

The Reddings Primary & Nursery School



Managing Aggressive Behaviour from Parents and Visitors Policy

Rationale taken from the DfE

As a general rule, schools are orderly, safe places, where relationships between staff and visitors, especially parents, demonstrate mutual respect and recognition of shared responsibility for pupils' welfare and educational progress. Parental involvement is an important factor in educational success and in dealing with emerging problems at an early stage. However, occasionally the behaviour of a few parents can cause severe disruption or worse, resulting in abusive or aggressive behaviour towards staff.

1. Statement of intent

The Reddings Primary and Nursery School encourages close links with parents and the community. We believe that pupils benefit when the relationship between home and school is a positive one. We wish to keep the school a happy and safe place for both staff, visitors and children to work and learn.

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

Our school expects and requires its staff to behave professionally in these difficult situations and attempt to defuse the situation where possible, informing a member of the senior team and seeking the involvement of other colleagues as appropriate.

We expect parents and other visitors to behave in a reasonable way. If parents are unhappy about any aspect of their child's education they can arrange a meeting in the first instance, with the class teacher, the Senior Leadership Team member responsible for that class and if it is not resolved then the Headteacher.

Violence, threatening behaviour and abuse against school staff or other members of the school community will not be tolerated and all have the right to expect that their school is a safe environment in which to work and learn without fear.

The governing body is responsible for protecting the health and safety of their staff, pupils and visitors; this policy outlines the steps that will be taken where behaviour is unacceptable.

2. Behaviour

Some examples of behaviour towards school staff or other members of the school community that are considered serious and unacceptable and will not be tolerated:

Definition of Abusive, Threatening and Violent Behaviour

- a) Unreasonable behaviour and aggressive language
 - Shouting, either in person or over the telephone

- Physically intimidating e.g. standing very close to her/him
 - The use of aggressive hand gestures
 - Making threats whether in person or via social media
 - Shaking or holding a fist towards another person
 - Swearing
 - Pushing
 - Hitting e.g. slapping, punching and kicking
 - Spitting
 - Sexist, racist or homophobic comments
- b) Common Assault - involving the threat of immediate violence or causing minor injury (such as a graze, reddening of the skin or minor bruise)
- c) Actual Bodily Harm - causing an injury which interferes with the health or comfort of the victim (such as multiple bruising, broken tooth or temporary sensory loss)
- d) Grievous Bodily Harm - causing serious injury (such as a broken bone or an injury requiring lengthy treatment). There is also a racially aggravated form of assault, where there is a racial element to the offence, which carries higher maximum penalties.
- e) Harassment - situations can arise where staff find themselves subjected to a pattern of persistent and unreasonable behaviour from individual parents which is not abusive or overtly aggressive but which can be perceived as intimidating and oppressive. In these circumstances, staff may be faced with a barrage of constant demands or criticisms (on an almost daily basis) which, whilst not particularly taxing or serious when viewed in isolation, can have the cumulative effect over time of undermining their confidence, well-being and health. In extreme cases, the behaviour of the parent may constitute an offence under the protection from Harassment Act 1997.

There is an expectation that conduct will conform to that as laid out in the home school agreement. Unacceptable behaviour will result in Herts County Council and the Police being informed of the incident.

3. Procedure

This policy will detail how our school will deal with violence, threatening behaviour or abuse by parents/carers of a child.

The school's measures to avoid, prevent and minimise incidents include:

- The Headteacher has the prime responsibility in the school to ensure that the staff are protected. This responsibility is delegated to the members of the Senior Leadership Team who share in the responsible for safety of staff on a day to day basis. Staff are advised, however, in the event of an incident, to:
 - Speak calmly and without raising the voice
 - Be assertive but not aggressive
 - Be polite but firm
 - Seek assistance

- Think about an escape route, should the need arise
- Walk away
- Ending the telephone call
- In the event of an emergency, staff should request assistance from a member of the Senior Leadership Team, if available, otherwise the nearest member(s) of staff.
- The member of Senior Leadership will request that the person causing offence leave the premises.
- Should the person not leave the premises then the member of Senior Leadership Team will call the police.
- The incident will be reported to the Local Authority.

Dealing with abusive, threatening or violent behaviour

When a parent or member of the public behaves in an unacceptable way towards a member of the school staff the Headteacher or senior staff member will seek to resolve the situation through discussion and mediation. If necessary, the school's complaints procedure 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 or carer may be banned by the Headteacher from the school premises for a period of time, subject to review. A parent of a child attending a school has implied permission to be on the school's premises at certain times and for certain purposes but if the parent's behaviour is unreasonable this permission will be withdrawn and they will become a trespasser.

Section 547 of the Education Act 1996 makes it an offence for a trespasser on school premises to cause or permit a nuisance or disturbance and allows for the removal and prosecution of any person believed to have committed the offence. The penalty for a person convicted of the offence is a fine of up to £500.

Prior to being banned the following steps will be taken:

1. The parent/carer will be informed, in writing, that they are banned from the premises, subject to review, and what will happen if the ban is breached, e.g. that an injunction application may follow.
2. Where an assault has led to a ban, a statement indicating that the matter has been reported to Herts County Council and the Police will be included.
3. The Chair of Governors will be informed of the ban.
4. Where appropriate, arrangements for pupils being delivered to, and collected from the school gate will be clarified. It is important for clear and concise detailed records of events to be maintained at every stage.

4. Statutory and Non-Statutory Measures

Non-statutory Measures

Following an incident, and an appropriate risk assessment, the following strategies may also be used:

- If appropriate, parents will be invited to make an appointment to speak to their child's class teacher should an issue arise that they wish to discuss, a member of the Senior Leadership Team will be present at this meeting and the discussion will be minuted.

- A class teacher may refuse to speak to a parent if the level of aggression increases during the meeting and is deemed to be unacceptable. In this case the meeting will be closed and the parent asked to leave the site.
- The Headteacher/member of the Senior Leadership Team may request an appointment with the parent in place of the class teacher to discuss the incident. It is advisable to have a witness present at this meeting.
- Any member of staff has the right to call 999 and seek assistance should they be confronted by verbal abuse or the threat of physical assault against them.

Statutory Measures

The school's Governing Body would take the lead in giving consent for proceedings against a parent/carer. The School may also decide to use the following legal measures:

- Section 222 Local Government Act 1972
- Anti-Social Behaviour Orders
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Criminal Damage Act 1971
- Section 39 of Criminal Justice Act 1988
- Section 47 of the Offences against the Persons Act 1861
- Offences against the Public Order Act 1986
- Section 31 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- Criminal Justice Act 1988

5. Support for Employees

If a member of staff is unfortunate enough to be one of the very small minority subject to physical or serious verbal abuse, there are a variety of support mechanisms available to them. In such circumstances the immediate and ongoing support of colleagues will be invaluable. In addition to this, staff at The Reddings Primary & Nursery School may be able to obtain confidential specialist support through SAS Insurance and/or Open Toy Box. Trade unions are also likely to be a source of assistance.

6. Conclusion

Herts County Council will take action where behaviour is unacceptable or serious and breaches our home school agreement or health and safety legislation. In implementing this policy, the school will as appropriate, seek advice from the County's Education, Health and Safety and Legal Departments to ensure fairness and consistency.