**New Duty to Prevent Sexual Harassment in the Workplace**

From **26 October 2024**, the **Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010)** legislation was introduced to foster a safe and respectful workplace. This legislation places a **duty on employers to take proactive steps** to ensure that employees are not subjected to sexual harassment in the course of their employment.

Sexual harassment is a type of sexual violence – the phrase we use to describe any sexual activity or act that happened without consent.

Sexual harassment is unwanted sexual behaviour and can cause distress, offence, humiliation or intimidation. It is also when someone carries out this behaviour with the intention of making someone else feel that way. It can happen in many ways, for example, making sexual remarks about someone’s body, clothing or appearance, telling sexually offensive jokes or touching someone against their will. This unwanted sexual conduct can happen in person, on the phone, by text or email, or online.

**Key responsibilities for school leaders include:**

* Raising awareness of this, communicating the expected professional behaviour of all staff and that harassment of any form will not be tolerated
* Providing a safe, confidential and inclusive work environment where all employees can raise concerns and disclosures of sexual harassment
* Taking reasonable and timely actions to prevent or challenge unacceptable behaviour at the earliest stage possible
* To raise awareness of the School/Council’s zero tolerance stance on sexual harassment

**Key responsibilities for staff include:**

* To be aware of the behaviour expectations placed on all staff by the legislation, namely that sexual harassment, or any other form of harassment, will not be tolerated
* To be aware that the School and Council have a zero tolerance stance on sexual harassment
* To raise concerns about sexual harassment, received or witnessed, at the earliest opportunity to senior leaders and to be assured that they will be safe to do this, in a confidential environment, and that it will be taken seriously
* To challenge unacceptable behaviour of any kind at the earliest opportunity