# SEXUAL HARRASSMENT IN THE WORKPLACE POLICY (including Third Party Sexual Harassment)

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## 1. Our culture and values

1.1 Reach South Academy Trust is committed to fostering a culture where all colleagues are treated with dignity, respect and fairness and are supported to achieve their full potential. We believe that high standards of conduct and professional behaviour are integral to delivering the best outcomes for our pupils and communities.

1.2 This policy is underpinned by the Trust's values:

**Aspiration** – We encourage all colleagues to aim high, embrace opportunities for growth and contribute positively to the success of our schools and Trust.

**Excellence** – We are committed to maintaining high professional standards and delivering high-quality education and services through accountability, professionalism and continuous improvement.

**Resilience** – We recognise that challenges and mistakes can occur and seek, wherever possible, to support learning, reflection and improvement whilst maintaining appropriate standards of conduct.

**Integrity** – We expect all colleagues to act honestly, ethically and professionally, demonstrating sound judgement and maintaining the trust placed in them by pupils, families, colleagues and the wider community.

1.3 The purpose of this policy is not solely to address misconduct where it occurs, but to promote a positive working environment in which our values are consistently demonstrated and high standards of behaviour are understood and upheld by all employees.

## 2. Policy statement

2.1 Reach South Academy Trust (“the Trust”) is committed to ensuring a safe and respectful working environment for all staff, free from sexual harassment. Any such behaviour is unacceptable and will be addressed firmly under Trust policy and UK law.

2.2 The Trust takes reasonable and practical steps to prevent sexual harassment in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and the Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023. We take proactive measures to prevent sexual harassment and have clear, accessible reporting procedures for staff to raise concerns. If you have experienced or witnessed sexual harassment, we encourage you to report it so that we can address the matter promptly and appropriately. The Trust is committed to trauma-informed approaches when handling complaints, ensuring psychological safety and support for all individuals involved.

2.3 Instances of sexual harassment or victimisation will not be tolerated. Concerns may be raised by the individual affected or by someone who has witnessed inappropriate behaviour. Where the alleged harasser is a member of Trust personnel, the matter may be investigated under the Trust’s Disciplinary Policy and Procedure, Grievance



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Policy and Procedure, or Whistleblowing Policy as appropriate. Where allegations are upheld, action will be taken which may include sanctions up to and including dismissal.

2.4 Where the alleged harasser is a third party, such as a contractor, visitor, or agency worker, the Trust will investigate the matter and take appropriate steps to protect the affected individual. This may include reporting the incident to the third-party organisation, requesting their cooperation in the investigation, and requiring them to take disciplinary action. The Trust may also suspend or terminate the third party's engagement with the Trust if necessary. Criminal behaviour will be reported to the police and safeguarding authorities where applicable.

2.5 This policy should be read alongside the Trust's:

- Dignity at Work (Bullying and Harassment) Policy
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Grievance Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy

2.6 In accordance with s.40A of the Equality Act 2010 (as amended by the Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023), the Trust will take all reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment. This includes but is not limited to:

- Sexual harassment risk assessments will be reviewed annually and following any reported incident, significant organisational change, emergence of identified risks, or concerns raised through staff surveys, exit interviews or investigations.
- Providing mandatory training for all staff, refreshed annually
- Implementing a zero-tolerance culture through visible leadership commitment
- Monitoring and reviewing incident reports and workplace culture surveys

2.7 The Trust will take all reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment before it occurs, including identifying risks, implementing control measures, monitoring effectiveness and taking corrective action where required.

2.8 The Trust acknowledges that failure to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment, including by third parties, may result in enforcement action by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC). We are committed to meeting our legal obligations and maintaining a safe working environment for all.

2.9 This policy does not form part of your employment contract, and the Trust may update it at any time in consultation with Trade Unions.

## 3. Who is covered by the policy?

3.1 This policy applies to all individuals working with or on behalf of the Trust, including employees at all levels and grades, casual workers, volunteers, governors, trustees, agency staff, contractors, and visitors to Trust schools. It also covers third-party organisations providing services in support of our work, such as supply agencies and external service providers.



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3.2 All individuals and organisations covered by this policy are expected to uphold the Trust's zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment. Third-party organisations must ensure their staff are aware of and comply with the standards set out in this policy, including having appropriate internal policies, training, and procedures in place.

## 4. Personnel responsible for implementing the policy

4.1 The Board has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy but has delegated day-to-day responsibility for its operation to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and the Director of People.

4.2 Responsibility for monitoring and reviewing the operation of this policy and making recommendations for change to minimise risks also lies with the CEO and the Director of People.

4.3 All line managers have a specific responsibility for operating within the boundaries of this policy, ensuring that all staff understand the standards of behaviour expected of them and taking action when behaviour falls below its requirements. Line managers are responsible for:

- identifying harassment risks within their teams;
- taking prompt action where concerns arise;
- ensuring staff understand reporting routes;
- escalating concerns appropriately;
- supporting staff affected by harassment.

4.4 All staff are responsible for the success of this policy and should ensure that they take the time to read and understand it.

## 5. Accountability

5.1 All staff are responsible for treating stakeholders in line with this policy and should be aware of their duties when conducting themselves professionally.

5.2 Headteachers hold delegated responsibility for discharging the sound application of all Trust policies within the relevant Academy. The CEO and Trust Executive Directors have delegated responsibility for direct line management of Headteachers and day to day oversight of each Academy.

## 6. Definitions

6.1 Sexual harassment is unwanted conduct, regardless of intent, of a sexual nature which has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person. It also covers treating someone less favourably because they have submitted to, or refused to submit to, unwanted conduct of a sexual nature or in relation to gender reassignment or sex.

6.2 Sexual harassment may be committed by a fellow worker, an agent of an organisation, or a third party. It does not need to occur in person. It can occur via digital means, including social media sites or channels (e.g. WhatsApp). Someone may be sexually harassed even if they were not the target of the behaviour.



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Examples of sexual harassment include, but are not limited to:

- sexual comments or jokes, which may be referred to as “banter”
- displaying sexually graphic pictures, posters, or photos
- suggestive looks, staring or leering
- propositions and sexual advances
- making promises in return for sexual favours
- sexual gestures
- intrusive questions about a person’s private or sex life or a person discussing their own sex life
- sexual posts or contact in online communications, including on social media
- spreading sexual rumours about a person
- sending sexually explicit emails, text messages or messages via other social media
- unwelcome touching, hugging, massaging or kissing

Examples of digital sexual harassment include, but are not limited to:

- Inappropriate emojis
- Unsolicited video calls

6.3 Victimisation is subjecting someone to detriment because they have done, are suspected of doing, or intend to do, an act which is protected under discrimination and harassment laws. These are outlined below. It is not necessary for the person to have done the protected act in order for detrimental treatment to be considered as victimisation.

6.4 The protected acts are:

- making a claim or complaint under the Equality Act (e.g. for discrimination or harassment)
- helping someone else to make a claim by giving evidence or information in connection with proceedings under the Equality Act
- making an allegation that someone has breached the Equality Act
- doing anything else in connection with the Equality Act.

6.5 Examples of victimisation may include:

- failing to consider someone for promotion because they have previously made a sexual harassment complaint
- dismissing someone because they accompanied a colleague to a meeting about a sexual harassment complaint
- excluding someone from work meetings because they gave evidence as a witness for another employee as part of an employment tribunal claim about harassment.

## 7. Circumstances which are covered

7.1 This policy covers behaviour which occurs in the following situations:



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- a work situation
- a situation occurring outside of the normal workplace or normal working hours which is related to work, e.g. a working lunch, a business trip, or social functions
- outside of a work situation but involving a colleague or other person connected to the Trust, including on social media
- against anyone outside of a work situation where the incident is relevant to your suitability to carry out the role

## 8. What to do if you are subject to sexual harassment or victimisation

8.1 We are committed to ensuring that there is no sexual harassment or victimisation in our workplace. Allegations of sexual harassment and victimisation will be treated as a disciplinary matter, although every situation will be considered on an individual basis and in accordance with the principles of the Trust's Disciplinary Policy.

8.2 All complaints will be handled in line with the Trust's Data Protection Policy and GDPR. Personal data collected will be processed on the basis of legal obligation and legitimate interest, stored securely, and only shared with those who have a need to know.

### 8.3 Informal complaint

8.3.1 We recognise that complaints of sexual harassment or victimisation can be of a sensitive or intimate nature and that it may not be appropriate for you to raise the issue through our normal grievance procedure. In these circumstances, you are encouraged to raise such issues with a senior colleague of your choice (whether or not that person has a direct supervisory responsibility for you) as a confidential helper. This person cannot be the same person who will be responsible for investigating the matter if it becomes a formal grievance.

8.3.2 If you experience sexual harassment and you feel comfortable to do so, you should make it clear to the harasser on an informal basis that their behaviour is unwelcome and ask the harasser to stop. If you feel unable to do this verbally then you should hand a written request to the harasser.

8.3.3 In addition, you may also choose to raise concerns during your regular communication with your line manager, e.g. in a one-to-one meeting. Your line manager will listen to you and take your concerns seriously if you do this but may encourage you to follow the reporting procedures set out below. If you don't have a one-to-one meeting scheduled with your line manager, you can ask to meet with them to discuss any concerns that you may have.

### 8.4 Formal complaint

8.4.1 The Grievance Policy is a formal way for an employee to raise a problem or a complaint to the Trust about sexual harassment or victimisation.

8.4.2 An employee can raise a grievance if:
- they feel raising it informally has not worked
- they do not want it dealt with informally
- it's a very serious issue or whistleblowing



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8.4.3 Please refer to the Trust's Grievance Policy and the Trust Whistleblowing Policy for further details.

8.4.4 Employees have the statutory right to be accompanied at any formal meeting under this policy by a trade union representative or work colleague.

8.4.5 If possible, you should keep notes of what happened so that the written complaint can include:

- the name of the alleged harasser
- the nature of the alleged harassment
- the dates and times when the alleged harassment occurred
- the names of any witnesses
- any action already taken by you to stop the alleged harassment

8.4.6 You can report instances of sexual harassment or victimisation by emailing safevoice-hr@reachsouth.org Our online means of reporting sexual harassment are continually monitored, and you will be contacted within two working days.

8.4.7 On receipt of a formal complaint, the Trust will take action to separate you from the alleged harasser to enable an uninterrupted investigation to take place. This may involve a temporary transfer of the alleged harasser to another work area or suspension with contractual pay until the matter has been resolved.

8.4.8 Where the alleged behaviour may amount to a criminal offence, the Trust will discuss with the complainant whether the matter should be reported to the police. In safeguarding cases, the Trust may be required to make a referral without consent.

8.4.9 In addition to the existing reporting routes, the Trust will provide options for confidential reporting. Staff may raise concerns through a trusted colleague, trade union representative, or a designated safeguarding lead, who can report on their behalf. The Trust will respect requests not to identify the complainant where feasible; however, full confidentiality cannot be guaranteed if this would prevent a fair and thorough investigation or where there is a safeguarding or legal obligation to disclose.

## 9. What to do if you witness sexual harassment or victimisation

9.1 If you witness sexual harassment or victimisation, you are encouraged to take appropriate action to address it. You should not take any action that may put you at risk of sexual harassment or other harm. If you feel able, you should intervene to prevent the matter continuing. If you are not able to do this, your action may include offering support to the person who has been sexually harassed and encouraging them to report the incident or reporting the incident yourself.

9.2 Those employees who may witness, report or support throughout any investigations into Sexual harassment concerns will be supported and protected through any retaliation or victimisation. If an employee is accused of sexual harassment at work, ACAS guidelines state that employers must handle the process fairly, impartially, and without presuming guilt. The accused person has the right to a proper investigation, confidentiality, and workplace support, while intent does not change whether the behaviour legally constitutes harassment.



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9.3 If reporting the incident, you should bring the matter to the attention of your line manager in writing. Alternatively, you can report instances of sexual harassment by emailing safevoice-hr@reachsouth.org Our online means of reporting sexual harassment are continually monitored.

9.4 All concerns will be handled by a member of the People Team, who will sensitively engage with the person affected to understand how they wish the matter to be managed.

9.5 As an alternative, concerns can also be raised under the Trust's Whistleblowing Policy, particularly if you feel unable to report the matter through your line manager or usual channels. This route offers additional protections for individuals who raise concerns in good faith.

## 10. Third-party sexual harassment

### 10.1 Definition and Scope

10.1.1 Third-party sexual harassment occurs when a member of our workforce is subjected to sexual harassment by someone who is not part of our workforce but who is encountered in connection with work. In education setting, this may include pupils, parents or carers, visitors, contractors, self-employed workers, suppliers, members of the public, or other individuals interacting with the school community.

10.1.2 Third-party sexual harassment of our workforce is unlawful and will not be tolerated. The law requires employers to take steps to prevent sexual harassment by third parties and we are committed to doing so.

10.1.3 The Trust operates a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment by parents, carers, visitors and members of the public. Where concerns are substantiated, the Trust may restrict site access, require interactions to occur through designated channels, issue warning letters, or take legal action where appropriate.

### 10.2 Trust Commitment

10.2.1 The Trust is committed to taking all reasonable steps to prevent and respond to third party sexual harassment and victimisation. We recognise that such incidents can be distressing and disruptive to a safe working environment and will treat all reports seriously and sensitively.

10.2.2 The law does not provide a mechanism for individuals to bring a claim of third-party harassment alone. However, failure for an employer to take reasonable steps to prevent third-party sexual harassment may result in legal liability in other types of claims.

### 10.3 Expectations of Third Parties

10.3.1 All third-party organisations providing services to the Trust, including supply agencies, contractors, and service providers, are expected to:

- Maintain a sexual harassment policy aligned with UK legislation.



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- Provide training to their staff on recognising and preventing harassment.
- Cooperate fully with the Trust in investigating any reported incidents.
- Take appropriate disciplinary action against individuals found to have committed harassment.
- Ensure their staff are aware of the Trust's zero-tolerance stance on harassment.

10.3.2 As part of procurement and contract management processes, the Trust may require contractors and service providers to confirm compliance with relevant equality and harassment legislation and provide evidence of workforce training where appropriate

### 10.4 Preventative Measures

10.4.1 To reduce the risk of third-party harassment, the Trust will:

- Display signage in public-facing areas warning that harassment will not be tolerated.
- Ensure staff are not left alone in vulnerable situations.
- Provide anonymous reporting channels.
- Record and monitor incidents involving third parties.
- Pay attention to more vulnerable staff, such as young workers or those with language barriers.

### 10.5 Reporting and Investigation

10.5.1 If a member of Trust personnel experiences third-party harassment:

- They should report the incident to their line manager or designated safeguarding lead.
- The Trust will investigate the incident promptly and sensitively.
- Where necessary, the Trust will take steps to protect the affected individual, including adjusting work arrangements or separating them from the alleged harasser.
- The Trust may suspend or terminate services from the third-party organisation pending investigation.
- Criminal behaviour will be reported to the police and safeguarding authorities where applicable.

10.5.2 Third-party organisations may also report concerns or incidents to the Trust via designated safeguarding leads or the Trust's central reporting by emailing safevoice-hr@reachsouth.org These reports will be treated with the same seriousness and confidentiality as internal complaints.

10.5.3 The Trust will periodically review third-party organisations' sexual harassment policies and training compliance as part of its due diligence and safeguarding responsibilities.

## 11. Safeguarding and Pupil-Related Sexual Harassment

11.1 In education settings, any complaint involving pupils or raising safeguarding concerns will be handled in line with *Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)* and the Trust's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.



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11.2 Sexual harassment by pupils towards staff will be treated as a serious safeguarding and disciplinary matter under the Trust's Behaviour Policy and Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

### 11.3 Reporting and Response to Pupil-Related Incidents

- Staff must report any incident of sexual harassment by a pupil immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or their deputy.
- The Trust will follow statutory guidance in KCSIE and the Trust's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy when responding to such incidents.
- This includes liaising with parents/carers and external agencies (such as the Local Authority Designated Officer, social care, or the police) where appropriate to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all parties involved.

### 11.4 Third-party safeguarding concerns

11.4.1 Where third-party harassment involves pupils or raises safeguarding concerns, the Trust will follow procedures outlined in *KCSIE* and the Trust's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. This includes making referrals to external safeguarding bodies where appropriate.

## 12. Training, communication, and awareness

12.1 All line managers and staff should receive training on sexual harassment to ensure there is a clear understanding of:

- what sexual harassment is, how it may occur and that it will not be tolerated
- expected levels of behaviour
- how they can report any incidents of having been sexually harassed or having witnessed it
- how acts of harassment will be dealt with under the disciplinary procedure, which can potentially result in dismissal.

12.2 The Trust will ensure that all levels of management are trained on implementing this policy, including preventing and managing sexual harassment in the workplace and the procedure to follow if an allegation is reported.

12.3 The Trust will regularly review the effectiveness of the training.

12.4 The Trust will provide refresher training as appropriate, particularly in response to incidents of sexual harassment, to reinforce expectations and promote a safe and respectful working environment.

12.5 The Trust will periodically remind staff of behavioural expectations, reporting routes and available support through internal communications, induction programmes and mandatory compliance activity.

12.6 Staff training will also include recognising and responding to sexual harassment from pupils, ensuring that employees understand how to identify such behaviour, report it promptly to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), and follow safeguarding procedures in line with *Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)*.



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## 13. Support

13.1 Supporting staff who have experienced sexual harassment is a fundamental part of our duty of care. The Trust will ensure that staff have access to appropriate support, guidance, and resources throughout the process.

13.2 Further support for employees experiencing sexual harassment or victimisation can be obtained from an employee's trade union or the Trust's Employee Assistance Programme. In addition, external support is available through organisations such as ACAS, Citizens Advice, and specialist charities that provide confidential advice and emotional support. These resources can offer guidance on rights, reporting options, and wellbeing support outside the workplace.

13.3 Following the resolution of a sexual harassment or victimisation complaint, the Trust commits to following up with the complainant within an agreed timeframe to ensure they feel safe and supported. This may include further check-ins, adjustments to the working environment, or access to additional resources.

## 14. Review of the policy

14.1 This policy is reviewed as required by the Trust in consultation with the recognised trade unions.

14.2 The Trust reserves the right to amend this policy at any time, particularly where changes in legislation or statutory guidance require updates to ensure continued compliance and best practice.

14.3 We will monitor the application and outcomes of this policy to ensure it is working effectively.

14.4 As part of the policy review process, the Trust will assess the effectiveness of its third-party sexual harassment prevention measures, including engagement with external providers and the outcomes of any reported incidents.

14.5 The Trust will monitor indicators of workplace culture through:

- staff surveys;
- wellbeing surveys;
- exit interviews;
- grievance trends;
- whistleblowing reports;
- safeguarding concerns;
- disciplinary outcomes.

14.6 The Director of People will provide periodic reports to the Board or relevant committee regarding themes, trends and preventative actions arising from reported sexual harassment concerns



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## POLICY HISTORY

| Policy Date | Summary of change | Contact | Implementation Date | Review Date |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| September 2025 | Consultation on new policy (HR_33) | All Recognised Trade Unions | N/A | N/A |
| October 2025 | New policy implemented | People Team | October 2025 | November 2028 |
| September 2026 | Reviewed in line with Employment Rights bill 2026 and inclusion of Trust Values | People Team | October 2026 | September 2029 |



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