

The Key Educational Trust



# Parents' Code of Conduct

## 2022-23

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## Introduction

The Key Educational Trust expects all of its academies/schools to build close links with parents/carers and the community.

We are very fortunate to have a supportive and friendly parent body across our academies/schools. Our parents recognise that educating pupils is a process that involves partnership between parents, class teachers and the school community. As a partnership, our parents/carers will understand the importance of a good working relationship to equip pupils with the necessary skills for adulthood. For these reasons we continue to welcome and encourage parents/carers to participate fully in the life of our schools. We believe that pupils benefit when the relationship between home and school is a positive one.

## Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this policy is to provide a reminder to all parents, carers and visitors to our schools about the expected conduct. This is so we can continue to flourish, progress and achieve in an atmosphere of mutual understanding.

The vast majority of parents, carers and others visiting our schools are keen to work with us and are supportive of the school. However, on the rare occasions when a negative attitude towards a school is expressed, this can result in aggression, verbal and or physical abuse towards members of school staff or the wider school community.

## Guidance

The Key Educational Trust expects and requires its members of staff to behave professionally in these difficult situations and attempt to defuse the situation where possible, seeking the involvement as appropriate of other colleagues.

However, all members of staff have the right to work without fear of violence and abuse, and the right, in an extreme case, of appropriate self-defence.

We expect parents/carers and other visitors to:

- Respect the caring ethos and values of our schools.
- Understand that both teachers and parents need to work together for the benefit of their pupils.
- Demonstrate that **all** members of the school community should be treated with respect and therefore set a good example in their own speech and behaviour.
- Seek to clarify a pupil's version of events with the school's view in order to bring about a peaceful solution to any issue.

- Correct own pupil's behaviour especially in public where it could otherwise lead to conflict, aggressive behaviour or unsafe behaviour.
- Approach the school to help resolve any issues of concern.
- Avoid using staff as threats to admonish pupils' behaviour.

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

At all times the common purpose remains clear: to achieve zero tolerance of violence, threatening behaviour or abuse in schools, and to ensure all members of the school communities and all visitors to schools, can be confident that they are operating within a safe environment.

**In order to support a peaceful and safe school environment schools cannot tolerate parents, carers and visitors exhibiting the following:**

- Disruptive behaviour which interferes or threatens to interfere with the operation of a classroom, an employee's office, office area or any other area of the school grounds including team matches.
- Using loud/or offensive language, swearing, cursing, hand gestures, using profane language or displaying temper – either in person, or over the telephone.
- Invasion of a member of staff's personal space – standing very close to them.
- Threatening to do actual bodily harm to a member of school staff, Governor, visitor, fellow parent/carer or pupil regardless of whether or not the behaviour constitutes a criminal offence.
- Damaging or destroying school property.
- Abusive or threatening e-mails or text/voicemail/phone messages or other written communication.
- Defamatory, offensive or derogatory comments regarding the school or any of the pupils/parent/staff, at the school on **Facebook** or other **social sites**. (See Appendix 1). Any concerns you may have about the school must be made through the appropriate channels by speaking to the class teacher, Executive Principal/Head of School or the Chair of Governors, so they can be dealt with fairly, appropriately and effectively for all concerned.
- The use of physical aggression towards another adult or pupil.

- Approaching someone else's child in order to discuss or chastise them because of the actions of this pupil towards their own child. (Such an approach to a pupil may be seen to be an assault on that pupil and may have legal consequences).
- Smoking and consumption of alcohol or other drugs whilst on school property.
- Dogs being brought on to school premises without prior permission.

This is not an exhaustive list but seeks to provide illustrations of such behaviour.

**Unacceptable behaviour may result in the Trust Board, Local Governing Committee or local authority and the police being informed of the incident.**

<b>Procedure to be followed</b>
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If a parent/carer behaves in an unacceptable way towards a member of the school community, the Executive Principal/ Executive Headteacher/Head of School or appropriate senior member of 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/carer may be banned by the Executive Principal/ Executive Headteacher/Head of School 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 Trust Board, Local Governing Committee, local authority and the police will be included.
3. The Chair of Governors/Trust Board/LA will be informed of the ban.
4. Where appropriate, arrangements for pupils being delivered to, and collected from the school gate will be clarified.

**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/carer that the school will not tolerate misbehaviour

- Shows the school takes 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).

## **Options for the Executive Principal/ Executive Headteacher/Head of School**

After evaluating all available information, and any other relevant factors, there are several actions the Executive Principal/ Executive Headteacher/Head of School may wish to take. These can include:

### **Inviting the parent/carer to a meeting to discuss events**

This could be helpful where a planned and structured meeting has either not been held before or has previously been productive. Skilled facilitators may need to be used. A full restorative meeting may be considered, but if it is not safe to bring all the parties together at a meeting, a restorative process can still take place through the exchange of information. The safety and well-being of those attending such a meeting must be carefully considered. It is strongly recommended that members of school staff should 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/carer who could potentially become aggressive. The main points of discussion and any agreed actions should be noted, and a follow-up letter sent to confirm the school's expectations and any agreed actions. Some parents/carers may covertly record meetings and then seek to use the information obtained to support their case, and therefore schools should state explicitly that information obtained without permission will not be permissible.

### **Clarifying to the parent/carer what is considered acceptable behaviour by the school**

In some instances, it may be appropriate simply to ensure the parent/carer is clear about behaviour standards expected by the school. This could be explained at a meeting, or by letter, however any verbal explanation should be followed by a written confirmation of the discussion and the standards of behaviour outlined.

## **Forming strategies to manage future situations of potential conflict**

It is sometimes possible to identify situations of potential conflict and to plan for these in a way that minimises potential risks. For example, where a parent/carer persistently engages in arguments with staff in corridors or on the school gate at the beginning or end of the school day, the parent/carer could be informed that any discussions with school staff must be held by prior appointment. Alternatively, the parent/carer may be asked not to approach the class teacher, but should instead arrange to meet the Executive Principal/ Executive Headteacher/Head of School (or other member of the senior leadership team), who will deal with their concerns.

In more serious cases a further option may be to advise the parent/carer that in future their concerns should be dealt with by written communication. Any such arrangements should be confirmed in writing to the parent/carer.

## **Withdrawing permission for the parent/carer to enter the school site and/or buildings**

In more serious cases of actual or threatened aggression/violence, or persistent abuse/intimidation, the Executive Principal/ Executive Headteacher/Head of School may need to consider whether it is safe for the parent/carer to continue to come onto the school site or enter the buildings. **In such circumstances, it is strongly recommended that the Executive Principal/ Executive Headteacher/Head of School first consult with Key Educational Trust legal advice.**

Cases of actual assault should be also reported to the local authority by completing a health and safety event report.

## **Calling for police assistance**

In an emergency, police assistance should be sought. In cases where a ban is in place but is ignored and the person comes onto the school site, the police should be notified immediately. (Staff will need to be aware of the ban and have agreed procedures in place should the person come onto the school site).

In situations where there is no immediate threat to staff, pupils, other members of the school community or the school's property, the Executive Principal/ Executive Headteacher/Head of School may still wish to make their local community police officer (e.g. neighbourhood support team, youth intervention officer) aware of the situation.

The police could give consideration to warning the offender of formal action, which may include legal proceedings.

## **Legal proceedings**

Where individuals persist in coming onto the school site even when permission to do so has been withdrawn, it is possible for legal proceedings to be pursued. The options include:

- **Prosecution under section 547 of the Education Act 1996**

This requires substantial evidence to be gathered and presented by the police. Clearly it is not a quick process, and whilst in most cases the threat may prove to be a sufficient deterrent, prosecution can only be seen in the last resort as a punitive measure.

- **Appropriate behaviour contracts**

These are voluntary agreements made between people involved in anti-social behaviour, and the agency/school concerned. They are flexible in terms of content and format, and can be an effective means of encouraging young adults, children and parent/carers to take responsibility for unacceptable behaviour. The person named does not always agree with the contract, but it can be used as evidence at a later stage for an application for an anti-social behaviour order. Conditions can be put on the contract, e.g. not to enter school grounds.

- **Anti-social behaviour orders (Crime and Disorder Act 1998)**

These are most likely to be used where the offender (aged over 10) has acted in a manner which causes harassment, alarm or distress, and is needed to protect others in the same area from similar behaviour.

Anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs) may be sought by the local authority or the chief officer of police. ASBOs are designed to deal with persistent bad behaviour, and the police will need to show that other options have been tried, or are unsuitable.

- **Restraining orders (Protection from Harassment Act 1997)**

Section 2 of the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 provides for criminal or civil prosecution, for cases where someone causes alarm or distress to another person on more than two occasions. Section four provides for criminal or civil prosecution where people have been put in fear of violence on at least two occasions. In each case the sanctions include both criminal penalties (fines, imprisonment or community sentences) and a restraining order. These orders are generally quicker and easier to obtain, but are part of a criminal conviction.

- **Prosecution for criminal damage/assault**

Prosecutions for causing deliberate damage or injury may occasionally be the most appropriate course of action. If the police are called, the option to make criminal allegations is readily available, and they may arrest suspected offenders there and then. Official allegations should only be made if there is no intention of later withdrawing the complaint. Criminal proceedings can be initiated at a later date. All possible steps should be taken to prevent the loss of evidence. In particular witnesses should be asked to make a record of exactly what they saw and heard at the earliest opportunity.

Legal advice is available under the legal buy back scheme for schools that are members, or can be arranged at an hourly fee for schools that are not.

Individual cases should always be discussed with the Chair of the Board of Directors, who will work with the Executive Principal/ Executive Headteacher/Head of School and Legal Services to decide the most appropriate response.

Whilst the emphasis will usually be on ensuring safety and security of persons and property, and therefore the injunction route is likely to be the most effective deterrent legal action, it does not necessarily guarantee against the behaviour of the more persistent offender.

## **Record Keeping**

There will be clear and detailed records of all events which must be kept up to date. Any witness statements (where appropriate) and notes of any subsequent meetings held to discuss the events should also be retained.

Notes should be signed and dated.

Any physical evidence should be bagged and labelled, and witnesses should be asked to make a record of exactly what they saw and heard at the earliest opportunity. It is also advisable to ensure that in every case, even where a formal letter is not required, parent/carers receive a written confirmation of the events and the Executive Principal/ Executive Headteacher/Head of School's response.

If the police are asked to deal with an incident as a criminal investigation, there are a number of actions that may thwart this process. Witness details should not be made known to suspected offenders or their families. Groups of witnesses or suspects should not be left together, or allowed to discuss what happened, before the police interview them. If in doubt always seek the advice of the police officer first.

## **Support for Employees**

If a member of staff is unfortunate enough to be one of the very small, minority subject to serious physical and/or verbal abuse there are a variety of sources of potential support available to them. In such circumstances, the immediate and ongoing support of colleagues will be invaluable.

## **Conclusion**

The Trust or local authority itself may take action where behaviour is unacceptable or there are serious breaches of our home-school code of conduct or health and safety legislation. In implementing this policy, the school will, as appropriate, seek advice from the Local Authority's education, health and safety and legal departments, to ensure fairness and consistency. This Policy is based on the NAHT Model Policy and guidance and will be reviewed annually.

We trust that parents and carers will assist our school with the implementation of this policy and we thank you for your continuing support of the school.



## **Appendix 1: Inappropriate use of Social Network Site**

Social media websites are being used increasingly to fuel campaigns and complaints against schools, Executive Principal/ Executive Headteacher/Head of School, school staff, and in some cases other parents/pupils. The Governors consider the use of social media websites being used in this way as unacceptable and not in the best interests of the pupils or the whole school community. Any concerns you may have must be made through the appropriate channels by speaking to the class teacher, the Executive Principal/ Executive Headteacher/Head of School or the Chair of Governors, so they can be dealt with fairly, appropriately and effectively for all concerned.

In the event that any student or parent/carer of a pupil being educated in the school is found to be posting libellous or defamatory comments on Facebook or other social network sites, they will be reported to the appropriate 'report abuse' section of the network site. All social network sites have clear rules about the content, which can be posted, on the site and they provide robust mechanisms to report contact or activity which breaches this. The school will also expect that any parent/carer or student removes such comments immediately.

In serious cases the school will also consider its legal options to deal with any such misuse of social networking and other sites. Additionally, and perhaps more importantly is the issue of cyber bullying and the use by one pupil or a parent to publicly humiliate another by inappropriate social network entry. We will take and deal with this as a serious incident of school bullying. Thankfully such incidents are extremely rare.