

# Violence at Work Policy

1 June 2017 Version Number:1

Review Date: Summer Term 2019

Northern  
House  
School



## VIOLENCE AT WORK POLICY

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## Introduction

This document provides guidance on the prevention and management of threatening and violent incidents at school it gives practical advice to help Headteachers find out if violence is a problem for staff, and if it is, how to tackle it.

People who deal directly with the public may face aggressive or violent behaviour; they may be sworn at, threatened or even attacked.

The guidance is aimed at Headteachers but should also interest staff and others who may be affected by violence at work.

This document is guidance only. Schools will need to develop their own local procedures for the prevention and control of violence dependent on the actual circumstances they are faced with.

## SEMH Context

Within a SEMH setting there is recognition that violence happens but that it should not be tolerated. All staff should be clear that early intervention of low level behaviours is a good method of reducing violent episodes. The use of the Team Teach six stages of a crisis should be used to ensure that most incidents do not become major issues. De-escalation skills and strategies should be used in line with Team Teach physical interventions to make safe wherever possible.

## Definition of Violence

The Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) definition of work-related Violence is:

*'Any incident, in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work'.*

Verbal abuse and threats are the most common types of incident. Physical attacks are comparatively rare.

Violence can include:

- verbal abuse
- rude gestures
- innuendo
- physical attack
- bullying

Sexual, racial and other forms of harassment are also included within the definition of violence.

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## Persons who may be at risk

Staff whose job requires them to deal with the public can be at risk from violence. For example:

- Headteachers
- Teachers
- Teaching/Learning Support Assistants
- Site controllers or caretakers
- School governors

In addition staff can be at risk from violence from interactions with other employees or members of staff. For example:

- bullying
- racial discrimination or attack
- sexual harassment.

For further information on harassment refer to the Equal Opportunities, Bullying and Harassment Policy available on the Wokingham Schools Learning Community website. Headteachers also need to make staff aware of these additional policies and guidance within their school.

It must be noted that this policy cannot list every issue that may arise however staff should pass on any issue they wish to raise and it will be looked at.

## Policy

The School recognises that members of the public, other employees, school pupils, etc., may expose some employees to the risk of violence. It will, therefore, ensure that steps are taken to identify, take action to control or prevent the risk of violence occurring at work and to institute control measures to provide appropriate support should violence occur. It is recognised that violence happens but it will not be tolerated. For further guidance refer to the Wokingham Schools' Learning Community section of the Wokingham Borough website for further guidance.

The School will not tolerate abusive or violent behaviour between or by its employees, or to its employees. If violence between or by employees occurs then the disciplinary procedure will be implemented with appropriate action being taken against the perpetrators. For further guidance refer to the Wokingham Schools' Learning Community section of the Wokingham Borough website.

The School is committed to creating a safe working environment, one in which an employee will feel able to report violence against them and have confidence that the violence or risk of violence will be appropriately addressed.

Appropriate action will be taken against any person who uses abusive or offensive language, or who conducts themselves in a disorderly manner on premises or other workplaces that are owned, rented or administered by the School. This could result in the person being escorted off the premises and/or reported to the police, and for legal action to be taken against them. If a person is abusive or offensive to a member of staff going about their duties at any time or in any location

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again this could result in them being reported to the police or legal action being taken against them. For further guidance reference should be made to any Policies that are available and specific to each department.

Further guidance on violence in education is issued by the Department for Education – refer to the DfE website.

Withdrawal of a service from pupils is covered by Education Legislation.

Many schools use the Team Teach Training where they feel that there may be occasions when physical intervention may need to be used for both the safety of the staff and pupils.

Where appropriate, formal action will be taken against offending individuals. Where threats of aggression are made to an employee and the perpetrator can be identified, the School will, in all appropriate cases, consider taking legal action; and will send a formal letter to the person(s) concerned, warning that legal action may be taken if a breach of the law occurs. Within Northern House School, each individual case/incident of violence will be dealt with on an individual basis, depending on the student's previous history, SEN, cognitive ability and personal situation at the time of incident. All students will be considered within the parameters of the service level agreement that the school has with Thames Valley Police.

## **Persons who have a responsibility to manage violence**

Both the Local Authority, School and its staff have an interest in reducing violence at work. For the Local Authority, violence can lead to poor morale and can affect the image of the organisation, making it difficult to recruit and retain staff. It can also mean extra cost, with absenteeism, higher insurance premiums and compensation payments. For staff, violence can cause pain, distress and even disability or death. Physical attacks are obviously dangerous but serious or persistent verbal abuse or threats or bullying can also damage employees' health through anxiety or stress or other psychiatric conditions.

Headteachers have a responsibility to ensure that a threat or hazard analysis is carried within their school and that a comprehensive risk assessment programme is carried out and that a Handling Plan is considered. In conjunction with SLT, tutors should update individual pupil risk assessments after each incident of note. As a norm, individual pupil risk assessments will be updated annually.

Advice on completion of risk assessments is available in the online Health and Safety Manual for Schools. Training is also available on how to complete risk assessments. For information on health and safety training please contact the WBC HR Enquiries Helpdesk on (0118) 974 6116.

Following risk assessment, risk controls and procedures should be developed to ensure that all possible measures are in place to limit anyone being exposed and/or affected by violence. The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring local procedures are developed and communicated to staff.

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The Headteacher should involve and consult with their senior management team, staff, School Governors as well as their Health and Safety Co-ordinator, union representative or safety representative(s) or representatives of safety annually. To ensure that the risk assessment is comprehensive and that resulting procedures have ownership by staff, it is a legal requirement to consult with employees.

## Violence Management Programme

A straightforward four stage management process is set out below Stage 1 Violence Threat Identification

Stage 2 Violence Risk Assessment and Evaluation

Stage 3 Taking action

Stage 4 Review the actions taken

It must be remembered that the four stages are not a one-off set of actions. If Stage 4 shows there is still a problem then the process needs to be repeated again. Stages 1 and 2 are completed by carrying out a risk assessment.

### Stage 1 Violence Threat Identification

The first step in risk assessment is to identify the hazard. It may be thought that violence is not a problem in the workplace or that incidents are rare, however, the viewpoint from staff may be very different. At Northern House, each individual student will have been risk assessed and their levels of violence will also be included in this process. Tutors and assistants should risk assess their pupils on a termly basis, and after each serious incident. The results of this assessment will then inform SLT if the student requires a Positive Handling Plan.

### Consult with Staff

This should be done informally through the senior management team, union representatives and safety representatives, or use a short questionnaire to find out whether staff ever feel threatened. Inform every one of the results of the survey and reiterate that the health and safety of staff is a priority.

**Example:** A school was not aware of the size of the problem faced daily by staff, until it sought their views during a series of staff meetings. It was found that staff believed strongly that increased violence was the most serious threat to their personal health and safety.

### Keep detailed records

It is School policy and good practice to record incidents, including verbal abuse and threats. The following information should be recorded on Sleuth:

- an account of what happened;
- details of the victim(s), the assailant(s) and any witnesses;
- the outcome, including working time lost to both the individual(s) affected and to the school as a whole;
- details of the location of the incident.

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For a variety of reasons staff may be reluctant to report incidents of aggressive behaviour that makes them feel threatened or worried. They may for instance feel that accepting abuse is part of the job. Records of all incidents are required to enable as a complete picture as possible. Encourage staff to report incidents promptly and fully and let them know that it is a mandatory requirement to report all such incidents no matter how trivial, and that support is available from the school and if available. Staff should be advised of any counselling that is available to them.

## **Classify all incidents**

Use headings such as place, time, type of incident, potential severity, who was involved and possible causes. It is important that you examine each incident report to establish whether there could have been a more serious outcome.

For example a simple classification to help you decide how serious incidents are and could include:

- serious physical injury;
- minor injury or emotional shock requiring first aid, out-patient treatment, counselling, absence from work (record number of days);
- feeling of being at risk or distressed.

## **Evaluate Trends**

Once the data is available the school will be able to look for similarities, whether the same people are involved and common causes, areas or times. Steps can then be taken and resources targeted effectively on areas of concern and where they are most needed.

This can be done at a departmental as well as school level.

## **Stage 2 Violence Risk Assessment and Evaluation**

Having identified that violence may be a problem for the staff a decision needs to be made on what action needs to be taken.

A risk assessment needs to be undertaken to determine who is specifically at risk and to determine ultimately what measures need to be taken to protect them. Risk assessment is a legal requirement. The risk assessment process for generic risk assessment, and the template, can be found in the online Health and Safety Manual for Schools. Continue the risk assessment by taking the steps shown below.

## **Decide who may be harmed, and how**

Identify staff who are at risk: those who have face-to-face contact with the public e.g. visitors to the school, parents, guardians, school pupils with challenging behaviours etc. are normally the most vulnerable. Where appropriate, identify potentially violent people/children in advance so that the individual risks from them can be prevented or controlled.

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## **Establish Possible Consequences**

Try to predict what might happen; do not restrict the assessment to incidents that have already affected staff. There may be a known pattern of violence linked to certain situations. Professional organisations and trade unions may be able to provide useful information on this. Articles in the local, national and technical press might also alert you to relevant incidents and potential problem areas.

## **Evaluate the Risk Level**

Determine the level of risk so as to prioritise where action is required most urgently and to help prioritise resources.

## **Determine the Required Control Measures**

Controls measures should be considered in the order that will provide the most benefit to the greatest number of people. Starting with:

- Elimination of risk e.g. can the risk of violence be eliminated by organising activities such as parents evenings in particular location, such as the main hall and not separate classrooms.
- Safe systems of work e.g. detailed procedure and call-in system for lone working, not meeting visitors alone after school hours.
- Personal protective equipment e.g. mobile phones
- Training e.g. violence identification and reduction techniques, Team Teach
- Design of and layout of offices such as the main reception For example consider entry and exit
- Staffing levels to avoid lone working

## **Compare the Required Control Measures with Existing Control Measures**

During comparison decide where a control measure is required and does not exist and consider implementation.

## **Check existing arrangements**

Are the precautions already in place adequate or should more be done? Remember it is usually a combination of factors that give rise to violence. Factors, which you can influence include:

- the environment;
- the design of the job.
- the level of training and information provided
- staffing levels/pupil ratios

Consider the way these factors work together to influence the risk of violence.

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## Review of existing training and information

Look at what training, if any, staff may have had in spotting the early signs of aggression and are, therefore, able to either avoid or cope with it. Make sure they fully understand any system that has been set up for their protection. Provide on-going training at least yearly with periodic updates as required. Review what information that is provided to staff to enable them to identify clients with a history of violence or to anticipate factors which might make violence more likely. Training should always be recorded.

## The environment

- Provide better seating, decor, lighting in public waiting area and regular information about any delays.
- Consider physical security measures such as:
  - video cameras or
  - alarm systems;
  - coded security locks on doors to keep visitors out of staff and teaching areas;
  - layout of the meeting room, so as to ensure that the visitor is not between the member of staff and the door,
  - viewing panel in the door/meeting room partition,

## The design of the job

For example:

- Use cheques, credit cards or tokens instead of cash to make robbery less attractive.
- Bank money more frequently and vary the route taken to reduce the risk of robbery.
- Arrange for staff to be accompanied by a colleague if they have to meet a suspected aggressor.
- Make arrangements for any staff who work away from their base to keep in touch.
- Wherever possible, ensure staff avoid lone working. For example, if staff are working outside of normal school hours can they buddy up or join Forestcare (see below).
- Ensure adequate level of staff trained in managing violence.

The threat of violence does not stop when the work period has ended. It is good practice to make sure that staff can get home safely. For example where staff are required to work late, it may be necessary to arrange transport home, escort to their car or by ensuring a safe parking area is available.

Staff are more likely to be more committed to the measures if they are involved in the process of identifying and implementing the measures taken to prevent violent attack. A mix of measures often works best. Concentrating on just one aspect of the problem can make things worse in another. Try to take an overall view and balance the risks to the staff against any possible reaction of the public. Remember that an atmosphere that suggests staff are worried about violence can sometimes increase its likelihood.



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## Record the findings

Once the assessment has been completed ensure that detailed records are maintained. The record will provide a working document for the school and staff, as well as governors.

Review and revise your assessment. Regularly check that the assessment is a true reflection of the current work situation. Be prepared to add further measures or change existing measures where these are not working. It is particularly important when changes occur, such as change in staff, job description, change of location, to review and revise the assessment. If a violent incident occurs, look back at the assessment, evaluate it and make any necessary changes, and ensure these are communicated to staff, trade union representatives and representatives of safety.

## Stage 3 Taking action – Violence Prevention Action Plan

Once the threat and level of risk has been identified and evaluated the appropriate actions need to be taken.

A violence prevention action plan should be prepared which sets out clearly

- What steps are to be taken
- Who is responsible for carrying them out
- A target date and
- A sign-off section where an action is signed off and the date when the sign-off occurred

Steps in an action plan could include:

- Installation of protection measures e.g. installation of CCTV, security coded access points.
- Preparation of a written procedure for dealing with violence
- All staff are made aware of the written procedure and are trained in its provisions
- Relevant staff are given training in violence recognition and violence reduction techniques and reporting requirements
- Support after an assault to include advising staff of any counselling that may be available to them, as well as any support arrangements.

The action plan needs to be implemented and should be reviewed to ensure all the appropriate actions have been completed.

## Stage 4 Review the Actions Taken

Check on a regular basis how well the arrangements are working by consulting with staff or their representatives. Consider violence in the agenda of staff meetings. Keep records of incidents and examine them regularly; they will show the levels of progress being made and if the problem is changing. If the measures are working well, keep them up.

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If violence is still identified as being a problem then other measures will need to be taken by going back to Stages 1 and 2 thereby investigating and establishing other preventive measures that may work.

## Victims of Violence

If there is a violent incident involving member(s) of staff then a quick response is required to avoid any long-term distress to the workforce.

It is essential to plan how support is going to be provided before any incidents.

The following should be considered:

- debriefing - victims will need to talk through their experience as soon as possible after the event. Remember that verbal abuse can be just as upsetting as a physical attack;
- time off work - individuals will react differently and may need differing amounts of time to recover. In some circumstances they might need specialist counselling;
- legal help - in serious cases legal help may be appropriate;
- other staff - may need guidance and/or training to help them to react appropriately.

## Stalking

Stalking can be described as a series of acts which are intended to, or in fact do, cause harassment to another person. Stalkers can have a devastating effect on the lives of their victims, who are subjected to constant harassment at home, in public places and at work, to the extent that they feel they are no longer in control of their lives. The methods employed by stalkers can take many forms, for example threatening, abusive or obscene phone calls; using abusive and threatening language; or committing acts of violence. But even apparently harmless behaviour, such as following someone down the street or sending them flowers, can be intimidating if it is persistently inflicted on a victim against their will.

Stalking, as stated above, is a form of harassment and as such is seen as a criminal offence. Under English law stalking is covered by the Protection from Harassment Act 1997.

If staff are being harassed by a stalker they should be advised to take the following steps:-

- Records should be kept of what happened, where, when every time they were followed, phoned, received post or e-mail.
- The more details the victim obtains the better, how the offender looked or sounded, what they were wearing, the make, and number plate or colour of their car.
- Letters, and parcels should be kept as evidence: even if they contain frightening or upsetting messages, they should not be thrown away and handled as little as possible.
- Copies of e-mails should be kept on disk and print out hard copies; the originals should not be deleted.

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- Making notes in a diary is a good idea. Information should be written down as soon as possible, when events are still fresh in their mind.
- Telephone conversations should be recorded and kept on tape if possible.
- If the victim recognises the handwriting, letters or parcels can be kept as evidence without having to open them.
- Make sure that any stored messages (including text messages) or telephone numbers that are received on mobile phones and caller ID units are kept.
- Staff should be informed of what is happening, unless requested by the police or the victim.
- Photographic or video evidence of the stalker (especially if the stalker has already been warned by the police not to go near the victim).

## Responding to violence

Everyone has a right to defend themselves from an attack, using reasonable force. Within Northern House School (Wokingham), staff would use their Team Teach training as their techniques are accredited by ICM (Institute of Conflict Management), trained for and child friendly. Only in extreme circumstances would reasonable force be used in a special school. The law however doesn't allow carrying anything that can be described as an offensive weapon. The level of force must be commensurate with the threat.

When it comes to using force there are specific legal constraints placed upon people in a self-defence situation. It is very important to understand that when it comes to using force, individuals will be held accountable, both criminally and civilly for their actions, however, where deemed to have used reasonable force the Trust will support the individual. Excessive force is liable to result in criminal action against the individual.

It is important that all violent attacks whether verbal or physical should be reported, no matter how trivial they may seem, and that the appropriate follow up steps are taken.

There are various training courses available that specialise in dealing with threats of violence.

## Weapons

If a pupil has or is suspected of having a weapon in school staff should immediately inform the Headteacher or a member of SLT. Pupils who bring weapons into school without intention to harm will be seen by the School's Liaison Officer and warned of the consequences.

If the pupil is clearly threatening violence with a weapon a 999 call should be made and the area made safe by removing all other pupils to a safe area to isolate the incident. Staff who have advanced Team Teach weapons training should be alerted.

Unless absolutely necessary, staff should not attempt to remove a sharp weapon from a pupil who is threatening violence.

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## Physical Intervention and Restraint

When restraining someone the same rules apply as when responding to violence i.e. only reasonable force can be used that is commensurate with the level of force being threatened.

However, there are guidance documents available giving advice on how to carry out risk assessments and develop procedures to deal with identifiable situations within particular workplaces. Further guidance on this can be found in the WSLC section of the WBC website.

For example the Department for Education have produced guidance in order to clarify the powers of teachers, and other staff who have lawful control or charge of pupils, to use reasonable force to prevent pupils committing a crime; causing injury or damage; or causing disruption. Such powers already existed under common law but were often misunderstood. DfE guidance can be accessed on their website.

Neither the Act, nor the Department for Education guidance, authorise the use of corporal punishment in any circumstances. Nor is it intended to encourage the use of inappropriate force. The guidance:

- gives examples of circumstances in which physical intervention might be appropriate, and factors that teachers should bear in mind when deciding whether to intervene;
- discusses the meaning of 'reasonable force';
- advises that schools should have a policy about the use of reasonable force, and the school should tell parents about it; and,
- advises that schools should record incidents in which force is used to control or restrain a pupil, and tell parents of any such incidents involving their child.

The Department for Education has also issued guidance to schools on dealing with intruders, trespassers or parents in relation to violence and the use of reasonable force. Refer to the Department for Education website.

## Incidents of Violence off site.

Occasionally pupils will lose control outside of the school environs i.e. on educational visits or reward trips. Also pupils may leave site when angry and present a risk to themselves, property or members of the public. The pupils themselves may also be vulnerable to conflict situations. In these incidents guidance suggests that staff should have formal ID so that they can identify themselves to members of the public. If there is an incident off site then wherever possible two members of staff should attend or track a pupil. Staff ringing into school for support must RAG rate the incident so that senior staff can respond in the correct way.

## Team Teach

All staff within Northern House School (Wokingham) are trained to an appropriate standard of physical intervention and de-escalation techniques. Up to 16 staff are trained in advanced techniques for more serious incidents that require a high level of physical management.

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## **The basic principles of Team Teach training are:-**

The use of force must be reasonable, proportionate and necessary.

There is an emphasis on appropriate and targeted verbal and non-verbal communication. paraverbal skills matter at all times, during a restraint however, it is what you say and how you say it that is important.

The aim is for the person to calm down sufficiently so that staff can return the physical control and help find a better way.

A calm approach with staff using (Communication, Awareness/Assessment Listening/Looking and Making Safe skills) is expected at all times when managing such situations.

Staff are encouraged to make a risk assessment, both before, during and after any serious incident involving positive handling. Running parallel with this risk assessment is the 'duty of care' question they have to both the service user and themselves.

Staff numbers: Where there is time and sufficient resources, the emphasis should be on the involvement of at least two members of staff when such crisis situations occur.

Where possible, the expectation is that the course members will exhaust all behavioural management strategies before they physically intervene. Where and when there is time, the physical interventions should be viewed as a 'last resort option' for staff. All physical techniques should be endorsed in policy and supported by management and those in 'authority'.

Where a service user requires repeated physical management, the strategies and techniques should be planned for and agreed in advance. They should be written out and included in individual care/health/education/behaviour management plans.

## **Reporting of Incidents**

Any incident of violence even if it did not result in physical injury should be reported immediately in accordance with the schools procedure for reporting accidents or incidents. The Headteacher/department head and safety representative should be informed and an Incident Report form completed on Sleuth.

In special schools it may be necessary to record frequent but relatively minor incidents. Where this is the case then a system of recording and reporting these incidents must also be introduced, but it will not be necessary to complete the WBC Health and Safety Incident Report form for every incident. Special schools should have systems for managing behaviour requiring the recording of all incidents and regular review as part of the ongoing care and support provided for that person. Headteachers must ensure that they monitor trends periodically. Corporate Health and Safety produce regular accident/incident statistics for the Workforce and Schools Health and Safety Committee. These statistics assist schools and the Council to identify trends. This information will help identify any increased incidence of violence or aggression in relation to particular students/pupils or visitors to schools.

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## Follow up and support

Immediate follow up and debrief by the Headteacher or Senior Management Team is essential in order to take action to avoid recurrence and to provide the support that staff need. Staff may need some 'time out' or a short break away from their work environment in order to recover or in more serious incidents of assault medical treatment and Headteacher should be sympathetic to this. Headteachers in the case of serious assaults may need to arrange for staff to attend their GP Surgery, or to them drive home.

Headteachers should bear in mind that violence has both short term and long term emotional consequences. Wherever possible members of staff should be able to make an informed choice about where they wish to seek the support they may need. Confidential Counselling should be made available.

Where personal belongings (not cars) or other equipment have been damaged due to assault, enquiries in regard to replacement and/or repair should be directed to the school's insurance provider via the Headteacher.

## Training

### Team Teach:

Team Teach training emphasises positive handling as but one part of a whole setting approach to behaviour management. Physical techniques should not be taught in isolation. In Team Teach training, they account for only two out of eight modules.

The training has evolved from a residential care and educational background. It continually emphasises positive relationships as being the key element to lone working. The physical techniques can help to protect and maintain these relationships.

The physical techniques have sufficient range and robustness to be appropriate across the age and development range, for both the intentional and non-intentional 'challenging' individual.

The physical techniques provide a gradual, graded system of response commensurate with the situation, task and individuals involved, allowing for phasing up and down as dictated to by the circumstances at the time.

The training will aim to comply and work within 'good practice' guidelines produced by government departments. Team Teach has been actively involved with consultation by government departments looking at 'good practice' principles in this area. Training will comply with the Human Rights Act.

There is an emphasis on the Health and Safety of course member's through-out the training support and co-operation are key values with the emphasis being on using the minimum amount of force that is necessary in order to achieve the objectives. That the resistance used in training is proportionate to the level of confidence and competence gained. Role- play is carefully controlled by instructors and is not used until course members have acquired sufficient skill and expertise.

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Although a serious subject, the training has a fun element and will enhance team-work, co-operation and staff morale.

Training will help Local Authorities/organisations meet their obligations in Health and Safety legislation, thus reducing potential liability claims.

## **Unauthorised Persons**

Whilst it accepted that for security reasons employees will challenge unauthorised persons, they must not put themselves at any risk and are expected by the Council to contact the Police.

## **Lone Working Monitoring Systems**

A remote monitoring system can be useful for some roles e.g. Site Controllers who work alone throughout schools closures. One such service is Forestcare. For more details contact Forestcare on 01344 786500

For further advice and information

For risk management advice, email [HREnquiries@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:HREnquiries@wokingham.gov.uk) or telephone the HR Enquires Helpdesk on (0118) 974 6116.

It is recommended that schools consider the HSE's guidance document 'Violence in the Education Sector' which is available for free download on the HSE Books website.



## Annex 1

### HEADTEACHERS CHECKLIST

- Develop a violence management programme for your school**
- Consult with your staff and union/safety representatives**
- Identify and evaluate the risk of violence to your staff**
- Consider the school environment, jobs carried out by staff**
- Ensure suitable and sufficient risk assessments are carried out with appropriate control measures identified and agreed with staff and safety representatives**
- Record your findings**
- Review and training and information available**
- Document your local health and safety procedure for managing violence at work**

Ensure arrangements are communicated to all staff.