



Bullying and Harassment Policy

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1. Policy Statement on Commitment

Reddish Hall School as part of Acorn Education and Care group is committed to providing a working environment for all its staff that is comfortable and free from all forms of bullying and harassment. The School adopts a zero-tolerance approach towards bullying and harassment and any employee who is found to have harassed or bullied a colleague will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including summary dismissal.

This is especially important for us given the difficulties that the majority of our children, young people and their families will have experienced. Reddish Hall School and Acorn Education and Care are committed to ensure that everyone that comes into contact with us is treated fairly and consistently.

2. Definition of Bullying and Harassment

The terms bullying and harassment are used interchangeably by most people and many definitions include bullying as a form of harassment. Harassment in general terms is unwanted conduct affecting the dignity of men and women in the workplace. It may be related to age, sex, race, disability, religion, sexual orientation, nationality or any personal characteristic of the individual and may be persistent or an isolated incident. The key is that the actions or comments are viewed as demeaning and unacceptable to the recipient.

Bullying may be characterised as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient. Bullying or harassment may be by an individual against an individual (perhaps by someone in a position of authority such as a manager or supervisor) or involve groups of people. It may be obvious or it may be insidious. Whatever form it takes, it is unwarranted and unwelcome to the individual.

3. Examples of Bullying and Harassment

3.1 Examples of Harassment:

- Harassment can be defined as inappropriate behaviour, actions, comments or physical contact that is objectionable or causes offence
- Behaviour that is acceptable to one employee may not be acceptable to another
- Examples of sexual and sexual orientation-related harassment include:
 - Requests for sexual favours
 - Speculation about an employee's private life and sexual activities
 - Threatened or sexual violence
 - Threat of dismissal, loss of promotion, etc. for refusal of sexual favours

- Insensitive jokes and lewd comments
- Leering, whistling or making sexually suggestive or insulting gestures
- Unnecessary bodily contact
- Displays of sexually offensive material
- Sending salacious, offensive or abusive messages or pictures via internal or external mail, facsimile or e-mail
- Exclusion from normal workplace conversation or social events, i.e. being “frozen out”

3.2 Examples of Bullying:

- Bullying behaviour goes beyond management’s right to issue reasonable instructions. It applies to the use of persistent offensive tactics that threaten, intimidate or humiliate employees causing fear, distress, vulnerability, loss of self-confidence and stress-related illness
- Examples of bullying behaviour include:
 - Shouting, use of foul language and personal abuse
 - Threatening/disorderly behaviour or physical assault
 - Teasing, humiliating or criticising staff in public
 - Imposing unrealistic targets or deadlines
 - Imposing excessive workloads
 - Removing employees’ responsibilities and giving them menial tasks
 - Excluding individuals from meetings and decision-making
 - Ostracising or openly ignoring someone
 - Excessively close daily supervision
 - Rude or intimidating messages via e-mail, etc.
 - Withholding necessary information or supplying incorrect information
 - Blocking holiday requests, promotion or training and development opportunities without sufficient and reasonable justification

Bullying and harassment are not necessarily face to face, they may also occur in written communications, e-mail, 'phone and automatic supervision methods, such as computer recording.

Bullying and harassment makes someone feel anxious and humiliated. Feelings of anger and frustration at being unable to cope may be triggered. Some people may try to retaliate in some way. Others may become frightened and demotivated. Stress, loss of self-confidence and self-esteem caused by harassment or bullying can lead to job insecurity, illness, absence from work and even resignation. Almost always job performance is affected and relationships in the workplace suffer.

4. Process

If the School has grounds to believe that an employee may have been bullying or harassing another employee, whether or not there has been a formal complaint, the School will instigate an investigation into the alleged bullying or harassment.

Any employee who believes that another employee's conduct amounts to bullying or harassment has the absolute right to complain to their line manager or if the alleged bullying and harassment is by their line manager, to their line manager's line manager. Furthermore employees have the right to complain if they believe that they have been bullied or harassed by a third party, for example a customer, client or supplier.

Employees are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying or harassment that they experience or witness so that the School can investigate and resolve the matter. The School will take all such complaints seriously and an employee who makes a genuine complaint of bullying or harassment will be protected and will not be penalised or victimised in any way.

As part of its investigations the School will:

- Check whether the employee suspected of bullying or harassment has received previous warnings for similar misconduct (or other types of misconduct) and, if so, whether any earlier warnings are active
- Talk in confidence to any employees who may have evidence relating to the employee's alleged behaviour
- Endeavour to persuade any employees who may have been witness to the employee's alleged bullying or harassment, or who may have knowledge of it, to give a written statement to that effect
- Set up an interview with the employee believed to have bullied or harassed a colleague, allowing him/her the right to be accompanied at the interview

- Allow the employee a full and fair opportunity to answer any allegations against him/her and/or explain his/her conduct
- Assess objectively whether the employee's conduct appears to have amounted to bullying or harassment
- Adopt an objective and balanced approach to the information gained as a result of the investigation
- Avoid allowing personal views about the employee to influence the overall assessment of the conduct under review and
- Keep confidential records of the investigation and ensure that these are handled in accordance with data protection rules.

The School reserves the right to suspend or temporarily redeploy either the employee suspected of bullying or harassment or the employee raising a complaint of bullying or harassment during the investigations, if it is considered in the interests of the individual(s) or the School to do so. Suspension in these circumstances does not constitute disciplinary action and will be on full pay.

As soon as possible, following the conclusion of the investigation, the School will inform the employee suspected of bullying or harassment as to the outcome. The School will decide at that point whether or not it is appropriate to instigate disciplinary action against the employee. Any disciplinary proceedings will, where possible, be conducted by a different manager from the person who conducted the investigation.

5. Victims of Harassment or Bullying

The School recognises that it is not only important to deal appropriately with the source of harassment or bullying but also to offer support to victims. This may take the form of confidential counselling or assertiveness training.

6. Victimisation

No person will be victimised or discriminated against for taking action under this policy or for supporting such action by another.