

Lovelace Primary School

Statement on Dealing with Inappropriate Parental or Visitor Conduct that Cause a Disturbance on the School Site

Statement agreed by governors - May 2019.

Principles

This policy has been written taking into account the DfE Guidance 'Advice on school security: Access to, and barring individuals from school premises' December 2012 as well as NAHT guidance on dealing with abusive parents: <https://www.naht.org.uk/advice-and-support/management/dealing-with-violent-and-abusive-visitors/>

At Lovelace, we value the positive relationships forged with parents and visitors to the school. Parents often comment on the great partnership between parents and school staff and the 'family feel' of our school. We encourage close links with parents and the community and believe that students benefit when the relationship between home and school is a positive one. We also strive to make our school a place where as adults we model for students the behaviour we teach and expect. In general, we place a high importance on good manners, positive communication and mutual respect. We expect all children, staff & parents to model our core values and golden rules:



Almost all parents, carers and visitors to Lovelace Primary School are keen to work with us and are supportive of the school. However, on very rare occasions the behaviour of a very small minority of parents falls short of what we expect. This sometimes manifests itself in aggression or abuse towards members of the school community. This can be in written communication (including social media), on the telephone or in face-to-face incidents.

In these situations, we expect members of staff to behave professionally, attempting to defuse the situation where possible and seeking the involvement as appropriate of other colleagues. Staff who face these situations have licence to end any conversation (face to face or on the telephone). They should then refer the incident to a headship team who will take appropriate action or invoke the provisions of this policy.

The overriding principle is, however, that all members of the school community have the right to work or be in school without fear of aggression or abuse from parents or other visitors to school. The board of governors has a requirement to protect staff and students from such aggression.

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The progress and well-being of the parent's child(ren) will be fully considered. Actions taken against the parent will be reasonable and proportionate. The parent will have the opportunity to put their views forward at every stage. In the case of the imposition of conditions or a ban from school, robust review processes involving the Chair of Governors and then the governing body are in place to ensure fairness.

Definition of unacceptable behaviour by parents or visitors on our school site

We consider that aggressive, abusive or insulting behaviour or language from a parent presents a risk to staff, students or visitors to school. Unacceptable behaviour is such that makes a member of staff or student or visitor feel threatened. This can be through face-to-face contact, on the telephone or in written communication (including social media). The following is not an exhaustive list but seeks to provide illustrations of such behaviour:

- any kind of insult as an attempt to demean, embarrass or undermine
- any kind of threat (including veiled ones)
- raising of voice so as to be intimidating
- physical intimidation, e.g. by standing very close to him/her or the use of aggressive hand gestures
- Using loud/or offensive language, swearing, cursing, using profane language or displaying temper
- any kind of physical abuse
- allegations which turn out to be vexatious or malicious
- use of physical, verbal or written aggression towards another adult or child. This includes physical punishment of your own child on school premises.
- approaching someone else's child in order to discuss or chastise them because of the actions of this child towards their own child
- approaching another parent in order to discuss their own child's behaviour or conduct them because of the actions of this child towards their own child.

The school's approach to dealing with incident

If a parent/carer/visitor behaves in an unacceptable way towards a member of the school community, the head teacher or appropriate senior staff will assess the level of risk before deciding on a future course of action. The course of action will be reasonable and commensurate with the assessed level of risk.

Risk Assessment

The Headteacher will carry out a risk assessment in order to help make a decision about the level of response. In all cases the response will be reasonable and proportionate. The Headteacher will consider the following questions:

- What form did the abuse take?
- What evidence is there?
- What do witnesses say happened?
- Are there previous incidents to take into consideration?
- Did members of staff/pupils feel intimidated by the parent's behaviour?
- Is there any evidence of provocation?
- How high is the assessed risk that this will be repeated or there will be retaliation at the school's action? (low, medium, high).

Recording of Incidents

Staff subject to abuse and witnesses will make written statements about incident(s) on the form in the appendix which will be kept in a file with subsequent letters. This file will be kept by the Headteacher's SBM. Depending on an assessment of the risk of retaliation to witnesses or individuals.

The School's Response

Following the completion of the risk assessment, the Headteacher will decide the level of action to be taken in consultation with the Chair of Governors.

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Actions may include the following:

1. Clarify 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 orally or by letter from the Headteacher, the Headship Team or the Family Liaison Officer.

A letter may contain a warning about further action if there are further incidents. The parent will be invited to write to the Headteacher with his/her version of events within 10 working days. Depending on the parent's response a meeting may then be held to discuss the situation and how this can be avoided in future.

2. Invite the parent to an informal meeting to discuss events (including restorative justice / mediation)

This could be helpful to discuss and to try to find a solution to the situation.

The safety and well-being of those attending such a meeting must be carefully considered. Members of school staff will always 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 or e-mail sent to confirm the school's expectations and any agreed actions.

3. Impose conditions on the parent's contact with the school and its staff

Although fulfilling a public function, schools are private places. The public has no automatic right of entry. Parents of enrolled students have an 'implied licence' to come onto school premises at certain stated times. It is for schools to define and set out the extent of such access. Parents exceeding this would be trespassing.

Depending of the type, level or frequency of the unacceptable behaviour, the school may consider imposing conditions on the parent's contact with the school. These conditions may include (but are not exclusively):

- being accompanied to any meeting with a member of school staff by a member of the headship team
- restricting contact by telephone to named members of the senior leadership team
- restricting written communications to named members of the senior leadership team
- restricting attendance at school events to those where the parent will be accompanied by a member of the senior leadership of the school
- any other restriction as deemed reasonable and proportionate by the Headteacher.

In this case the parent will be informed by letter from the Headteacher the details of the conditions that are being imposed. The parent would then be given 10 working days from the date of that letter to make representations in writing about the conditions to the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors would then decide whether to confirm or remove the conditions. This would be communicated to the parent in writing within 10 working days of the date of the parent's letter.

If the decision is to confirm the conditions imposed, this decision will be reviewed by the governing body after approximately six months (and every six months after that, if appropriate). The parent will be invited to make written representation to the governors. This and the evidence from the Headteacher will be considered at a meeting of the full governing body. Governors may decide to maintain, extend or remove the conditions. The decision of the review will be communicated to the parent by the clerk to the governors within 10 days of the date of the meeting.

When deciding whether it will be necessary to maintain, extend or remove the conditions, governors will give consideration to the extent of the parent's compliance with the conditions, any appropriate expressions of regret and assurance of future good conduct received from him/her and any evidence of the parent's co-operation with the school in other respects.

4. Imposing a ban

Where other procedures have been exhausted and aggression or intimidation continues or where there is an extreme act of violence then the school may consider banning the individual from school

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premises. This will include banning a parent from accessing school staff by written communication, telephone or in person.

In these circumstances, the individual would be advised in writing by the Headteacher that a provisional ban is being imposed. The parent would then be given 10 working days from the date of that letter to make representations about the ban in writing to the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors would then decide whether to confirm or remove the ban. This would be communicated to the parent in writing within 10 working days of the receipt of their letter.

If the Chair's decision is to confirm the ban, parents in these circumstances will be offered an annual meeting about their child's progress, usually with a member of senior staff.

A decision to impose a ban will be reviewed by the governing body after approximately six months (and every six months after that, if appropriate). The parent will be invited to make written representation to the governors; this and the evidence from the Headteacher will be considered at a meeting of the full governing body. Governors may decide to remove the ban, extend the ban or impose conditions on parent's access to the school. The decision of the review will be communicated to the parent by the clerk to the governors within 10 days of the date of the meeting.

In deciding whether to remove or extend the ban or impose conditions, governors will give consideration to the extent of the parent's compliance with the ban, any appropriate expressions of regret and assurance of future good conduct received from him/her and any evidence of the parent's co-operation with the school in other respects.

5. Visitor removal from school

Parents who have been banned from the school premises and continue to cause a nuisance will be deemed to have committed a **section 547 offence**. They will be considered as trespassers and the police may be called. In these circumstances the offender may be removed from school. This may be carried out by a police officer or person authorised by the governing body. Legal proceedings may be brought against the parent.

6. Complaints policy

Any parental complaint that arises from incidents of abusive behaviour or inappropriate conduct will be dealt with under the complaints policy.

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Appendices [not to be published on website]

Example Warning

Model letter 1: This is an initial letter from the Headteacher to ensure the parent is clear about behaviour standards expected by the school. This letter contains a warning about further action if there are other incidents. The letter invites a written response and suggests a meeting.

Imposing conditions on the parent's attendance at school events

Model letter 2: This is a letter from the Headteacher informing parents of the school's decision to impose conditions on the parent's attendance at school events, pending review by the Chair of Governors

Model letter 3: Letter from the Chair of Governors informing parent of her decision to confirm or remove the conditions

Imposing a ban

Model letter 4: Letter from Headteacher Informing parents of the school's intention to impose a ban on their attendance at school premises, pending review by the Chair of Governors

Model letter 5: Letter from the Chair of Governors informing parent of her decision to confirm or remove ban

Reviewing the decision to impose conditions or impose a ban

Model Letter 6: Letter from clerk to governors requesting statement from parents to governing body for review of decision.

Model letter 7: Letter from clerk to the governors to confirm the outcome of further reviews of decisions where the imposition of conditions/ban has been extended or removed.

Incident Logging Form

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Model Posters like the examples below are located around school and placed in the school newsletter on a regular basis:



Lovelace Primary School **We are a safe & happy school**

We expect the highest standards of courtesy, respect and conduct from parents & visitors when visiting Lovelace. We will act to ensure that it remains a happy & safe place for our children, staff & visitors.

If you cause a disturbance on school premises, use angry, aggressive or intimidating behaviour, swearing verbal, homophobic or racial abuse, threatening behaviour, physical violence towards staff, another parent or visitor, the school will remove your permission to enter and report you to the local police and you may be prosecuted.

Important – Keeping our school and community safe for all

We welcome visitors and parents to our school. All staff at school are here for the education of young children aged 2 to 11. This ensures that Lovelace is a safe and happy place to be and to learn and achieve for children and staff. We expect the highest standards of courtesy, respect and conduct from all visitors and parents when in contact with the school or visiting the school site. Aggressive, intimidating, rude, anti-social or abusive behaviour in or around the school site or via the telephone, online, via social media or in writing is not acceptable at any time, and will not be tolerated. If you threaten or display abusive or intimidating behaviour towards another parent, visitor or staff member in or around our school site, the school will remove your permission to enter the school and report you to the local police and potentially, you may be prosecuted.