

Managing Aggressive, Malicious and Abusive Visitors

Introduction

Bramley Grange primary school is a safe, orderly place where relationships between staff and visitors especially parents are built on mutual respect and recognition of a shared vision of wanting the best for the children. The school highly values visitors and parents however there are occasions when the behaviour of parents/visitors can cause severe disruption resulting in abusive or aggressive behaviour towards staff or members of the community.

The Trust board has a responsibility to protect staff and children in the school. The school must take reasonable steps to safeguard both children and adults during working hours. Adults should always consider the children and make every attempt to be positive role models when on the school site. There is an expectation that school staff will behave professionally in difficult situations

Purpose

Violence, malicious, threatening behaviour and abuse against school staff or members of the school community will not be tolerated. All members of the school community have a right to expect the school to be a safe place in which to work and learn. There is no place for violence, threatening behaviour, abuse or malicious actions in school. Where such behaviour does occur, the directors of the trust will take any action necessary to deal with it. At all times, the common purpose remains clear: to achieve zero tolerance of violence, threatening behaviour, abuse and malicious actions and to ensure all members of the school community can be confident they are operating within a safe environment.

The vast majority of parents/visitors are supportive of the school and the staff however there are occasions when a negative attitude towards the school is expressed, this can result in aggression, verbal abuse, physical abuse, malicious acts and malicious communications towards staff or the wider community.

The directors of the trust expect all staff to behave professionally in these difficult situations seeking support from colleagues, senior staff and where appropriate their trade union.

There is also an expectation that visitors and parents behave in a reasonable way towards school staff. This policy outlines the steps that will be taken where behaviour is unacceptable.

Types of unacceptable behaviour

This is not an exhaustive list but seeks to illustrate such behaviour

- Shouting at staff - either in person or over the telephone
- Abusive telephone calls, emails, social media comments
- Unreasonable demands
- Intimidation

- Threatening behaviour including aggressive body language
- Professional slander - this includes making personal comments about staff and false allegations intended to cause harm
- Swearing
- Pushing
- Hitting including slapping, punching, kicking
- Spitting
- Tripping
- Actions that restrict movement
- Unwanted physical contact
- Sexual, racist harassment
- Breaching school security procedures

Unacceptable behaviour may result in police involvement and legal action taken.

Preventing Violent and aggressive behaviour

This should be read in conjunction with the 'Lone Working Policy'. Staff should be alert to warning signs. If they feel they are at risk they should make a judgement as to the best course of action. This maybe that they send for support or remove themselves from the situation. Staff should be aware of their body language and other forms of non-verbal communication can exacerbate a situation. Every attempt should be made to de-escalate the situation through a calm, measured approach. Staff should ensure they listen and remain polite at all times. Over the telephone, staff should remain calm and measured at all times.

Procedures

If a member of staff behaves in an unacceptable way towards a parent/member of the school community, the complaints procedure must be followed.

If a parent/carer, visitor behaves in an unacceptable way towards a member of staff the following actions will be taken:

1. Staff will be fully supported and counselling offered to ensure that the best possible support given.
2. Staff will complete an incident report form and pass to the head teacher who dependent on the severity of the situation may choose to initially delegate the investigation of the incident to an appropriate member of senior staff.

3. The incident will be investigated drawing on witness statements and a risk assessment written and implemented to protect staff and children from re occurring incidents. These will be regularly reviewed
4. Where the incident involves written correspondence e.g. letter or e-mail a copy will be retained as evidence. Anonymous letters or e-mails will not be responded to. Any response will be made by a senior member of staff. Consideration will be given as to the involvement of the police under malicious communications.
5. A log will be kept noting outcomes to monitor the frequency of incidents and to inform improvements in practise to avoid repeated incidents.
6. Dependent on the severity of the incident the school will seek to resolve the situation through mediation and discussion. A record of this will be made.
7. Dependent on the severity and/or frequency of incident a warning relating to future behaviour may be issued.
8. Where this is deemed not possible either due to the nature of behaviour or incident a parent may be banned from the school premises for a period of time, subject to review.
9. Should behaviour be persistent, malicious or defamatory legal advice will be taken and the police will be involved. Criminal prosecutions will be pursued. In such cases, a parent will be banned from the premises for a period of time subject to review.
10. In cases of severe behaviour for example physical assault, the police will be called immediately and parents/visitors will be banned from the premises. Criminal prosecutions will be pursued.

In imposing a ban, the following steps will be taken:

1. The head teacher will assemble the full facts before proceeding.
2. The head teacher will write to the parent/visitor to record in detail why the behaviour is unacceptable.
3. A full report will be shared with the directors of the trust. The parent/visitor may write to the directors of the trust giving their version and why they feel they should not be banned
4. A decision will be made by the board of directors and communicated to the parent/visitor.
5. The ban will be reviewed periodically, taking account of subsequent patterns of behaviour.
6. Where the ban relates to a parent, arrangements will be made for collecting and dropping children off at school. Normal communications will be maintained. Parents retain their right to an annual consultation in relation to the educational progress of their child/children. The school will determine who will be present at such a meeting and its location. The interests of the child should be paramount.

