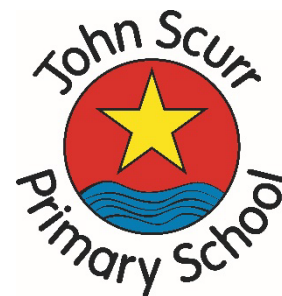


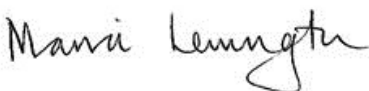
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Headteacher: Maria Lewington



Dealing with Abusive Parents/Visitors Policy

Reviewed by:	General Governing Body
Date:	September 2024
Review dates:	2024
Next Review	September 2025
Ratified by Governors:	Maria Lewington & Kevin Hinde
Governor Signature:	 

Dealing with Abusive Parents/Visitors Policy

1. Statement of Principles

This policy has been written taking into account the DfE Guidance *Controlling Access to School Premises* (November 2018) as well as NAHT guidance on dealing with abusive visitors, violence and threatening behaviour in schools.

At John Scurr School, we value the positive relationships forged with parents 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 adults model for students the behaviour we teach and expect. In general, we place a high importance on good manners, positive communication and mutual respect.

Almost all parents, carers and visitors to John Scurr 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.

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 manager who will take appropriate action or invoke the provisions of this policy.

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 progress and wellbeing 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 then the Governing Board are in place to ensure fairness.

2. Definition of Unacceptable Behaviour

We consider that aggressive, abusive or insulting behaviour or language from a parent presents a risk to staff and students. Unacceptable behaviour is such that 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 as an attempt to demean, embarrass or undermine

- any kind of threat
- raising of voice so as to be intimidating
- physical intimidation, eg by standing very close to him / her 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 School's Approach to Dealing with Incidents

If a parent / carer / visitor behaves in an unacceptable way towards a member of the school community, the Headteacher or appropriate member of 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.

4. Risk Assessment

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 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).

5.Recording of Incidents

Staff / students subject to abuse and witnesses will make written statements about incident(s) which will be kept in a file with subsequent letters. This file will be kept by the Headteacher. Depending on an assessment of the risk of retaliation to witnesses or individuals, statements made by adults may be made available to the parent if they request it.

6. 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 the following:

Level 1: Clarify to the parent what is considered acceptable behaviour by the school

In some instances, it may be appropriate simply to ensure that the parent is clear about behavioural standards expected by the school. This could be explained by letter from the Headteacher. 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 3 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.

Level 2: Invite the parent to an informal meeting to discuss events

This could be helpful to discuss and diffuse the situation. The safety and wellbeing 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. The main points of discussion and any agreed actions should be noted, and a follow-up letter or email sent to confirm the school's expectations and any agreed actions.

Level 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 SLT
- 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 parent will be accompanied by a member of the senior leadership of the school
- any other restriction as deemed reasonable and proportionate by the Headteacher.

In the event that conditions are imposed, a letter would be sent to them by the Headteacher explaining what the conditions are and how they will work. The parent would be given 5 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 Board after approximately six months as (and every six months after that, if appropriate). The parent will be invited to make written representation to the Governing Board. This and the evidence from the Headteacher will be considered at a meeting of the Governing Board. 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 Governing Board 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 give consideration to 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 cooperation with the school in other respects.

Level 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 include banning a parent from accessing school staff by written communication or telephone. 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 to the Head or Chair of Governors. The Head or 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.

A decision to impose a ban will be reviewed before the end of the ban date. The parent will be invited to make written representation and this and the evidence considered by Chair of the 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 Clerk to the Governing Board within 10 days of the date of the meeting.

In deciding whether to remove or extend the ban or impose conditions, Governors will give consideration to 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 cooperation with the school in other respects.

Level 5: Removal from school

Parents who have been banned from the school premises and continue to cause a nuisance will be deemed to have committed a section 547 offence. They will be considered as trespassers. In these circumstances the offender may be removed from school. This may be carried out by a police officer. Legal proceedings may be brought against the parent.

7. Complaints Policy

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

8. Monitoring by the Governing Board

This policy is reviewed by the school's Governing Board every two years or earlier, as necessary. All actions taken under this policy are also monitored by the Governing Board. Details of incidents are reported to the Governors as part of the Headteacher's Report to Governing Board meeting.

Model letters

Model Letter 1: Initial warning letter from the headteacher

Further to the incident to the incident that took place on [time and date] when you [Summary of incident, including location, and the effect on staff, pupils and other parents.]

I must inform you that John Scurr Primary School will not tolerate conduct of this nature on its premises and will act to defend its staff members and other members of the school community. I am therefore putting you on notice that, if I receive a further report of unacceptable conduct from you, I will have no option but to instigate the school's formal procedure to withdraw your permission to enter or be on the premises of John Scurr Primary School.

I should warn you that, if your permission to enter or be on school premises is withdrawn, you can be removed from the premises by a police officer and you may be prosecuted under Section 547 of the Education Act 1996. If convicted under that section, you will be liable to a fine of up to £500.00 and have a criminal conviction recorded against you. If you have any concerns about the school which have led to your unacceptable conduct, you should raise these with the school in accordance with the school's Complaints Policy, a copy of which is attached for your consideration.

I trust that we will now be able to put this matter firmly behind us.

Yours sincerely

Maria Lewington

Headteacher

Dear [parent name],

I refer to the incident that took place on [time and date] when you [Summary of incident, including location, and the effect on staff, pupils and other parents].

If the Head Teacher did not witness the incident they may wish to use the following text: I have considered the witness accounts of the incident, (if relevant: including your own), and it would appear [insert details of incident].

If the incident is minor, add:

This behaviour is not in keeping with our parent code of conduct [Please find a copy attached to this letter.] **OR**

Your behaviour falls short of the standard of conduct expected of those visiting the school.

If the incident is more serious, add:

As written in our parent code of conduct, we do not tolerate this kind of behaviour in our school. [Please find a copy attached to this letter.]

I must therefore warn you that if you are involved in a similar incident again, you will leave me with no alternative other than to ban you from coming onto the school site without my written permission.

I do hope that this will not be necessary and that I can rely on your cooperation in this matter.

Yours sincerely

Maria Lewington

Headteacher

Dear

Your conduct on school premises on (insert date)

I refer to the incident that took place on school premises today (or insert relevant day) when you (insert details of the incident).

If the Head Teacher did not witness the incident, the following text may be used: I have considered the witness accounts of the incident, (if relevant: including your own), and it would appear (insert details of incident).

Your behaviour falls short of the standard of conduct expected of those visiting the school. (Omit if this is a first incident – As you will remember, I have previously warned you about your behaviour when I wrote to you on (date)). I have considered the matter very carefully and have decided that you should not be allowed on to the school premises from now until (insert date). During that time I will review the situation. Before I make a final decision you may, if you wish, write to me to give me any further information you want me to take into consideration. You have until (insert date) to write to me.

If you need to speak to me or a member of staff about any matter, please telephone and I will make the necessary arrangements and confirm them to you in writing. You will not be allowed to come onto the school site unless you have a letter from me giving you authorisation.

If you do not comply with this ban, you will be guilty of causing a nuisance or disturbance on educational premises. This is a criminal offence under section 547 of the Education Act 1996. If you were to commit this offence, you would be liable to prosecution in the magistrates' court. If you were to be convicted, you would be liable to a fine and a criminal conviction.

I regret that I have had to take this action and hope that I can rely on your cooperation.

Yours sincerely

Maria Lewington

Headteacher

Dear

Your conduct on school premises (insert date)

I refer to the incident that took place on school premises on (insert relevant day) when you (insert details of the incident). In my letter dated (insert date), I referred to my intention to ban you from the premises and I invited you to make representations to me about this.

I have considered the points you have made to me and I have decided to proceed with the ban for a period of (insert number of weeks or an indefinite period), until (insert date), after which the ban will be reviewed by the Chair of Governors and myself. I will write to you again when this review is going to take place so that you may make written representations, which we will take into account. When we have made our decision, I shall write to you to inform you of it together with our reasons.

If you need to speak to me or a member of staff about any matter, please telephone and I will make the necessary arrangements and confirm them to you in writing. You will not be allowed to come onto the school site unless you have a letter from me giving you authorisation.

If you do not comply with this ban, you will be guilty of causing a nuisance or disturbance on educational premises. This is a criminal offence under section 547 of the Education Act 1996. If you were to commit this offence, you would be liable to prosecution in the magistrates' court. If you were to be convicted, you would be liable to a fine and a criminal conviction.

I regret that I have had to take this action and hope that I can rely on your cooperation.

Yours sincerely

Maria Lewington

Headteacher

Model Letter 4 – Ban from school premises for time-limited period whilst obtaining the parent's account and decision by GB

Your conduct on school premises on (insert date)

I refer to the incident that took place on school premises today (*or insert relevant day*) when you (*insert details of the incident*).

If the Head Teacher did not witness the incident, the following text may be used: I have considered the witness accounts of the incident, (*if relevant: including your own*), and it would appear (*insert details of incident*).

Your behaviour falls short of the standard of conduct expected of those visiting the school. (*Omit if this is a first incident* – As you will remember, I have previously warned you about your behaviour when I wrote to you on (*date*)). I have considered the matter very carefully and have decided that you should not be allowed on to the school premises in the interests of the safety and wellbeing of my staff and the pupils of this school. This ban will continue until the Governing Body of School meets to decide on whether to extend the ban.

This letter gives you notice that the Governing Body of School will be meeting on (*during the week of*). In the meantime, you are not permitted to enter the site without the previous prior permission of the Headteacher/myself. You may have to make alternative arrangements for the delivery and collection of your children.

Should you wish to respond to the contents of this letter and make representations to the Governing Body as to why you should not be banned from the school premises then please put this in writing no later than(1 week from date of receipt of letter).

The Governing Body is imposing a temporary ban on your entering the school site, pending your response to this letter and the Governors consideration. This ban is effective as detailed above with effect from and you must arrange for another responsible adult to bring your children to school each day if they require meeting on the school premises. You may not enter any part of the school site.

You should be aware that Section 547 of the Education Act 1996 makes it a criminal offence for a person to be present on educational premises without lawful authority and to cause or permit nuisance or disturbance to the annoyance of the persons who lawfully use the premises. Therefore if you choose to ignore the warning contained in this letter, we will have no hesitation in taking formal action.

If you do not comply with this ban, you may be guilty of causing a nuisance or disturbance on educational premises. This is a criminal offence under section 547 of the Education Act 1996 (updated 2002). If you were to commit this offence, you would be liable to prosecution in the magistrates' court. If you were to be convicted, you would be liable to a fine and a criminal conviction.

If you need to speak to me or a member of staff about any matter, please telephone and I will make the necessary arrangements and confirm them to you in writing. You will not be allowed to come onto the school site unless you have a letter from me giving you authorisation.

I regret that I have had to take this action and hope that I can rely on your cooperation. You will be written to following the meeting of the Governing Body and informed of their decision.

Yours sincerely

Maria Lewington

Headteacher

Model Letter 5 – Unban from school premises from Head Teacher

Dear

Your conduct on school premises on (insert date)

On (insert date) I wrote to you informing you that I had temporarily withdrawn permission for you to come onto the school premises. To enable me to determine whether to confirm this decision for a longer period, I gave you the opportunity to let me have your written comments on this incident by (insert date).

I have not received a written response from you/I have now received a letter from you dated (insert date), the contents of which I have noted. (delete either sentence as appropriate).

(However) in the circumstances, (insert detail) I have decided to restore to you the permission to come onto the school premises, with immediate effect.

Nevertheless I remain very concerned at the incident which occurred on (insert date), and I must warn you that if there is any repetition of your behaviour on that occasion, I shall not hesitate to withdraw permission for you to come onto the premises again.

Yours sincerely

Maria Lewington

Headteacher