



LOCATION: SCHOOL HANDBOOK, SECTION I, DOCUMENT 42

MANAGING VIOLENT AND ABUSIVE VISITORS TO SCHOOLS

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Reviewed By: Vicky Aspin

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Chair of Governor's Signature:

Date:

26.11.2024

Statement of Principles

The governing body of Abbey Court School encourages close links with parents and carers and the community at all times. It believes students benefit when the relationship between home and school is a positive one.

As partners, our parents/carers will understand the importance of a good working relationship to equip children with the necessary skills for adulthood. For these reasons, we continue to welcome and encourage parents and carers to participate fully in the life of our school.

It is important that discussions between parents/carers and staff are conducted in a calm and respectful manner. In the vast majority of such situations, this is what happens, but on very rare occasions, aggression and verbal and/or physical abuse can be directed towards members of school staff or members of the wider school community.

Our parents/carers (and those with parental responsibility) are granted a "limited licence" to visit the grounds and buildings of a school. Day-to-day access to a school is within the control of the headteacher.

The Governing Body expects and requires its members of staff to behave professionally in these difficult situations and attempt to defuse the situation where possible, seeking the involvement as appropriate of other colleagues. All members of staff have the right to work without fear of violence and abuse, and the right, in an extreme case, of appropriate self-defence. Staff who might face these situations have a licence to end any conversation (face to face or on the telephone).

We expect parents and other visitors to behave in a reasonable way towards members of school staff at all times.

The purpose of this document is to provide a reminder to all parents, carers and visitors to our schools, about expected conduct. This is so we can continue to develop and grow in an atmosphere of understanding.

Definition of unacceptable behaviour

We consider that aggressive, abusive or insulting behaviour or language from a parent, carer or visitor presents a risk to staff or pupils.

Unacceptable behaviour is such that makes a member of staff or pupil feel threatened.

This can be through face-to-face contact, on the telephone or in written communication (including social media).

Types of behaviour that are considered serious and unacceptable and which will not be tolerated in relation to members of staff, and other members of our school community are:

- using a raised voice, creating an intimidating atmosphere, for example, refusing to take part in two-way dialogue and consistently talking/shouting over responses from staff
- filming/recording conversations using mobile phones or other technology – danger of safeguarding issues regarding recording other people's children and not taking due consideration of the wishes of the staff involved
- inappropriate use of social media e.g. posting defamatory, offensive or derogatory comments regarding the school or any of the pupils, parents or staff at the school on Facebook or other social sites (see further information about the inappropriate use of social media below)
- shouting, either in person or over the telephone
- swearing, either in person or over the telephone/email
- constant emails and/or phone calls that amount to harassment and intimidation, despite the school's best efforts to address a situation
- inappropriate electronic activity including publishing abusive or inappropriate content with regard to the school, teachers or pupils on social networking websites such as Facebook and Twitter or in email communication
- any kind of insult as an attempt to demean, embarrass or undermine
- any kind of threat
- damage to school property
- physical intimidation e.g. standing unnecessarily close to another person
- the use of rude or aggressive hand gestures, including shaking or holding a fist towards another person
- spitting
- use of foul or abusive language
- any kind of physical abuse
- allegations which turn out to be vexatious or malicious
- racist, sexist, homophobic or transgender comments
- breaching the school's security procedures

This is not an exhaustive list; but illustrates the range of such behaviour.

Unacceptable behaviour may also result in the School informing the Local Authority and the Police being informed of the incident.

Inappropriate use of Social Media

Social media websites are increasingly being used to fuel campaigns or complaints against schools or to share inappropriate information, e.g. naming pupils involved in incidences, sharing confidential information regarding an aspect of school life, making allegations or accusations or sharing false news.

The Governors consider the use of social media websites or Apps in this way as unacceptable and not in the best interests of the pupils or the whole school community. Any concerns you may have must be made through the appropriate channels by speaking to the class teacher, the key stage leader, the

leadership team or the Headteacher, so they can be dealt with fairly, appropriately and effectively for all concerned.

In the event that any pupil, parent or carer of a child/ren is found to be posting libellous or defamatory comments on Facebook or other social network sites or Apps, they will be reported to the appropriate 'report abuse' section of the network site.

All social network sites have clear rules about the content that can be posted on the site and they provide robust mechanisms to report content or activity which breaches this. The school will also expect that any parent, carer or pupil removes such comments immediately.

In serious cases, the school will also consider its legal options to deal with any such misuse of social networking and other sites. Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, is the issue of cyberbullying and the use by one child or a parent to publicly humiliate another by inappropriate social network entry. We will take and deal with this as a serious incident of school bullying. Thankfully such incidents are extremely rare. We would expect that parents would make all persons responsible for collecting children aware of this policy.

Parental/Visitor Access to School premises

Schools are private property and people do not have an automatic right to enter. However, parents, carers (and those with parental responsibility), including visitors, have an 'implied licence' to come onto school premises at certain times, for instance:

- for appointments
- to attend a school event
- to drop off or collect their children

At all times, should situations deemed to be dangerous or illegal, arise on the school premises, any member of staff, regardless of their job role, is empowered to call the police requesting the police intervention to help maintain public order.

In all other cases where there are serious concerns regarding the conduct of a parent, carer or visitor, and possible staff/pupil safety, the following steps will be followed:

- Member of staff reports the incident to the Headteacher
- Headteacher will initiate a meeting/dialogue with the individual(s) concerned.
- If it is appropriate, the school's complaints/risk assessment procedures will be followed using the school's electronic safeguarding system CPOMS.
- The Headteacher will consider the incident and decide on the most appropriate response.
- The Headteacher may invite the parent/visitor in for an informal meeting and will consider the wellbeing of those attending and ensure any staff members attending are accompanied by another colleague. The Headteacher will also consider the venue and seating arrangements of such a meeting.
- Where the Headteacher decides to write to the visitor, the letter will record in detail the incident and why it is unacceptable. The Headteacher will explain their decision which may:
 - 'Vary' the visitor's 'licence' to visit through the addition of conditions;
 - warn of the possibility of a ban if the misconduct is repeated;
 - impose a ban with a review after a fixed period or
 - impose a ban without review.
- Where the Headteacher is unable to make an immediate decision, they will notify the visitor of the date by which the decision will be made.
- If the decision is to confirm that conditions are imposed, this decision will be reviewed by the Governing Body. The parent/visitor will be invited to make written representations to the Governing Body. The Governors may decide to maintain, extend or remove the conditions. This will be communicated to the parent/visitor via the Clerk to Governors.

- When deciding whether it will be necessary to maintain, extend or remove the conditions, governors will give consideration to the extent of the parent's compliance with the conditions, any appropriate expressions of regret and assurance of future good conduct received from them and any evidence of the offender's co-operation with the school in other respects.
- In all cases, the response will be reasonable and proportionate.
- The Headteacher has the discretion to share information with all parties as deemed appropriate.
- Any complaint that arises from incidents of unacceptable, violent or abusive behaviour will be dealt with through the School's Complaints Policy.

Conclusion

In implementing this policy, the school will, as appropriate, seek health and safety, or legal advice to ensure fairness and consistency.

Every attempt will be made to maintain normal communications with parents/carers, including giving them the opportunity to participate in elections for parent governors, say.

Even where a parent/carer/visitor has been banned from the school premises, every attempt will be made to maintain normal communications with them. The interests of the child will continue to be paramount.

Parents/carers will retain their right to attend an Annual Review in relation to the educational progress of their child/ren. However, our school will determine whether adjustments will need to be made to the meeting, e.g. a senior member of staff might accompany the class teacher), the meeting may take place online such as via Teams or Zoom.

In certain circumstances, this will mean the LA taking the lead in initiating action on our school's behalf with our support, and in other circumstances we expect the LA to support the school in action that the school itself will initiate.

At all times the common purpose remains clear: to achieve zero tolerance of violence, threatening behaviour or abuse in schools, and to ensure all members of the school community, and all visitors to the school, can be confident that they are operating within a safe environment.

Our school will in the first instance ask the LA for advice on the appropriateness of the remedies available. The LA should, where they have the power to do so, take the lead in initiating action. In circumstances where power does not lie with the LA (eg. under criminal law), we would expect the LA to support and advise us, and they should remove as much of the burden from us as possible.

The policy will be reviewed within 2 years or following each incident where the policy needs to be used.