



Héronswood Primary School and Pre-School

Policy - Managing Violent and Abusive Visitors to School

At Heronswood we believe that every child, every member of staff and every parent or carer deserves to be treated with respect, courtesy and without fear of verbal or physical attack. This policy is guidance for dealing with aggressive or abusive parents and visitors to schools who cause nuisance or create a disturbance.

Summary

Day to day access to a school is within the control of the Head Teacher. Normally parents and carers (and those with parental responsibility) are granted "limited licence" to visit the grounds and buildings of a school. Most schools will establish procedures which set out: the acceptable purposes for such visits; the areas of the school that may be entered at particular times and the standard of behaviour expected.

Where there is a breach of such procedures the school needs to respond in a measured way, depending on the seriousness of any inappropriate conduct e.g.:

- initiate a meeting/dialogue with the individual;
- write to the visitor, describing their misconduct, explaining its impact on the school and stating its unacceptability;
- vary the person's "licence", say, through the addition of conditions;
- warn of the possibility of a "ban" (i.e. the withdrawal of their licence) if the misconduct is repeated;
- impose a ban with a review after a fixed period;
- impose a ban without review.

It is possible for a Head Teacher to initiate any of these actions on their own authority, but is less likely to lead to personal confrontation if the more serious sanctions are initiated by the School Improvement Board Members or Board of Trustees.

Introduction

As a general rule, schools are orderly, safe places, where relationships between staff and visitors, especially parents and carers, 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, on occasion, the behaviour of a few parents and carers can cause severe disruption or worse, resulting in abusive or aggressive behaviour towards staff, pupils, or other members of the school community.

Violence, threatening behaviour and abuse against school staff or other members of the school community must not be tolerated. All members of the school community have a right to expect that their school is a safe place in which to work and learn. There is no place for violence, threatening behaviour or abuse in schools. Where such behaviour does occur, schools must know that their School Improvement Board Members will play a proactive role in taking all possible action to deal with it, in response to the wishes of the school.

At all times the common purpose remains clear: to achieve zero tolerance of violence, threatening behaviour or abuse in schools, and to ensure all members of the school community, and all visitors to the school, can be confident that they are operating within a safe environment. Schools should in the first instance ask their School Improvement Board Members for advice on the appropriateness of the remedies available.

Code of Conduct

The School Improvement Board Members of Heronswood encourages close links with parents and the community. It believes that pupils benefit when the relationship between home and school is a positive one. The vast majority of parents, carers and others visiting 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, verbal and or physical abuse towards members of school staff or the wider school community.



The School Improvement Board expects and requires its members of staff to behave professionally in these difficult situations and attempt to defuse the situation where possible, seeking the involvement as appropriate of other colleagues. However, all members of staff have the right to work without fear of violence and abuse, and the right, in an extreme case, of appropriate self-defence.

We expect parents and other visitors to behave in a reasonable way towards members of school staff. This policy outlines the steps that will be taken where behaviour is unacceptable.

Types of behaviour that are considered serious and unacceptable and will not be tolerated:

- Shouting at members of the school staff, either in person or over the telephone;
- Physically intimidating a member of staff, e.g. standing very close to her/him;
- The use of aggressive hand gestures;
- Threatening behaviour;
- Shaking or holding a fist towards another person;
- Swearing;
- Pushing;
- Hitting, slapping, punching and kicking;
- Spitting;
- Breaching the school's security procedures.

This is not an exhaustive list but seeks to provide illustrations of such behaviour. **Unacceptable behaviour may result in the police being informed of the incident.**

The Banning Process

The Head Teacher will need to assemble the full facts before proceeding, making sure that all those involved in any incidents, or witnesses to those incidents, make a full written record as soon as possible.

Crucial elements:

- Write to parent/carer/intruder to record in detail the incident and why it is unacceptable;
- Explain that the School Improvement Board Members will consider banning the parent, giving the parent a period in which they may respond in writing giving their version and why they should not be banned;
- Tell the parent when a decision will be made.

The length of a ban

The ban should be finite in length, as only the most serious misconduct would justify an indefinite ban. The duration needs to be sufficient to convey a clear message about the seriousness of the associated misconduct, but not so long as to be disproportionate. The aim should always be to restore "normal" relations as soon as is reasonably practicable. Even if a ban is permanent, it should be reviewed periodically, taking account of subsequently demonstrated patterns of behaviour.

What does a ban achieve?

- It confirms to a parent that the school will not tolerate misbehaviour;
- Shows the school takes health and safety of its staff, visitors and pupils seriously;
- It provides a key element in making it easier to use legal remedies to prevent repeated misconduct, including use of S547 of the 1996 Education Act to enable Police removal and possible prosecution of those on school premises without permission;
- It may form the basis for an application for an injunction to curtail repeated instances of misbehaviour.

Parental Rights

Every attempt should be made to maintain normal communications with parents/carers, including giving them the opportunity to participate in elections for parent School Improvement Board Members, say. Even where a parent/carer has been banned from the school premises, they retain their right to an annual consultation in relation to the educational progress of their child/ren. However, the school may determine who will be present at the meeting (e.g a senior member of staff might accompany the class teacher) and its location (e.g. it may well be arranged off site). The interests of the child should continue to be paramount.

**Section 547, Education Act 1996**

Section 547 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. A parent/carer of a child attending a school normally has implied permission (limited licence) to be on the school's premises at certain times and for certain purposes but if their behaviour is unreasonable this permission may be withdrawn and they will become a trespasser. A person who nevertheless persists in entering the school premises and displaying unreasonable behaviour may be removed and prosecuted under section 547.

The School Improvement Board Members may take the lead in authorising the removal of a person believed to be causing or permitting a nuisance or disturbance and may bring proceedings against them. In the case of an academy, the School Improvement Board Members or Board of Trustees can independently authorise the removal of someone from the premises and may also authorise a person to bring proceedings against that individual. Additionally, in all situations the police are authorised to remove someone from school premises and to bring proceedings for an offence under this section.

Schools wishing action to be taken against someone they believe has committed an offence under s547 should contact their School Improvement Board as appropriate. If the police have been involved the school should clarify whether the police intend to summons or charge and whether the Crown Prosecution Service has decided that there is sufficient evidence to prosecute. In most cases it will be in the public interest to prosecute if there is sufficient evidence to support a prosecution.

This policy has been written in consultation with the School Improvement Board Members, staff and pupils of Heronswood

Policy Written - November 2015

Mrs Pierpoint – Head Teacher

Agreed by School Improvement Board Members: November 2015

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