

Parent, Carer and Visitor Code of Conduct on School Premises

September 2023

Statement of Principles

This policy has been written taking into account the DfE Guidance 'Controlling access to school premises' November 2018 as well as other guidance on dealing with abusive parents.

At all schools, we value the positive relationships forged with parents, carers and visitors to the schools. We encourage close links with parents, carers and the community, and believe that students benefit when the relationship between home, community and school is a positive one. We also strive to make our schools a place where, as adults, we model for students the behaviour we teach and expect. In general, we place a high importance on good manners, positive communication, a calm manner and mutual respect.

Almost all parents, carers and visitors to the schools are keen to work with us and are supportive of the schools. However, on very rare occasions, the behaviour of a small number falls short of what we expect. This sometimes manifests itself in aggression or abuse towards members of the school community. This can be in written communication (including all virtual communication such as social media), on the telephone or in face-to-face incidents.

In these situations, we expect members of staff to behave professionally, attempting to defuse the situation where possible and seeking the involvement as appropriate of other colleagues. Below are advice and strategies to consider

Create a cool down time and conditions so you can give proper attention to concerns

Explain that you want to give them your full attention in an appropriate space. Invite them to have seat while you discharge duties/get yourself released to meet with the parent/carer/visitor. If someone is in 'fight or flight' they will need this time and sitting down also helps. Alert other adults as necessary or ask a SLT to support.

1. Meeting and emotional responses

Listen to what the parent has to say **without interrupting**. When they've finished talking, give **an emotional response** to their concerns. **Label and validate how they feel** e.g. "You must be very worried about what's happened today. Thank you for coming to see me straight away."

Summarise what the parent has said. This shows you've listened to their concerns and gives them a chance to clarify any misunderstandings.

2. A visitor/parent/carer continues to be aggressive

If someone continues to be aggressive and intimidating, it is okay to make them aware of this in a calm manner. Phrases such as:

'I want to listen to your concerns but could I ask you to communicate in a calm, polite manner.'

'I'm really sorry but if you don't use a calm, polite manner I think it better that we end the phone call/ meeting and ask you to phone/ come back tomorrow/at a mutually convenient time.'

'I understand how cross you are about this, this is a priority to deal with so let's make an appointment for...'

3. Reschedule to discuss next steps

Tell the parent you'll investigate what has happened/you want to think about the situation and get back to them (this also gives more time for everyone to be productive and positive in the problem solving). Give them **a specific time and date**

When visitors/parents/carers are heightened, you may need to deal with it in two phases:

- Day one: deal with the **emotional state**
- Day two: **respond to concerns** (problem-solving conversation)

Staff who face these situations have licence to end any conversation (face to face or on the telephone) at any point. They should then refer the incident to a senior manager who will take appropriate action or invoke the provisions of this policy. The overriding principle is, however, that all members of the school

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community have the right to work or be in school without fear of aggression or abuse from parents, carers and/or visitors. The board of Governors has a requirement to protect staff and students from such aggression. The progress and well-being of the child(ren) of these parents, carers and visitors will be fully considered. Actions taken against the parent, carer or visitor will be reasonable and proportionate. The parent, carer or visitor will have the opportunity to put their views at every stage. In the case of the imposition of conditions or a ban from school, robust review processes involving the Chair of Governors are in place to ensure fairness.

Definition of unacceptable behaviour

We consider that aggressive, abusive or insulting behaviour or language presents a risk to staff or students. Unacceptable behaviour is such that makes a member of staff or student feel threatened. This can be through face-to-face contact, on the telephone or in any form of communication including virtual and social media.

The following is not an exhaustive list but seeks to provide illustrations of such behaviour:

- any kind of insult as an attempt to demean, embarrass or undermine;
- any kind of threat;
- raising of voice so as to be intimidating;
- physical intimidation, eg by standing very close or the use of aggressive hand gestures;
- use of foul or abusive language;
- use of images to abuse or intimidate;
- any kind of physical abuse;
- allegations which turn out to be vexatious or malicious.

The Trust's approach to dealing with incidents

If a parent/carer/visitor behaves in an unacceptable way towards a member of the school community, the Headteacher or appropriate senior member of staff will assess the level of risk before deciding on a future course of action. The course of action will be reasonable and commensurate with the assessed level of risk.

Risk Assessment

The Headteacher will carry out a risk assessment in order to help make a decision about the level of response. In all cases the response will be reasonable and proportionate. The Headteacher will consider the following questions:

- What form did the abuse take?
- What evidence is there?
- What do witnesses say happened?
- Are there previous incidents to take into consideration?
- Do members of staff/students feel intimidated by the person's behaviour?
- Is there any evidence of provocation?
- How high is the assessed risk that this will be repeated or there will be retaliation at the school's action? (low, medium, high).

Recording of Incidents

Staff/students subject to abuse and witnesses will make written statements about incident(s) which will be kept in a file with subsequent letters. This file will be kept by the Headteacher. Depending on an assessment of the risk of retaliation to witnesses or individuals, statements made by adults may be made available to the person if they request it. Please see Safeguarding policy and Data Protection policies.

The School's response

Following the completion of the risk assessment, the Headteacher will decide the level of action to be taken. Actions will include the following:

1. Clarify to the parent/ carer/ visitor what is considered acceptable behaviour by the school

In some instances it may be appropriate simply to ensure the person is clear about behaviour standards expected by the school. This could be explained in person or if repeated by letter from the Headteacher. This letter may contain a warning about further action if there are further incidents.

2. Invite the parent/ carer/ visitor to an informal meeting to discuss events

This could be helpful to discuss and diffuse the situation.

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The safety and well-being of those attending such a meeting must be carefully considered. Members of school staff will always be accompanied by at least one other colleague at any such meeting. Consideration should be given to the seating arrangements, and care taken to ensure exits cannot be blocked by a person who could potentially become aggressive. The main points of discussion and any agreed actions should be noted, and a follow-up letter or e-mail sent to confirm the school's expectations and any agreed actions.

3. Impose conditions on the parent's/ carer's/ visitor's contact with the school and its staff (liaison with the Chair of Governors is advised)

Although fulfilling a public function, schools are private places. The public has no automatic right of entry. Parents and carers of enrolled students have an 'implied licence' to come onto school premises at certain stated times. It is for schools to define and set out the extent of such access. Parents or carers exceeding this would be trespassing. Depending on the type, level or frequency of the unacceptable behaviour, the school may consider imposing conditions on the parent's/ carer's contact with the school. These conditions may include (but are not exclusively):

- being accompanied to any meeting with a member of school staff by a member of SLT;
- restricting contact by telephone to named members of the senior leadership team;
- restricting written and/or virtual communications to named members of the senior leadership team;
- restricting attendance at school events to those where the parent will be accompanied by a member of the senior leadership of the school;
- any other restriction as deemed reasonable and proportionate by the Headteacher/Head of School.

In this case the parent/ carer/ visitor will be informed by letter from the Headteacher the details of the conditions that are being imposed and when they will be reviewed. When deciding whether it will be necessary to maintain, extend or remove the conditions, Governors will give consideration to the extent of the person's compliance with the conditions, any appropriate expressions of regret and assurance of future good conduct received from him/her and any evidence of the person's co-operation with the school in other respects.

4. Imposing a ban (liaison with the Chair of Governors and the Executive Headteacher is required)

Where other procedures have been exhausted and aggression or intimidation continues OR where there is an extreme act of violence and/or abuse, then the school may consider banning the individual from school premises. The individual must be allowed to present their side. A school can either:

- bar them temporarily, until the individual has had the opportunity to formally present their side
- tell them they intend to bar them and invite them to present their side by a set deadline

After the individual's side has been heard, the school can decide whether to continue with barring them. The decision should be reviewed within a reasonable time, decided by the school.

In these circumstances, the individual would be advised in writing by the Headteacher that a ban is being imposed and when it will be reviewed. All parents, even if excluded from school premises, are not excluded from the rights to information about their child's educational progress.

In deciding whether to remove or extend the ban, or impose conditions, the Headteacher and Chair of Governors will give consideration to the extent of the person's compliance with the ban, any appropriate expressions of regret and assurance of future good conduct received from him/her and any evidence of the person's co-operation with the school in other respects.

5. Removal from school

Parents/ carers/ visitors who have been banned from the school premises and continue to cause a nuisance will be deemed to have committed a section 547 offence. They will be considered as trespassers. In these circumstances the offender may be removed from school. This may be carried out by a police officer or person authorised by the Board of Governors. Legal proceedings may be brought against the person.

6. Complaints policy

Any parental complaint that arises from incidents of abusive behaviour will be dealt with under the complaints policy.

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Sample Letters:

This is an example of a warning letter to be sent to a parent, carer or visitor who has caused a disturbance at the school. The actual wording may need to be varied according to the circumstances.

Dear

Re: unacceptable conduct on date and brief summary of the incident

I note that you have had a private conversation about your unacceptable behaviour in the past and you reassured me (or member of the SLT) that such an incident would not be repeated.

Therefore, this serves as your written warning.

I must inform you that the governors will not tolerate conduct of this nature.

(Optional) If you are unhappy about any aspect of your child's education then you can arrange to have a meeting with the Headteacher and or Chair of Governors at an appropriate time and place.

This letter serves as a final written warning, in accordance with our Parent, Carer and Visitor Code of Conduct and Behaviour on School Premises Policy. I must inform you that any repetition of such behaviour could lead to further restrictions or an immediate withdrawal of permission for you to enter the school premises.

Should you wish to discuss the content of this letter, please make an appointment to see me via the school office.

Yours sincerely

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Sample ban letter

Dear

Re: unacceptable conduct on date and brief summary of the incident and its effect on staff and pupils.

I note that you have had a private conversation and a written warning about your conduct in the past.

I must inform you that the governors will not tolerate conduct of this nature. I am therefore instructing you that you are not to enter the school premises. If, following this notification, you cause a nuisance or disturbance on the premises, you may be prosecuted under section 547 of the Education Act 1996.

Even though we have taken this decision, the headteacher and staff remain committed to the education of your child(ren), who must continue to attend school as normal under the following arrangements:

We request that all communications whether face to face, on the phone or in writing are calm and respectful. Special arrangements can be made for you to meet with the headteacher, if necessary, but this may only be with the written arrangement and attendance of a governor.

The withdrawal of permission for you to enter the school premises takes effect immediately and will be temporarily in place for (insert days*) school days in the first instance. A review will then take place on (insert day) to decide whether the bar continues and for how long.

If you wish to appeal this decision, you have the opportunity to write to the Chair of Governors before the review. These comments may be to challenge or explain the facts of the incident, to express regret and give assurances about your future good conduct.

If you wish to make a formal complaint against our approach please follow our Trust Complaints Policy [here](#).

Yours sincerely

*NB: It is good practice to implement a provisional bar to allow parents time to respond or find representation. Parents should be given a reasonable opportunity to make representations.