



IRONSTONE ACADEMY TRUST

**IAT policy for preventing and dealing
with violence & assaults
towards staff**

December 2024

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1.0 Introduction

This policy sets out how our IAT will seek to prevent workplace violence in its schools, and the procedures that will be followed if a violent incident occurs. This may include, but is not limited to, threats of or actual abuse from pupils/students, staff, parents/carers, visitors or intruders.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines workplace violence as *“any incident in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work”* and states that it can include verbal abuse or threats as well as physical attacks. HSE statistics also show that teaching and education professionals experience a higher-than-average rate of violence victimisation at work.

IAT has a responsibility for the health, safety and welfare of all colleagues (including contractors, agency staff and governors) and pupils/students, and that of any visitors to our premises. Violence and abusive behaviour are unacceptable, and colleagues and others must be protected.

All colleagues have a responsibility to cooperate with their employer and to follow the instructions in relation to health and safety matters. Headteachers and line managers responsible for implementing this policy will be briefed on how to apply it. Further training on the policy will be provided to all staff. The policy must be implemented in a way that both protects staff and pupils from violence and also protects pupils' human rights and personal dignity.

Please see section 12 for definitions of terms such as 'assault' and 'colleague' used within this policy.

2.0 Preventing assaults - risk assessment

Each School will conduct regular and suitable risk assessments in relation to its activities and additional assessments regarding the potential for assaults and violence on colleagues and is responsible for ensuring that related site-specific operational procedures are fully documented and communicated. When an assessment/plan is changed, staff will be given a copy, told what has changed and the date of receipt recorded.

2.1 School level risk assessment

Nominated trade union health and safety representatives (or in their absence, union branch officials), school health and safety officers and governors can all play an active role in the risk assessment process. The risk assessment will be kept under regular review and updated as necessary. In-school trade union representatives must be consulted in good time about matters affecting the safety of their members including (but not limited to) risk assessments. It is recommended that these are discussed at school health and safety committee meetings (or equivalent forum).

The risk assessment procedure involves:

- establishing the risk of violence and assault towards colleagues, including those who may be more at risk than others (e.g. lone workers, pregnant workers)
- considering the risk of stress and/or the potential impact on colleagues of chronic exposure to working with pupils/students who are themselves suffering from unregulated stress
- taking steps to remove these risks
- where removal of the risk is not possible, reducing the risk by any necessary changes in working practices or by introducing appropriate protective and supportive measures via an action plan

Action plans should be monitored by the headteacher (or their designate) and governors to ensure that all items identified have sufficient resources allocated and have been addressed.

The plan should include the following:

- action required
- by whom
- risk priority
- timescales
- date completed

Control measures taken to reduce the risk of violence and assault may include, but are not limited to:

- issuing communications/notices regarding expected behaviours and the possible consequences of contravention
- the provision of training/supervision/procedures (e.g. working in pairs) for colleagues so they can carry out their duties safely and effectively
- providing regular training opportunities for all staff on dealing with aggression, de-escalation/disengagement techniques and personal safety. If restraint techniques are to be used, then all colleagues should be offered the opportunity to partake in the training. The rights of school staff to use reasonable force are outlined by the Department for Education (England) here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/use-of-reasonable-force-in-schools>
- equipment e.g. alarms, CCTV, school phone, walkie talkies
- revision of lone and/or off-site working guidance/policies
- review and practice of emergency/lockdown procedures
- changes to the working environment such as improved lighting or room layout
- review of procedures for the start and end of the school day
- pupil/student assemblies
- engagement with external bodies
- budgeting for the engagement of a private security firm
- purchasing a knife wand/knife arch

2.2 Individual risk assessment

Where the behaviour of an individual pupil/student presents a demonstrable and ongoing risk to the health, safety and wellbeing to other members of the school community, and implementation of the IAT's pupil/student behaviour policy has had little or no effect, an individual behaviour risk assessment will be completed.

Incidents that will result in a pupil/student behaviour risk assessment include, but are not limited to:

- a pupil/student carrying out - or threatening to carry out - any form of physical or sexual assault, whether in or outside of the school
- a pupil/student is found to be carrying a weapon, or threatens to bring a weapon into the school - such as a knife, ball-bearing gun etc. (see section 6 'Dealing with Weapons')

2.3 Students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

It is the aim of this policy to ensure that no member of staff or pupil should be subject to violent behaviour whilst undertaking the day-to-day role or being cared for in the education setting. For some children with identified SEND, particularly those with Communication and Interaction (C&I) or Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) special needs, volatile behaviour may be part of a response pattern to their disability, and sometimes their main form of communication. To fully support learners with SEND safely, as well as protecting the safety and wellbeing of all staff and pupils, staffing levels must be adequate, and full, ongoing training must be provided. Policies must be detailed and followed by all staff, including SLT.

Schools will already have made individual plans (which may be called a Care Plan, Pupil Passport, Individual Education Plan, Individual Behaviour Plan or personal risk assessment) that describe the student's 'triggers', range of challenging behaviours, and most importantly how staff can support them to de-escalate, defect, distract and avoid physical confrontation.

In the event that staff who have been trained to use these approaches, and who are following the child's individual plan, experience challenging behaviour as part of a suboptimal outcome for the student, then this is not automatically expected to be recorded as Violence at Work. It should, however, always be recorded as Violence at Work if the staff member involved believes the incident to be violent or if the staff member sustains an injury.

Such incidences should always be recorded as part of the monitoring of the student's special educational provision, reported to parents in line with individual plans, and any injuries reported and recorded in line with the IAT Health and Safety at Work policy. Support should be provided to the colleague(s) concerned.

2.4 Communication & monitoring

The school will inform colleagues of the outcome of the risk assessment (including any relevant pupil/student behaviour risk assessments) and ensure that relevant information is included in the induction process for all new colleagues, including supply teachers/support staff and colleagues employed via an agency.

IAT will monitor the effectiveness of control measures by monitoring incident rates (recorded) and equality characteristics of colleagues affected by assaults, and through meaningful engagement with the workforce and their trade union representatives. IAT will also gather information about the causes of violence in school and use this information to inform the risk assessment and prevention process. A full report, including all data, will be available to be shared three times a year with trade union reps.

3.0 Liaison with the police

Schools should establish a protocol with the local police for dealing with assaults and violent incidents if a risk assessment indicates these are a possibility. This should allow the police to be notified and to respond promptly when incidents occur.

Liaison with the police may also be required to address violent incidents within the wider community or within the vicinity of the school. For instance, the school may report concerns about potentially dangerous activity, such as knife crime, to the police for further investigation. In any case of escalation (e.g. complaint) or need for consideration of wider harms (e.g. increased gang-related problems), school leaders should work with the police in conjunction with their Chief Education Officer, to ensure a coordinated approach.

Colleagues may, of course, contact the police directly if they feel the need to do so.

4.0 Reporting procedures

IAT believes that all assaults against colleagues should be reported and investigated, even if they initially appear trivial. This applies to verbal abuse/threats as well as physical assault, as the psychological harm which can follow such incidents can lead to very real illness and mental distress for those who are unfortunate enough to be involved or experience them.

Schools will:

- Record all assaults on colleagues using a Violent Incident Report Form. This form can be completed by a colleague and/or their line manager. The form should include space to record a detailed account of the report, and the actions taken. Schools should provide the colleague with a copy of the report form as a matter of course.
- Use the report to review any risk assessments linked to the activity and environment of individual(s) involved, to identify what additional mitigations should be introduced to help to prevent future reoccurrence.
- Ensure colleagues are made aware at regular intervals of the reporting procedures, how to access the reporting form, and any update to process or risk assessments resulting from an incident.
- Make reports available to colleagues (upon request) to enable their trade union safety representatives to perform their functions.
- Provide regular anonymised reports and data to the health and safety committee.

The Violent Incident Report Form should be completed as soon as practically possible following a violent/abusive incident or following a threat of violence. The colleague will be given as much time as is necessary out of their normal duties to complete the form. Once completed, the form will be passed to the colleague's line manager who is responsible for ensuring it is processed

and recorded using the online report form. Action will then be taken in accordance with this policy.

These reports are in addition to the employers' duties already required by the Social Security (Claims and Payments) Regulations 1979 for recording accidents, and the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR), where the employer is responsible for reporting the following to the HSE:

- All accidents to colleagues resulting in deaths or 'specified injuries' (list available at www.hse.gov.uk/riddor/specified-injuries.htm).
- All accidents which result in a colleague being absent from work due to injuries for more than seven days.
- All accidents to non-employees which result in them being killed or taken to hospital and which are connected with work.
- Any violence or abuse in relation to one or more protected characteristic (age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy/maternity, marriage & civil partnership) may constitute illegal harassment under the Equality Act 2010).

5.0 Procedures to follow if an assault occurs

Colleagues who feel that they are in serious and imminent danger, and who withdraw from a situation in response, must report this to their headteacher immediately. Staff have rights to withdraw from a situation where they feel they are at 'serious' and 'imminent' danger and there are no viable alternatives. It is the aim of this policy to reduce these risks. The incident must be recorded (see section 4) and support will be provided to colleagues as appropriate to the situation (see section 11).

If a colleague is assaulted or is threatened with assault, the following action will be taken in line with our Attendance Policy. These notes are not meant to replace these but serve as a simple summary. The Attendance Policy is the definitive document.

- The student must be immediately separated from the colleague, and the colleague should be given a safe space (or sent home) to recover. Colleagues should not be expected to continue working with the student until an appropriate resolution process has been completed satisfactorily.
- The colleague will be advised to contact their trade union if they have not already done so.

- The colleague's line manager and the headteacher must be informed of the incident as soon as possible. The headteacher must inform the Chief Education Officer of the incident.
- The school's designated first aider will be asked to provide assistance, and further medical treatment assessment sought as required (e.g. at hospital or from their GP).
- IAT will pay for reasonable charges (e.g. from a doctor, dentist or optician) incurred following and arising from the assault.
- In the case of physical injuries, photos should - with consent - be taken. Special leave with pay for immediate medical advice/treatment should be given.
- Colleagues must be encouraged to take sick leave on full pay if they are experiencing physical or psychological injuries because of a violent incident. Recuperative time off work should be recorded as sickness absence but should not be counted against sick leave entitlements or used as trigger points that may form part of absence management procedures (see section 11).
- Occupational health advice may be sought following both physical and verbal assaults, as there may be stress and anxiety arising from an incident.
- Alternatively, or in addition, professional counselling services are available from our Employee Assistance provider.
- All incidents must be recorded, as soon as possible after the incident, in line with the procedures set out in this policy.
- The headteacher is responsible for ensuring written statements are taken from the colleague, any witnesses and the assailant (where applicable) as soon as possible following the incident. The statements will be taken and processed in line with the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) guidelines:
<https://www.acas.org.uk/investigations-for-discipline-and-grievance-step-by-step>
- The headteacher (or another person if the headteacher was a witness to the incident) will investigate the incident or delegate this responsibility to a member of the senior leadership team. Statements should be taken from the staff member, the student and any witnesses and an investigation should be undertaken. A full report will be produced following the investigation and provided to the colleague in a timely manner. A copy will be retained by the school. If the assault is being reported to the police, they will also receive a copy of the report.
- Following the incident, the risk assessment must be reviewed by the headteacher and further advice sought if appropriate. In cases where the assault was carried out by a pupil/student, an individual behaviour risk assessment will be undertaken. Reference will need to be made to other policies including those addressing pupil/student behaviour, school security and safeguarding.
- If appropriate, seek advice from the relevant person on communication, publicity and dealing with the media.
- Ensure that the colleague is supported (see section 11) and speak with the colleague concerned, as appropriate to the situation, in relation to resolution (e.g. restorative conversation/reintegration meeting). This should also be recorded.

If a colleague suffers an assault away from their normal workplace, but the assault arises in the course of and via the performance of their professional duties, support will be provided via this process.

It should be noted that under the Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations (1977), officially appointed trade union safety representatives also have the right to investigate accidents and other dangerous occurrences in the workplace, and to present their findings to management.

6.0 Dealing with weapons

The IAT Weapons Policy is the definitive document; this is a summary for reference.

If a colleague has grounds to suspect that a pupil/student is in possession of a weapon, or there has been an incident involving a weapon, they should immediately inform their line manager or a member of senior leadership team. Colleagues are not expected to, and should not, deal with the incident on their own.

The headteacher will make a decision about whether the pupil/student should be searched, with or without their consent, referring to the IAT's confiscation policy and Department for Education (England) guidance on [Searching, screening and confiscation in schools](#).

If the headteacher is unsure whether or not it is safe to conduct the search, e.g. the pupil may violently resist or not give consent, then it will be best course of action to call the police.

No member of staff should conduct a search without having received suitable and sufficient training. Further they should not conduct a search unless they are aware of all issues concerning the pupil and are certain that the school insurance covers their actions.

Staff would have to use their professional judgement and avoid using any force in relation to a search. If the staff member has doubts, or if it becomes clear that force will be needed, the member of staff should end the attempt to search immediately.

If a weapon is found, or the pupil/student refuses to cooperate, the police must be called immediately. If a weapon is found during a search before the police have arrived, it should be seized and kept in a safe, secure place until the police arrive.

If a pupil/student is found to be in the possession of a weapon, the disciplinary policy will be instigated, and an individual behaviour risk assessment will be undertaken. Sanctions may include exclusion on a temporary or permanent basis.

If an external person/intruder comes on site with a weapon, or threatens to, the school would need to go into lockdown protocol - covered below in 8.0.

7.0 Assaults by pupils/students

The School Behaviour Policy is the definitive document; this is intended as a useful summary.

Where a colleague is assaulted by a pupil/student, their conduct will be dealt with via the Trusts behaviour policy. The pupil/student will be removed from lessons and isolated from others. Behaviour sanctions, including exclusion, may be required. A fixed term exclusion may be necessary in order to investigate the circumstances around the assault.

As part of this process, an individual behaviour risk assessment will also be carried out and the outcome shared with colleagues that have contact with the pupil/student in question. The school's safeguarding lead should also be consulted following an assault by a pupil/student as there may be child protection issues to consider.

Where a pupil/student has assaulted a colleague, and they return to the school, consideration must be given as to how to minimise contact between the colleague and the student if this is the colleague's wish. In any event, care should be given to supporting the colleague with the return to the classroom. Schools may use, where appropriate, practices such as restorative meetings to assist with re-establishing relationships.

8.0 Assaults by visitors/intruders

All schools have an agreed lockdown procedure, which all colleagues are briefed on. For further advice please contact the HT.

In the case of an assault by a visitor or intruder, the manager dealing with the incident will in the first instance inform the police, requesting their prompt attendance, and ensure that all colleagues and pupils/students are safe and secure, following the procedure in this policy for responding to incidents.

If abusive, aggressive, or insulting behaviour or language from a parent presents a risk to colleagues or pupils/students, or makes them feel threatened, schools have common law powers to bar the parent in question from the premises. If a bar on a parent is deemed necessary, this will be put in writing, giving the parent a formal opportunity to put forward their views before the bar is made permanent. Following any representations from the parent, the bar will be confirmed or removed.

Furthermore, it is a criminal offence, under section 547 of the Education Act 1996, for a person who is on school premises without lawful authority to cause or permit a nuisance or disturbance. The Act also allows for the removal and prosecution of any person believed to

have committed the offence. Therefore, in cases where the assailant is known (including if they are a parent), a letter will be sent stating that their behaviour is unacceptable, and they are no longer permitted to come onto the premises in the future without an appointment. If they do persist in entering the school premises and displaying unreasonable behaviour, they will be treated as a trespasser and will be liable to prosecution.

See also section 9.0 for incidents within the school vicinity.

The action taken by individuals at the time of an incident will be dependent on what is reasonable in the circumstances, and colleagues are expected to exercise professional discretion on what is appropriate in any given situation. Colleagues should take in to account:

- their professional duty of care towards safeguarding and promoting the welfare of their pupils/students ([Keeping Children Safe in Education, DfE](#))
- the need to act in accordance with the procedures and guidelines provided by the **IAT**
- the responsibility to look after their own health, safety, and welfare, and that of their colleagues.

9.0 Incidents within the school vicinity

Our communities value the work of colleagues in supervising students in the immediate vicinity (e.g. bus stops) and this is important in how the local community judges the school by the behaviour of students travelling to and from school. Schools are responsible for establishing good working practices for the beginning and end of the school day.

The school will also consider the risk of violent incidents, such as knife crime, not occurring directly on the school premises but in the wider vicinity of the school. The risk assessment will consider the possibility of such incidents occurring, and whether violent incidents have previously occurred in the community. However, school colleagues will not be required to monitor public areas outside of the school vicinity, and if there are concerns about criminal or dangerous activity taking place, the police will be contacted.

If a violent incident occurs that impacts on the school, such as one involving knife crime, the following steps will be undertaken:

- The headteacher/principal will convene a rapid response meeting with the police. This is particularly important if there is a continuing risk, for instance, if the perpetrator is still at large.

- Counselling may be offered in the aftermath of the incident to the whole (or sections of the) school community (colleagues, pupils/students and parents) as appropriate.

10.0 Sexual assaults

The Trust Sexual Harassment Procedure notes the approach that we will take, these notes specifically consider the risk of sexual assault and harassment against colleagues. Sexual harassment is defined as *“unwanted conduct that violates an individual’s dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment”*. It may take the form of unwanted verbal; non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature and it is unlawful under the Equality Act 2010.

SEND children are at greater risk of adopting these behaviours and, where appropriate, this should be reflected in relevant risk assessments.

11.0 Support for colleagues

Colleagues employed directly by IAT who have experienced an assault/intentional act of violence will be permitted reasonable paid time off to meet with their trade union representative, the police, legal counsel and to attend court if necessary. IAT will assist colleagues in reporting violent incidents to the police, with their knowledge and consent.

If the colleague sustains an injury arising from an assault at work, and it is necessary for them to take sick leave, the school will advise them of their additional entitlements to sick pay for those suffering injury at work (in accordance the Burgundy Book / Green Book for colleagues employed).

The National Joint Council for Local Government Services’ National Agreement on Pay and Conditions of Service (known as the Green Book, part 2, section 10.2 states that absence in respect of *“... normal sickness is entirely separate from absence through... assault arising out of or in the course of employment with a local authority. Periods of absence in respect of one shall not be set off against the other”*. Absences due to injuries arising from an assault at work must therefore be discounted from absence indicators under the trust’s attendance policy.

Following an injury, the manager will also signpost the colleague to the possibility of obtaining compensation through the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority and will offer assistance in making and pursuing an application where appropriate. The manager should also encourage the colleague to speak to their trade union about the injury as a matter of urgency.

Following an assault, the manager will discuss with the colleague whether they feel ready to return to their normal duties and advice will be sought from the employer's occupational health provider. If the colleague is not able to complete their normal duties, arrangements will be made for amended duties and/or on a phased return basis - for instance, a reduced timetable or shortened working hours. The colleague will receive their normal full salary during this period of amended duties. This process of phased return will be managed in line with the IAT's attendance policy.

IAT acknowledges that colleagues may experience stress and/or anxiety following an assault or arising out of the threat of assault. Counselling following an assault is available from our IAT's Employee Assistance Programme. If necessary, the colleague will receive paid time off from work during normal working hours to attend counselling.

12.0 Definitions in this policy

- 'assault' refers to any form of violent conduct against a colleague. It may be physical, psychological, sexual, verbal or online (e.g. "trolling"). It also refers to threats of and attempted assault of any kind, and includes abuse and threats made via the telephone or via social media. Behaviours associated with assault may include, but are not limited to, hitting, pinching, kicking, pushing, biting, spitting, shouting, swearing, insults, offensive gestures, use of weapons and racial or sexual abuse, unwanted physical contact such as unnecessary touching, malicious / vexatious statements or videos posted online.
- 'manager' includes the headteacher/principal, members of the senior leadership team and line managers.
- 'colleague' refers (unless otherwise stated) to all colleagues where a specific duty of care is owed, which includes those employed on fixed term contracts, supply teachers employed via an agency or directly by the school, trainees, and student teachers, apprentices and contractors employed by the IAT.
- 'parent' includes a guardian or carer.

13.0 Review

Data in relation to reported incidents will be made available to relevant health and safety 'committees' (see section 4) at both school and trust level.

This policy will be reviewed once every three years.