

Expected Behaviour of Parents/Carers and Visitors to our Schools

Parent, carers and other visitors copy

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Non-Statutory Policy



Introduction

We are very fortunate to have a supportive and friendly body of parents, carers and other visitors who engage with our school. They recognise that educating children is a partnership, and understand the importance of good working relationships to equip children with the necessary skills for adulthood. These relationships are built on mutual respect and consideration of the views and needs of others.

The purpose of this document is to set out expected conduct for parents, carers or anyone else who visits or engages with the school, to clarify what constitutes inappropriate behaviour, and how the school/Trust will manage instances of this when they occur.

Guidance on Expected Behaviours

All members of the school community have a right to expect that their school is a safe and welcoming place. We therefore expect all parents, carers, visitors and other people who engage with our school to:

- Respect the caring ethos and values of our school
- Understand that both teachers and parents need to work together for the benefit of their children
- Be courteous in their engagement with all members of the school community including staff, and other parents and children, both in person and through any electronic communications (including social media)
- Demonstrate that all members of the school community should be treated with respect and therefore set a good example in their own speech and behaviour
- Correct their own child's behaviour, especially whilst in the school site or in public where it could otherwise lead to conflict, aggressive behaviour or unsafe behaviour
- Proactively approach the school to help resolve any issues of concern

We recognise that there may be times where parents have concerns or complaints about an aspect of the school. If this is the case, they should contact their child's class teacher, the Headteacher or an alternative member of the senior leadership team. The school will work with parent/carer to investigate and resolve the issue in good faith. The parent/carer has the right to escalate the complaint if they are not happy with the outcome (as set out in the School's Complaints policy).

In a very small number of cases, the behaviour of parents, carers or other people may cause disruption and be considered as putting the safety of the school and the school community at risk.

Examples of inappropriate behaviour include (but are not limited to):

- Disruptive behaviour which interferes or threatens to interfere with the operation of a classroom, an employee's office, office area or any other area of the school grounds, including during sports matches
- Using loud/or offensive language, swearing, using profane language or displaying temper
- Threatening to do actual bodily harm to a member of school staff, governor, visitor, fellow parent/carer or student regardless of whether or not the behaviour constitutes a criminal offence
- Damaging or destroying school property
- Abusive or threatening emails or text/voicemail/phone messages or other written communication
- Defamatory, offensive, derogatory or threatening comments regarding the school, pupils or any members of staff on social media (or any other electronic communication platform) such as Facebook
- The use of physical aggression towards another adult or child
- Approaching someone else's child in order to discuss or chastise them about the actions of this child towards their own child. (Such an approach to a child may be seen to be an assault on that child and may have legal consequences.)
- Smoking and consumption of alcohol or other drugs whilst on school property
- Dogs being brought on to school premises
- Refusal to leave the school premises when asked to do so by a member of school staff

Instances of such behaviour will not be tolerated and our school will take action against the perpetrator.

This may include, but is not limited to:

- a formal warning against future instances of poor conduct
- a temporary ban from the school site
- an extended/indefinite ban from the school site
- a ban from making contact or engaging with members of school staff

In addition, police and other statutory authorities may be contacted to support and reinforce any action that the school deems necessary to manage inappropriate behaviour. Legal action will also be taken where this is appropriate to protect the school and its community.

Management of Inappropriate Behaviour

In the event of a parent, carer or any other person who engages with the school behaving in an inappropriate way, each situation will be considered individually by the Headteacher and/or the Chair of the Local Advocate Board.

In the event of a parent (or other person) becoming aggressive or violent, the school should not hesitate to contact the police using 999. When the situation does not require immediate Police response, but there is prior knowledge of likely trouble, the Headteacher may contact the local Police Station or the school's Community Officer for advice.

Staff who witness inappropriate behaviour should complete a written record of the incident. This should be completed as soon as possible after on an Incident Report Form (see annex 1). This should be signed and dated by the member of staff and sent to the Headteacher. Other evidence of abuse, such as texts, emails, voicemails, or social media posts/messages should be attached to the Incident Report Form where this is appropriate.

Following an incident, the Headteacher will review all evidence that is available. Where appropriate, they will inform the Chair of their Local Advocate Board and may also seek advice from the ACE Central Team where this is required.

The Headteacher will undertake a risk assessment taking account of the following factors before deciding on the most appropriate course of action:

- Has the person (i.e. parent, carer or other person engaging with the school) been verbally aggressive/threatening/intimidating?
- Has the person been physically aggressive/threatening/intimidating?
- What evidence is there? What do witnesses say happened?
- Does the person have a known previous history of aggression/violence? (Information can only be sought from the police when an official complaint has been made.)
- Do members of the school staff/community feel intimidated by the person's behaviour?
- Have pupils witnessed aggressive/threatening/intimidating behaviour from the person?
- Have pupils been approached inappropriately by the person?
- Has the person been abusive to school staff, pupils or visitors?
- Has the person been persistently abusive to school staff, pupils or visitors?
- How frequently have the behaviours occurred?
- Is there a risk (low, medium or high) that the behaviour may be repeated?

Actions that may be considered following the risk assessment include:

- Inviting the parent to a meeting to discuss events
- Issuing a warning letter to the person about their behaviour
- Whether to issue a ban letter to the person. If a ban is considered, the Headteacher will discuss this with the Chair of the Local Advocate Board and the ACE Central Team.
- Forming strategies to manage future situations of potential conflict
- Seeking Prosecution under section 547 of the Education Act 1996
- Anti-social behaviour orders (Crime and Disorder Act 1998)
- Restraining orders (Protection from Harassment Act 1997)
- Prosecution for criminal damage/assault
- Contacting the host (i.e. the social networking site) to make a request to get any online content taken down
- Request the police to issue a Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) request to a service provider, enabling them to disclose the data about a message or the person sending it
- Any other relevant legal proceedings

Management of Unreasonable Behaviour: Complaints

Any person can make a complaint to the school through the process set out in our complaints policy. An initial complaint will usually be made informally to the Headteacher, and this can then be escalated if the complainant is not happy with the outcome.

The school will treat the complainant with courtesy and respect, and will do its utmost to resolve the issue in a timely way. We also expect and require that the person making the complaint will do so in a courteous and reasonable manner.

In a small number of cases, we may consider a complainant's behaviour to be unreasonable. Such behaviour is defined as that which hinders our consideration of complaints, or ability to communicate with an individual effectively, because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the school. Examples include if the complainant:

- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
- refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on, including vexatious complaints
- raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales
- makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and forwarding information to others or requesting that someone else deals with the issue
- changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds
- repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed)
- refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed, including referral to the Department for Education
- seeks an unrealistic outcome
- makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy or complicated contact with staff in person, in writing, by email and/or by telephone
- uses threats to intimidate
- sends rude, threatening or confrontational letters/emails
- uses abusive, racist, sexist, offensive or discriminatory language or violence
- knowingly provides falsified information
- insists on unattainable outcomes
- wants revenge or retribution
- makes demands about the way the complaint should be handled

- provides an extraordinary degree of irrelevant detail
- creates complexity where there is none and proposes unreasonable arguments
- advances irrational beliefs (e.g. seeing cause and effect where none exists)
- insists that a particular solution is the correct or only one
- publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school relating to their complaint, while the complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text), as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the Headteacher or Chair of the Local Advocate Board will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking. If the behaviour continues, the Headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it.

For complainants who excessively contact the school causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will be reviewed after six months.

Considering a Ban from the School Site

Schools are not public places and although parents and carers have rights to attend and enter school premises for legitimate proper purposes, The Education Act of 1996 states that it is an offence for a trespasser on school premises to cause a nuisance or disturbance.

The school is entitled to withdraw the implied right a parent or carer has to enter the school and will consider this in the event of a significant breach of the expectations for behaviour set out above (e.g. due to violent, aggressive or intimidating behaviours). If the parent or carer then enters the premises, they are in breach of the law, and they can be prosecuted in the criminal courts.

The Headteacher will decide whether the situation has been reached for proposing an actual ban. In extreme circumstances, i.e. if the incident is considered to be very serious, then she/he can issue a short-term temporary ban immediately, if required.

If the issue presents a less immediate threat, then the headteacher will consider issuing a warning letter which says that repeats of such behaviour will likely result in a ban. Events may occur in a number of stages, and it may be that upon consideration by the Headteacher a warning letter needs to be issued.

The school will write to the parent/carers or individual setting out:

- What has happened and why it is unacceptable
- That the school will consider banning the parent/carers from the school premises
- A clear explanation of why the ban is proposed
- A period of 3 working days for the parent/carers to respond in writing giving their own version of events
- The length of the proposed ban and give a review date

Following receipt of the written response:

- The Headteacher will decide whether to ban the parent/carer
- The parent/carer will be informed in writing within 3 days of the decision taken
- The terms of any ban will be clear, with explicit paths of communication between the school and the parent
- Pick up and drop off for children will be taken into consideration
- A date for the review will be given, which will take account of what has happened in the interim period
- If no further concerns have arisen regarding the parent's behaviour, a meeting date will be set which will seek to re-establish a productive working relationship between the school and the parent/carer.

Any appeal against a ban must be in writing and follow the complaints procedure. The first stage of this appeal will be undertaken by an appointed local Advocate who would invite the Headteacher to review the matter. If the outcome of this stage is that the ban is to remain in force, the complainant may appeal further to a panel of Advocates according to the usual complaints process. In some cases, the unacceptable behaviour is so extreme (for example, an assault on a member of staff) that the Headteacher may feel that there is no alternative but to impose a lengthy or permanent ban. In criminal cases the Headteacher should inform the police and should contact the Trust's legal advisors.

