

BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS STAFF BY PARENTS, CARERS AND VISITORS: EXPECTATIONS AND PROCEDURES

1. Expectations of parents, carers and visitors to the school

The school actively encourages close links with parents/carers and the community. We know that students benefit when the relationship between home and school is a positive one and we welcome visitors to our school and encourage parents to communicate with us by phone or via email. If a parent or carer has concerns we will always listen to them and seek to address them as quickly and positively as possible. We will always act to ensure the school remains a safe place for students, staff and all other members of our community and therefore abusive, threatening or aggressive behaviour will not be tolerated. If such behaviour occurs we will follow the procedures outlined in this policy.

Types of behaviour that are considered serious and unacceptable and which will not be tolerated in relation to members of staff, and other members of the community are:

- shouting, either in person or over the telephone
- swearing, either in person or over the telephone
- emails which are sarcastic, combative or aggressive in tone and language
- constant emails and/or phone calls which amount to harassment and intimidation, despite the school's best efforts to address a situation
- inappropriate electronic activity including publishing abusive or inappropriate content with regards to the school, teachers or students on social networking websites such as Facebook and Twitter or in email communication
- any form of physical violence, such as pushing or hitting
- physically intimidation, e.g. standing unnecessarily close to her/him
- the use of rude or aggressive hand gestures, including shaking or holding a fist towards another person

2. Procedure to be followed when behaviour is inappropriate

a) Informal complaint

If a parent, carer or visitor behaves in an unacceptable way towards a member of the school community, the Headteacher and/or appropriate senior staff will seek to resolve the situation through discussion and mediation. Such discussion will highlight how the behaviour of the parent/carers did not meet the school's expectations and a request will be made that future communications with the school are modified in the light of this. A letter will be sent to the parent/carers to confirm this request.

b) Formal complaint

Following any interaction with a parent/carers or visitor, a member of staff reserves the right to submit a formal complaint about the incident to the Headteacher. Should such a formal complaint be made then the Headteacher or designated member of the Leadership team will investigate the complaint, by speaking with the parent/carers and the member of staff. During the investigation, any contact with the school will be through a designated member of staff and by prior appointment only. The parent/carers will be informed of this by letter. The Headteacher will determine any action to be taken in response to the findings of the investigation.

3. Actions which could follow such an investigation

- An request to meet with the Headteacher to discuss events
- A letter clarifying to the parent/carers what is considered acceptable behaviour by the school

- The designation of one member of staff to act as the conduit for communication between the parent/carer and the school
- As a last resort, withdrawing permission for the parent/carer to enter the school site and/or buildings without prior appointment

4. Acceptable communication by telephone

a) Dealing with abusive telephone calls

Sometimes staff may have to deal with challenging, abusive, aggressive or threatening telephone calls. It is unacceptable for any member of staff to be subjected to such abuse and this guidance has been produced to assist parents to understand conduct which the school expects parents to follow during phone calls and to staff if they are faced with a difficult situation.

Guidance for parents/carers

- When you call Rosebery School you will speak initially to our Reception staff. They will do their very best to connect you with the person you wish to speak to, but given the vast majority of our staff will be teaching, it is most likely that they will take a message or put you through to the voicemail of that member of staff
- Please do not become frustrated with the Reception staff if they cannot attain an answer to your concern or connect you to the person you wish to speak to straight away; this is not their fault and any frustrations vented at this time, will not serve to ensure your issue is dealt with any quicker
- At any time when speaking to a member of staff at Rosebery School, please do not raise your voice or use aggressive or threatening language

Guidance to staff

To reduce the likelihood of callers becoming abusive staff should conduct themselves in a courteous and professional manner and make every attempt to meet the needs of the caller. Staff should also have the confidence that it is acceptable to end an abusive telephone call.

Always:

- remain calm and polite
- stay in control of the situation
- actively listen – repeat information back to the caller to test understanding of the issue and gain their agreement
- inform the caller they are trying to help them
- be positive and say what you can do
- be clear and avoid using jargon
- if necessary, apologise for an error and take action to put it right
- make notes of the conversation
- follow the procedure below and if appropriate refer to the caller to the LT Line Manager or to the Headteacher

Never:

- respond in the same manner as an abusive caller
- take it personally
- allow yourself to be bullied
- slam the phone down.

Script for abusive telephone calls

When the caller starts to raise their voice/be abusive:

Mr/Mrs/Ms...please don't raise your voice/swear at me, I am not raising my voice/being rude to you. If you continue to raise your voice/be rude to me then I will be forced to terminate the call.

When the caller continues to raise their voice/be abusive:

Mr/Mrs/Ms..... I understand you are upset/frustrated however I am not prepared to continue to be shouted/sworn at so you can either call back when you have calmed down or if you prefer you can put your views in writing.

If, despite the two warnings above, the caller continues to raise their voice/be abusive:

Mr/Mrs/Ms.... I advised you earlier during this call about raising your voice/swearing and you have continued to do this, so I am afraid I am going to have to terminate this call. Hang up.

Further actions

Make a written note of the telephone call or use the incident report form and report the incident to your line manager.

b) Acceptable communication by email

Sometimes staff may have to deal with challenging, abusive, aggressive or threatening emails. It is unacceptable for any member of staff to be subjected to such abuse and this guidance has been produced to assist parents to understand conduct which the school expects parents to follow when emailing the school and to staff if receive such messages.

Guidance for parents/carers

- Always address the member of staff formally (eg Dear Ms Allen...)
- Always use formal and courteous language in the message
- Do not use bold text or capitalisation to emphasise concerns
- Only expect a response to the member of staff to whom you have directly sent the email, not those who you have included in the circulation
- Do not expect an instant response. The majority of staff will be teaching for most of the day and do not have the opportunity to check their emails until the conclusion of meetings and training which take place after the children have gone home

Guidance for staff

- Always address the member of staff formally (eg Dear Ms Allen...)
- Always use formal and courteous language in the message
- Do not use bold text or capitalisation to emphasise concerns
- If you receive an email which you believe does not follow the school's expectations of the use of email, forward the message to your LT Line Manager or to the Headteacher

5. Abuse/bullying using cyber technology

Staff may become targets of cyber abuse or bullying which can have a significant impact on health, well-being and self-confidence. Protecting staff from abuse is best done within a prevention framework, including whole school policies and appropriate practices.

Cyber abuse/bullying may consist of threats, harassment, embarrassment, humiliation, defamation or impersonation. It may take the form of general insults, or prejudice based abuse, e.g. homophobic, sexist, racist, or other forms of discrimination. It may involve email, virtual learning environments, chat rooms, websites, social networking sites, mobile and fixed-point phones, digital cameras, games and virtual world sites.

Abuse using cyber technology can occur at any time and incidents can intrude into the victim's private life. The audience for such messages can be very large and can be reached rapidly. The content of electronically forwarded messages is hard to control and the worry of content resurfacing can make it difficult for the victim to move on.

a) Cyberbullying and the law

While there is not a specific criminal offence called cyberbullying, activities can be criminal offences under a range of different laws, including:

- The Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- The Malicious Communications Act 1988
- Section 127 of the Communications Act 2003
- Public Order Act 1986
- The Defamation Acts 1952 and 1996

It is the duty of the school to ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all employees. Incidents that are related to employment, even those taking place outside the hours or place of work may fall under the responsibility of the employer.

b) Effectively tackling abuse using cyber technology

School behaviour policies and procedures explicitly refer to and outline how the school will deal with cyber abuse/bullying of both staff and students. They include:

- rules on the use of equipment, software and network access provided by the school,
- the use of staff and student owned equipment and internet access routes, where they are used on school premises and within school hours, e.g. mobile phones, digital cameras and laptops

Responding to incidents

- Staff should never retaliate i.e. personally engage with cyberbullying incidents.
- Keep any records of abuse – texts, emails, voice mails, or instant messages. Take screen prints of messages or web pages. Record the time, date and address of the site.
- Inform the LT Line Manager or Headteacher as soon as possible
- Where the perpetrator is known to be a current student or co-worker, this should be dealt with through the school's own behaviour management / disciplinary procedures.
- Monitoring and confiscation must be appropriate and proportionate – parents/carers, employees and learners should be made aware in advance of any monitoring (for example, of email or internet use) or the circumstances under which confiscation might take place.
- A designated member of the leadership team should contact the police where it appears that a law has been broken – for example, where death threats, assault, or racially motivated criminal offences are involved. Where a potential criminal offence has been identified, the school should ensure that any internal investigation does not interfere with police inquiries. School staff are of course able to report incidents directly to the police.
- If a potential criminal offence has been committed and the school is not able to identify the perpetrator, the police may issue a Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) request to a service provider, enabling them to disclose the data about a message or the person sending it.

Abuse/bullying using cyber technology

Where online content is upsetting / inappropriate and the person(s) responsible for posting is known, the quickest way to get material taken down is likely to be to ensure that the person who posted it understands why the material is unacceptable and to request that they remove it.

If the person responsible has not been identified, or will not take the material down, the school will contact the host (i.e. the social networking site) to make a request to get the content taken down. The material posted may breach the service provider's terms and conditions of use and can then be removed.

It is important to be clear about where the content is – for example by taking a screen capture of the material that includes the URL or web address. If the school requests they take down material that is not illegal, it will be clear how it contravenes the site's terms and conditions. In cases of actual/suspected illegal content, the school will contact the police.

Annex C

Record keeping

There should be clear and detailed records of all events which must be kept up to date. Any witness statements (where appropriate) and notes of any subsequent meetings held to discuss the events should also be retained. Notes should be signed and dated.

Any physical evidence should be bagged and labelled, and witnesses should be asked to make a record of exactly what they saw and heard at the earliest opportunity.

It is also advisable to ensure that in every case, even where a formal letter is not required, parents/carers receive a written confirmation of the events and the Principal's response.

If the police are asked to deal with an incident as a criminal investigation, there are a number of actions that may thwart this process. Witness details should not be made known to suspected offenders or their families. Groups of witnesses or suspects should not be left together, or allowed to discuss what happened, before the police interview them. If in doubt always seek the advice of the police officer first.

A model form is attached as Appendix 4 to this document, and is provided for Principals and Governors to adapt as necessary.

Incident recording form

Date and time of incident:

Details of person(s) assaulted/ verbally abused:

Name:

Address and telephone number:

Role / Job title:

Details of perpetrator:

Name:

Address and telephone number:

Relationship to the school:

Details of witnesses:

Witness 1:

Name, contact details and relationship to the school