single severe incident (e.g., extreme public humiliation or professional sabotage) may be considered bullying if it has lasting impact.

#### **Mutual Conflict**

Disagreements or disputes where all parties are equally involved and there is **no power imbalance** are not classified as bullying. These situations may require support or mediation but do not constitute bullying.

#### **Recognising Bullying or Harassment**

Perceptions of behaviour vary. What one person sees as firm management or professional challenge may be experienced by another as bullying. Examples of unacceptable behaviour include:

- Spreading malicious rumours or insulting someone, including based on protected characteristics (age, race, sex, disability, sexual orientation, religion, belief)
- Ridiculing, humiliating, or setting colleagues or trainees up to fail
- Excluding or victimising individuals
- Unfair treatment
- Unwelcome sexual advances or harassment, including inappropriate touching, invading personal space, offensive materials, or making professional decisions based on sexual compliance

### **Possible Signs**

Bullying or harassment can affect wellbeing and behaviour. Indicators may include:

- Withdrawal, anxiety, or loss of confidence
- Aggression, disruption, or unreasonable behaviour
- Bullying others
- Reluctance to report concerns or speak up
- Distress affecting eating or sleep patterns
- Unexplained absences or avoidance of placements, training, or meetings
- Seeking excessive attention or giving improbable explanations for behaviours

Signs may indicate other issues, but **bullying should always be considered and investigated appropriately.**

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## **4. Principles**

VNHTT operates under the following principles:

- **Zero tolerance** for behaviour undermining dignity and respect
- **Early, constructive resolution** encouraged where safe and appropriate
- **Confidentiality** throughout all reporting and investigations
- **Fair, consistent, and timely handling** of concerns

- **Supportive approach** for all parties involved
  - **Alignment with legislation** and professional guidance
  - **Positive, professional culture** reinforced at all levels
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## **5. Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Leadership Team:**

- Promote a culture of dignity and respect
- Embed this policy into induction, core training, and professional development
- Ensure staff and mentors receive guidance and training on handling complaints sensitively
- Monitor effectiveness and review outcomes

### **Mentors and Tutors:**

- Model respectful, professional behaviour
- Address concerns promptly and sensitively
- Escalate serious or unresolved issues according to procedures

### **Trainees and Staff:**

- Uphold dignity and respect in all interactions
- Challenge inappropriate behaviour where safe to do so
- Report concerns promptly

### **Trainee Well-being Representatives:**

- Advocate for peers and coordinate positive initiatives
  - Gather feedback and support a respectful cohort culture
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## **6. Prevention and Awareness**

VNHTT will:

- Embed training on dignity, respect, and professional behaviours in induction and core sessions

- Include guidance on harassment, bullying, micro-aggressions, and online conduct
  - Provide clear reporting channels, support mechanisms, and mentoring opportunities
  - Encourage peer support and proactive reflection to maintain a positive learning culture
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## 7. Reporting Procedures

### Informal Resolution:

- Speak directly to the person involved if safe
- Seek support from a mentor, tutor, or leadership team member
- Request mediation or facilitated discussion

### Formal Reporting:

- Submit a written complaint via the **VNHTT Concerns Form**. This goes to the VNHTT Operations Manager in the first instance  
[Vantage North Humber Teacher Training Concerns Form – Fill out form](#)
- Alternatively, concerns can be reported directly to the Head of VNHTT or a member of the Vantage Leadership team by email.
- Include incident details, dates, names, witnesses, and evidence
- Complaints may also be raised if the concern involves third parties (e.g., placement school staff)
- If the concern implicates any member of the VNHTT leadership team, then the matter should be dealt with through the **VNHTT complaints policy** process.

### Protection for Complainants:

- Complaints raised in good faith will not lead to retaliation or unfavourable treatment
  - Malicious or deliberately false complaints may result in disciplinary action
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## 8. Investigation Process

1. **Initial Assessment:** Confirm applicability, ensure immediate support and safety
  2. **Investigation:** Conducted fairly, confidentially, and promptly; interviews with all parties
  3. **Outcome:** Findings communicated clearly; actions or recommendations applied
  4. **Escalation:** Serious or unresolved cases may involve the Leadership Team or external advice
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## 9. Possible Outcomes

- Coaching, support plans, or mediation
  - Professional warnings or formal conduct actions
  - Adjustments to placement routines
  - Referral to safeguarding where appropriate
  - Consideration of impact on training progression
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## 10. Support for All Parties

### Complainants:

- Mentoring and Well-being Rep support
- Access to in-house counselling (via VNHTT Mental Health champions or EDIJ lead) or external counselling (via Focus counselling)
- Guidance managing placement or training impact

### Respondents:

- Fair representation and opportunity to respond
  - Professional coaching or development
  - Support to understand and adjust behaviour where appropriate
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## **11. Confidentiality and Record-Keeping**

- All reports handled confidentially
  - Records stored securely, separate from other records
  - Access limited to individuals directly involved in the investigation
  - Data handled in compliance with GDPR
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## **12. Protection Against Retaliation**

- Retaliation or victimisation is strictly prohibited
  - Any retaliatory behaviour will be treated as a serious breach of professional conduct
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## **13. Monitoring and Review**

- Annual review by Leadership Team, including input from Trainee Well-being Representatives
  - Incident data analysed to identify trends, inform training, and improve culture
  - Thematic patterns reported to governance while preserving individual confidentiality
  - Compliance and effectiveness monitored regularly
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## **14. Publication and Communication**

- Posted on VNHTT website and on Sharepoint
- Summarised in training slides and programme handbook to ensure accessibility and clarity for all

## **15. Office of the Independent Adjudicator**

- The Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) runs an independent scheme to review student/trainee complaints. VNHTT is a member of this scheme.

- If a trainee teacher is unhappy with decisions made by the SCITT regarding this Policy, they may be able to ask the OIA to review this decision. More information about making a complaint to the OIA, what it can and can't look at and what it can do to put things right if something has gone wrong can be found here:  
<https://www.oiahe.org.uk/students> .