

MANAGING CHALLENGING CONDUCT WITH ADULTS POLICY



Northgate Primary School

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| Document title | Policy on managing challenging conduct with adults (parents/carers/visitors/member of the public) |
| Committee responsible for policy | HR Committee |
| Next review | January 2023 |
| Policy author | Headteacher |

General

At Northgate, we value the positive relationships forged with parents/carers and visitors to the 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 all adults model, for students, the behaviour we teach and expect. We place a high importance on good manners, positive communication and mutual respect.

The overriding principle is that all members of the school community have the right to work or be in school without fear of aggression or abuse from parents/carers or visitors. The Governing Body has a requirement to protect staff and students from such aggression.

Almost all parents, carers and visitors are keen to work with us and are supportive of the school. However, on the rare occasions when a negative attitude towards the school is expressed, this can result in aggression, verbal and or physical abuse towards members of school staff or the wider community. This could be in written communication (including social media), on the telephone or in face-to-face incidents.

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

1. Definition of unacceptable behaviour

In order to support a peaceful and safe school environment, we consider that aggressive, abusive or insulting behaviour or language from a parent/carer or visitor is unacceptable whether it be direct or indirect. 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:

- disruptive behaviour or disorderly conduct which interferes or threatens to interfere with the running of a meeting, classroom, office or any other area of the school grounds
- any kind of insult as an attempt to demean, embarrass or undermine
- any kind of threatening behaviour
- raising of voice so as to intimidate
- physical intimidation, e.g. by standing very close or the use of aggressive hand gestures
- use of foul or abusive language
- any kind of physical aggression. This includes physical punishment against your own child on school premises.
- defamation of the school or staff character on Facebook or other social networking sites
- approaching someone else's child in order to discuss or chastise them because of their actions towards your own children
- damaging or destroying school property

Parents and carers are not permitted to discipline a child who is not their own. They must seek a member of staff. Parents or carers who take matters into their own hands may be subject to safeguarding action being taken against them by the school or by the parent(s) of the child involved.

2. The school's approach to dealing with incidents

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

In instances where action is needed, 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.

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?
- Do members of staff/students/parents feel intimidated by the person's behaviour?
- Is there any evidence of provocation?
- How high is the assessed risk that this will be repeated or that there will be retaliation to the school's action (low, medium, high)?

3. The school's response

If a person behaves in an unacceptable way towards a member of the school community, the leadership team will consider their response. Depending on the situation, actions by the Headteacher and local governing body may include the following:

a. Clarify to the person what is considered acceptable behaviour by the school

In some instances it may be appropriate simply to ensure the person is clear about behaviour standards expected by the school. This could be explained in a meeting or by letter from the Headteacher.

Where necessary, this letter will contain a warning about further action to be taken if there are further incidents.

b. Invite the person to an informal meeting seeking to resolve the situation through discussion and mediation

The main points of discussion and any agreed actions will be noted, and a follow-up letter or e-mail sent to confirm the school's expectations and any agreed actions.

The safety and well-being of those attending such a meeting will be carefully considered. Members of school staff will always be accompanied by at least one other colleague at any such meeting. Consideration will be given to the seating arrangements, and care taken to ensure exits cannot be blocked by a person who could potentially become aggressive.

c. Impose conditions on the person's contact with the school and its staff

These conditions may include (but are not exclusively):

- being accompanied to any meeting with a member of school staff by a member of the leadership team
- restricting contact by telephone to named members of the leadership team
- restricting written communications to named members of the leadership team
- restricting attendance at school events to those where the person will be accompanied by a member of the leadership of the school

The Headteacher may enforce any other restriction as deemed reasonable and proportionate given the situation.

- Warn, in writing, of the possibility of a ban from the school's grounds and buildings if the misconduct is repeated
- Immediate ban from the school's grounds and buildings

Where all relevant procedures have been exhausted and aggression or intimidation continue, or where there is an extreme act of violence, a visitor (including a parent or carer of an existing pupil) may be banned by the Headteacher from the school's premises for a defined period.

Although fulfilling a public function, schools are private places. The public has no automatic right of entry. Parents/carers of enrolled students are permitted to come onto school premises at certain stated times, other visitors do not. It is for schools to define and set out the extent of such access. Persons exceeding this would be trespassing.

4. Imposing a ban

Where other procedures have been exhausted and aggression or intimidation continues or where there is an extreme act, or threat of violence, then the school will consider banning the person from school.

In these circumstances, the individual will be advised in writing by the Headteacher that a ban to be imposed and the given conditions. The person would then be given 10 working days from the date of that letter to make representations about the ban in writing to the Governing Body. The Governing Body would then decide whether to confirm or remove the ban. This would be communicated to the person in writing within 10 working days of the receipt of their 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 person will be invited to make written representation to the Governing Body. The written representation, and the evidence from the Headteacher will be considered at a meeting of members of Governing Body. Governors will decide to either maintain, extend or remove the conditions. The decision of the review will be communicated to the person within 10 working days of the date of the meeting. When deciding whether it will be necessary to maintain, extend or remove the conditions, Governing Body members will give consideration to the extent of the person'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 person's cooperation with the school in other respects.

5. Removal from school

Persons who have been banned from the school premises and continue to cause a nuisance will be considered as trespassers. If a trespasser refuses to leave a school premises or enters after being required to leave or causes a disturbance, their behaviour may give rise to a criminal offence under Section 547 of the Education Act 1996. In these circumstances the person may be removed from school. This may be carried out by a police officer or person authorised by the local school authority. Legal proceedings may be brought against the person.

6. Complaints policy

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

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.