

Managing unacceptable behaviour of parents and visitors' policy



WEST CROFT SCHOOL
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Keeping schools safe from abuse, threats and violence

West Croft School

AIMS and PURPOSE of the Policy

Day to day access to a school is within the control of the Head Teacher. Parents, carers and visitors are granted 'limited licence' to visit the grounds and buildings of the school.

We recognise the importance of working in partnership with parents and carers in order to achieve this, and endeavour to foster positive relationships which are based on trust and mutual respect.

The vast majority of the parents and carers are keen to work with us and are supportive of the school's work. If a parent or carer has concerns we will always listen and seek to address them.

At West Croft Primary School we are committed to:

- Listening to parents carefully and respectfully, including allocating an appropriate length of time for pre-arranged meetings
- Responding appropriately to concerns raised
- Outlining any actions that may be required
- Updating parents and carers on progress and outcomes of the concern
- Listening and responding to updates from parents and carers

At West Croft Primary School we expect parents and carers to:

- Communicate their concern respectfully and accurately
- Listen to and consider the responses from the school
- Work in partnership with the school in order to reach a resolution, including supporting the school's Behaviour Policy
- Allow time for the school to respond to concerns (3 – 5 working days)
- Acknowledge past support and intervention made by the school

Parents and carers should not make allegations against staff or the school or bring the school into disrepute on social media sites.

A failure to keep to the above standards is likely to limit the school's ability to respond effectively to concerns.

Parents and carers are not permitted to discipline a child who is not their own. They must seek support from a member of staff. Parents or carers who take matters into their own hands may be subject to safeguarding action being taken against them by the school or by the parent(s) of the child involved.

TYPES OF UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR

In order to support a peaceful and safe school environment the school cannot tolerate parents, carers and visitors exhibiting the following:

- Disruptive behaviour or disorderly conduct which interferes or threatens to interfere with the running of a meeting, classroom, office or any other area of the school grounds
- Use of loud/or offensive language including shouting, swearing, using profane language, attempting to physically intimidate, use of aggressive hand gestures or displaying temper
- Threatening to harm a member of school staff, visitor, fellow parent/carer or pupil regardless of whether or not the behaviour constitutes a criminal offence
- Damaging or destroying school property
- Sending abusive or threatening e-mails or text/voicemail/phone messages or other written communications
- Defamation of the school or staff character on Facebook or other social networking sites
- The use of physical aggression towards another adult or child. This includes physical punishment against your own child on school premises
- Approaching someone else's child in order to discuss or chastise them because of their actions towards your own children
- Smoking and consumption of alcohol or illegal drugs on school premises
- Dogs being brought on to school premises with the exception of assistance dogs.

STEPS TO BE TAKEN IN THE EVENT OF UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR

1: Risk assessment

In the event of a parent behaving in an inappropriate way, each situation will need to be considered individually by the headteacher or a designated member of staff. The following factors should be taken into account as a risk assessment, before deciding on the most appropriate course of action:

- Has the parent been verbally aggressive/threatening/intimidating?
- Has the parent been physically aggressive/threatening/intimidating?
- What evidence is there? What do witnesses say happened?
- Does the parent 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 parent's behaviour?
- Have pupils witnessed aggressive/threatening/intimidating behaviour from the parent?
- Have pupils been approached inappropriately by the parent?
- Has the parent been abusive to school staff, pupils or visitors?
- Has the parent been persistently abusive to school staff, pupils or visitors?
- Was the parent provoked in any way prior to their behaviour and/or does the parent claim to have been provoked?
- Is there evidence of provocation?
- How frequently have the behaviours occurred?
- Is there a risk (low, medium or high) that the behaviour may be repeated?

2: The headteacher will make one of the following decisions (A-G)

Options for the headteacher after evaluating all available information, and any other relevant factors, there are several actions the headteacher may wish to take. These can include:

A: Inviting the parent to a meeting to discuss events

This could be helpful where a planned and structured meeting has either not been held before or has previously been productive. Skilled facilitators may need to be used. A full restorative meeting may be considered, but if it is not safe to bring all the parties together at a meeting, a restorative process can still take place through the exchange of information.

The safety and well-being of those attending such a meeting must be carefully considered. It is strongly recommended that members of school staff should 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 parent who could potentially become aggressive.

The main points of discussion and any agreed actions should be noted, and a follow-up letter sent to confirm the school's expectations and any agreed actions. Some parents may covertly record meetings and then seek to use the information obtained to support their case, and therefore schools should state explicitly that information obtained without permission will not be permissible.

B: Clarifying to the parent what is considered acceptable behaviour by the school

In some instances, it may be appropriate simply to ensure the parent is clear about behaviour standards expected by the school. This could be explained at a meeting, or by letter, however any verbal explanation should be followed by a written confirmation of the discussion and the standards of behaviour outlined.

C: Forming strategies to manage future situations of potential conflict

It is sometimes possible to identify situations of potential conflict and to plan for these in a way that minimises potential risks. For example, where a parent persistently engages in arguments with staff in corridors at the beginning or end of the school day, the parent could be informed that any discussions with school staff must be held by prior appointment. Alternatively, the parent may be asked not to approach the class teacher, but should instead arrange to meet the headteacher (or other member of the senior leadership team), who will deal with their concerns. In more serious cases a further option may be to advise the parent that in future their concerns should be dealt with by written communication. Any such arrangements should be confirmed in writing to the parent.

D: Seeking appropriate voluntary behaviour contracts between the adult and the school

These are voluntary agreements made between people involved in anti-social behaviour, and the agency/school concerned. They are flexible in terms of content and format, and can be an effective means of encouraging young adults, children and parents to take responsibility for unacceptable behaviour. The person named does not always agree with the contract, but it can be used as evidence at a later stage for an application for an anti- social behaviour order. Conditions can be put on the contract, eg. not to enter school grounds.

In cases A – D the headteacher may wish to consider:

Option 1: INFORMAL ADVICE

The headteacher will summarise the issue, the information that they have considered and will put to them that such behaviour is unacceptable. An assurance will be sought that such an incident will not be repeated. It will be stressed on this occasion that repetition of such an incident will result in further more serious action being taken. The letter, associated records and any response from the parent will be kept and filed.

If the headteacher has been subject to abuse this will be done by the Chair of Governors (or another appointed governor). A report of the incident will be provided to the Chair of Governors.

Option 2: A FORMAL WARNING

The headteacher will summarise the issue, the information that they have considered and will put to them that such behaviour is unacceptable. An acknowledgment that the previous informal warning has not been heeded and that their behaviour is unacceptable. The letter needs to explain that any further issues may result in

- **Withdrawing permission for the parent to enter the school site and/or buildings**
- **Calling for police assistance**
- **Legal proceedings**

The letter, associated records and any response from the parent will be kept and filed. A report of the incident will be provided to the Chair of Governors.

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E: Withdrawing permission for the parent to enter the school site and/or buildings

In more serious cases of actual or threatened aggression/violence, or persistent abuse/intimidation, headteachers may need to consider whether it is safe for the parent to continue to come onto the school site or enter the buildings. In such circumstances, headteachers should firstly consult with the LA legal team.

Cases of actual assault should be also reported to the local authority by completing an online health and safety event report.

547 of the Education Act 1996 is relevant, even in extreme cases where an offence under the Public Order Act 1986 has been committed, all parents, even if excluded from school premises, are not excluded from the rights to access to school and have a right to seek an appointment to speak to school staff about their child's educational progress.

The incident must be reported to the chair of governors.

The adult who has been banned from the site may make representation to the governing body through the complaints procedure. The chair must not sit on the review panel. The first committee of the Governors will follow the complaints policy and seek to assure themselves that the decision taken by the headteacher is **reasonable** based on the incident and evidence gathered, **procedurally correct**, in that the headteacher has applied this policy correctly and **legal**, that decision to withdraw the 'licence' to enter the school for a specified proportionate time. The committee may decide to **UPHOLD** the heads decision or **OVERTURN** it.

If the committee **UPHOLD** the decision, a date of no longer than 6 months must be set to carry out a risk assessment relating to the withdrawal of the licence and review whether to reinstate the licence or not. It is important that the governors write to inform the individual of their decision. Governors must be mindful of legislation relating to Human Rights in arriving at their decision.

F: Calling for police assistance

In an emergency, police assistance should be sought. In cases where a ban is in place but is ignored and the person comes onto the school site, the police should be notified immediately. (Staff will need to be aware of the ban and have agreed procedures in place should the person come onto the school site).

In situations where there is no immediate threat to staff, pupils, other members of the school community or the school's property, headteachers may still wish to make their local community police officer (e.g. neighbourhood support team, youth intervention officer) aware of the situation.

The police could consider warning the offender of formal action, which may include legal proceedings.

G: Legal proceedings

Where individuals persist in coming onto the school site even when permission to do so has been withdrawn, it is possible for legal proceedings to be pursued. The options include:

Prosecution under section 547 of the Education Act 1996

This requires substantial evidence to be gathered and presented by the police. Clearly it is not a quick process, and whilst in most cases the threat may prove to be a sufficient deterrent, prosecution can only be seen in the last resort as a punitive measure. The outcomes of these proceedings may include:

Anti-social behaviour orders (Crime and Disorder Act 1998)

These are most likely to be used where the offender (aged over 10) has acted in a manner which causes harassment, alarm or distress, and is needed to protect others in the same area from similar behaviour. Anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs) may be sought by the local authority or the chief officer of police. ASBOs are designed to deal with persistent bad behaviour, and the police will need to show that other options have been tried, or are unsuitable.

Restraining orders (Protection from Harassment Act 1997)

Section 2 of the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 provides for criminal or civil prosecution, for cases where someone causes alarm or distress to another person on more than two occasions. Section four provides for criminal or civil prosecution where people have been put in fear of violence on at least two occasions. In each case the sanctions include both criminal penalties (fines, imprisonment or community sentences) and a restraining order. These orders are generally quicker and easier to obtain, but are part of a criminal conviction.

Prosecution for criminal damage/assault

Prosecutions for causing deliberate damage or injury may occasionally be the most appropriate course of action. If the police are called, the option to make criminal allegations is readily available, and they may arrest suspected offenders there and then. Official allegations should only be made if there is no intention of later withdrawing the complaint. Criminal proceedings can be initiated at a later date. All possible steps should be taken to prevent the loss of evidence. In particular witnesses should be asked to make a record of exactly what they saw and heard at the earliest to Headteacher in their decision making.

Whilst the emphasis will usually be on ensuring safety and security of persons and property, and therefore the injunction route is likely to be the most effective deterrent legal action, it does not necessarily guarantee against the behaviour of the more persistent offender.

Record keeping

There should be clear and detailed records of all events which must be kept up to date. Any witness statements (where appropriate) and notes of any subsequent meetings held to discuss the events should also be retained. Notes should be signed and dated.

Any physical evidence should be bagged and labelled, and witnesses should be asked to make a record of exactly what they saw and heard at the earliest opportunity.

It is also advisable to ensure that in every case, even where a formal letter is not required, parents receive a written confirmation of the events and the headteacher's response.

If the police are asked to deal with an incident as a criminal investigation, there are a number of actions that may thwart this process.

- Witness details should not be made known to suspected offenders or their families.
- Groups of witnesses or suspects should not be left together, or allowed to discuss what happened, before the police interview them.

If in doubt always seek the advice of the police officer first.

A model form is attached as Appendix D to this document, and is provided for headteachers and governors to use.

Support for employees

If a member of staff is unfortunate enough to be one of the very small, minority subject to serious physical and/or verbal abuse there are a variety of sources of potential support available to them.

In such circumstances the immediate and ongoing support of colleagues will be invaluable.

The employee needs to be advised that they can obtain confidential specialist support and provided with appropriate contact details of the services we currently have to hand.

Their staff associations/trade unions are also likely to be a source of assistance.

Visitors' Behaviour



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1. We welcome visitors to our school.
2. We will act to ensure it remains a safe place for pupils, staff and all other members of our community.
3. If you have concerns we will always listen to them and seek to address them.
4. Please be aware that swearing, abusive behaviour, threatening behaviour or violent behaviour will not be tolerated by this school either in person, off site or on social media.

For example

- Disruptive behaviour or disorderly conduct which interferes or threatens to interfere with the running of a meeting, classroom, office or any other area of the school grounds
- Use of loud/or offensive language including shouting, swearing, using profane language, attempting to physically intimidate, use of aggressive hand gestures or displaying temper
- Threatening to harm a member of school staff, visitor, fellow parent/carer or pupil regardless of whether or not the behaviour constitutes a criminal offence
- Damaging or destroying school property
- Sending abusive or threatening e-mails or text/voicemail/phone messages or other written communications
- Defamation of the school or staff character on Facebook or other social networking sites
- The use of physical aggression towards another adult or child. This includes physical punishment against your own child on school premises
- Approaching someone else's child in order to discuss or chastise them because of their actions towards your own children
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Visitors behaving in this way are likely to be banned from coming onto school grounds or prosecuted.

Parents and carers should not make allegations against staff or the school or bring the school into disrepute on social media sites.

A failure to keep to the above standards is likely to limit the school's ability to respond effectively to concerns.

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