

## Advice to Members

If members experience bullying at work, they should:

- speak to their NASUWT Representative;
- keep a record of all incidents (with dates, times, witnesses, feelings experienced). Many of the incidents may appear trivial in isolation, so it is important to establish a pattern over time;
- keep copies of any relevant documents;
- tell friends or colleagues – others may also be suffering. Don't shut yourself off. Make sure you get support from friends;
- consider approaching the bully to make it clear that their behaviour is unacceptable – alternatively ask the NASUWT Representative to do this;
- make a formal complaint, if an informal approach does not work, using the employer's grievance procedures. It is important to note that a claim cannot be made to an Employment Tribunal for discrimination or constructive dismissal unless a grievance has been lodged by the employee;
- ask for union support to attend a meeting with the school management if not comfortable about doing this alone;
- where bullying leads to sickness absence, report incidents in the school/college's accident/incident book;
- attend an NASUWT "Working Assertively" course.

***Do not suffer in silence – if you are being bullied, seek help immediately from the Union.***

***NASUWT Representatives can help members by:***

- treating the member's concerns seriously and making it clear that the Union is there to help;
- encouraging the member to write down everything that has happened;
- finding out whether other members have experienced similar problems and seeing if there is a collective issue;
- agreeing with the member how she/he wants the issue to be handled;
- insisting that the matter is dealt with as quickly as possible by management;
- alerting the NASUWT Local Association to the problem;
- following the NASUWT Casework Code of Practice, taking advice from the NASUWT Local Association Secretary or Regional Centre;
- signposting the member to other organisations that may be able to offer additional forms of support.

While members should turn to NASUWT for support in the first instance, further information is available from organisations such as: The Andrea Adams Trust ([www.andreaadamstrust.org](http://www.andreaadamstrust.org)) and the TUC ([www.tuc.org.uk](http://www.tuc.org.uk)).

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**health&safety**  
at work

**Bullying  
at work**

**NASUWT**

*the largest union representing teachers  
and headteachers throughout the UK*

## What is workplace bullying?

The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) defines workplace bullying as “*offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient*”.

## How prevalent is workplace bullying in schools/colleges?

An NASUWT survey of members found that 50% of teachers in primary schools and 44% in secondary schools considered bullying incidents to be frequent.

Evidence from NASUWT research has revealed that, almost exclusively, bullies exploit a position of seniority. Bullies also include governors, parents and pupils.

## Examples of bullying may include:

- Setting unrealistic deadlines and unmanageable workload.
- Constant criticism and ‘nit picking’.
- Using sarcasm, jokes, insults and innuendo to mock, demean or humiliate.
- Undermining responsibilities and overruling decisions.
- Deskillling someone and replacing their work with menial tasks.
- Continually taking the credit for someone else’s work.
- Using or threatening to use formal procedures.
- Excluding someone, withholding information or ignoring and sidelining them.

- Blocking promotion or pay progression or failing to provide training and treating someone differently.
- Verbal abuse, shouting, aggression and physical abuse.

Bullying can happen in many forms, including face to face, by phone and memos and through ‘cyber bullying’. Cyber bullying may include e-mails, abusive websites, use of online chat rooms and text messaging. NASUWT took action in July 2006 to refuse to teach a pupil who used a mobile phone to photograph a woman teacher’s cleavage and distribute the image amongst peers. NASUWT will continue to challenge cyber bullying.

## Prejudice-related bullying

Prejudice is one of the common motives for bullying. In these cases, the bullying is discriminatory and is usually on the grounds of an individual’s gender, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, disability, age, religion or beliefs. Bullying on grounds of body image/size is also becoming increasingly common. Prejudice-related bullying takes the form of stereotyping individuals and can go as far as personal harassment.

Where NASUWT is organised in schools and colleges, bullying is less frequent. Anti-bullying policies negotiated locally are a key indicator that the school community takes these issues seriously. A model anti-bullying policy is available from NASUWT, telephone 0121 453 6150 or on the website [www.teachersunion.org.uk](http://www.teachersunion.org.uk).

**There is no excuse for workplace bullying**

## What the law says

Employers/governing bodies have a duty of care under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 for the health and wellbeing of their staff. It is an implied term of contract that an employee should be able to carry out his/her duties free from bullying.

Behaviour that affects the dignity of individuals in the workplace and is perceived as demeaning and unacceptable to the recipient is harassment and may be covered by anti-discrimination legislation in respect of sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, age and religion or belief. Trade union membership is also covered.

## Schools policies on workplace bullying

The starting point for an anti-bullying culture is a written policy, specific to the workplace and agreed with trade union representatives. All schools should develop such a policy, which should include:

- a commitment that all employees have a right to dignity at work;
- a clear statement that bullying or harassment will not be tolerated and will be treated as a disciplinary matter;
- illustrative examples of unacceptable behaviour;
- procedures for preventing bullying;
- procedures for victims to raise a complaint in confidence;
- procedures for investigation;
- counselling and support arrangements;
- responsibilities of line managers;
- training for managers.