



# Willows High School

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## Dealing with threatening and abusive behaviour from Parents, Carers and Visitors

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Signed.....

Chair of Governors Date.....

Signed.....

Headteacher Date.....

#### Introduction:

At Willows High School, we value the positive relationships forged with our parents, carers and visitors to the school. We wish to work in partnership with parents and carers in order to create the best learning opportunities for their child so that we can reach together for success.

We also strive to make our school a place where, as adults, we model the behaviour we teach and expect. We place a high importance on our school values together with good manners, positive communication and mutual respect.

#### Principles:

Almost all parents, carers and visitors to Willows High School are keen to work with us and are supportive of the school. However, on very rare occasions, the behaviour of a small number of parents falls short of what we expect. This can sometimes manifest itself in aggression or abuse towards members of the school community or it can be written communication (including social media), on the telephone or in face-to-face situations. To conclude, the over-riding principle of this policy is that all members of the school community have the right to work or be in school without fear of aggression or abuse from parents, carers or visitors.

#### Staff conduct:

We expect all members of our staff to behave professionally, attempting to defuse the situation where possible and seeking the involvement of other colleagues as appropriate. However, staff also have the right to end any conversation (face to face or on the telephone) should they feel they are being threatened or are dealing with aggressive or abusive parents or carers.

#### Parents, carers and visitors conduct:

We expect all members of the community to follow these principles:

- Respect the caring ethos of our school and our School Values.
- To work together with teachers and other members of school staff for the benefit of our pupils.

All members of the school community should be treated with respect and, therefore, we must all set a good example in our own speech and behaviour. In order to support a safe and peaceful school environment, the school cannot accept parents, carers or visitors exhibiting any of the following behaviour:

- Any kind of threat.
- Any kind of insult that is meant to demean, embarrass or undermine.
- Any kind of conduct which undermines the safe and calm environment in the school, either in the reception area, a school office, classroom, around the school site, immediately outside the school or on the school grounds. (This includes parents entering the school without a member of staff being present).
- Raising of voice so as to be intimidating.
- Using loud or offensive language, such as swearing, or displaying an unacceptable amount of anger and aggression.
- Threatening physical violence to a member of the school community (including other parents or carers).

- Damaging school property.
- Abusive telephone calls, emails, letters or other forms of written communication.
- Defamatory comments about school staff or governors (including on social media sites).
- The use of physical aggression towards another adult (including parents or carers) or child. This includes physical punishment of your own child.
- Approaching someone else's child in order to chastise them.
- Any other behaviour (can be face-to-face contact, on the telephone or written communication) which makes a member of staff or pupil feel threatened.

The Public Order Act 1986 defines "disorderly conduct" as: verbal abuse, threatening abusive or insulting words or behaviour or any disorderly behaviour whereby a person is caused alarm, harassment or distress.

"Threatening behaviour" is when a person fears that violence, or threat of violence, is likely to be provoked. In a school context this could mean someone shouting at a member of staff, either in person or on the phone; acting aggressively, including using intimidating body language, as well as actual violence. It also covers comments posted on social networking sites or situations where members of staff are approached off school premises.

Recording incidents:

Any incident must be recorded by email to the Headteacher:

- Trespass
- Verbal abuse
- Sexual or racial abuse
- Threats
- Aggression
- Physical violence
- Intentional damage to personal property or the school's property
- Any racist comments
- Any injuries to staff or children

Unreasonable Demands:

Whilst the school is committed to addressing complaints in a proportionate manner, unreasonable demands, persistence or vexatious complaints may prevent the school staff and governing body from meeting this commitment. The school consider such unreasonable demands could include:

- Inappropriate, lengthy or frequent visits, phone calls, emails or letters.
- Making groundless complaints and/or making a groundless complaint only to annoy.
- Insisting on seeing or speaking to a particular member of staff when a suitable alternative has been offered.
- Routinely ignoring the procedures for dealing with queries or complaints (for example, copying the same correspondence to a number of people at the school, thereby making it difficult for us to provide a co-ordinated response).
- Demanding a response within an unreasonable timescale.
- Not accepting that the issues raised are not within the school's remit despite having been informed that this is the case.

- Inappropriately changing the substance of a query or complaint while the school is dealing with it.
- Frequently raising peripheral and, possibly, trivial matters that do not relate to the main query/complaint
- Pursuing a complaint after the Complaints Policy has been fully implemented and exhausted
- Insisting that the school or Governing Body has not provided an adequate response to a query or complaint, despite evidence that this has been provided.
- Refusing to cooperate with school's complaint handling procedures.
- Electronically recording meetings or conversations without the prior knowledge and consent of other parties.
- Making the same complaint repeatedly with minor differences to insist that the differences make the matter a 'new' complaint.
- Making unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues and seeking to have them replaced.
- Knowingly providing falsified or inaccurate information.
- Publishing unacceptable information on social media or other forums.

What is 'harassment'?

We regard harassment as the unreasonable pursuit of issues or complaints, particularly if the matter appears to be pursued in a way intended to cause personal distress rather than seek a resolution.

Behaviour considered to be harassment:

- It appears to be deliberately targeted over a significant period of time at one or more members of school staff or others.
- The way in which a complaint or other issues is pursued (as opposed to the complaint itself) causes ongoing distress to school staff or others.
- It has a significant and disproportionate adverse effect on the school community.
- Actions are pursued aggressively or in any manner not appropriate to an effective resolution.

Procedure for dealing with abusive parents, carers or visitors:

Step 1 - Letter to explain what is considered acceptable behaviour (see Appendix A) The Headteacher will send a letter to the parent(s) involved. It will be put to them that such behaviour is unacceptable and an assurance will be sought that such an incident will not be repeated. It will be stressed on this occasion that repetition of such an incident will result in further more serious action being taken. If the Headteacher has been subject to abuse, this will be done by the Chair of Governors (or other appointed governor, if the Chair is involved in the incident in any way). At any stage, the school may report serious incidents of abusive and threatening behaviour to the Local Authority. The school has a statutory responsibility to report any racist or discriminatory incidents to the Local Authority Any act of actual or threatened violence will be referred to the police immediately. NB: Any incidents of violent conduct would immediately proceed to step 5.

Step 2 – Written warning with an invitation to discuss events If a second incident occurs involving the same person or persons, the Headteacher will write to the adult(s) informing them once again that this conduct is unacceptable and invite them in to discuss the events.

As for Step 1, if the Headteacher has been subject to abuse, this will be done by the Chair or other appointed governor.

Step 3 – Final written warning informing parents of imposed conditions If a third incident occurs involving the same person or persons, the Headteacher will write to inform parents/carers of the school's decision to impose conditions that restrict their access to the school (this includes a complete ban).

Step 4 - Letter from Chair of Governors to confirm or overturn Headteacher's decision The Chair of Governors (or other appointed governor) will write to the adult(s) giving a final decision to either impose the conditions set out in Step 3 or to overturn the decision.

Step 5 – Involvement of the police. Any act of actual or threatened violence will be referred to the police immediately.

Furthermore, if following a decision to ban a person from the school premises, that person nevertheless persists in entering school premises and is displaying unreasonable behaviour, such a person may be removed from the school premises as a trespasser under Section 547 of the Education Act 1996 and charged with an offence under the Public Order Act 1986.

All parents, even if excluded from school premises, have a right to seek an appointment to speak to school staff about their child's educational progress. Monitoring Behaviour of parents, carers and visitors will be monitored by the Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team

Review and Evaluation of the Policy:

The policy will be reviewed in line with the governors' policy review schedule or to reflect any curriculum/practice changes that take place within school or externally.

## Appendix A - Letter to explain what is considered acceptable behaviour (Step 1)

Dear xxxx,

I have received a report about your conduct at the school on (enter date, time or details).

This appears to fall far short of what we would expect of a parent/carer/visitor at Willows High School. (Add factual summary of the incident and its effect on staff, pupils and other parents).

I must inform you that the governing body will not tolerate aggression towards members of the school community and will act to protect its staff and pupils from any form of abuse or intimidation.

I should warn you that any future conduct could result in the school imposing conditions restricting your access to the school or banning you from contacting or attending the school altogether. I wish to give you the opportunity to give me any written comments regarding the report about your conduct. These comments may include any assurances you are prepared to give about your future good conduct.

Details of our policy on dealing with abusive parents can be found on our website.

Kind regards,

Headteacher

## Appendix B - Written warning with an invitation to discuss events (Step 2)

Dear xxxx,

I have received a report about your conduct at the school on (enter date, time or details).  
(Add factual summary of the incident and its effect on staff, pupils and other parents).

You will recollect that I have already written to you about a previous incident on (date) warning you of the consequences of any further insulting or aggressive behaviour on your part.

I must inform you that the governing body will not tolerate conduct of this nature on the school premises and will act to defend school staff and pupils. I am therefore writing to invite you to attend a meeting on (date and time) to discuss the incident.

Failure to attend a meeting may result in the school imposing conditions regarding the contact you have with the school.

Details of our policy on dealing with abusive parents can be found on our website.

Kind regards,

Headteacher

Appendix C - Final written warning informing parents of imposed conditions (including a ban)  
(Step 3)

Dear xxxx,

I have received a report about your conduct at the school on (enter date, time or details).  
(Add factual summary of the incident and its effect on staff, pupils and other parents).

You will recollect that I have already written/spoken to you about a previous incident on (date) warning you of the consequences of any further insulting or aggressive behaviour on your part.

I must inform you that the governing body will not tolerate conduct of this nature on the school premises and will act to defend school staff and pupils. I am therefore writing to inform you that I am imposing conditions on the contact you may have with the school. These are as follows: (delete as appropriate)

- You must be accompanied to any meeting with a member of school staff
- You may not approach any member of staff unless you are accompanied by the Headteacher or member of the senior leadership team.
- You may not contact by telephone or in writing any member of staff. You may contact the Headteacher only.
- You may not attend any events for parents except those where you will be accompanied by the Headteacher or a member of the senior leadership of the school
- Other as are reasonable and proportionate

OR (Ban)

I am therefore writing to inform you that I am recommending imposing a ban on you attending or contacting the school.

This means you may not attend school for any reason whatsoever. You must not contact any member of staff by telephone or e-mail. You do, however, have the right to attend one meeting per year to discuss your child's progress. This meeting will be with me and I will contact you to arrange this at the time of the next parents evening.

The restrictions are provisional until they have been reviewed by the Chair of Governors. Please consider them in force until you receive their confirmation.

The Chair of Governors will need to decide whether it is appropriate to confirm or overturn this decision.

You may, if you wish, send a letter in writing any comments of your own within 10 working days of the date of this letter. They will then write to you the outcome of their decision.

Details of our policy on dealing with abusive parents can be found on our website.

Kind regards,

Headteacher



Appendix D - Letter from Chair of Governors to confirm or overturn Headteacher's decision  
(Step 4)

Dear xxxx,

The Headteacher (name) wrote to you on (date) to detail concerns about an incident when your behaviour fell far short of what we expect as a school.

You will be aware he has written to you previously about your behaviour. I have not received a written response from you. I have received a letter from you dated (date), the contents of which I have considered carefully. (delete as appropriate)

In the circumstances, and after further consideration of the Headteacher's report and your letter (delete as appropriate), I have determined that the decision to impose conditions/a ban (delete as appropriate) on you should be confirmed.

The decision will be reviewed on \_\_\_\_\_ (date) OR In the circumstances, and after further consideration of the Headteacher's report and your letter (delete as appropriate), I have determined that the decision to impose conditions/ban (delete as appropriate) should be overturned.

However, should there be a repeat of inappropriate behaviour towards staff, all of the above sanctions will apply.

Kind regards,

Chair of Governors