



# BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS STAFF BY PARENTS, CARERS AND VISITORS: EXPECTATIONS AND PROCEDURES

## EXPECTATIONS OF PARENTS, CARERS AND VISITORS TO THE TRUST SCHOOLS

- The Trust and its schools actively encourage close links with parents/carers and the community.
- We know that students benefit when the relationship between home and school is a positive one and we welcome visitors to our school and encourage parents to communicate with us by phone or via email.
- If a parent or carer has concerns we will always listen to them and seek to address them as quickly and positively as possible.

We will always act to ensure the school remains a safe place for students, staff and all other members of our community and therefore **abusive, threatening or aggressive behaviour will not be tolerated.**

If such behaviour occurs, we will follow the procedures outlined in this policy.

## DEFINITIONS OF UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR

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 the community include but are not limited to:

- shouting, either in person or over the telephone (Appendix 1)
- swearing, either in person or over the telephone (Appendix 1)
- emails which are sarcastic, combative or aggressive in tone and language (Appendix 2)

- constant emails and/or phone calls which amount to threat, harassment and intimidation, despite the school's best efforts to address a situation (Appendix 2)
- inappropriate electronic activity including publishing abusive or inappropriate content with regards to the school, teachers or students on social networking websites such as Facebook and Twitter or in email communication (Appendix 3)
- any form of physical violence, such as pushing or hitting
- physically intimidation, e.g. standing unnecessarily close to her/him
- the use of rude or aggressive hand gestures, including shaking or holding a fist towards another person
- allegations that turn out to be vexatious or malicious

## **PROCEDURE TO BE FOLLOWED WHEN BEHAVIOUR IS UNACCEPTABLE**

### **Informal complaint**

- If a parent, carer or visitor behaves in an unacceptable way towards a member of the school community, the Headteacher and/or appropriate senior staff will seek to resolve the situation through discussion and mediation. Records will be kept in line with Appendix 4.
- Such discussion will highlight how the behaviour of the parent/carer did not meet the school's expectations and a request will be made that future communications with the school are modified in the light of this.
- A letter will normally be sent to the parent/carer to confirm this request.

Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage will reduce the numbers that develop into formal complaints. Concerns ought to be handled, if at all possible, without the need for formal procedures and in the spirit of shared respect and willingness to find a mutually acceptable resolution. The requirement to have a formal complaints procedure need not in any way undermine efforts to resolve the concern informally.

### **Formal complaint**

- Following any interaction with a parent/carer or visitor, a member of staff does retain the right to submit a formal complaint about the incident to the Headteacher.
- Should such a formal complaint be made, then the Headteacher or designated member of the Leadership team will investigate the complaint, by speaking with the parent/carer and the member of staff. Records will be kept in line with Appendix 4.
- During the investigation, any contact with the school will be through a designated member of staff and by prior appointment only.
- The parent/carer will be informed of the outcome of the investigation by letter.
- The Headteacher will determine any action to be taken in response to the findings of the investigation.

## **ACTIONS THAT COULD FOLLOW SUCH AN INVESTIGATION**

Following the completion of the investigation, the headteacher, or member of the school's leadership team in their absence, will decide the level of action to be taken.

Notwithstanding these general responses, Head teachers are able to use their discretion to act in the best interests of the school, its staff and any affected children.

- An request to meet with the Headteacher to discuss events
- A letter clarifying to the parent/carer what is considered acceptable behaviour by the school
- The designation of one member of staff to act as the conduit for communication between the parent/carer and the school
- As a last resort, withdrawing permission for the parent/carer to enter the school site and/or buildings without prior appointment

## **REMOVAL FROM SCHOOL**

- Parents/Carers/visitors who have had permission to enter the school premises withdrawn 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 individual(s) may be removed from the school grounds.
- This may be carried out by a police officer or person authorised by the Local Governing Board. Legal proceedings may be brought against the individual(s) in this situation.

## **COMPLAINTS POLICY**

- Any parental complaint that arises from incidents of abusive behaviour will be dealt with under the Trust's Complaints Policy.

Approved by the Trustee Board in March 2020

### **Acceptable Communication by Telephone**

Sometimes staff may have to deal with challenging, abusive, aggressive or threatening telephone calls.

It is unacceptable for any member of staff to be subjected to such abuse and this guidance has been produced to assist parents to understand conduct, which the school expects parents to follow during phone calls and to staff if they are faced with a difficult situation.

#### **Guidance for parents/carers**

- When you call a School within The Learning Trust, you will speak initially to our Reception staff. They will do their very best to connect you with the person you wish to speak to, but given the vast majority of our staff will be teaching, it is most likely that they will take a message or put you through to the voicemail of that member of staff
- Please do not become frustrated with the Reception staff if they cannot attain an answer to your concern or connect you to the person you wish to speak to straight away; this is not their fault and any frustrations vented at this time, will not serve to ensure your issue is dealt with any quicker
- At any time when speaking to a member of staff at a School within The Learning Trust, please do not raise your voice or use aggressive or threatening language

#### **Guidance to staff**

- To reduce the likelihood of callers becoming abusive, staff should conduct themselves in a courteous and professional manner and make every attempt to meet the needs of the caller.
- Staff should also have the confidence that it is acceptable to end an abusive telephone call.

### **Acceptable Communication by email**

Sometimes staff may have to deal with challenging, abusive, aggressive or threatening emails.

It is unacceptable for any member of staff to be subjected to such abuse and this guidance has been produced to assist parents to understand conduct which the school expects parents to follow when emailing the school and to staff if receive such messages.

#### **Guidance for parents/carers**

- Always address the member of staff formally (eg Dear Ms Allen...)
- Always use formal and courteous language in the message
- Do not use bold text or capitalisation to emphasise concerns
- Only expect a response to the member of staff to whom you have directly sent the email, not those who you have included in the circulation
- Do not expect an instant response. The majority of staff will be teaching for most of the day and do not have the opportunity to check their emails until the conclusion of meetings and training which take place after the children have gone home

#### **Guidance for staff**

- Always address the member of staff formally (eg Dear Ms Allen...)
- Always use formal and courteous language in the message
- Do not use bold text or capitalisation to emphasise concerns

### **Abuse/bullying using cyber technology**

Staff may become targets of cyber abuse or bullying which can have a significant impact on health, well-being and self-confidence. Protecting staff from abuse is best done within a prevention framework, including whole school policies and appropriate practices.

Cyber abuse/bullying may consist of threats, harassment, embarrassment, humiliation, defamation or impersonation. It may take the form of general insults, or prejudice based abuse, e.g. homophobic, sexist, racist, or other forms of discrimination. It may involve email, virtual learning environments, chat rooms, websites, social networking sites, mobile and fixed-point phones, digital cameras, games and virtual world sites.

Abuse using cyber technology can occur at any time and incidents can intrude into the victim's private life. The audience for such messages can be very large and can be reached rapidly. The content of electronically forwarded messages is hard to control and the worry of content resurfacing can make it difficult for the victim to move on.

#### **Cyberbullying and the law**

While there is not a specific criminal offence called cyberbullying, activities can be criminal offences under a range of different laws, including:

- The Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- The Malicious Communications Act 1988
- Section 127 of the Communications Act 2003
- Public Order Act 1986
- The Defamation Acts 1952 and 1996

It is the duty of the school to ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all employees. Incidents that are related to employment, even those taking place outside the hours or place of work may fall under the responsibility of the employer.

#### **Effectively tackling abuse using cyber technology**

School behaviour policies and procedures explicitly refer to and outline how the school will deal with cyber abuse/ bullying of both staff and students. They include:

- rules on the use of equipment, software and network access provided by the school,
- the use of staff and student owned equipment and internet access routes, where they are used on school premises and within school hours, e.g. mobile phones, digital cameras and laptops

## **Responding to incidents**

- Staff should never retaliate i.e. personally engage with cyberbullying incidents.
- Keep any records of abuse – texts, emails, voice mails, or instant messages. Take screen prints of messages or web pages. Record the time, date and address of the site.
- Inform the Line Manager or Headteacher as soon as possible
- Where the perpetrator is known to be a current student or co-worker, this should be dealt with through the school's own behaviour management / disciplinary procedures.
- Monitoring and confiscation must be appropriate and proportionate – parents/carers, employees and learners should be made aware in advance of any monitoring (for example, of email or internet use) or the circumstances under which confiscation might take place.
- A designated member of the leadership team should contact the police where it appears that a law has been broken – for example, where death threats, assault, or racially motivated criminal offences are involved. Where a potential criminal offence has been identified, the school should ensure that any internal investigation does not interfere with police inquiries. School staff are of course able to report incidents directly to the police.
- If a potential criminal offence has been committed and the school is not able to identify the perpetrator, the police may 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.

## **Abuse/bullying using cyber technology**

Where online content is upsetting / inappropriate and the person(s) responsible for posting is known, the quickest way to get material taken down is likely to be to ensure that the person who posted it understands why the material is unacceptable and to request that they remove it.

If the person responsible has not been identified, or will not take the material down, the school will contact the host (i.e. the social networking site) to make a request to get the content taken down. The material posted may breach the service provider's terms and conditions of use and can then be removed.

It is important to be clear about where the content is – for example by taking a screen capture of the material that includes the URL or web address. If the school requests they take down material that is not illegal, it will be clear how it contravenes the site's terms and conditions. In cases of actual/suspected illegal content, the school will contact the police.

## **Record keeping**

The School will maintain 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 will 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/carers receive a written confirmation of the events and the Principal'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 will 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 any doubt exists, we will always seek the advice of the police officer first.

A model form is outlined below.

### **Incident recording form**

Date and time of incident: .....

#### ***Details of person(s) assaulted / verbally abused:***

Name: .....

Address and telephone number: .....

Role / Job title: .....

#### ***Details of perpetrator:***

Name: .....

Address and telephone number:

.....

.....

Relationship to the school: .....

#### ***Details of witnesses:***

Witness 1: .....

Name, contact details and relationship to the school .....