

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Staff Safety & Protection from Harassment: Parents' Guide



‘Walking in the footsteps of Jesus, loving and serving together’

Introduction

The school encourages close links with parents and the community. We believe that students benefit when the relationship between home and school is a positive one. The vast majority of parents, carers and others visiting the school are keen to work with us and are supportive of the school.

However, a tiny minority of parents have a negative attitude towards the school and sometimes this can result in aggression, and verbal and/or physical abuse towards school staff. The school expects its staff to behave professionally in these difficult situations and to attempt to defuse the situation where possible, seeking the involvement as appropriate of other colleagues. However, all staff have the right to work without fear of violence and abuse and the right, in extreme cases, of appropriate self-defence.

All staff have the support of the Governing Body in dealing with violent, harassing, or aggressive individuals.

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

Indicators of Unacceptable Behaviour

Listed below are the types of behaviour that are considered serious and unacceptable and will not be tolerated. The list is not exhaustive and seeks only to provide illustrations of such behaviour.

- Shouting at 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 school staff
- Shaking or holding a fist towards another person
- Swearing at a member of school staff
- Pushing
- Hitting, e.g. slapping, punching or kicking

- Spitting
- Racist or sexist comments
- Breaking the school's security procedures

Degrees of Unacceptable Behaviour

Displays of unacceptable behaviour range from outright physical violence to aggression and intimidating language and swearing.

Violence

There are three categories of assault, based on the severity of the injury to the victim:

- a) Common Assault - involves the threat of immediate violence or causing minor injury (such as a graze, reddening of the skin or minor bruise);
- b) Actual Bodily Harm - causes an injury which interferes with the health or comfort of the victim (such as multiple bruising, broken tooth or temporary sensory loss);
- c) Grievous Bodily Harm - causes serious injury (such as a broken bone or an injury requiring lengthy treatment).

Harassment

Harassment can be harder to define and prove. 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. If so, the Police have powers to take action against the offender.

Aggression

This is probably the most common form of antisocial behaviour. Examples are:

- a) threatening stance or posture;
- b) threatening or abusive language;
- c) swearing;
- d) antisocial gestures.

Procedure for Dealing with Unacceptable Behaviour

This procedure assumes that:

- The Headteacher is designated to take the lead role in relation to this policy; and
- The Chair of Governors is nominated to oversee the implementation of this policy on behalf of the Governing Body.

If there is an act of violence, the Police will be called.

For any act of aggression, violence or harassment, an incident report form will be started or continued. In the case of harassment, which is continuing, a log of events will be maintained. All staff involved will be asked to contribute to the incident report form. In the case of violence or aggression, or continued incidences of harassment (two or more occurrences), the governor responsible for maintaining the policy will be informed. The incident report form will be completed as soon after the incident as is immediately practical, and the governor responsible for maintaining this policy will be notified.

When a parent or member of the public behaves in an unacceptable way towards a member of the school staff the headteacher or designated senior staff member will seek to resolve the situation through discussion and mediation. If necessary, the school's complaints procedure will 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. Such a ban is a formal arrangement whereby an individual who breaks the ban may then be treated as a trespasser and served with an injunction.

Prior to being banned the following steps will be taken:

- a) Where there has been an assault the matter will be reported to Wiltshire Council and the Police and may result in prosecution;
- b) The parent/carer will be informed, in writing, that s/he is banned from the premises, that the ban is subject to review and what will happen if the ban is breached, e.g. that an injunction application may follow;
- c) The Chair of Governors will be informed of the ban;
- d) Where appropriate, arrangements for pupils being delivered to and collected from the school gate will be clarified.

Conclusion

If a parent, carer or other visitor to the school is intimidating, threatening or aggressive towards any member of the school community any interaction will be terminated immediately and the person will be instructed to leave the premises. Further action may be taken by the school where behaviour is considered to be unacceptable.

Arrangements for monitoring, evaluation and review

Responsible committee for monitoring & evaluation:	Mission, Vision and Ethos Committee
Policy reviewed by:	Mission, Vision and Ethos Committee
Policy review & approval date:	February 2023
Next review date:	February 2025

