

# Unacceptable conduct policy

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# 1 Policy statement

## 1.1 Vision, mission and values

Our vision is to inspire, raise aspirations and create brighter tomorrows. We are dedicated to making a difference in our diverse communities and in the lives of those who learn with us and work with us – ensuring that all our students can go beyond their aspirations and achieve their potential. We will work in partnership with parents, carers and other stakeholders to achieve this aim.

Underpinning this policy is our commitment to empowerment, respect and care for all students and staff. We aim to solve any concern through dialogue and mutual understanding, and will provide sufficient opportunity for any concern to be fully discussed, and then resolved. We also have a duty of care to both staff and students to ensure their safety and wellbeing. We will not tolerate behaviour that is unacceptable and has a detrimental effect on the good order and safety of our academies.

## 1.2 Purpose and intent

**In this policy, ‘parent’ means a parent, carer, or anyone with legal responsibility for a child. The principles in this policy also apply to any other family members of students or other visitors to an academy.**

This policy outlines the behaviours of parents that are unacceptable and what sanctions are available to deal with such behaviour.

This policy should be read in conjunction our [concerns and complaints policy](#). Where a complaint is repetitious, vexatious or pursued in an otherwise unreasonable manner, this will be dealt with in line with the procedure outlined in the concerns and complaints policy.

If a parent is acting in a voluntary capacity, for example as a local academy governor or as part of an academy’s PTA, they are still subject to the scope of this policy as a parent.

## 1.3 Key policy principles

- The parent/school partnership is fundamental to securing the success and wellbeing of all our students.
- The education and wellbeing of the child of the parent involved will not be compromised in any way by the application of this policy.
- Any decisions will be fully communicated to the parent with clear reasons for the decision taken.

- Parents have the right to make representations about the action of the Trust or its academies.
- Any restrictions will be time limited and subject to a review.

## **1.4 Scope and application of this policy**

1.4.1 This policy covers unacceptable behaviour which is committed by a parent:

- in any Trust or academy building or on a Trust or academy site;
- by phone to the Trust or an academy;
- by email to the Trust or an academy;
- on social media and any other public electronic media platforms (e.g. websites) referring to the Trust or an academy or a member of staff of the Trust or academy; or
- in any other setting which, in the reasonable opinion of the CEO or chair of trustees (or any person authorised by them), should be regulated by this policy.

1.4.2 The following behaviours are considered unacceptable by the Trust.

### **1.4.2.1 Unacceptable conduct, including:**

- verbal or written threats of violence or harm;
- swearing or the use of other abusive, offensive or threatening language;
- intimidation, coercion or humiliation;
- aggressive or disruptive behaviour;
- harassment, bullying or causing distress;
- physical violence, including damage to property or injury to individuals;
- discriminatory conduct or use of discriminatory language (sexist, racist, other);
- frequent, unwarranted and/or unnecessary correspondence which is hindering the proper running of the Trust or its academies;
- making deliberately false, malicious or vexatious accusations;
- consumption of alcohol (unless alcohol has been allowed at a specific event) or use of illegal drugs on the Trust or an academy's premises, or accessing the Trust or an academy's premises whilst intoxicated;
- any behaviour that violates the law or Trust or academy policies; and
- incitement of others to do any of the above.

This is not an exhaustive list but seeks to provide illustrations of such conduct. It will ultimately be for the Trust to determine whether conduct is deemed to be unacceptable.

Any form of communication that threatens the safety or wellbeing of staff or students will be taken seriously and addressed immediately, with the goal of protecting the safety and wellbeing of all members of our Trust and academy communities.

#### **1.4.2.2 Covert recordings**

Unless explicitly agreed in writing, the Trust does not consent to parents making audio or video recordings of any member of staff, trustee/local academy governor or academy volunteer, including during in-person meetings (whether on academy premises or at other locations), remote/virtual meetings or phone conversations. Making covert recordings without the consent of members of staff is regarded as a breach of the relationship of mutual trust and confidence between the parent and the academy/Trust.

If a parent is found to be recording a discussion, all members of staff have the right to terminate the meeting or phone call on discovery.

A parent that records a member of staff, trustee/local governor or academy volunteer, without consent may be issued with a restricted communication plan (see 2.4.1).

If a parent is found to have recorded any audio or video footage on the academy site, or otherwise while staff perform their professional role, without consent of any individual, this may result in the parent being immediately banned from an academy's premises (see 2.4.2) and the involvement of external agencies.

#### **1.4.2.3 Inappropriate use of social media**

The Trust encourages parents to approach staff with concerns and to make use of the Trust's concerns and complaints procedure to escalate matters where necessary.

We urge parents to refrain from expressing concerns about the Trust, its academies or its staff on social media sites. Expressing concerns on social media may damage the reputation of the Trust and/or its academies, and the integrity of its staff may be unnecessarily called into question.

Negative comments posted on social media can cause upset and is often counter-productive to the overall aim of educating students. Furthermore, comments made about individual members of staff may be considered defamatory or amount to cyber-bullying.

It is a criminal offence to publish information which would likely lead to the identification of a teacher who is subject to an allegation of misconduct, until such time as they are charged with an offence or the Secretary of State for Education publishes information about the teacher in connection with a disciplinary case (Education Act 2011). All members of the community need to be aware of the importance of not publishing named allegations against teachers online as this can lead to prosecution and a fine.

Should the Trust become aware that a parent is using social media to target the Trust, any academy or its staff, it may (or it may authorise an academy to):

- report the post(s) to the relevant social networking site;
- contact the parent or social media page owner to require the post to be edited or removed;
- issue the parent with a restricted communication plan (see 2.4.1); and/or
- where appropriate, inform the police or other relevant agencies.

## **2 Policy**

The Trust has a range of strategies to employ with any parent who engages in unacceptable behaviour. Whilst these sanctions are set out in the policy by way of a sequential process, they can be initiated at any stage if, in the reasonable judgement of the CEO or chair of trustees (or any person authorised by them), the severity of the behaviour warrants such a level of intervention.

Where the behaviour is so extreme that it threatens the immediate safety and welfare of staff or others, the matter will be referred immediately to the police and/or the Trust's legal team for action.

### **2.1 Verbal warning**

A parent who displays any of the behaviour as described in 1.4 will be asked to desist and offered the opportunity to discuss the matter face-to-face with an appropriate member of staff. Two members of staff may attend this meeting.

### **2.2 Mediation meeting**

Where appropriate, the parent may be asked to meet with the executive principal or principal of an academy (or a person authorised by them) to discuss the matter in person.

### **2.3 Formal written warning(s)**

A formal written warning will be sent to the parent by letter to their home address or via email. This letter will be signed by the executive principal and/or principal of an academy (or any person authorised by one or more of them) and circulated to relevant internal parties to ensure that an informed and consistent approach can be adopted. This letter will be retained for a period of twelve months and then in line with the Trust's data retention policy. Where appropriate, more than one formal written warning letter may be issued.

## **2.4 Legal sanctions**

If a parent commits serious or repeated breaches of the expected standard of behaviour as set out in this policy, then the Trust may consider implementing one or more of the sanctions listed below (or may authorise an academy to do so).

### **2.4.1 Restricted communication plan**

The parent may be issued with a communication plan. This will restrict the manner in which the parent can communicate with the Trust and/or an academy. This may include:

- requiring contact in a particular form (e.g. in writing only);
- limiting contact to one member of staff or a specific email address; or
- restricting phone calls to specified days and times.

### **2.4.2 Ban from an academy's premises**

A parent's common licence to access an academy's premises can be removed or restricted for a specified period. In such circumstances, parents may need to make alternative arrangements for bringing their child into school.

Any entry onto the site in contravention of such a ban and where a nuisance is caused would be a criminal offence under section 547 of the Education Act 1996. Any parent in breach of the ban will be removed from the premises by the police or an authorised member of staff.

### **2.4.3 An injunction under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997**

The Trust may seek an injunction requiring the parent to desist from behaving in the manner in question.

## **2.5 Records of incidents**

A record will be kept of any correspondence, action or decisions for a period of at least twelve months and then in line with the Trust's data retention policy. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual matters will be kept confidential except where:

- access is requested by the Secretary of State;
- disclosure is required in the course of an academy inspection;
- an individual has a legal right to access their own personal data contained within such documentation; or
- under other legal authority.