

Anti-Bullying Policy

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Related documents:	Equality Act 2010 Children Act 1989 & 2004 Education Act 2002 (Section 175) Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025) Protection from Harassment Act 1997

Contents Page

1. Purpose	3
2. Scope	3
3. Definition of bullying.....	3
4. Recognising learners who may be being bullied	4
Emotional and behavioural signs.....	4
Physical signs	4
Social signs	4
Academic signs.....	5
Digital signs.....	5
Communication signs	5
5. Prevention	5
6. Reporting bullying	5
Learners can report bullying by:	5
Staff are required to:	6
Parents/carers can:	6
7. Recording bullying	6
8. Responding to bullying.....	6
Following investigation.....	6
10. Monitoring and review	7
Additional sources of guidance/information.....	7

1. Purpose

At Red Balloon of the Air (RBAir), we are committed to providing a safe, supportive and inclusive environment for all learners. For those young people with a range of mental health conditions, emotional trauma and neurodiverse diagnoses, engagement in learning is dependent on the intrinsic safety of the provision. It is the core belief of RBAir that everyone has the right to feel secure and free from bullying, and all necessary steps will be taken to prevent and respond to bullying behaviour.

We promote equality and celebrate diversity in all its forms. This policy specifically addresses bullying relating to any protected characteristic as defined in the Equality Act 2010, including age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity.

The policy aims to:

- prevent all forms of bullying, including physical, verbal, emotional and cyberbullying;
- support all young people to feel safe, valued, and confident to engage with their learning programmes;
- encourage an ethos of respect, empathy and kindness throughout the RBAir community;
- ensure all incidents are recorded, reported and dealt with promptly and appropriately.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all staff, learners, volunteers and visitors. It covers all activities that take place on RBAir premises, as well as off-site events and trips organised by the provision.

3. Definition of bullying

Bullying is 'behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally'. This includes:

- Physical: hitting, kicking, pushing
- Verbal: name-calling, threats, offensive comments
- Emotional: excluding, spreading rumours, intimidation
- Cyber: online harassment, inappropriate messaging, social media abuse

Bullying can target any individual or group.

Other bullying behaviours may include:

- the use of demeaning, ageist, racist, religious, cultural, sexual, sexist or homophobic, biphobic or transphobic names or language, or language related to special educational needs and disability - it can be direct or indirect;
- 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 learner - deliberately ignoring or avoiding a fellow learner 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.

4. Recognising learners who may be being bullied

Emotional and behavioural signs

- Sudden or unexplained changes in mood or behaviour (e.g. becoming withdrawn, anxious, tearful or irritable)
- Reluctance or refusal to attend sessions (including increased absences or lateness)
- Loss of interest in work or activities they previously enjoyed
- Low self-esteem or loss of confidence
- Unexplained outbursts or angry reactions

Physical signs

- Unexplained injuries, such as cuts, bruises or scratches
- Frequent complaints of headaches, stomach aches or feeling unwell (often as a reason to avoid school)
- Damaged or missing belongings, clothes or books

Social signs

- Sudden avoidance of certain people, places or situations
- Spending time alone or being excluded from group activities

- Loss of friendships or sudden changes in friendship groups
- Reluctance to talk about changes in behaviour

Academic signs

- Drop in academic performance or engagement
- Lack of concentration or unwillingness to participate in sessions

Digital signs

- Frequent lateness to sessions, not engaging at all
- Becoming upset, withdrawn or secretive after using devices or being online
- Reluctance to use technology or engage in online activities they previously enjoyed
- Sudden changes to online activity

Communication signs

- Avoiding eye contact or becoming unusually quiet
- Expressing feelings of helplessness, worthlessness or not belonging
- Directly or indirectly mentioning being picked on, left out or threatened

5. Prevention

RBAir's strategies for the prevention of bullying include:

- promoting positive relationships through the curriculum and PSHE;
- creating opportunities for learners to express concerns safely (e.g. regular check-ins, invitations to speak 1:1 with trusted adults);
- providing strong pastoral support;
- training staff to identify and respond to bullying, focusing on how signs might be different in different learners, particularly those with neurodiverse conditions;
- fostering a culture of inclusion, kindness and respect via the curriculum and wider provision enrichment, e.g. trips and visits, RBAir clubs including Willow Lounge, physical activity, and sessions involving teamwork;
- providing curriculum elements where expression of emotions is pivotal, e.g. art, music, inclusive games.

6. Reporting bullying

Learners can report bullying by:

- telling a trusted adult at RBAir;
- sending an email, Teams message or text message to a trusted person;
- speaking with their mentor/pastoral support person.

Staff are required to:

- listen, reassure and record details of the incident using an incident form;
- report all incidents to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy Safeguarding Lead (DDSL).

Parents/carers can:

- contact the RBAir via phone, email or in person;
- request a meeting with the DSL or Head of Centre.

7. Recording bullying

All reported incidents must be:

- logged using the Bullying Incident Form;
- reviewed regularly by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT).

8. Responding to bullying

Staff at RBAir are trained to recognise the signs of bullying. When a learner indicates there is an issue causing distress, staff/DSL/DDSL will:

- listen to the learner, ensure they feel safe and make sure the immediate situation is managed;
- report to the DSL/DDSL as soon as possible;
- communicate intentions to those involved and parents;
- investigate promptly and impartially;
- support the victim, ensuring their safety and wellbeing;
- communicate outcomes to all parties, maintaining confidentiality.

Following investigation

- Support will be offered to learners subject to bullying. This may involve:

- offering further 1:1 work with a pastoral member of staff/Link Mentor;
 - further opportunities for therapy;
 - opportunities to engage with restorative approaches with those involved.
- Application of boundaries/guidance making clear that any form of bullying, including those targeting any protected characteristic, is a serious breach of RBAir values and potentially the law. Involve parents/carers and external professionals as appropriate.
 - Develop reintegration/restoration plans for any learner affected by bullying-related absence.

10. Monitoring and review

- This policy will be reviewed annually with input from staff, learners, and parents.
- All outcomes and data generated will be shared with trustees.

Additional sources of guidance/information

Outside agencies that can offer support include:

- Childline: 0800 11 111
- NSPCC: 0800 800 5000
- Samaritans: 116 123