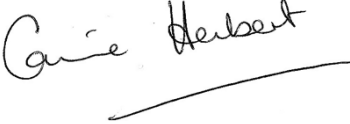


Anti-Bullying Policy

Policy title	Anti-Bullying Policy
Policy owner (including job title)	Kim Anderson (Director of Education)
Version	1 (Created Jan. 2026)
Red Balloon Educational Trust (RBET) approving body	RBET Trustees
Approving signature	
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Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to articulate RBET's commitment to providing a safe, supportive, and respectful environment for both students and staff. It sets out the guiding principles that underpin our approach to addressing the impact of bullying on young people and to ensuring that all members of the RBET community are treated with dignity and care. Red Balloon was originally founded to address the impact and harm that bullying can have on young people and their families and continues to provide a secure and supportive educational environment that helps those who have avoided attending school, often because of bullying or trauma. This policy provides a framework for consistent practice across the organisation and informs the procedures, expectations, and responsibilities that support our ethos.

Red Balloon Educational Trust promotes the values of mutual respect and tolerance. We seek to establish a caring and secure setting in which all learners can be themselves and feel valued, respected and safe. Our learners have all experienced challenging social, emotional and mental health needs and this is reflected in our approach. All learners, when becoming a part of RBET, agree to behave with respect and consideration towards the other learners, the staff, visitors and the property. RBET will model this value whilst prioritising the safety and security of those within its care.

Therefore, the overarching goals of this policy are to:

- prevent bullying of any type from occurring;
- ensure fast and effective resolution of bullying when it does occur.

Scope and responsibilities

All staff are responsible for reading and implementing this policy to ensure that bullying is prevented at Red Balloon Educational Trust wherever possible.

All staff are responsible for promoting such positive staff and learner relationships as to ensure learners feel able to disclose and discuss situations in which they have been bullied.

All staff are responsible for maintaining vigilance so that behaviours that may constitute bullying can be detected and challenged.

RBET Trustees will take a lead role in monitoring and reviewing this policy.

Policy statement, provision and safeguards

Objectives

- All staff, learners and parents should understand what bullying is.
- All staff, learners and parents should be aware of Red Balloon's policy on bullying and know what they should do if bullying occurs.

- All learners should be aware of the serious consequences of bullying and know that such behaviour is not tolerated.
- All learners should understand how they can help to prevent bullying (including as bystanders) by reporting it to an appropriate adult.
- Anyone who does bully is made fully aware that their behaviour is unacceptable. Staff seek to help them understand how their behaviour affects those whom they bully, how they can change it, and what amends need to be made.
- Everyone involved, whether perpetrator, victim or bystander, maintains their right to be treated with unconditional positive regard.

Definition of bullying

Bullying can be defined as behaviour that is:

- repeated
- intended to hurt someone either physically or emotionally
- often aimed at certain groups, for example because of race, religion, gender or sexual orientation
- It takes many forms and can include:
 - physical assault
 - teasing
 - making threats
 - name calling
 - cyberbullying - bullying via mobile phone or online (for example email, social networks and instant messenger)

Bullying 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.

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;
- cyber-bullying via mobile phone or online;
- 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.

This list is illustrative but not exhaustive.

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.

There may sometimes be misunderstanding about the meaning of the term ‘bullying’: one-off incidents, whilst they may be very serious and must always be dealt with, would not normally fall within the definition of ‘bullying’. Red Balloon staff work hard to ensure that all learners know the difference between bullying and simply “falling out”. Friendship fallouts occur at times and occasionally there will be conflict between learners. Bullying is repeated and occurs where there is an imbalance of power.

Preventing bullying

Red Balloon aims to foster a safe environment (both in-person and online), where individuality is celebrated and learners can flourish without fear or harassment, irrespective of their race, religion, gender, sexual orientation and special educational needs or disabilities. Our ethos is one of mutual respect and tolerance. This is both embedded in Red Balloon’s culture (e.g. staff modelling respectful behaviour and relationships) and addressed directly (e.g. issues of difference and prejudice discussed in PSHE lessons).

Learners

Bullying is discussed at an early stage and throughout the personal development programme. Learners are encouraged to inform staff as early as possible if bullying is taking place.

Staff will deal with observed instances of bullying promptly and effectively, in accordance with agreed procedures. Teaching and support staff are encouraged to look out for and report possible signs of bullying, such as distress in learners, deterioration of work, feigning illness, isolation and erratic attendance.

Parents

Parents should contact the Head of Centre if they have any concerns, and staff will investigate these in full. Parents should advise their children not to retaliate violently to any forms of bullying. A supportive approach between parents and our Learner Centres is seen to be very important in achieving the best outcomes for learners.

Responding to bullying

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.

Procedures for dealing with bullying

Any incidents should be recorded on CPOMS for all parties involved, clearly indicating alleged victim and perpetrator (link all learners involved onto the entry). This is important should there be concerns around child-on-child abuse.

Any Bullying Report forms completed should be attached as link documents to the learner's CPOMS file. When a learner does report bullying, the possible paths to resolution will be explored with them before action is taken. Action will not be taken by staff without prior discussion with the victim.

- The victim will complete a Bullying Report Form prior to investigation.
- The victim and perpetrator will be interviewed and the seriousness of the incident assessed.
- The parents of the victim and of the perpetrator will be informed.
- The Head of Centre will determine whether to initiate the proceedings in line with RBET's Behaviour Policy

Bullying of any 'protected characteristic' must be reported directly to the appropriate Head of Centre and details recorded in the Equalities Log with the Trust's administrator. The 'protected characteristics' are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage/civil partnership, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion/belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

Racist bullying must be reported directly to the appropriate Head of Centre and recorded as a Race-Related Incident in the Trust Equalities Log.

Procedures for staff who are informed of an incident or ongoing bullying

- Offer the victim support by listening carefully and sympathetically treating every incident as potentially serious, obtain a written account of the situation. This can be recorded on the Bullying Report Form (see appendix).
- Reassure the learner; tell them that help is available, action will be taken to investigate, it is not their fault, and they will not have to face this on their own.
- It is important that confidentiality is respected and the learner's privacy is protected, but a teacher must not give guarantees not to tell anyone. Often learners worry about others finding out they have 'told'.
- The DSL or DDSL will initially talk to the victim, and then to the person(s) accused of bullying separately and obtain their versions of events verbally and in writing.
- The DSL or DDSL will talk to any other learners involved and similarly obtain a written account.
- The Head of Centre or Behaviour SLT will review the incident when all accounts are collected. Depending on the severity of the bullying, the Head of Centre or Behaviour SLT will bring parties together to discuss the situation and the interpretation of incident. It will be made clear to all that bullying is unacceptable. It will be emphasised that the expectation is that this will be the end of the incident, the matter will be escalated should there be any further repercussions on the victim and the person accused of bullying.
- Appropriate sanctions will be decided by the Head of Centre or Behaviour SLT in line with RBET's Behaviour Policy and these may include restorative conversations with the victim. In the most serious of incidents SLT will be consulted with, and sanctions may include temporary or permanent exclusion from Red Balloon.
- Incidents to be recorded directly onto CPOMS. If an incident is race-related, a separate note will be recorded in the Equalities Log which is held with the Trust Administrator. Copies of all completed paperwork must go in all involved learner's files.
- The Head of Centre/Behaviour SLT will inform all sets of parents by telephone and letter or email and enlist their support in reinforcing the advice given to learners.
- Monitoring of the situation will be maintained by staff involved with a regular review.
- If it is apparent that a victim or bully needs further support or guidance, they may be referred to an appropriate agency, such as a Centre therapist.
- Some forms of bullying are illegal and should be reported to the Police. These include: violence or assault, theft, hate crimes and repeated harassment or intimidation, such as name calling, threats and abusive phone calls, emails or text messages.

Procedures for learner to staff bullying

- Teacher(s) speak to learners involved.
- Explain unacceptable behaviour as in RBET's Behaviour Policy.
- Follow the Behaviour Policy.
- Request a meeting with parents.

Procedures for staff to learner bullying

- It is recommended that learners talk to their mentor or a member of the Safeguarding team.
- A member of SLT will discuss the allegation with the teacher involved and will follow the procedures for Dealing with Allegations against Staff and Volunteers.

Procedures for staff to staff bullying

- Procedures to be followed in accordance with RBET's Grievance and Discipline Procedures.

The Heads of Centre will:

- ensure that all staff are aware of Red Balloon's anti-bullying policies and procedures and their legal responsibilities;
- ensure that learners are aware of their responsibilities in preventing bullying, through reporting it to an appropriate adult;
- investigate and take appropriate action on reported incidents of bullying, including cyber-bullying;
- ensure support is provided for both victim and perpetrator, as appropriate for their circumstances and needs;
- keep records of all instances of bullying and review these records to ensure careful monitoring of behaviour, to evaluate the effectiveness of Red Balloon's approach to bullying and to enable any patterns to be identified;
- seek assistance from the police if it is believed a criminal offence may have been committed.

All staff will:

- know the policy and procedures and deal with incidents in accordance with the policy;
- be vigilant;

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

Guidance for learners

If you are bullied or you see another learner 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.

If you tell a member of Red Balloon staff, they will:

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

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.

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

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

Guidance for parents

Parents **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.

It is not always easy for a parent to know that their child is being bullied, but some indicators to look out for include the following:

- changes to usual routine;

- unwillingness to attend school or other places where their school peers may be present.
- reluctance to travel on public transport;
- becoming withdrawn, anxious or lacking in confidence;
- becoming aggressive, disruptive and/or unreasonable;
- starting to bully siblings and/or other children;
- not eating;
- saying they feel ill on school mornings;
- having nightmares, crying themselves to sleep, bedwetting;
- personal possessions/clothes being damaged or going missing;
- asking for unusual amounts of money or stealing money;
- self-harming;
- running away from home;
- being afraid to use the internet or mobile phone;
- nervous when a text message is received;
- unwilling to discuss behaviour.

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

Incidents reported by parents or learners 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.

Parents and learners should refer to the Complaints Policy if they feel that their concerns about bullying are not being addressed satisfactorily.

Safeguarding and child protection

Safeguarding issues can manifest themselves via child-on-child abuse, including cyber-bullying, physical abuse, sexual harassment and sexting.

If an individual or group of learners persists in such behaviour, the Head of Centre may choose to remove them from Red Balloon temporarily or permanently. They 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.

If there is “reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm”, a bullying incident is treated as a child protection concern and Red Balloon works with the statutory agencies in accordance with Keeping Children Safe in Education. If a child 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 and/or the Designated Safeguarding Lead will ensure that information is shared with all agencies and professionals involved with the child or family.

All learners, when joining RBET, agree they will “behave with respect and consideration towards the other learners, the staff, visitors and the property”. Red Balloon will always attempt to embody this value by supporting both the victim(s) and the perpetrator(s). However, the entitlement for every Red Balloon learner to perceive themselves to be safe - physically and emotionally is paramount. Therefore, if any learner is unable or unwilling to modify their behaviour and another learner continues to feel unsafe, who will thus not be allowed to remain within the community (see RBET’s Exclusion Policy).

Legislation and guidance that inform this document

- Safe to Learn – Embedding anti-bullying work in schools (DCSF 2007)
- Guidance on Prevention and Tackling of bullying (Gov.UK 2011)
- Preventing Bullying (Gov.UK 2013)
- Preventing and Tackling Bullying - Advice for Head of Centres, Staff and Governing Bodies (DfE July 2017)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (Gov.UK 2018)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (revised annually by gov.uk)

Other Red Balloon policies to be read in conjunction with this one

- Behaviour for Learning
- Curriculum
- Online Safety
- Exclusion
- Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education
- Safeguarding and Child Protection
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Wellbeing

Outside agencies that can offer support

These include:

- Childline: 0800 1111
- NSPCC: 0800 800 5000
- Samaritans: 116123
- Stand Up to Bullying www.standuptobullying.co.uk
- UK Safer Internet Centre <https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/>

Appendix 1: Bullying Report Form

Red Balloon Bullying Report Form

Name:

Date:

We take any incidents of bullying very seriously. To enable us to find the best way of supporting you, it is helpful if you answer as many of the questions as possible. **Thank you.**

- Names of the bullies (or, if you don't know their names, a description).
- When and where it takes place.
- What happens? What is being said or done?
- When did it start? How long has it been going on for?
- How often does it occur?
- Are there any witnesses or other people who could help?

- Who (if anyone) have you told so far?
- What (if anything) have you done about it so far?
- Have you got any ideas about what you would like to be done about it or what help you would like to receive?

Appendix 2. Response regarding the bully

ACTION TAKEN	RESOURCES	YES/NO
Ensure the alleged bully has completed a written account		
Ensure the alleged incident cannot be repeated	Take any appropriate action to ensure they are not in the same area, i.e. rooms. Look at timetable closely.	
Ensure CPOMS records the perpetrator's role clearly		
Ensure bully is aware they have breached RBET's Behaviour for Learning Policy		
Parents informed that an investigation is taking place		
In the case of cyber bullying, capture screenshots of the material available	It is important to establish if malicious harm was meant. This may be shared with parents at some stage.	
An offer of mediation to be made between the two parties	A facilitated and structured restorative conversation led by staff	
Contract created	An agreement which the perpetrator signs to show they are willing to help resolve the situation	

Outcomes may include	Removal of perpetrator until victim feels safe to return to lessons or communal space. Being placed on a progress report. Temporary exclusion. Permanent exclusion	
Offers of support around meeting expectations for learners	In-house therapy/counselling with focus on how to behave appropriately and exploring the reasons behind the bullying. Additional mentoring or other pastoral support	
Consider whether external agencies need to be contacted	Police Any other agency regarding online safety	

Appendix 3. Response regarding the victim

ACTION TAKEN	RESOURCES	YES/NO
Ensure the immediate safety of the victim First Aid assessment		
Separate the victim and the alleged bully	Look at timetables and available spaces to ensure they are not in the same space.	
Start a formal investigation	Collect accounts from victim, bully and any witnesses	
Inform parent/carers that a formal investigation has begun	Send a holding email informing them you have started the investigation and will get back to them	
Reassure the victim using positive reinforcement that they have done the right thing by reporting it.		
Log the incident on CPOMS		
Provide strategies to the victim to help prevent incidents from occurring in the future	Assertiveness training Discuss strategies with parent/carers	
Provide emotional support	Therapy/counselling Additional mentoring	
Update parents with the outcomes of the investigation	Ask parents if they are happy with the way the situation has been handled and ask for feedback	
Review procedures	Ask victim for their views on the process and outcomes	