

# Policy for Managing Inappropriate Behaviour by Parents and Visitors

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**Formby High School**  
*Determined To Achieve*

## Policy for Managing Inappropriate Behaviour by Parents and Visitors

### Aims of the Policy

Formby High School recognises the rights of all, and promotes relationships that are founded on the principles of tolerance and mutual respect. It also values the positive and supportive relationship that develops with the parents of students at the school. This policy aims to foster these good relationships and protect members of staff and students from being subjected to abuse or threat from parents or other visitors to the school. This policy takes into account the DfE Guidance *'Controlling access to school premises'* (November 2018) and the National Association of Headteachers' (NAHT) guidance on dealing with abusive parents.

### Policy Statements

- Members of the school community have the right to work or be in school without fear of aggression or abuse from parents or visitors.
- At Formby High School, we value the positive relationships forged with parents and visitors to the school. We encourage close links with parents and the local community, and believe that students benefit when the relationship between home and school is a positive one.
- We strive to make our school a place where adults model for students the behaviour we teach and expect, and where high importance is placed on good manners, positive communication and mutual respect.
- On very rare occasions the behaviour of some parents and visitors falls short of what is expected. 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.
- The Governing Body is committed to protecting staff and students from abuse and/or aggression.
- Where a member of staff is placed in a situation where he/she experiences abuse or aggression, we expect him/her to behave professionally, attempting to defuse the situation where possible and seeking the involvement of other colleagues as appropriate. He/She is, however, entitled to end any conversation of this nature (face to face or on the telephone).
- Where a member of staff has experienced abuse or aggression, he/she should refer the incident to a member of the Senior Leadership Team who will take appropriate action and/or invoke the provisions of this policy.
- Where it is necessary to take action against a parent or visitor, it will be reasonable and proportionate, and the parent or visitor will have the opportunity to put his/her views forward at every stage.
- Where certain conditions or a ban from school premises are imposed upon a parent or visitor, the Governing Body will ensure a review process is in place.

### Definition of Unacceptable Behaviour

We consider that aggressive, abusive or insulting behaviour or language from a parent or visitor presents a risk to staff or students. 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.
- Raising of voice so as to intimidate.
- Physical intimidation (for example, by standing very close, the use of aggressive hand gestures).
- Use of foul or abusive language.
- Any kind of physical abuse.
- Allegations which turn out to be vexatious or malicious.

### Investigating and Recording Incidents

- Any allegation of abuse, aggression or insulting behaviour will be investigated by the Headteacher or a member of the Senior Leadership Team.
- The parent or visitor will be informed of the investigation and will be given the opportunity to provide an account of the incident.
- Staff/students subject to abuse and witnesses will make written statements about the incident(s) which will be kept in a file with any subsequent documents produced in the investigation. This file will be kept by the Headteacher's PA. If the parent or visitor requests to see any of the statements the Headteacher will determine whether this information will be shared.

### Risk Assessment

If it is determined that a parent or visitor has behaved in an unacceptable way towards a member of the school community, the Headteacher or appropriate member of the Senior Leadership Team will assess the situation before deciding on a future course of action. In all cases, the response will be reasonable, proportionate and commensurate with the assessed level of unacceptable behaviour. The risk assessment will help inform the level of response and will consider the following questions:

- What form did the behaviour take?
- What evidence is there?
- What do witnesses say happened?
- Are there any previous incidents to take into consideration?
- Do members of staff/students feel intimidated by the parent's or visitor's behaviour?
- Is there any evidence of provocation or mitigating factors?
- How high is the assessed risk that this will be repeated or there will be retaliation against the school's action?

### The School's Response

Following the completion of the investigation and risk assessment, the Headteacher will decide the level of action to be taken. Actions will include the following:

#### 1. Clarify to the parent or visitor 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 by a letter from the Headteacher. This letter may contain a warning about further action if there are further incidents.

#### 2. Invite the parent or visitor to an informal meeting to discuss events

This could be helpful to discuss and diffuse the situation. Members of school staff will always be accompanied by at least one other colleague at any such meeting. The main points of discussion and any agreed actions will be noted and confirmed in writing to the parent or visitor.

### **3. Impose conditions on the parent or visitor**

Where the matter concerns the conduct of a parent, depending on the type, level or frequency of the unacceptable behaviour, the school may consider imposing conditions on his/her contact with the school. Schools are private places and members of the public have no automatic right of entry. Parents of enrolled students have an 'implied licence' to come onto school premises at certain stated times and it is for the school to determine the extent of such access. Parents exceeding this would be trespassing. These conditions may include (but not exclusively):

- being accompanied to any meeting with a member of school staff by a member of the Senior Leadership Team.
- restricting contact by telephone only to named members of the Senior Leadership Team.
- restricting written communications only 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 Team.
- any other restriction as deemed reasonable and proportionate by the Headteacher.

Where conditions are imposed, the parent will be informed by letter from the Headteacher the details of the conditions that are being imposed. He/She will be given 10 school days from the date of the letter to make representations in writing about the conditions to the Governing Body. The Governing Body will then decide whether to confirm or remove the conditions and will communicate its decision in writing within 10 school days of the date of the letter. If the decision is to confirm the conditions imposed, this decision will be reviewed by the Headteacher and representatives from the Governing Body after six months (and every six months after that, if appropriate) who will decide whether to amend, extend or remove the conditions. The parent will be invited to make written representation to the Governing Body and Headteacher in advance of any decision being made. This, and any subsequent decisions, will be communicated to the parent in writing within 10 school days of the decision.

### **4. Imposing a Ban**

Where other procedures have been exhausted and unacceptable behaviour continues OR where there is an act of violence, the school may consider banning the individual from school premises. This will include banning a parent from accessing school staff by written communication or telephone. In these circumstances, the individual will be advised in writing by the Headteacher that a ban is being imposed. The parent will then be given 10 school days from the date of that letter to make representations about the ban in writing to the Governing Body who will decide whether to confirm or remove the ban. The decision will normally be communicated to the parent in writing within 10 school days of the receipt of their letter. If the Governing Body's decision is to confirm the ban, parents in these circumstances will still be offered an annual meeting to discuss their child's progress, usually with a member of Senior Leadership Team. The decision to impose a ban will be reviewed by the Headteacher and representatives from the Governing Body after six months (and every six months after that, if appropriate) who will decide whether to amend, extend or remove the ban. The parent will be invited to make written representation to the Governing Body and Headteacher in advance of any decision being made. This, and any subsequent decisions, will normally be communicated to the parent in writing within 10 school days of the decision. During a ban, the

parent may only communicate with school by letter or email, addressed to a designated member of the Senior Leadership Team, unless in the event of an emergency.

## **5. Removal from school**

Parents who have been banned from the school premises and continue to cause a nuisance will be considered as trespassers and deemed to have committed a Section 547 offence. In these circumstances the offender may be removed from school by a police officer or other authorised person and may be subject to legal proceedings.

Similar measures to those outlined above for parents may be implemented for visitors to the school who behave inappropriately towards staff and/or students.

## **Social Media**

Social media websites are used increasingly to fuel campaigns and complaints against schools, their staff and parents or students. The use of social media websites in this way is unacceptable and not in the best interests of members of the school community. Any concerns that parents or visitors have should be made through the appropriate channels so they can be dealt with fairly, appropriately and effectively for all concerned.

Any student, parent or other member of the public found to be posting libellous or defamatory comments on social media sites will be reported to the appropriate 'report abuse' section of the site(s). All social network sites have clear rules about the content which can be posted and they provide robust mechanisms to report contact or activity which breaches this. The school will also expect that any student, parent or other member of the public removes such comments immediately.

In serious cases the school will also consider its legal options, including informing the police, when dealing with any such misuse of social networking and other sites.