



Twyford
C of E
Academies Trust

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| Document Title | Policy on Managing Abusive Parents/Carers and Members of the Public |
| Committee Responsible for Policy | Resources Committee |
| Review Frequency | Every 3 years |
| Last Reviewed | October 2020 |
| Next Review Due | October 2023 |
| Policy Author | Director of Finance & Operations |

Assessment of the Impact of a Policy on Equality & Diversity

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| Policy: Policy on Managing Abusive Parents/Carers and Members of the Public | |
| Impact assessed by: R Lane | Date: 7/10/2020 |
| 1. What is the potential for this policy impacting a person or group with a protected characteristic differently (favourably or unfavourably) from everyone else? Staff from protected groups may receive less protection than the general staff population. | |
| 2. How would this be evidenced? By monitoring incidents and complaints from staff and how they had been handled. | |
| 3. Is there evidence that the operation of the current policy might impact a person or group with a protected characteristic differently from everyone else? No. | |
| 4. If the answer to 3 is 'Yes', please provide details and evidence. | |
| 5. How might the new policy change this? | |
| 6. Are there any other changes to the policy which might impact a group with a protected characteristic differently from everyone else? No. | |
| 7. If the answer to 6 is 'Yes', please provide details and evidence. | |
| 8. Policies are required to reduce or eliminate inequality and disadvantage and promote diversity. Does this assessment indicate that the Policy passes or fails this test? PASS | |

Policy on Managing Abusive Parents/Carers and Members of the Public

1 Purpose and statement of policy

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. Almost all parents, carers and visitors to our schools are respectful and polite and are supportive of the Trust's ethos. However, on very rare occasions the behaviour of a small number of parents/carers or visitors can fall short of our expectations. This can manifest itself in aggression or abuse towards members of the school community. This could 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, 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 manager who will take appropriate action or invoke the provisions of this policy.

Staff are entitled to carry out their work for the Trust free from all kinds of abuse including threats and violence. Furthermore, Health and Safety legislation requires the Trust to take appropriate steps to protect staff from abuse and it is the Trust's policy to comply in full with its legal obligations and to adopt best practice in this area.

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. 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 the Local Governing Body (LGB) are in place to ensure fairness.

This policy has been written with reference to government guidance on controlling access to school sites (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/controlling-access-to-school-premises/controlling-access-to-school-premises>) and NEU advice addressing violence and assault against staff (<https://neu.org.uk/advice/violence-and-assaults-against-staff-schools>).

2 Definition of unacceptable behaviour

We consider that aggressive, abusive/insulting behaviour or language from a parent/carer or member of the public is unacceptable whether it be direct or indirect, and presents a risk to staff and students. Unacceptable behaviour is any which makes a member of staff or student 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 including attempts to demean, embarrass or undermine
- Any kind of threat
- 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 abuse
- Allegations which turn out to be vexatious or malicious.

3 The Trust's approach to dealing with incidents

If a parent/carer/member of the public behaves in an unacceptable way towards a member of the school community, the Associate 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.

3.1 Assessing the Risk

Where deemed necessary, 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 Associate 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 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)?

3.2 Keeping a record

Staff/students subject to abuse and witnesses will make written statements about any incident(s) which will be kept in a file with subsequent follow up letters. This file will be kept by the Associate Headteacher. Depending on an assessment of the risk of retaliation to witnesses or individuals, statements made by these adults may or may not be made available to the parent if they request it.

3.3 A reasonable and proportionate response

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

3.3.1 Clarify to the person what is considered acceptable behaviour by the school

The person will be invited to write to the Associate Headteacher with his/her version of events within 10 working days. 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 letter from the Associate Headteacher. Where necessary, this letter will contain a warning about further action to be taken if there are further incidents. Depending on the parent's response there will be either no further action or a meeting will be held to discuss the situation and how this can be avoided in future.

3.3.2 Invite the person to an informal meeting to discuss events

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. 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.

3.3.3 Impose conditions on the person'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 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. People exceeding this would be trespassing. Depending on the type, level or frequency of the unacceptable behaviour, the school may consider imposing conditions on the person'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 senior leadership 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 person will be accompanied by a member of the senior leadership of the school
- Any other restriction as deemed reasonable and proportionate by the Associate Headteacher.

The person will be informed in writing of any conditions to be imposed. The person will then be given 10 working days from the date of that letter to make representations in writing about the conditions to the Associate Headteacher. The Associate Headteacher, in consultation with the Chair of Governors, will then decide whether to confirm or remove the conditions. This would be communicated to the person in writing within 10 working days of the date of the person's letter.

If the decision is to confirm the conditions imposed, this decision will be reviewed by the LGB after approximately six months (and every six months after that, if appropriate). The person will be invited to make written representation to the LGB. The written representation, and the evidence from the Associate Headteacher will be considered at a meeting of the LGB. LGB members will decide to either maintain, extend or remove the conditions. The decision of the review will be communicated to the person by the Clerk within 10 working days of the date of the meeting.

When deciding whether it will be necessary to maintain, extend or remove the conditions, LGB 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.

3.3.4 Impose 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 this case the person will be informed in a letter from the Associate Headteacher, consulting with the Chair of Governors, the details of the ban from the school premises. This will include banning a person from contacting school staff by written communication or telephone.

In these circumstances, the individual will be advised in writing by the Associate Headteacher that a provisional ban is being imposed. 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 LGB. The LGB 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 banned person is a parent they 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 LGB after approximately six months (and every six months after that, if appropriate). The person will be invited to make written representation to the trustees; this and the evidence from the Associate Headteacher will be considered at a meeting of the LGB. LGB members will decide to remove the ban, extend the ban or impose conditions on

person's access to the school. The decision of the review will be communicated to the person by the Clerk within 10 days of the date of the meeting.

In deciding whether to remove or extend the ban or impose conditions, LGB members will give consideration to the extent of the person'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 person's cooperation with the school in other respects.

3.3.5 Removal from the school site

People who have been banned from the school premises and continue to cause a nuisance will be deemed to have committed an offence under section 547 of the Education Act 1996. They will be considered as trespassers. In these circumstances the person may be removed from school. This may be carried out by a police officer or person authorised by the LGB. Legal proceedings may be brought against the person.

3.3.6 Action following serious incidents

Incidents involving injury or potential injury may require a first aid response (see the First Aid Policy) and/or longer term support such as counselling. Incidents may also need to be reported as an accident and followed up with an investigation (see the Health & Safety Policy) and may require police involvement and cooperation with a police investigation. In exceptional cases where there are ongoing concerns about the safety of staff they may be provided with assistance with safe home to work travel or other measures to minimise the risk of a further incident.

4 Appeals and complaints

Any person who has been served with a ban may appeal. Appeals must be in writing to the Chair of the Trust. The Chair of the Trust may request further information and will decide on all cases within 15 working days.

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