



Tibberton CE First School and Hindlip CE First School

Policy for Handling Unreasonably Persistent, Harassing or Abusive Behaviours from School Visitors

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| Policy reviewed: | Autumn 2024 |
| Adopted by Governing Body: | Autumn 2024 |
| Policy to be reviewed: | Autumn 2026 |

Chair of Governors: Mr. A. Clarke
Health & Safety Governor: Mr J. Porter,
Executive Headteacher: Mr A. Gromski

'Let all that you do be done in love.' 1 Corinthians 16:14

Purpose: As a Church of England School we are committed to serving with Grace and enabling every person to flourish and live out 'life in all its fullness'. We recognise that we can only do this by working together as Church-School communities. As such we have an open door policy to allow you to discuss and share, with school staff, any difficulties which may arise so we can work together to find a way forward.

All members of the school community have a right to expect that their school is a safe place in which to work and learn. Abuse, harassment, threatening behaviour or violence against school staff (or other members of the school community) is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Any incident will be treated seriously and a disruptive visitor may be banned from entering the school or even prosecuted.

Abuse, threatening behaviour or violence are not considered to be an acceptable part of any job, nor is it part of the duties of any employee to accept such behaviour. Throughout this document where the term 'visitor' is used it covers any abusive parent or visitor to the school and is not confined to adults.

The Governing Body is committed to reducing the risks to its school staff from acts of unreasonably persistent, harassing or abusive behaviours, including violence and aggression, by:

- Demonstrating to staff that the potential for violence and threatening behaviour at work is recognised;
- Issuing clear procedures/guidelines, which include preventative and protective measures;
- Clarifying violent incident reporting and monitoring procedures;
- Encouraging proper reporting of incidents and near misses and ensuring that school staff do not avoid reporting violent incidents in the belief that an assault may suggest a failure on the part of the member of staff concerned;
- Supporting staff who have been subject to violent, threatening or abusive behaviour and offering counselling or training where appropriate;
- Allocating adequate resources to support this Policy;
- Reviewing this Policy statement and procedures and guidelines regularly.

Threatening behaviour: The Governing Body recognises that staff can be intimidated or threatened by a variety of circumstances, including:

- Physical assault;
- Actions that restrict movement;
- Unwanted physical contact which results in no injury;
- Swearing;
- Other verbal or written abuse which causes personal offence or distress;
- Sexual, racial or other harassment;
- Intimidation;
- Damage to personal property;
- Harassment
- Abusive telephone calls, letters, faxes, emails, website entries;
- Other aggressive behaviour (shouting, gestures, posturing, insults, innuendo, gestures);
- Deliberate silence;

- **Unreasonable persistent behaviour** including demands or blackmail.

What do we mean by 'an unreasonably persistent behaviour'? An unreasonably persistent behaviour may be anyone who engages in unreasonable behaviour when making a complaint and/or makes slanderous/ defamatory comments which may appear in the public domain. This will include persons who pursue concerns in an unreasonable manner. Unreasonable behaviour may include:

Actions which are

- Out of proportion to the nature of the complaint.
- Persistent – even when the complaints procedure has been exhausted.
- Personally harassing.
- Unjustifiably repetitious.

An insistence on

- Pursuing unjustified complaints.
- Unrealistic outcomes to justified complaints.
- Pursuing justifiable concerns in an unreasonable manner (eg using abusive or threatening language).
- Making complaints in public or via a social networking site such as Facebook.
- Refusing to attend appointments to discuss the concern.

What is 'harassment'? We regard harassment as the unreasonable pursuit of issues or concerns, particularly if the matter appears to be pursued in a way intended to cause personal distress rather than to seek a resolution. Behaviour may fall within the scope of this policy if:

- It appears to be deliberately targeted at one or more members of school staff or others.
- The way in which a concern or other issues is pursued (as opposed to the complaint itself) causes undue distress to school staff or others.
- It has a significant and disproportionate adverse effect on the school community.

What does the school expect of any person wishing to raise a concern? The school expects anyone who wishes to raise concerns with the school to:

- Treat all members of the school community with courtesy and respect.
- Respect the needs of pupils and staff within the school.
- Avoid the use of violence, or threats of violence, towards people or property.
- Recognise the time constraints under which members of staff in schools work and allow the school a reasonable time to respond to a complaint.
- Follow the school's complaints procedure.
- Avoid harassing or abusive behaviours.

Schools' responses to unreasonably persistent behaviours or harassment - This policy is intended to be used in conjunction with the school's complaints procedure. Taken together, these documents set out how we will always seek to work with parents, carers and others with a legitimate complaint to resolve a difficulty. However, in cases of unreasonably persistent complaints or harassment, the school may take some or all of the following steps, as appropriate:

- Inform the complainant informally that his/her behaviour is now considered by the school to be unreasonable or unacceptable, and request a changed approach.
- Inform the complainant in writing that the school considers his/her behaviour to fall under the terms of the unreasonably persistent behaviours/ harassment policy.
- Require all future meetings with a member of staff to be conducted with a second person present. In the interests of all parties, notes of these meetings may be taken.
- Inform the complainant that, except in emergencies, the school will respond only to written communication and that these may be required to be channelled through the local authority.
- Inform the complainant, in circumstances where complaints are being regularly made but with no substantial evidence that they will be limited to the number of complaints made each term as part of a communication plan. This would usually be reviewed after six months. This communication plan would be discussed and agreed with the chair of the Personnel Committee and reported anonymously at the next Full Board of Governors meeting.

Procedures for staff:

Avoiding an Incident - Parents, or members of the public, may arrive in a tense, agitated state and how they are initially dealt with might well make the difference between a minor exchange of words and an escalating or violent confrontation. Members of staff are entitled to support from their SLT in handling a potentially difficult parent interview, so, if you have any concerns you should discuss them with your senior leader. Sensitivity towards parental difficulties is an asset. Many adults are still influenced by their own schooling and other childhood experiences, as well as their consequent expectations for their own children. Over anxious, or even ambitious, parents can feel very vulnerable. Preparation is an essential ingredient in ensuring that interviews/meetings prove constructive rather than confrontational. The school advises all staff not to engage in work related conversations with parents/carers etc outside of the school boundary. Staff that do risk breaching confidentiality guidelines and may also be putting themselves at unnecessary risk of abuse.

Always try to:

Prepare in advance by:

- Ensuring there is enough space in the room, whilst also making it appear intimate and relaxing (this can be achieved through lighting and warm colouring). People can need greater personal space than normal when upset or angry and the proximity of others can be more threatening
- Having an alarm readily available (a member of staff nearby/door open/mobile phone next to you switched on)
- Considering having a colleague present, or pre-arranging with a colleague to check

Physical or verbal aggression - The governing body will not tolerate **any** form of physical or verbal aggression against members of the school community. If there is evidence of any such aggression the school may:

- Ban the individual from entering the school site, with immediate effect;
- Request an anti-social behaviour order (ASBO).
- Prosecute under anti-harassment legislation.
- Call the police to remove the individual from the premises, under powers provided by the Education Act 1996.

Barring from the School Premises - Although fulfilling a public function, schools are private places. The public has no automatic right of entry. The schools will therefore act to ensure it remains a safe place for pupils, staff and other members of our community.

If a parent's behaviour is a cause for concern, the school can ask him/her to leave school premises. In serious cases, the headteacher or the local authority can notify them in writing that their implied licence to be on school premises has been temporarily revoked subject to any representations that the parent may wish to make. The school will give the parent the opportunity to formally express their views on the decision to bar in writing.

The decision to bar should then be reviewed, taking into account any representations made by the parent and either confirmed or lifted. If the decision is confirmed the parent should be notified in writing explaining how long the bar will be in place.

Anyone wishing to complain about being barred can do so, by letter or email, to the headteacher or Chair of Governors. However, complaints about barring cannot be escalated to the Department for Education. Once the school's own complaints procedure has been completed, the only remaining avenue of appeal is through the Courts; independent legal advice must therefore be sought.

Legitimate new complaints will always be considered, even if the person making them is (or has been) subject to the Unreasonably Persistent Behaviours/ Harassment Policy. The school nevertheless reserves the right not to respond to communications from individuals subject to the policy.