

Managing Disruptive, Violent and Abusive Visitors Policy

Guidance and Policy for dealing with disruptive, aggressive or abusive parents and visitors who cause nuisance or create a disturbance.

Managing violent and abusive visitors - Guidance

Summary

Shipley is a small rural school with a strong sense of community. Parents/carers (and those with parental responsibility) are welcomed onto the premises before and after school to drop off and collect children. There is a code of conduct which parents and visitors are expected to follow. Where there is a breach of such procedures the school needs to 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 access, say, 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
- impose a ban without review

It is possible for a head teacher, with the approval of the Governors, to initiate any of these actions on their own authority.

Introduction

Shipley must be a place where children and parents feel safe and free from harm or abuse. Relationships between staff and visitors, especially parents/carers, demonstrate mutual respect and recognition of shared responsibility for pupils' welfare and educational progress.

The Headteacher and Governing Body are responsible for protecting the health and safety and well-being of their staff and pupils. This document is about dealing with violence, threatening behaviour or abuse by parents of a pupil, including those cases where the parent has been asked not to come onto the premises.

Violence, aggressive or threatening behaviour and abuse 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 they have a safe place in which to work and learn. There is no place for violence, aggressive or threatening behaviour or abuse in school. Where such behaviour does occur, the school must take appropriate action to ensure it does not re-occur.

In certain circumstances, this will mean liaising with other agencies including the police and West Sussex County Council.

Risk assessments

Senior staff members have undertaken a risk assessment to ascertain the risk to staff and others from aggressive, abusive or violent visitors. This risk assessment aims to identify and assess the risks, determine and implement appropriate actions to minimise risks and monitor the results.

It is recommended that members of staff have received information on what to do, including

- Recognising an escalating situation
- Safe techniques to calm a potential assailant
- improving staff confidence in dealing with aggression and the resulting stress
- minimising the risk of an attack causing injury

The Banning Process

The head teacher and governor 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.

Crucial elements:

- write to parent/carer/intruder to record in detail the incident and why it is unacceptable
- explain that the school will consider banning the parent, giving the parent a period in which they may respond in writing giving their version and why they should not be banned
- tell the parent when a decision will be made

The length of a ban

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 “normal” 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 violence, aggression or abuse
- shows the school takes the 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 normal communications with parents/carers, including 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.

Section 547 makes it an offence for a trespasser 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 the offence. The penalty for a person convicted of the offence is a fine of up to £500.

A person who nevertheless persists in entering the school premises and displaying unreasonable behaviour may be removed and prosecuted under section 547.

Appendix 1 – Policy

Policy on managing disruptive or aggressive behaviour from parents and visitors to our school

Shipleigh CE Primary School encourages close links with parents and the community. Our school must be a place where children and parents feel safe and free from harm or abuse. Relationships between staff and visitors, especially parents/carers, demonstrate mutual respect and recognition of shared responsibility for pupils' welfare and educational progress.

The vast majority of parents, carers and others visiting our school are supportive and model good conduct to young people. However, on very rare occasions, visitors may show aggression, verbal and or physical abuse towards members of school staff or the wider community, including parents. We expect parents and other visitors to behave in a reasonable way towards members of school staff and members of the wider community.

Violence, aggressive or threatening behaviour and abuse against school staff or other members of the school community will not be tolerated.

This policy outlines the steps that will be taken where behaviour is unacceptable.

Serious or unacceptable types of behaviour directed towards school staff or members of the wider community include:

- shouting, either in person or over the telephone
- physical intimidation e.g. standing very close to her/him
- the use of aggressive hand gestures
- threatening behaviour
- shaking or holding a fist towards another person
- shouting or using abusive or foul language
- pushing or hitting, e.g. slapping, punching and kicking
- spitting
- 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 police and West Sussex Local Authority being informed of the incident.

Procedure to be followed

If a parent/carer 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 through discussion and mediation. If necessary, the school's complaints procedures should be followed.

Where all procedures have been exhausted, and aggression or intimidation continue, or where there is an extreme act of violence, a parent or carer may be banned by the head teacher and Governors from the school premises for a period of time, subject to review.

In imposing a ban the following steps will be taken:

1. The parent/carer will be informed, in writing, that she/he is banned from the premises, subject to review, and what will happen if the ban is breached, e.g. that police involvement or an injunction application may follow
2. Where an assault has led to a ban, a statement indicating that the matter has been reported to the local authority and the police will be included
3. The chair of the Governing body will be informed of the ban
4. Where appropriate, arrangements for pupils being delivered to, and collected from the school gate will be clarified.

In implementing this policy, the school will, as appropriate, seek advice from the West Sussex education, health and safety and legal departments, to ensure fairness and consistency.

This Policy will be reviewed annually.

Appendix 2 - Incident report form

Relevant incidents include trespass, nuisance or disturbance on school premises, verbal abuse, sexual or racial abuse, threats, aggression, physical violence and intentional damage to property.

Where possible, the form should be completed before any discussion between witnesses is possible, as this might lead to allegations of collusion.

This form should be completed as fully as possible please, using a continuation sheet, if necessary. For any incident involving or witnessed by a pupil or parent/carer/visitor, a member of staff should complete the form on their behalf.

The completed form should be passed to the head teacher, for appropriate action and recording.

Date of incident
Time of incident
Name of person reporting incident
Date incident reported
Member of staff recording incident
Date incident recorded
Name(s) of person(s) causing incident (Where name(s) is/are unknown, provide other details of which may allow their identification)
Status(es) (parents/carers/visitors/trespassers)
Full description of incident (e.g. names of persons involved; location; nature of any injuries; attendance of emergency services)

Names of any witnesses statuses
Initial action/outcome (e.g. informal conciliation; police intervention; warning or banning letter issued)
Summary of subsequent actions taken by the school, including risk assessments
Linked incidents (if any)

Appendix 3 - Sample Letters

Warning letter, from the head teacher: to parent/carer with child/ren at the school

Dear

I have received a report about your conduct at the school on **(enter date and time)**.

(Add factual summary of the incident and of its effect on staff, pupils, other parents.)

I must inform you that the school will not tolerate conduct of this nature on its premises and will act to protect its staff, pupils and members of the wider community.

Therefore if, in the future, I receive any reports of conduct of this nature I will be forced to consider an exclusion from the school premises, either for a fixed period or permanently.

I wish to give you an opportunity to give me in writing any comments or observations of your own in relation to the report which I have received about your conduct. These comments may include any expressions of regret on your part and any assurances you are prepared to give about your future good conduct. To enable me to take a decision on this matter at an early point, you are asked to send me any written comments you wish to make by **(state date ten working days from the date of letter)**.

Yours sincerely,
Head Teacher

(Banning Letter: to parent/carer with child/ren at the school)

Dear

I have received a report from the Headteacher about your conduct on **(enter date and time)**.

(Add factual summary of the incident and of its effect on staff, pupils, other parents).

I must inform you that the school will not tolerate conduct of this nature on its premises and will act to protect its staff and pupils and members of the wider community.

I am therefore instructing that until **(add date)** you are not to reappear on the premises of **(insert name of school)**.

In the case of a primary include:

For the duration of this decision you may bring your son(s)/daughter(s) **(delete as appropriate)** to **(insert name)** and collect them/him/her **(delete as appropriate)** at the end of the school day, but you must not go beyond the school gate.

The withdrawal of permission for you to enter the school premises takes effect straightaway. However, I still need to decide whether it is appropriate to confirm this decision. Before I do so, I wish to give you an opportunity to give me in writing any comments or observations of your own in relation to the report which I have received from the head teacher. These comments may include any expressions of regret on your part and any assurances you are prepared to give about your future good conduct. To enable me to take a decision on this matter at an early point, you are asked to send me any written comments you wish to make by **(state date ten working days from the date of letter)**.

If on receipt of your comments I consider that my decision should be confirmed, or extended, you will be supplied with details of how to pursue a review of the circumstances of your case.

Yours sincerely,

(Banning Letter, from the school: to member of the public)

Dear

I have received a report from the head teacher at **(insert name of school)** about your conduct on **(enter date and time)**.

(Add factual summary of the incident and of its effect on staff, pupils, other parents.)

I must inform you that the school **(delete as appropriate)** will not tolerate conduct of this nature on its premises and will act to protect its staff and pupils. On the advice of the head teacher I am therefore instructing that you are not to reappear on school premises. If you do not comply with this instruction I may arrange for you to be removed from the premises and prosecuted under Section 547 of the Education Act 1996. If convicted, you are liable to a fine of up to £500.

Finally I would advise you that I have asked the head teacher to ensure that your complaint **(give brief details)** is considered under the appropriate school procedure. You will be contacted about this by the school in due course.

Yours sincerely,

(Letter, from the LA or governing body, following formal review of a banning letter, extending ban: to parent/carers with child/ren at the school)

Recorded delivery

Dear

I wrote to you on **(insert date)** withdrawing permission for you to come onto the premises of **(insert name)** until **(insert date)**. In that letter I also advised you that I would take steps to review this decision by **(insert date)**.

I have now completed the review. However, after consultation with the head teacher, I have determined that it is not yet appropriate for me to withdraw my decision. **(Give a brief summary of reasons)**

I therefore advise that the instruction that you are not to come onto the premises of **(insert name of school)** without the prior knowledge and approval of the head teacher remains in place until **(insert date)**.

I shall undertake a further review of this decision on **(insert date)**.

If you are dissatisfied with this decision, you have a right to request a review of the decision by the governing body.

Yours sincerely,

Letter, from the LA or governing body, following formal review of a banning letter, ending ban: to parent/carers with child/ren at the school)

Recorded delivery

Dear

I wrote to you on **(insert date)** informing you that I had withdrawn permission for you to come onto the premises of **(insert name)** until **(insert date)**.

In that letter I also advised you that I would take steps to review this decision by **(insert date)**.

I have now completed the review. After consultation with the head teacher, I have decided that it is now appropriate to change that decision and I am therefore restoring to you the permission to come onto the school premises, with immediate effect.

I trust that you can now be relied upon to act in full co-operation with the school and that there will be no further difficulties of the kind which made it necessary for me to prevent you entering the premises.

I should point out that if there is any repetition of your behaviour, I shall not hesitate to withdraw permission for you to come onto the premises once more.

Yours sincerely,

Useful websites

The Department for Education's school security website.

<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/RR419#downloadableparts>

The Department for Education's publication Health & Safety: advice on legal duties and powers for local authorities, head teachers, staff and governing bodies.

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/adminandfinance/healthandsafety/f00191759/departental-health-and-safety-advice-on-legal-duties-and-powers-for-local-authorities-headteachers-staff-and-governing-bodies>

Guidance on Police-School Protocols: Principles and guidance on Safer School Partnerships.

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/youth-justice/prevention/SaferSchoolPartnershipsGuidancefinal0509.pdf>

Health and Safety Executive (HSE) guidance on risk assessments.

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/raindex.htm>

Health and Safety Executive (HSE) guidance on reporting school accidents.

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/edis1.htm>

The HSE RIDDOR website.

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/riddor/index.htm>

NAHT guidance "Social Networking Websites"

<http://www.naht.org.uk/welcome/advice/advice-home/parents-and-pupils-advice/guidance-on-social-networking/?locale=en>