

Academy for Character and Excellence

Expected Behaviour of parents/carers and visitors to our schools

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Who should use this policy?

This policy should be used by parents, carers and members of the wider public in relation to their conduct in communicating or dealing with staff and volunteers of The Academy for Character and Excellence.

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Introduction

In this guidance, the definition in the Education Act 1996 of the word parent is somewhat extended and includes an individual who has care of the child whether or not s/he is the natural parent or has parental responsibility for the child. This includes step parents or carers. Where an individual does not fall within this broad definition, the principles of this guidance should still be applied.

The Academy for Character and Excellence encourages partnerships with our parents at all schools. We work hard to maintain mutual respect and recognition of shared responsibility for the children. However, in a very small minority of cases, the behaviour of parents can cause disruption, resulting in abusive, aggressive or harassing behaviour towards staff, this includes the use of social media and other forms of faceless communications. This will not be tolerated. All members of the school community have a right to expect that their school is a safe place.

If the parent's behaviour is unreasonable, permission for them to be on the school premises may be withdrawn and they will become a trespasser.

There are also other exceptional circumstances when a parent will be automatically banned from the school premises. These include if a parent is a registered sex offender (for sexual offenses against children) or if a parent has been prosecuted for harming children. In the case of a parent who is on the sex offender register for offences involving children (whether historical or not), where a charge and conviction has taken place, an automatic ban will be put in place to protect all areas of the school community.

Aims

- To encourage partnerships with our parents.
- To maintain mutual respect and recognition of shared responsibility for the children.
- To ensure that all members of the school community are kept safe from abuse, threats and violence.

Risk Assessment

In the event of a parent behaving in an inappropriate way, each situation will be considered individually by the Headteacher and/or the Chair of the local committee. The following factors will 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?
- How frequently have the behaviours occurred?
- Is there a risk (low, medium or high) that the behaviour may be repeated?

In addition to incidents that happen on school premises, the following are considered as inappropriate conduct by the school:

Dealing with abusive telephone calls

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. It is acceptable for staff to end an abusive telephone call. If this occurs, make a written note of the telephone call and transfer onto an 'Incident Report Form' and report the incident to your line manager.

Abuse / bullying using cyber technology

Staff in schools may become targets of cyber abuse/bullying and, like other forms of bullying, it can have a significant impact on their health, well-being and self-confidence. 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.

Harassment / 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
- Section 547 Education Act 1996
- The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 Section 2 and 3
- Criminal Damage Act 1971
- Criminal Justice Act 1988 Section 39

It is the duty of every employer 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.

After the Incident

- The people who witnessed the incident must make witness reports in writing as soon as possible after the incident, (see appendix 1 Incident Report Form). Reports must be signed and dated. Reports may be disclosed to the perpetrator and the witness should say whether or not they are prepared for this to happen.
- Keep any records of abuse – texts, emails, voice mails, or instant messages. Take screen prints of messages or web pages and fill in an 'Incident Report Form' with the screen prints attached
- Inform your line manager at the earliest opportunity.

Actions that may be considered are:

- Inviting the parent to a meeting to discuss events.
- Whether to issue a warning letter to the person.
- 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 committee where appropriate.
- Forming strategies to manage future situations of potential conflict.
- Calling for police assistance.
- 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 on-line 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.

Police Assistance

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.

Appendix 1 Incident Report Form

INCIDENT REPORT FORM

This includes trespass, nuisance or disturbance on school premises, verbal abuse, sexual or racial abuse, threats, aggression, physical violence and intentional damage to personal property.

This form should be completed as fully as possible (please use a continuation sheet if necessary). For an incident involving or witnessed by a child, a member of staff should complete the form on their behalf. However, any discussion between one witness and another should not precede completion of the form, as this might lead to allegations of collusion.

Date, time and location of the incident	
Name(s) of person(s) assaulted/verbally abused	
Perpetrator(s) name(s) and relationship to the school	
Witnesses name(s) and relationship to the school	
Description of the incident (include relevant events leading up to the incident, details of those present, whether weapons were involved etc.)	

Outcome (e.g. were police called, what happened after the incident)	
Any possible contributory factors?	
Is the perpetrator known to have been involved in any previous incidents? (if yes, give details)	
Name and contact details of police officer involved, and incident number or crime reference number, as appropriate.	
Any other relevant information?	

Form completed by (name and role)	
Signed	
Date form completed	

