

Bourne Education Trust

Behaviour Towards Staff by Parents, Carers and Visitors Policy

School: The Mead Infant and Nursery School

Introduction

The Mead Infant and Nursery School welcomes visitors to our school. We actively encourage close links with parents, carers and the wider community. Both the school and Bourne Education Trust (BET / the Trust) believe that pupils benefit when the relationship between home and school is a positive one.

Where a concern is raised, we will always listen and seek to address the issue. However, abusive, threatening or violent behaviour will not be tolerated, and we will act to ensure that school remains a safe place for pupils, staff and all other members of our community.

The vast majority of parents, carers and others visiting our school are keen to work with us and are supportive of the school. From time to time it is necessary to deal with problems which arise. It is important that discussions are conducted in a calm and respectful manner. In the vast majority of such situations this is what happens, but on rare occasions, aggression and verbal and / or physical abuse is directed towards members of school staff or members of the wider school community.

The Mead Infant and Nursery School and the Trust expects and requires members of staff to behave professionally in these difficult situations and to attempt to defuse the situation where possible, seeking the involvement of other colleagues where appropriate. However, all members of staff have the right to work without fear of violence and abuse and the right, in an extreme case, to use appropriate self-defence.

Violence, threatening behaviour and abuse against school staff or other members of the school community, including other parents, carers and pupils, will 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 our school.

We expect parents, carers and other visitors to behave in a reasonable way towards members of school staff and the wider school community at all times. This policy outlines the steps that will be taken where behaviour is unacceptable.

Unacceptable behaviours

Types of behaviour that are considered serious and unacceptable and which will not be tolerated are:

- Shouting, either in person or over the telephone
- Swearing, either in person, over the telephone, in writing or by email
- Inappropriate electronic activity including publishing abusive or inappropriate content online relating to the school, teachers or pupils for example on social networking websites such as Facebook and Twitter or in email communication
- Hitting, slapping, punching, kicking or pushing
- Physical intimidation such as standing unnecessarily close

- The use of rude or aggressive hand gestures, including shaking or holding a fist towards another person
- Spitting
- Breaching the school's security procedures.

This list is not exhaustive, but illustrates some behaviours considered unacceptable.

Repetitive emails and/or phone calls, despite the school's best efforts to address a situation or complaint, may be viewed as 'serial' or 'persistent'. The school's complaints procedure outlines how the school will respond to serial and persistent complaints.

There is advice to staff on dealing with abusive telephone calls in Appendix B.

Procedure to be followed when behaviour is inappropriate

In an emergency, police assistance will be sought through a 999 call. Where this is the case, advice must be followed concerning preserving physical evidence or the management of victims or potential witnesses.

Although fulfilling a public function, schools are private places. The public has no automatic right of entry. The local governing committee has a responsibility to ensure the wellbeing of pupils and staff and will therefore act to ensure that The Mead Infant and Nursery School remains a safe place. For this reason, if an individual's behaviour is a cause for concern, the headteacher can ask them to leave school premises. In this rare circumstance, after a suitable period, the headteacher will contact the individual, re-establish a dialogue and proceed as below.

In most other cases, if a parent, carer or visitor behaves in an unacceptable way towards a member of the school community, the headteacher or a senior member of staff will seek to resolve the situation through discussion and mediation. Where appropriate, the parent, carer or visitor should be directed to the school's complaints procedure.

In all cases, incidents must be documented using the form in Appendix A.

The headteacher will discuss the incident with members of staff involved prior to deciding how to proceed further. At any stage, members of staff subject to inappropriate behaviour have the right to submit a written complaint to the headteacher.

Having made initial enquiries, if the headteacher judges that the inappropriate behaviour is sufficiently minor that it may be resolved relatively informally, a telephone call or meeting with the parents, carers or visitors and the headteacher or a senior member of staff will take place. During the meeting or call, the behaviours which were, and are, considered unacceptable will be clarified, an apology sought, and the consequence of repeating the behaviours set out. The outcome of the discussion will be recorded on the form in Appendix A. If appropriate, a formal letter warning of the consequences of repeating the behaviours will be sent, otherwise an informal follow-up letter should be sent documenting the discussion.

Wherever the inappropriate behaviour is deemed poor enough to require it, or on receipt of a written complaint from a member of staff, the headteacher will appoint an appropriate investigating officer to investigate the incident. The investigation will involve speaking to the member(s) of staff, parents, carers or visitors involved in the incident and any witnesses. Parents,

carers or visitors involved in the incident will be informed of the investigation by letter and contact with the school during the investigation will be via a designated member of staff and by prior appointment only.

An investigation report will be prepared within 15 school working days. If the investigation concludes that a parent, carer or visitor had behaved inappropriately, the headteacher will, in consultation with the Trust's executive team as required, decide on one of 2 courses of action:

- The parent, carer or visitor will be invited to a meeting to discuss events during which behaviours which were, and are, considered unacceptable will be clarified, an apology sought and the consequences of repeating the inappropriate behaviour set out. If appropriate, a formal letter warning of the consequences of repeating the behaviours will be sent, otherwise an informal follow-up letter should be sent documenting the discussion
- Where all procedures have been exhausted following repeated inappropriate behaviour, or where circumstances otherwise require it, a parent, carer or visitor may be barred from the school premises for period of time, subject to review.

If the parent, carer or visitor disagrees with the school's response to an incident, they will be informed that their complaint will be managed thereafter using the school's complaints policy and procedure. Unless that response is to bar them from the premises (in which case, see below), they will be directed to the stage 1 formal complaint form and, should they lodge a complaint, a stage 1 formal investigation of the complaint will be undertaken by the headteacher.

A member of staff who has made a formal complaint following an instance of inappropriate behaviour will be notified of the outcome of the investigation in writing. Should they disagree with the outcome, they should be directed to the BET grievance procedure which will be followed thereafter.

Barring from the school premises

At any time, if an individual's behaviour is a cause for concern, the headteacher can ask them to leave school premises. In some cases, individuals can also be barred from entering school. They will be given the opportunity to express their views on the decision to bar in writing.

The decision to bar will then be reviewed by the chair of governors or a committee of governors, taking into account any representations made by the individual. The decision to bar will either be confirmed or lifted.

If the decision is confirmed the individual will be notified in writing, explaining how long the bar will be in place and when the decision will be reviewed.

Anyone wishing to complain about being barred can do so, by letter or email, to the headteacher or chair of governors. This will be treated as a stage 2 complaint and managed through the school's Complaints Policy. Once the school's appeal process has been completed, the only remaining avenue of appeal is through the courts; independent legal advice must therefore be sought.

Should an individual persist in coming onto the school site even when permission to do so has been withdrawn, it is possible for legal proceedings to be pursued.

Record keeping

Clear and detailed records of all incidents will be made and kept up to date. Witness statements (where appropriate) and notes of subsequent meetings held to discuss events should also be retained. Notes must be signed and dated.

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.

All information will be gathered in line with the BET Data Protection Policy. All records will be retained in line with the BET Data Retention Policy – for the current year plus 5 years, after which the decision to retain or destroy will be reviewed.

Support for employees

If a member of staff is subject to serious physical and / or verbal abuse, support will be offered. In such circumstances, the immediate and ongoing support of colleagues will be invaluable.

Through the Employee Assistance Programme, staff can obtain confidential specialist support and advice. The staff associations and trades unions are also likely to be able to offer assistance.

Colleagues and headteachers should contact the Trust’s Head of HR if they wish to discuss further support.

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Appendix A – Incident recording form

Date, time and location of incident	
Details of person(s) subject to a form of unacceptable behaviour	
Name	
Address and telephone number	
Role	
Details of perpetrator	
Name	
Address and telephone number	
Relationship to school	
Details of witnesses	
Witness 1: Name, contact details and relationship to school	
Witness 2: Name, contact details and relationship to school	
Witness 3: Name, contact details and relationship to school	

Description of the incident. Include relevant events leading up to the incident, details of those present, whether weapons were involved, etc.

Location of incident (attach a sketch if appropriate)

Outcome (were police called, what happened subsequent to the incident)

Other information to be recorded as appropriate. Any known or possible contributory factors

Does the perpetrator have a known history of previous incidents? If so, give brief details

Name and contact details of any police officer(s) involved. Incident number / crime reference number
Any other relevant information
Name of person completing the form and date of completion
Change history of the form (what was updated, when and by whom)
Log of actions (Note of headteacher's initial investigation, appointment of investigations officer, outcome)
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.

Appendix B – 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. This guidance is to assist staff if they are faced with such a situation.

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.

Staff should endeavour always to:

- Remain calm and polite
- Stay in control of the situation
- Employ 'active listening' – 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 they can do
- Be clear and avoid using jargon
- If necessary, to apologise for an error and take action to put it right
- If it is necessary to put a caller on hold to seek additional information, let them know why they are being put on hold and update them frequently rather than leaving them on hold for a long time
- Make notes of the conversation
- Follow the procedure below and refer the call to the headteacher or other senior member of staff where appropriate.

Staff should endeavour never to:

- Become abusive or aggressive in response to an abusive caller
- Take it personally
- Allow themselves to be bullied
- Hang up the call without warning (see the advice below).

Script to be used to handle an abusive or aggressive call

- When the caller starts to raise their voice or 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 or be abusive:
Mr / Mrs / Ms..... I understand you are upset / frustrated, however I am not prepared to continue to be shouted / sworn at so please could you either call back later or, if you prefer, put your views in writing.

- If, despite the two warnings above, the caller continues to raise their voice or 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 using the incident report form (Appendix A) and report the incident to your line manager.