

Dealing with Threatening and Abusive behaviour Parents, Careers & Visitors.

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**Dealing with Threatening and Abusive Behaviour from Parents, Carers and Visitors**

This policy has been written considering 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.

**Introduction:**

At Pinders Primary School, we value the positive relationships forged with parents, carers and visitors to the school. We wish to work in partnership with parents, carers and visitors in order to create the best learning opportunities for their child so that we can reach together for success. We also strive to make our school a place where as adults we model the behaviour we teach and expect. We place a high importance on our school values together with good manners, positive communication and mutual respect.

**Principles:**

Almost all parents, carers and visitors to Pinders Primary School are keen to work with us and are supportive of the school. However, on very rare occasions the behaviour of a small number of parents falls short of what we expect; 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 overriding principle is, however, that all members of the school community have the right to work or be in school without fear of aggression or abuse from parents. The Governing Body has a requirement to protect staff and students from such aggression.

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

The progress and well-being of the parent’s/carer’s child will be fully considered. Actions taken against the parent will be reasonable and proportionate; the parent/carer 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 then the governing body are in place to ensure fairness.

**Staff conduct:**

We expect all members of our staff to behave professionally, attempting to defuse the situation where possible and seeking the involvement of other colleagues as appropriate. However, staff also have the right to end any conversation (face-to-face or on the telephone) should they feel they are being threatened or are dealing with aggressive or abusive parents or carers.

**Parents, carers and visitors conduct:**

We expect all members of the community to follow these principles:

• Respect the caring ethos of our school and our Pinders School Values.

• To work together with teachers and other members of school staff for the benefit of our pupils.

• All members of the school community should be treated with respect and, therefore, we must all set a good example in our own speech and behaviour.

**Unacceptable Behaviour**

In order to support a safe and peaceful school environment, the school cannot accept parents, carers or visitors exhibiting the following behaviour:

* Any kind of threat
* Any kind of insult that is meant to demean, embarrass or undermine.
* Any kind of conduct which undermines the safe and calm environment in a school, either in a school office, classroom, around the school site, immediately outside the school or on a school playing field. (This includes parents entering the school without a member of staff being present)
* Raising of voice so as to be intimidating.
* Using loud or offensive language, such as swearing, or displaying an unacceptable amount of anger and aggression.
* Physical intimidation, e.g. by standing very close to him/her or the use of aggressive hand gestures;
* Allegations which turn out to be vexatious or malicious.
* Use of foul or abusive language
* Any kind of physical abuse
* Threatening physical violence to a member of the school community (including other parents or carers).
* Damaging school property.
* Abusive telephone calls, emails, letters or other forms of written communication.
* Defamatory comments about school staff or governors (including on social media sites).
* The use of physical aggression towards another adult (including parents or carers) or child. This includes physical punishment of your own child.
* Approaching someone else’s child in order to chastise them.
* Any other behaviour (can be face-to-face contact, on the telephone or written communication) which makes a member of staff or pupil feel threatened

*The Public Order Act 1986 defines “disorderly conduct” as: verbal abuse, threatening abusive or insulting words or behaviour or any disorderly behaviour whereby a person is caused alarm, harassment or distress. “Threatening behaviour” is when a person fears that violence, or threat of violence, is likely to be provoked.*

*In a school context this could mean someone shouting at a member of staff, either in person or on the phone; acting aggressively, including using intimidating body language, as well as actual violence. It also covers comments posted on social networking sites or situations where members of staff are approached off school premises.*

**How We Will Deal with Incidents**

If a parent/carer/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 a future course of action. The course of action will be reasonable and commensurate with the assessed level of risk.

**Risk Assessment**

The Headteacher will carry out a risk assessment in order to help decide about the level of response. 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 feel intimidated by the parent’s behaviour?
* Is there any evidence of provocation?
* How high is the assessed risk that this will be repeated or there will be retaliation at the school’s action? (low, medium, high).

**Recording of Incidents**

Any threatening or abusive incidents must be communicated to the Headteacher:

• Trespass

• Verbal abuse

• Sexual or racial abuse

• Threats

• Aggression

• Physical violence

• Intentional damage to personal property or the school’s property

• Any racist comments

• Any injuries to staff or children

**Procedure for dealing with abusive parents, carers or visitors**

Staff who have been subject to abuse, and any witnesses, will make written statements about the incident. Children who have been subject to abuse, and any witnesses, will make either a written statement, or verbally report the incident to a member of staff who will make a written record.

All statements will be kept by the Headteacher, along with any subsequent correspondence.

Depending on an assessment of the risk of retaliation to witnesses or individuals, statements made by adults these may be made available to the parent if they request it.

**The School’s Response**

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

**Step 1** - Letter to explain/clarify what is considered acceptable behaviour

(see Appendix A) In some instances, it may be appropriate simply to ensure the parent is clear about behaviour standards expected by the school. This will be explained by a letter (appendix 1) from the Headteacher or Chair of Governors. This letter may contain a warning about further action if there are further incidents. The parent will be invited to write to the Headteacher with his/her version of events within 10 working days. Depending on the parent’s response a meeting may then be held to discuss the situation and how this can be avoided in future.

If the Headteacher has been subject to abuse, this will be done by the Chair of Governors (or other appointed governor, if the Chair is involved in the incident in any way).

**Step 2 - Invite the parent to an informal meeting to discuss events.**

This could be helpful to discuss and diffuse the situation. The safety and well-being of those attending such a meeting must be carefully considered. Members of school staff will always 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 who could potentially become aggressive. As for Step 1, if the Headteacher has been subject to abuse, this will be done by the Chair or other appointed governor

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

**Step 3 - Impose conditions on the parent’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 have an ‘implied licence’ to come onto school premises at certain stated times. It is for schools to define and set out the extent of such access; parents exceeding this would be trespassing.

Depending of the type, level or frequency of the unacceptable behaviour, the school may consider imposing conditions on the parent’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 staff;
* restricting written communications to named members of staff;
* restricting attendance at school events;
* any other restriction as deemed reasonable and proportionate by the Headteacher and Chair of Governors.

In this case the parent will be informed by letter from the Headteacher, the details of the conditions that are being imposed. The parent would then be given 10 working days from the date of that letter to make representations in writing about the conditions to the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors would then decide whether to confirm or remove the conditions. This would be communicated to the parent in writing within 10 working days of the date of the parent’s 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 parent will be invited to make written representation to the governors. This, and the evidence from the Headteacher will be considered at a meeting of the full Governing Body. Governors may decide to maintain, extend or remove the conditions. The decision of the review will be communicated to the parent by the clerk to the governors within 10 days of the date of the meeting.

When deciding whether it will be necessary to maintain, extend or remove the conditions, governors will consider the extent of the parent’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 parent’s co-operation with the school in other respects.

**Step 4 - Imposing a ban.**

Where other procedures have been exhausted and aggression or intimidation continues OR where there is an extreme act of violence then the school may consider banning the individual from school premises. This will also include banning a parent from accessing school staff by telephone; all communication from the parent should be in writing.

In these circumstances, the individual would be advised in writing by the Headteacher that a provisional ban is being imposed. The parent would then be given 10 working days from the date of that letter to make representations about the ban, in writing, to the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors would then decide whether to confirm or remove the ban. This would be communicated to the parent in writing within 10 working days of the receipt of their letter.

If the Chair of Governors’ decision is to confirm the ban, parents in these circumstances 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 governing body after approximately six months (and every six months after that, if appropriate). The parent will be invited to make written representation to the Governing Body. This, and the evidence from the Headteacher will be considered at a meeting of the full Governing Body. Governors may decide to remove the ban, extend the ban, or impose conditions on parent’s access to the school. The decision of the review will be communicated to the parent by the Chair of Governors within 10 days of the date of the meeting.

In deciding whether to remove or extend the ban or impose conditions, governors will consider the extent of the parent’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 parent’s co-operation with the school in other respects.

**Step 5 - Involvement of the police &** **Removal from school.**

If following a decision to ban a person from the school premises, that person nevertheless persists in entering school premises and is displaying unreasonable behaviour, such a person may be removed from the school premises as a trespasser under Section 547 of the Education Act 1996 and charged with an offence under the Public Order Act 1986. If the parent does not comply, the police will be called and asked to remove the parent from the school. Legal proceedings may be brought against the parent. All parents, even if excluded from school premises, have a right to seek an appointment to speak to school staff about their child’s educational progress.

**Complaints Policy**

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

**Appendix 1 –Letter to explain what is considered acceptable behaviour** (Step 1)

Dear

I have received a report about your conduct at the school on (enter date and time or details). This appears to fall short of that we would expect of a parent/carer/visitor at Pinders Primary School.

(Add factual summary of the incident and of its effect on staff, pupils, and other parents etc.)

I must inform you that the Governing Body will not tolerate aggression towards members of the school community and will act to protect its staff and students from any form of abuse or intimidation. I should warn you that any future conduct of this nature could result in the school imposing conditions restricting your access to the school or banning you from contacting or attending the school altogether.

I wish to give you an opportunity to give me, in writing, any comments or observations of your own in relation to the report which I have received about your conduct. Please do so within 10 working days of the date of this letter. These comments may include any assurances you are prepared to give about your future good conduct. There is then an option for us to meet to discuss the situation and how it can be avoided in the future.

Details of our policy on dealing with abusive parents can be found on our website

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

**Appendix B - Written warning with an invitation to discuss events** (Step 2)

Dear,

I have received a report about your conduct at the school on (enter date, time or details). (Add factual summary of the incident and its effect on staff, pupils and other parents).

You will recollect that I have already written to you about a previous incident on (date) warning you of the consequences of any further insulting or aggressive behaviour on your part. I must inform you that the governing body will not tolerate conduct of this nature on the school premises and will act to defend school staff and pupils. I am therefore writing to invite you to attend a meeting on (date and time) to discuss the incident. Failure to attend a meeting may result in the school imposing conditions regarding the contact you have with the school.

Details of our policy on dealing with abusive parents can be found on our website.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher

**Appendix C - Final written warning informing parents of imposed conditions (including a ban) (Step 3)**

Dear,

I have received a report about your conduct at the school on (enter date, time or details). (Add factual summary of the incident and its effect on staff, pupils and other parents).

You will recollect that I have already written/spoken to you about a previous incident on (date) warning you of the consequences of any further insulting or aggressive behaviour on your part. I must inform you that the governing body will not tolerate conduct of this nature on the school premises and will act to defend school staff and pupils.

I am therefore writing to inform you that I am imposing conditions on the contact you may have with the school. These are as follows: (delete as appropriate)

• You must be accompanied to any meeting with a member of school staff

• You may not approach any member of staff unless you are accompanied by the Headteacher or member of the senior leadership team.

• You may not contact by telephone or in writing any member of staff. You may contact the Headteacher only.

• You may not attend any events for parents except those where you will be accompanied by the Headteacher or a member of the senior leadership of the school

• Other as are reasonable and proportionate

**OR (Ban)**

I am therefore writing to inform you that I am recommending imposing a ban on you attending or contacting the school. This means you may not attend school for any reason whatsoever. You must not contact any member of staff by telephone or e-mail.

You do, however, have the right to attend one meeting per year to discuss your child’s progress. This meeting will be with me and I will contact you to arrange this at the time of the next parents evening. The restrictions are provisional until they have been reviewed by the Chair of Governors. Please consider them in force until you receive their confirmation.

The Chair of Governors will need to decide whether it is appropriate to confirm or overturn this decision. You may, if you wish, send a letter in writing making any comments of your own within 10 working days of the date of this letter. They will then write to you with the outcome of their decision.

Details of our policy on dealing with abusive parents can be found on our website.

Yours sincerely,

 Headteacher