



Founded 1125

Reading School

Anti-Harassment Policy

Introduction

Reading School is committed to taking proactive measures to prevent all forms of harassment and bullying. This includes providing regular equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) training, anti-bullying and harassment training, conducting anonymous workplace surveys, and undertaking regular risk assessments to minimise the risk of bullying and harassment. The school is responsible for taking action when it is aware that harassment or bullying may be or is taking place.

This policy applies to all individuals working for or on behalf of the school, including employees, volunteers, contractors and other third parties who interact with the school. The policy also applies to bullying and harassment by third parties. Managers should ensure that staff understand the standards of behaviour expected of them. All staff can prevent harassment and bullying by being sensitive to the reactions and needs of others, and ensuring that their conduct does not cause offence.

Definitions

Harassment

Harassment is any unwanted physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.

Harassment may involve conduct of a sexual nature or it may be related to age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partner status, pregnancy or maternity, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.

Harassment may include, for example:

- Unwanted physical conduct or 'horseplay', including touching, pinching, pushing and grabbing.
- Racist, sexist, homophobic or ageist jokes, or derogatory or stereotypical remarks.
- Mocking, mimicking or belittling a person's disability.
- Excluding someone from a conversation or a social event, or marginalising them from the group.
- Excluding or making derogatory comments about someone because of a perceived protected characteristic, or because they are associated with someone with a protected characteristic.



Founded 1125

Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature. This type of harassment does not need to be related to a protected characteristic.

Sexual harassment may include, for example:

- Physical conduct of a sexual nature, unwelcome physical contact or intimidation.
- Continued suggestions for social activity after it has been made clear that such suggestions are unwelcome.
- Sending or displaying material that is pornographic or that some people may find offensive (including emails, text messages, video clips and images sent by mobile phones or posted on the internet or social media).
- Unwelcome sexual advances or suggestive behaviour, which the harasser may perceive as harmless.

Bullying and micro-aggressions

Bullying is offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour involving the misuse of power that can make a person feel vulnerable, upset, humiliated, undermined or threatened. Bullying can take the form of physical, verbal and non-verbal conduct.

Examples of bullying may include:

- Persistent criticism of someone's work.
- Persistently putting someone down in meetings.
- Posting humiliating, offensive or threatening comments or photos on social media.

Micro-aggressions, which are indirect, subtle, or unintentional acts of discrimination, are also considered unacceptable under this policy. These include:

- Micro-assaults, for example, deliberate derogatory comments.
- Micro-insults, for example, unintentional discriminatory remarks.
- Micro-invalidations, for example, denying someone's experience of discrimination.

Legitimate, reasonable and constructive criticism of performance or behaviour, or reasonable instructions during the course of employment, will not amount to bullying on its own.

Victimisation

Victimisation includes subjecting a person to a detriment because they have done, or are suspected of doing or intending to do, any of the following protected acts:

- Bringing proceedings under the Equality Act 2010.
- Giving evidence or information in connection with proceedings under the Equality Act 2010.



Founded 1125

- Doing any other thing for the purposes of or in connection with the Equality Act 2010.
- Alleging that a person has contravened the Equality Act 2010.

Victimisation may include, for example:

- Denying someone an opportunity because it is suspected that they intend to make a complaint about sexual harassment.
- Excluding someone because they have raised a grievance about sexual harassment.
- Failing to promote someone because they accompanied another member of staff to a grievance meeting.

Third-party harassment

Bullying or harassment by third parties, including contractors or visitors, will not be tolerated. In compliance with the Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023, the school will take proactive steps to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace, which includes taking reasonable measures to prevent sexual harassment by third parties. Any incidents involving third-party harassment should be reported immediately to the headteacher or designated manager. Appropriate steps will be taken to address the matter, which may involve investigating the conduct by the third-party or limiting their access to school premises.

Vexatious, Incessant, and Demanding Communications

Reading School recognises the importance of open communication between the school and parents or guardians. However, vexatious, incessant, or demanding communications that hinder the effective operation of the school will not be tolerated. Such communications are defined as:

- Repeated or excessive demands for information or responses that have already been addressed
- Aggressive, intimidating, or disrespectful language
- Communication that disrupts the normal functioning of staff or the school's operations

Parents or guardians engaging in such behaviour will be asked to adhere to respectful communication standards. The school reserves the right to establish boundaries or limit communication channels if necessary to maintain a productive and respectful environment for all members of the school community.

Harassment and bullying complaints procedures

Informal

- If possible, a member of staff who believes that they have been harassed or bullied should, in the first instance, raise the matter directly with the person responsible and ask that person to stop the harassing or bullying behaviour.



Founded 1125

- If a staff member feels unable to confront the person responsible direct, they should speak to their line manager or headteacher who will be able to provide assistance in resolving the issue informally.
- If the welfare or safety of the individual or others is at risk, or where the allegations are serious, the school may have a duty to speak with the person responsible and start a formal investigation. In such cases, the school will discuss this with the individual first, if reasonably possible.

Formal

- If informal steps are not appropriate, or have been unsuccessful, the member of staff should raise the matter formally by submitting a formal complaint under the school's grievance procedure. The complaint should include full details of the conduct, including the name of the harasser or bully and the nature of the harassment or bullying.
- Formal complaints will be dealt with in a timely and confidential manner and by someone with appropriate experience and with no prior involvement.
- The investigator will meet with both the complainant and the alleged harasser/bully individually. Both will be entitled to be accompanied to any meetings by a colleague or a representative of their trade union or professional association.
- It may be necessary to suspend the harasser or bully while the investigation is undertaken. If the investigation reveals that the complaint is valid, disciplinary action against the alleged harasser/bully will then be considered under the terms of our school's disciplinary procedures.
- In deciding the appropriate disciplinary action to take, the school will take into account any aggravating factors, for example, the abuse of power over a more junior colleague.
- If a complainant is not happy with the outcome of an investigation by the headteacher, they may appeal to an appeal body comprising at least three members of the governing board in accordance with the school's grievance policy. The appeal body's decision will be final.
- Intimidation, victimisation and discrimination on the basis that an individual has brought a harassment claim are also regarded as gross misconduct.
- Confidentiality is important during any investigation in order to maintain the trust and confidence of those staff concerned. Breach of confidentiality may give rise to disciplinary action under the terms of the school's disciplinary procedure.
- Members of staff who have experienced bullying or harassment will be offered support, which may include access to confidential counselling services, mediation, or adjustments to their working environment where appropriate.



Founded 1125

Witnessing sexual harassment or victimisation

Members of staff who witness sexual harassment or victimisation are encouraged to take appropriate steps to address it, which could include:

- Intervening if they feel able to do so.
- Supporting the victim to report it or reporting it on their behalf.
- Reporting the incident(s) where they feel there may be a continuing risk if they do not report it.
- Co-operating in any investigation into the incident(s).

Reporting outcomes, confidentiality and record-keeping

Where a complaint is upheld, when appropriate and possible, the complainant will be advised of the action that has been taken to address their specific complaint and any measures put in place to prevent a similar event happening again.

Information about a complaint by, or about, a member of staff may be placed on their personnel file, together with a record of the outcome and of any notes or other documents compiled during the process. These will be processed in accordance with the school's [Data Policy](#).

Approved by EXPC Committee – 3 February 2025

To be reviewed: February 2027