

Salendine Nook High School (Academy)

Managing Difficult Adults Policy (Non-Statutory)

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Produced by	Mr D Christian
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1. Rationale

As a general rule, our schools are safe, welcoming places, where relationships between staff and visitors, especially parents/carers, demonstrate mutual respect and recognition of shared responsibility for students' welfare and educational progress. Parental involvement is an important factor in educational success and in dealing with emerging problems at an early stage. We welcome parents and carers into our school.

However, on occasion, the behaviour and approach of a very small number of parents/carers can cause serious disruption or worse, result in abusive or aggressive behaviour towards staff, students, or other members of the school community.

There may also be instances where parents make unreasonable demands towards school staff.

This document provides guidance for dealing with unacceptable behaviour by adults either in school or when communicating with school staff by telephone, letter or email.

This policy should be read in conjunction with 'Managing Violent and Abusive Behaviour'.

This policy makes it clear that violent, 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. Controlling and coercive behaviours will also not be tolerated. Deciding what constitutes unreasonable demand is difficult to define but is characterised under Point 3 below.

2. Statement of Principles

The school encourages close links with parents and the community. It believes that students benefit when the relationship between home and school is a positive one. The vast majority of parents, carers and others visiting our school or communicating with our staff are keen to work with school and are supportive of the school. However, there are occasions where contact with school is unreasonable and therefore unacceptable.

Similarly, Salendine Nook High School expects and requires its members of staff to behave professionally in all situations and attempt to defuse the situation where possible, seeking the involvement as appropriate of other colleagues. Should any stakeholder feel that staff behaviour or attitude has been unacceptable, this should be reported to the Principal in the first instance. If the Principal has been unable to resolve the issue (or the concern is regarding the Principal), stakeholders should refer to the Complaints Policy and escalate their concern to the Governing Body.

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 on the rare occasions when behaviour is unacceptable.

3. Unacceptable Behaviour

Types of behaviour that are unreasonable and therefore unacceptable:

- Persistent and repeated emails to the same member of staff, for example the SENCo or Head of Year.
- Pursuing the same issue with multiple members of staff simultaneously.
- Implicit or explicit threats made to the member of staff in order to force the action that the stakeholder is looking for.
- Long emails that include multiple lists of demands and expectations.
- Communication by email repeatedly outside of school hours, including late in the evening or at the weekend.
- Emails designed to cause offence or not written respectfully.
- Extremist views counter to Equality Legislation or against any protected characteristics.

This is not an exhaustive list but seeks to provide illustrations of such behaviour.

4. Procedure to be followed

If a parent/carer behaves in an unacceptable way towards a member of the school community, the Principal or appropriate senior leader will seek to resolve the situation through discussion and mediation. If necessary, the school's complaints procedures should be followed.

Where all procedures have been exhausted and controlling coercive or other types of unacceptable behaviour continue, a parent or carer (or other stakeholder) may receive only one point of contact for all matters in relation to their child (or the school business in which they are involved).

In imposing the single point of contact rule, the following steps will be taken:

1. The parent/carer will be informed in writing, that she/he is subject to having only one point of contact for all school business.
2. The Chair of the Governing Body will be informed of the action and the factors that led up to it.
3. Where the communication continues to be unacceptable, all communication will be conducted through email and the school reserves the right to refuse to reply to all but emergency or safeguarding matters.
4. The stakeholder will still receive generic communications e.g. reports or all parent emails etc.
5. Where this results in a complaint being lodged against the school, the Governing Body reserve the right to refuse to investigate this under the Complaints Policy. This is particularly the case where the school presents evidence of unacceptable behaviours. Evidence might include emails, recorded calls or witness statements.
6. Staff will be informed that the single point of contact rule has been enforced.

5. The single point of contact process

The Principal will gather 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. This may involve the sharing of emails from parents to affected staff.

Essential elements - School will:

- write to the stakeholder to record in detail the incident/s and why it / they is / are unacceptable;
- explain that the Governing Body will consider whether the school's action is reasonable, giving the parent a reasonable time period in which they may respond in writing giving their version of events and why they should not receive a single point of contact;
- tell the parent when a decision will be made.

The length of the single point of contact action

The single point of contact action should be finite in length. There may be exceptional circumstances which render this action indefinite e.g. where the stakeholder has had single point of contact action taken before.

The duration needs to be sufficient to convey a clear message about the seriousness of the behaviour.

However, 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 stakeholder that the school will not tolerate unacceptable behaviour;
- it shows that the school takes health, safety and wellbeing of its staff, visitors and students seriously;
- it may form the basis for further action, or evidence to support further action in the future.

6. Parental Rights

Every attempt should be made to maintain normal communications with parents/carers. They retain their right to an annual consultation in relation to the educational progress of their child/children. 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 even be arranged off site).

The interests of the child should continue to be paramount.

7. Recording the Incident

See Appendix 1. This will assist with the recording of any incidents of unacceptable behaviour. A record of an incident will help in the collection of evidence where necessary, such as when proceedings are being brought against an alleged individual.

All available evidence should be collated including staff statements, email records and telephone recordings subject to availability.

9. Model Letters

In the appendix there is an example of model letter to stakeholders where the single point of contact rule has been enforced.

10. Steps taken in SNHS to reduce the risk of unacceptable behaviour from parents/visitors

The types of behaviours discussed in this policy are thankfully rare. In the appendix are some suggested phrases for staff to use to end difficult phone conversations or meetings if this happens.

To prevent or deter unacceptable behaviours:

- Have a welcoming ethos, a clear mission and vision, which reinforces mutual respect
- SNHS employees model calm, professional courtesy behaviour when dealing with parents/carers in person or through written communication.
- SNHS employees know they can politely terminate a phone call or meeting if a parent/carer becomes abusive, threatening, coercive etc.
- All calls will be recorded from September 2021. Callers will be made aware that all calls are recorded for training and monitoring purposes.
- Our email policy makes it clear that emails with an unacceptable tone will be used as evidence for single point of contact action.
- SNHS employees alert senior leaders if their dealings with a particular person are becoming unpleasant.
- Ensure that meetings which may become heated have two members of staff present, including one senior teacher / person.
- Have the facility to make a video or audio recording of a meeting, if considered necessary.

11. Conclusion

The school may act where behaviour is unacceptable or there are serious breaches of the Home-School agreement or health and safety legislation. In implementing this policy the school will, as appropriate, seek advice from professional advisers for education. This is to ensure fairness and consistency and / or seek advice from the trust's legal advisors.

Appendix 1 - Incident Report Form

Where possible, the form should be completed before any discussion between witnesses is possible, as this might lead to allegations of collusion.

This form should be completed as fully as possible please using a continuation sheet, if necessary. For any incident involving or witnessed by a student or parent/carer/visitor, a member of staff should complete the form on their behalf.

The completed form should be passed to the Principal, for appropriate action and recording.	
Date of incident:	
Time of incident:	
Name of person reporting incident:	
Date incident reported:	
Member of staff recording incident:	
Date incident recorded:	
Name(s) of person(s) causing incident:	
Status(es): (parents/carers/visitors/trespassers)	

Where name(s) is/are unknown, provide other details of which may allow their identification:

Full description of incident (e.g. names of persons involved; location; nature of any unacceptable behaviour; other witnesses etc):
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Appendix 2 - Warning letter from the Principal: to parent/carer with child/children at the school

Recorded delivery

Dear

I have received a report about your conduct with school staff on **(enter date and time)**.

(Add factual summary of the incident/s and of its effect on staff, students, and other parents.)

I must inform you that the Governing Body will not tolerate conduct of this nature and will act to protect its staff and students. Therefore if, in the future, I receive any further reports of conduct of this nature I will be forced to consider initiating a single point of contact for all school business involving you.

Nevertheless, I wish to give you an opportunity to give me in writing any comments or observations of your own in relation to the report which I have received about your conduct. These comments may include any expressions of regret on your part and any assurances you are prepared to give about your future good conduct.

To enable me to take a decision on this matter at an early point, you are asked to send me any written comments you wish to make by **(state date ten working days from the date of letter)**.

Yours sincerely

**Principal,
SNHS**