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## Contents

1. Introduction and Purpose .....	2
2. Scope .....	2
3. Policy statement, provision and safeguards .....	2
4. Definition of bullying .....	2
5. Specific Types of Bullying .....	3
6. Responding to Bullying .....	4
7. Guidance for Students .....	5
8. Guidance for Parents .....	6
9. Outcomes .....	6
10. Prevention .....	6
11. Safeguarding and Child Protection .....	7
12. Legislation and guidance that inform this document .....	7
13. Other RBR policies to be read in conjunction with this one .....	7
Appendix 1: Additional Sources of Guidance/Information .....	9

## **1. Introduction and Purpose**

- 1.1 This policy sets out how Red Balloon, Reading (RBR from herein) promotes the values of mutual respect and tolerance. RBR seeks to establish a caring, secure and safe setting for learning in which all students can be themselves, feeling valued and respected. Therefore, the overarching goals of this policy are to:
- a. prevent bullying occurring;
  - b. ensure fast and effective resolution of bullying when it does occur.
- 1.2 Bullying of any kind is unacceptable and RBR has zero tolerance regarding it. If bullying does occur, all students and staff should be able to tell and know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. This means that anyone who knows or suspects that bullying is happening is expected to tell a staff member or Head of Centre and record it via CPOMS. At RBR, staff take a proactive approach to supporting students who may be having difficulties with their peers. Developing social communication and interaction skills are a focused and integral part of the curriculum.
- 1.3 RBR is proactive in supporting its staff team to work effectively with each other and expected to take necessary action as outlined in this policy.

## **2. Scope**

- 2.1 This policy is made on the basis of best efforts, and applies to employees, trustees, agency staff, volunteers, interns, contractors, and consultants (referred to as all staff from herein). All staff are responsible for reading and implementing this policy to ensure that bullying is prevented at RBR, insofar as reasonably practical.
- 2.2 All staff are responsible for promoting such positive staff/student relationships as to ensure students feel able to disclose and discuss situations in which they have felt bullied; and for maintaining vigilance so that behaviour that may constitute bullying can be detected and challenged.

## **3. Policy statement, provision and safeguards**

- 3.1 The policy objectives are that:
- a. All staff, students and parents/carers should understand what bullying is;
  - b. All staff, students and parents should know what RBR's policy on bullying is and what they should do if bullying occurs;
  - c. All students should be aware of the serious consequences of bullying and know that this behaviour is not tolerated;
  - d. All students should understand how they can help to prevent bullying (including as bystanders) by reporting it to an appropriate adult;
  - e. RBR takes bullying seriously. Students and parents/carers should be assured that they will be supported when bullying is reported;
  - f. Anyone who does bully is made fully aware that their behaviour is unacceptable. Staff seek to help them to understand how their behaviour affected another person, how they can change it and what amends need to be made; and
  - g. Everyone involved, whether perpetrator, victim or bystander, maintains their right to unconditional positive regard.

## **4. Definition of bullying**

- 4.1 **Bullying** is unwanted, unwarranted, aggressive or intimidating behaviour that involves a real or perceived power injustice. There is a deliberate intention to hurt the other person either physically and/or emotionally. The behaviour is repeated or has the potential to be repeated, over time.

- 4.2 Although bullying is not a specific criminal offence, there are laws which apply to harassment because of age, race, culture, disability, gender identity and sex, the misuse of technology, threatening behaviour and racist behaviour.
- 4.3 No list can include every action or activity that might be classed as bullying, but staff will work with students to ensure they understand the following descriptions/definitions: *Bullying involves actions (including physical, spoken, written, drawn, gesture, specific body language, facial expression... and can be actual or virtual, i.e. through personal contact or online) that physically, verbally or indirectly hurt or injure another individual, that threaten or frighten, that are demoralising or humiliating, that psychologically hurt or injure another person.*
- 4.4 Bullying is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, e.g., on grounds of ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation or disability. It might be motivated by actual or perceived differences between young people. It often involves an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim, whether physical, psychological, intellectual or social; this can make it difficult for those bullied to defend themselves.
- 4.5 Bullying may involve:
- the use of demeaning, ageist, racist, religious, cultural, sexual, sexist or homophobic names or language, or language related to special educational needs and disability - it can be direct or indirect;
  - hurtful, upsetting or distressing comments about another individual's or group's racial, ethnic, cultural or linguistic background, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, age or gender identity;
  - hurtful, upsetting or distressing comments about one or more individuals with a special educational need or disability or learning difficulty;
  - picking on an individual or group;
  - pushing, punching, hitting, kicking or any physical violence;
  - teasing, mocking, taunting or making offensive comments;
  - spreading rumours, ostracising a student - deliberately ignoring or avoiding a fellow student and/or encouraging others to do the same;
  - repeatedly criticising or making personal comments to an individual or group;
  - threatening behaviour;
  - unacceptable body language;
  - taking or damaging property;
  - producing offensive graffiti;
  - placing a victim in a position where they cannot defend themselves.

This list is illustrative but not exhaustive.

## **5. Specific Types of Bullying**

- 5.1 *Bullying related to race, religion or culture:* This includes racist or faith-based bullying. Political and social issues can also be a factor in bullying and harassment.
- 5.2 *Bullying related to special educational needs and disabilities:* Students with SEND can be more at risk of bullying than their peers. They may not have the social confidence and competence to protect themselves against bullying or the communication skills to report it.
- 5.3 *Bullying related to appearance or health conditions:* Perceived physical appearance, such as size and weight, and other body image issues can be the object of bullying.
- 5.4 *Bullying related to status, wealth etc.:* Perceived extremes of affluence (poverty, richness) can lead to victimisation, especially if a student or their family is not able to afford items of clothing or other 'desirable' possessions.
- 5.5 *Bullying related to sexual orientation:* This refers to any hostile or offensive action against

those who are (or are perceived to be) lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. Homophobic bullying is perhaps the form of bullying least likely to be self-reported, since disclosure carries risks not associated with other forms of bullying (for example, the student may not want to report bullying if it means 'coming out' to RB staff and parents before they are ready to). This type of bullying may also affect students whose parents or other family members are (or are perceived to be) lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.

- 5.6 ***Sexist or sexual bullying:*** Sexist and sexual bullying affect both genders; students identifying as transgender or experiencing gender dysphoria (feeling that they belong to another gender or do not conform with the gender role prescribed to them) can also be targeted. Sexual bullying may be characterised by name-calling, comments and overt 'looks' about appearance, attractiveness and emerging puberty. It may involve uninvited touching, innuendo, propositions, pornographic imagery, graffiti or sexting (sending sexually explicit images or messages, usually by mobile phone).
- 5.7 ***Cyber-bullying (refer to the RBR E-safety Policy):*** Cyber-bullying includes malicious, upsetting, repeated emails, images, texts, videos, tweets or other messages/postings sent directly to, or about, an individual. It may involve the use of mobile phones, email, internet messaging services, gaming or social media (e.g., Facebook, Threads, X (formally known as Twitter), Instagram, Snapchat, WhatsApp) and other technologies and applications that may become available in the future. There is no escape for the victim, as there is 24/7 contact, and the impact of such bullying is magnified through its relentless nature and the massive potential audience.

## **6. Responding to Bullying**

- 6.1 Bullying hurts and inevitably causes pain and distress. No one deserves to be a victim of bullying. Whilst it can take many forms, all bullying, both physical and emotional, must be viewed as very serious; it can have a significant and potentially long-lasting impact on an individual's mental health. Perpetrators of bullying behaviour need to understand and acknowledge the negative impact of their actions.
- 6.2 The Head of RBR will:
- a. ensure that all staff are aware of RBR's anti-bullying policies and procedures and their legal responsibilities;
  - b. ensure that students are aware of their responsibilities in preventing bullying, through reporting it to an appropriate adult;
  - c. investigate and take appropriate action on reported incidents of bullying, including cyber-bullying;
  - d. ensure support is provided for both victim and perpetrator, as appropriate for their circumstances and needs;
  - e. keep records of all instances of bullying and review these records to ensure careful monitoring of behaviour, to evaluate the effectiveness of RBR's approach to bullying and to enable any patterns to be identified;
  - f. notify the parents/carers of parties concerned;
  - g. inform staff on a need-to-know basis; and
  - h. seek assistance from the police if they believe a criminal offence may have been committed.
- 6.3 All staff will:
- a. know the policy and procedures and deal with incidents in accordance with the policy;
  - b. be vigilant;

- c. inform the Head (DSL) or any DSL deputies of any (suspected or known) bullying and report on CPOMS ;
- d. take action to reduce the risk of bullying at times and in places where it is most likely;
- e. always challenge any instances of sarcasm, unpleasant behaviour or put-downs, whether in person or online, and take further action as appropriate.

6.4 Trustees will:

- a. Review this policy and procedures at least annually with the Head of Centre;
- b. Support the Head of Centre when serious bullying allegations have been reported;
- c. Ensure that serious cases of bullying are reported termly through the Trust's reporting procedure;

6.5 Parents/carers will:

- a. regularly speak to their child in order to promote a social conscience and awareness that reporting bullying is the right thing to do;
- b. be aware of and support RBR's anti-bullying policy and procedures and use these to assist their child in understanding bullying behaviour.
- c. support the RBR's actions in dealing with proven cases of bullying;
- d. work with staff in order to support their child in developing positive responses to incidents of bullying consistent with RBR's anti-bullying procedures;
- e. be responsible for monitoring their child's e-communication and social media use;
- f. Should cyber-bullying occur, parents are responsible for ensuring that the appropriate reporting mechanism is used. For example, the report feature on Facebook, red flag on YouTube or report to the local police, in addition to communicating with RBR.

## 7. Guidance for Students

7.1 If you are bullied or you see another student being bullied (including online), you must tell someone. Ignoring bullying allows it to get worse. Tell an adult that you trust and feel comfortable talking to.

7.2 If you tell a member of RBR staff, they will:

- a. listen carefully;
- b. record what has happened;
- c. tell you that you have acted correctly in reporting the bullying;
- d. not put you under any pressure;
- e. not make you feel that your complaint is silly, that you have 'asked for it' or that the person doing the bullying 'can't help it';
- f. help you to decide on actions you can take to prevent bullying;
- g. follow up the incident(s), maybe with other staff after consulting you; and
- h. check with you that the situation has improved, that the bullying has stopped.

7.3 **What happens to the person who has been carrying out the bullying?** Staff will ensure that the person who has carried out the bullying is made fully aware that their behaviour is unacceptable.

7.4 In accordance with RBR's Behaviour for Learning Policy, staff will seek to enable the student to change their behaviour through the use of restorative justice and discussions about community needs, rights and responsibilities. Staff may involve parents.

7.5 If the person does not stop the bullying behaviour, they may be required to leave RBR temporarily or permanently.

## **8. Guidance for Parents**

8.1 Parents/carers **must inform staff** if they suspect or know that there is a problem (in person or online) for their own child or for another child, whether as perpetrator or victim.

8.2 It is not always easy for a parent to know that their child is being bullied, but there are some indicators to look out for:

- a. changes to usual routine;
- b. unwillingness to attend;
- c. reluctance to travel on public transport;
- d. becoming withdrawn, anxious or lacking in confidence;
- e. becoming aggressive, disruptive and/or unreasonable;
- f. starting to bully siblings and/or other children;
- g. not eating;
- h. claiming to feel ill on school mornings;
- i. having nightmares, crying themselves to sleep, bedwetting;
- j. personal possessions/clothes being damaged or going missing;
- k. asking for unusual amounts of money or stealing money;
- l. self-harming;
- m. running away from home;
- n. being afraid to use the internet or mobile phone;
- o. nervous when a text message is received; and/or
- p. unwilling to discuss behaviour.

8.3 These types of behaviour could indicate other problems, but bullying should be considered and investigated.

8.4 Incidents reported by parents or students are taken seriously and followed up immediately. Staff will listen sympathetically; the victim's perception of what happened will not be dismissed. Victims will be reassured that they have acted correctly in reporting the incident, that the complaint is important and that something will be done. The person allegedly carrying out the behaviour will be spoken to, and the facts of the incident established.

8.5 Parents and students should refer to RBR's Complaints Policy if they feel that their concerns about bullying are not being addressed satisfactorily.

## **9. Outcomes**

9.1 The bully (bullies) may be asked to genuinely apologise. Other consequences may take place, including in serious cases fixed exclusion will be considered. If possible, all students will be supported by staff to discuss the issues and be reconciled.

9.2 After the incident/incidents have been investigated and dealt with, each case will be monitored to ensure repeated bullying does not take place. In instances of repeated bullying a permanent exclusion may be considered.

## **10. Prevention**

10.1 RBR aims to foster a safe environment (both in person and online), where individuality is celebrated and students can flourish without fear or harassment, irrespective of their race, religion, gender, sexual orientation and special educational needs or disabilities. RBR's ethos is one of mutual respect and tolerance. These are both embedded in RBR's culture (e.g., staff modelling respectful behaviour and relationships) and addresses issues discussed directly in Personal, Health and Social Education (PHSE) lessons.

- 10.2 As a part of RBR's culture, staff will proactively use methods for helping students to recognise bullying, what they can do if they are bullied or witness another student being bullied and how to prevent bullying. This will include:
- a. adhering to RBR's expectations of behaviour, including staff leading by example;
  - b. use social stories;
  - c. writing stories or poems or drawing pictures about bullying;
  - d. reading stories about bullying, discussing during tutor time or circle time;
  - e. encouraging students to discuss incidents as they occur and so be part of the process;
  - f. accepting consequences and addressing issues before they escalate;
  - g. having general discussions with students about bullying and why it matters;
  - h. the opportunity to be aware, involved and to monitor the situation;
  - i. supporting anti-bullying week and making the subject and activities high profile; and
  - j. establishing links through English/Drama/PSHE schemes of work

## **11. Safeguarding and Child Protection**

- 11.1 Safeguarding issues can manifest themselves via student-on-student abuse, including cyber-bullying, physical abuse, sexual harassment and sexting. If an individual or group of students persists in such behaviour, the Head of Centre may choose to remove them from RBR temporarily or permanently.
- 11.2 In doing so, the Head of Centre will seek advice from statutory agencies, as appropriate, and make a referral if an incident meets the referral threshold set by the Local Safeguarding Children Board.
- 11.3 If there is 'reasonable cause to suspect that a student is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm', a bullying incident is treated as a child protection concern and RBR works with the statutory agencies in accordance with KCSiE, Sept 2023.
- 11.4 If a student is considered to be in immediate danger, an immediate referral to children's social care and/or the police will be made. As required by statutory guidance (Working Together, 2018) the Head of Centre (DSL) will ensure that information is shared with all agencies and professionals involved with the student or family.
- 11.5 RBR will always attempt to support both the victim(s) and the perpetrator(s). However, the requirement for every RBR student to perceive him/herself to be safe - physically and emotionally - is paramount. Therefore, if any student is unable or unwilling to modify their behaviour and another student continues to feel unsafe, the rights of the community are deemed to override those of the perpetrator, who will thus not be allowed to remain within the community (see RBR's Exclusion Policy).

## **12. Legislation and guidance that inform this document.**

- a. Safe to Learn – Embedding anti-bullying work in schools (DCSF 2007)
- b. Guidance on Prevention and Tackling of bullying (Gov.UK 2011)
- c. Preventing Bullying (Gov.UK 2013)
- d. Preventing and Tackling Bullying - Advice for Headteachers, Staff and Governing Bodies (DfE July 2017)
- e. Working Together to Safeguard Children (Gov.UK 2018)
- f. Keeping Children Safe in Education (Gov.UK Sept 2023)

## **13. Other RBR policies to be read in conjunction with this one.**

- a. Behaviour for Learning;
- b. Curriculum;

- c. E-safety;
- d. Exclusion;
- e. Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education;
- f. Safeguarding and Child Protection;
- g. Staff Code of Conduct; and
- h. Student Well-Being.



## **Appendix 1: Additional Sources of Guidance/Information**

Outside agencies that can offer support include:

Childline: 0800 1111

NSPCC: 0800 800 5000

Advisory Centre for Education (ACE) 0808 800 5793

Children's Legal Centre 0845 345 4345

KIDSCAPE Parents Helpline (Mon-Fri, 10-4) 0845 1 205 204

Visit the Kidscape website [www.kidscape.org.uk](http://www.kidscape.org.uk) for further support, links and advice.

Parentline Plus 0808 800 2222

Youth Access 020 8772 9900

Samaritans: 116123

Bullying Online [www.bullying.co.uk](http://www.bullying.co.uk)