

Managing Violence and Aggressive Visitors Policy

Edmund Waller Primary School



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Rationale

This document contains guidance for dealing with aggressive or abusive parents and visitors to schools who create a disturbance. We expect parents and other visitors to behave in a reasonable way towards members of school staff. This policy outlines the steps that will be taken where behaviour is unacceptable.

Violence, threatening behaviour and comments against school staff or other members of the school community will not be tolerated. All members of the school community have a right to expect that their school is a safe place in which to work and learn. There is no place for threatening behavior, violence or abuse in schools. 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. However, all members of staff have the right to work without fear of violence and abuse.

At all times the common purpose remains clear: 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 and to achieve zero tolerance of violence, threatening behaviour or abuse in the school.

This policy complies with the Education Act 1996

Section 547 of the Education Act 1996 makes it an offence for any person to be on school premises to cause or permit a nuisance or disturbance and allows for the removal and prosecution of any person believed to have committed an offence.

- A parent of a child attending a school normally has implied permission to be on school premises at certain times and for certain purposes, but if the parent's behaviour is unreasonable, this permission may be withdrawn.
- This also applies to all other individuals invited into the school for other reasons
- Parents, carers or other visitors exhibiting unacceptable behaviour could have a ban which prevents access to the school premises imposed on them.
- Should they ignore this ban, they would then become a trespasser on the school site.
- The Governing Body, in conjunction with the Headteacher and Lewisham Council, will take the lead in authorising the removal of a person believed to be causing a nuisance or disturbance, and, if necessary, will bring legal proceedings against them.
- Unacceptable behaviour by parents, carers or visitors may result in the Local Authority and the police being informed.

Introduction

As a general rule, schools are orderly, safe places, where relationships between staff and visitors, especially parents/carers, demonstrate mutual respect and recognition of shared responsibility for pupils' welfare and educational progress. Parental involvement is an important factor in educational success. However, on occasion, the behaviour of adults can cause disruption, or worse, which may result in abusive or aggressive behaviour towards staff, pupils, or other members of the school community.

Types of behaviour that are considered serious and unacceptable and will not be tolerated:

- raised voices towards members of the school staff, either in person or over the telephone
- physically intimidating a member of staff or a member of the community, eg standing very close to them
- the use of aggressive hand gestures
- threatening behaviour
- shaking or holding a fist towards another person
- swearing
- pushing
- physical aggression
- breaching the school's security procedures.

This is not an exhaustive list but seeks to provide illustrations of such behaviour.

Unacceptable behaviour may result in the local authority and the police being informed of the incident.

Procedure to be followed

If a member of the community behaves in an unacceptable way towards a member of the school community, the head teacher or appropriate senior staff will seek to resolve the situation. If necessary, the school's complaints procedures should be followed. Where all procedures have been exhausted, and aggression or intimidation continues, or where there is an extreme act of violence, a parent or carer may be banned by the head teacher from the school.

Where this happens, school will respond in a measured way, depending on the seriousness of any inappropriate conduct e.g.:

- initiate a meeting/dialogue with the individual;
- write to the visitor, describing their misconduct, explaining its impact on the school and stating its unacceptability
- vary the person's "licence", say, through the addition of conditions
- warn of the possibility of a "ban" (i.e. the withdrawal of their licence) if the misconduct is repeated
- impose a ban with a review after a fixed period
- impose a ban without review.

The head teacher can initiate any of these actions on their own authority. They will inform the Chair of Governors should such actions occur.

Conducting a risk assessment

On occasions it will be necessary to complete a risk assessment. A risk assessment should indicate both the preventative and protective measures and:

- identify and assess the risks;
- determine appropriate actions;
- implement the actions;
- monitor the results; and
- provide feedback.

It is good practice to ask staff directly about the extent of problems that they are aware of as part of the process of assessing risk. It is also helpful to consult school health and safety representatives about possible risks.

This should identify what the risks are (e.g. abuse, threatening behaviour, violence, and from whom), and who is likely to be at risk (e.g. reception staff, teachers, premises staff). Identifying what the risks are and who is at risk are the crucial initial steps before considering how to manage these risks and how they can be minimised.

In some cases, potential violence can be reduced and even prevented if members of staff have the skills to spot conflict before it leads to aggression and to use techniques to reduce aggression before violence occurs. (Risk assessments should include preventative and protective measures to deal with violence).

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has produced guidance on risk assessments which is on its website.

The banning process

The head teacher will need to assemble the full facts before proceeding, making sure that all those involved in any incidents, or witnesses to those incidents, make a full written record as soon as possible. The head teacher will write to parent/carer/intruder to explain the incident and why it is unacceptable. The ban should be finite in length, as only the most serious misconduct would justify an indefinite ban. The duration needs to be sufficient to convey a clear message about the seriousness of the associated misconduct, but not so long as to be disproportionate. The aim should always be to restore usual relations as soon as is reasonably practicable. Even if a ban is permanent, it should be reviewed periodically, taking account of subsequently demonstrated patterns of behaviour.

What does a ban achieve?

- it confirms to a parent that the school will not tolerate misbehaviour;
- shows the school takes health and safety of its staff, visitors and pupils seriously;
- it provides a key element in making it easier to use legal remedies to prevent repeated misconduct, including use of S547 of the 1996 Education Act to enable Police removal and possible prosecution of those on school premises without permission;
- it may form the basis for an application for an injunction to curtail repeated instances of misbehaviour.

Parental rights

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

Even where a parent/carer has been banned from the school premises, they retain their right to an annual consultation in relation to the educational progress of their child/ren. However, the school may determine who will be present at the meeting (e.g a senior member of staff might accompany the class teacher) and its location (e.g. it may well be arranged off site).

The interests of the child should continue to be paramount.

If there is an injury to staff from an assault, the employer may need to report the injury to the health and safety executive (HSE) under the requirements of the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 (RIDDOR), as amended in 2012.

