

Managing Abusive Visitors Guidance

Guidance for dealing with aggressive or abusive parents and visitors to schools who cause nuisance or create a disturbance

Our guiding 'Relational Principles'

At Reach South Academy Trust we believe that:

- Relationships are the foundation for us all to thrive in school.
- Mutual respect is the starting point for all agreements about how we all behave.
- Behaviour is a means of communication.
- We should work as a community to develop behaviours and responses to provide and positive and safe environment for everyone.
- All behaviours have natural consequences, and every member of our community is working towards taking accountability for their behaviour and what happens as a result.

Summary

The purpose of this document is to provide a reminder to all parents, carers and visitors to our schools about the expected conduct. This is so we can continue to flourish, progress and achieve in an atmosphere of mutual understanding.

Educating children effectively is a process that involves partnership between parents, staff and the wider school community. As partners, our parents will understand the importance of a good working relationship to equip children with the necessary skills for adulthood. For these reasons, we continue to welcome and encourage parents and carers to participate fully in the life of our school.

The vast majority of parents, carers and others visiting our schools are keen to work with us and are supportive of the school. From time to time, it is necessary for parents/carers and the school to deal with problems relating to pupils. It is important that discussions between parents and staff are conducted in a calm and respectful manner. However, on occasion, the behaviour of a few parents/ carers can cause severe disruption or worse, resulting in abusive or aggressive behaviour towards staff, pupils, or other members of the school community.

Behaviour is communication and in some instances a parent/visitor may become overwhelmed and dysregulated, leading them to inappropriate reactions and responses. Behaviour, our life experiences and other factors can impact on how we interact with others. Every situation will be unique and needs to be looked at and dealt with accordingly.

The trust expects members of staff to behave professionally in these difficult situations and attempt to defuse the situation where possible, seeking the involvement as appropriate of other colleagues.

The trust is responsible for protecting the health and safety of staff and pupils. Violence, 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. Where such behaviour does occur, schools must know that the trust will play a proactive role in taking all possible action to deal with it, in response to the wishes of the school.

In certain circumstances, this will mean the trust taking the lead in initiating action on the school's behalf with the school's support, and in other circumstances we expect the trust to support the school in action that the school itself will initiate. Schools should in the first instance ask the trust for advice on the appropriateness of the remedies available and trust should, where they have the power to do so, take the lead in initiating action. In circumstances where power does not lie with the trust (e.g. under the criminal law) the trust would support and advise schools and remove as much of the burden from them as possible

Day to day access to a school is within the control of the head teacher. Normally parents/carers (and those with parental responsibility) are granted "limited licence" to visit the grounds and buildings of a school. Most schools will establish procedures which set out: the acceptable purposes for such visits; the areas of the school that may be entered at particular times; the standard of behaviour expected etc.

Definition of unacceptable behaviour

We consider that aggressive, abusive or insulting behaviour or language from a parent, carer or visitor presents a risk to staff or pupils. Unacceptable behaviour is such that makes a member of staff or pupil feel threatened. This can be through face-to-face contact, on the telephone or in written communication (including social media).

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 Trust Community are:

- using a raised voice, creating an intimidating atmosphere, for example, refusing to take part in two-way dialogue and consistently talking/shouting over responses from staff
- filming/recording conversations using mobile phone or other technology – danger of safeguarding issues regarding recording other people's children and not taking due consideration of the wishes of the staff involved
- inappropriate use of social media eg posting defamatory, offensive or derogatory comments regarding the school or any of the pupils, parents or staff at the school on Facebook or other social sites
- shouting, either in person or over the telephone
- swearing, either in person or over the telephone/email • 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 pupils on social networking websites such as Facebook and Twitter or in email communication
- any kind of insult as an attempt to demean, embarrass or undermine
- any kind of threat
- hitting, slapping, punching, kicking or pushing
- physical intimidation e.g. standing unnecessarily close to another person
- the use of rude or aggressive hand gestures, including shaking or holding a fist towards another person

- spitting
- use of foul or abusive language
- any kind of physical abuse
- allegations which turn out to be vexatious or malicious
- racist, sexist, homophobic or transgender comments
- breaching the academy's security procedures

Unacceptable behaviour may result in the police being informed of the incident.

Where there is a breach of such procedures the school needs to respond in a measured way, depending on the seriousness of any inappropriate conduct e.g.:

- initiate a meeting/dialogue with the individual
- write to the visitor, describing their misconduct, explaining its impact on the school and stating its unacceptability
- vary the person's "licence", say, through the addition of conditions
- warn of the possibility of a "ban" (i.e. the withdrawal of their licence) if the misconduct is repeated
- impose a ban with a review after a fixed period
- impose a ban without review.

It is possible for a headteacher/SLT to initiate any of these actions on their own authority but is less likely to lead to personal confrontation if the more serious sanctions are initiated by the governing body or the trust, as appropriate.

The Trust's approach to dealing with incidents

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 member will seek to resolve the situation through discussion and mediation. If necessary, the school's complaints procedures should be followed by the parent, carer or visitor. Where all procedures have been exhausted and aggression or intimidation continue, or where the circumstances otherwise require it, a parent, carer or visitor may be banned by Headteacher from the school premises for a period of time, subject to review.

Risk Assessment

The Headteacher or nominated senior member of staff will carry out a risk assessment in order to help make an informed decision about the level of response required. In all cases the response will be reasonable and proportionate. Support for the risk assessment process can be sort through Gary Musson, Health & Safety Advisor for the Trust. The Headteacher will consider the following questions:

- What form did the abuse take?
- What evidence is there?
- What do witnesses say happened?

- Are there previous incidents to take into consideration?
- Do members of staff/pupils feel intimidated by the parent's, carer's or visitor's behaviour?
- Is there any evidence of provocation?
- How high is the assessed risk that this will be repeated or there will be retaliation at the academy's action? (low, medium, high)

Guidance for staff

A staff member must report any matter of intimidation, aggression, abuse or violence to the Headteacher. If the member of staff is in a meeting with an aggressive, abusive or violent parent, carer or visitor they should calmly and professionally outline that they are unable to continue the meeting in the current circumstances and report this immediately to the Headteacher or other senior member of staff. At all times, should situations deemed to be dangerous or illegal arise on the school premises, any member of staff, irrespective of their job role, is empowered to call the police requesting intervention to help maintain public order and/or personal safety. The Headteacher must be informed immediately.

Recording of Incidents

Staff and pupils subjected to abuse, including any witnesses, should record their statements about the incident(s), including as much factual information as possible on an **Incident Report Form (Appendix 1)**. They will then need to give this to the headteacher. Depending on an assessment of the risk of retaliation to witnesses or individuals, statements may be made available to the parent if they request it.

The Academy's response

Following the completion of the risk assessment, the Headteacher will decide the level of action to be taken. Headteachers can refer to their Trust DDE or the Trust DE for further guidance and support following an incident.

Actions will include the following:

1. Clarify to the parent what is considered acceptable behaviour by the academy. In some instances, it may be appropriate simply to ensure the parent is clear about behaviour standards expected by the academy. This could be explained by letter from the Headteacher. This letter may contain a warning about further action if there are further incidents. The parent will be invited to write to the Headteacher with their version of events within 10 school (working) days. Depending on the parent's response a meeting may then be held to discuss the situation and how this can be avoided in the future. (**see Appendix 2 Warning letter**)
2. Invite the parent to an informal meeting to discuss events This could be helpful to discuss and diffuse the situation. The safety and well-being of those attending such a meeting must be carefully considered. Members of academy staff will always be accompanied by at least one other colleague at any such meeting. Consideration should be given to the seating arrangements and care taken to ensure exits cannot be blocked by a parent who could potentially become aggressive. The main points of discussion and any agreed actions should be noted, and a follow-up letter or email sent to confirm the academy's expectations and any agreed actions.

3. Impose conditions on the parent's contact with the academy and its staff. Although fulfilling a public function, schools are private places, and therefore the public has no automatic right of entry. Parents of enrolled pupils have an 'implied licence' to come onto the academy premises at certain stated times. It is for the academy to define and set out the extent of such access. Parents exceeding this 'implied licence' would be trespassing. Depending on the type, level or frequency of the unacceptable behaviour, the academy may consider imposing conditions on the parent's contact with the academy. These conditions may include (but not exclusively): **(See Appendix 3 Imposing Conditions Letter)**

- being accompanied to any meeting with a member of academy staff by a member of SLT
- restricting contact by telephone to named members of the senior leadership team
- restricting written communications to named members of the senior leadership team
- restricting attendance at academy events to those where the parent will be accompanied by a member of the senior leadership of the academy
- any other restriction as deemed reasonable and proportionate by the Headteacher.

In this case the parent will be informed by a letter from the Headteacher the details of the conditions that are being imposed. The parent would then be given 10 school (working) days from the date of that letter to make representations in writing about the conditions to the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors would then decide whether to confirm or remove the conditions. This would be communicated to the parent in writing within 10 school (working) days of the date of the parent's letter. If the decision is to confirm the conditions imposed, this decision will be reviewed by the governing body after approximately six months (and every six months after that, if appropriate). The parent will be invited to make written representation to the governors. This, together with the evidence from the Headteacher will be considered at a meeting of the full governing body. Governors may decide to maintain, extend or remove the conditions. The decision of the review will be communicated to the parent by the clerk to the governors within 10 school (working) days of the date of the meeting. When deciding whether it will be necessary to maintain, extend or remove the conditions, governors will give consideration to the extent of the parent's compliance with the conditions, any appropriate expressions of regret and assurance of future good conduct received from them and any evidence of the offender's co-operation with the school in other respects **(See Appendix 4 Confirming or overturning decision to Impose Conditions)**

4. Impose a ban

Where all relevant procedures have been exhausted and aggression or intimidation continue, or where there is an extreme act of violence, a visitor (including a parent or carer of an existing pupil) may be banned by the headteacher from the school's premises for a defined period. In these circumstances, the individual would be advised in writing by the Headteacher that a provisional ban is being imposed. The parent would then be given 10 school (working) days from the date of that letter to make representations about the ban in writing to the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors would then decide whether to confirm or remove the ban. This would be communicated to the parent in writing within 10 school (working) days of the receipt of their letter.

If the Chair's decision is to confirm the ban, parents in these circumstances will be offered an annual meeting about their child's progress, usually with a member of senior staff.

A decision to impose a ban will be reviewed by the governing body after approximately six months (and every six months after that, if appropriate). The parent will be invited to make written representation to the governors; this and the evidence from the Headteacher will be considered at a meeting of the full governing body. Governors may decide to remove the ban, extend the ban or impose conditions on parent's access to the school. The decision of the review will be communicated to the parent by the clerk to the governors within 10 school (working) days of the date of the meeting. In deciding whether to remove or extend the ban or impose conditions, governors will give consideration to the extent of the offender's compliance with the ban, any appropriate expressions of regret and assurance of future good conduct received from them and any evidence of their co-operation with the school in other respects. **(See Appendix 7 - Model Letter 7: Letter from clerk to the governors requesting parents' statement for review by the governing body & See Appendix 8 - Model Letter 7: Letter detailing outcome of governing body's review)**

In imposing a ban, the following steps will be taken:

1. The parent/carer will be informed, in writing, that they are banned from the premises, subject to review, and what will happen if the ban is breached, e.g. that police involvement or an injunction application may follow **(See Appendix 5 Letter to Impose a Ban & Appendix 6 Letter from Chair of LGB to confirm or overturn the ban)**.
2. Where an assault has led to a ban, a statement indicating that the matter has been reported to the local police will be made.
3. The Chair of the Board of Trustees will be informed of the ban.
4. As appropriate, arrangements for meetings at school regarding pupils, and arrangements for pupils being delivered to and collected from the school will be clarified.
5. Remove from the academy Parents, carers or visitors who have been banned from the school premises and continue to cause a nuisance will be deemed to have committed a section 547 offence. They will be considered as trespassers. In these circumstances the offender may be removed from school. This may be carried out by a police officer or person authorised by the governing body. Legal proceedings may be brought against the offender.
6. **Complaints policy** Any complaint that arises from incidents of abusive behaviour will be dealt with under the Trust Complaints Policy.

Conclusion

In implementing this guidance, the Trust will, as appropriate, seek advice from the Trust's solicitors and/or the Local Authority if necessary, to ensure fairness and consistency. This guidance will be reviewed every three years and/or following each incident

Appendix 1 – Incident Report Form

Relevant incidents include trespass, nuisance or disturbance on school premises, verbal abuse, sexual or racial abuse, threats, aggression, physical violence and intentional damage to property.

Where possible, this 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 pupil or parent/carer/visitor, a member of staff should complete the form on their behalf.

The completed form should be passed to the head teacher, for appropriate action and recording.

Incident Report Form	
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 (where name(s) is/are unknown, provide other details of which may allow their identification)	
Status(es) (parents/carers/visitors/trespassers)	
Full description of incident (e.g. names of persons involved; location; nature of any injuries; attendance of emergency services)	
Names of any witnesses	
Statuses Initial action/outcome (e.g. Informal conciliation; police intervention; warning or banning letter issued)	
Summary of subsequent actions taken by the school, including risk assessments	

Appendix 2 – Model Letters Model Letter 1:

Warning (sent by Headteacher/SLT)

Dear

We have received a report about your conduct at the school on (enter date and time or details). This appears to fall far short of the behaviour we would expect of a parent/carer of a pupil at [name of school].

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

We must inform you that the Local Governing Body will not tolerate any form of aggression towards members of the academy community and will act to protect its staff and pupils from any form of abuse or intimidation. We should warn you that any future conduct of this nature could result in the academy imposing conditions restricting your access to the academy or banning you from contacting or attending the academy altogether.

We wish to give you an opportunity to give in writing any comments or observations of your own in relation to the report which I have received about your conduct. Please do so within 10 school (working) days of the date of this letter. These comments may include any assurances you are prepared to give about your future good conduct. There is then an option for us to meet to discuss the situation and how it can be avoided in the future.

Details of our guidance on Managing Aggressive Behaviour from Parents and Visitors to Our School can be found on our website.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher/SLT

cc Chair of Governors

Appendix 3 - Model Letter 2: Imposing conditions on attendance at academy events, pending review (sent by Headteacher/SLT)

Dear

We have received a report from the (name of staff) about your conduct on (enter date and time).

(add summary of incident and its effect on staff and pupils)

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

We must inform you that the Local Governing Body, in line with our policy, will not tolerate conduct of this nature on the academy premises and will act to defend academy staff and pupils. I am therefore writing to inform you that we are imposing conditions on the contact you may have with the academy. These are as follows:

(delete as appropriate)

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

The restrictions above are provisional until they have been reviewed by the Chair of the governing body.

Please consider them to be in force until you receive confirmation from the Chair. The Chair of the governing body will need to decide whether it is appropriate to confirm or overturn this decision. You may, if you wish, send to the Chair in writing any comments or observations of your own within 10 school (working) days of the date of this letter. These comments may be to challenge or explain the facts of the incident, to express regret and give assurances about your future good conduct. The Chair will then write to you with the outcome of their decision. If on receipt of your comments, the Chair of the governing body considers that my decision should be confirmed, you will be supplied with details of how the conditions will be reviewed by the governing body.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher/SLT

cc Chair of Local Governing Body

Appendix 4 - Model Letter 3: Letter to confirm or overturn Headteacher/SLT's decision to impose conditions (sent by the Chair of the LGB)

Dear

The Senior Leadership Team wrote to you on (date) to detail concerns about an incident when your behaviour towards (name) fell short of what we would expect as an academy. You will be aware that the SLT has written to you previously about your behaviour towards staff. I have not received a written response from you/I have received a letter from you dated, the contents of which I have considered carefully. In the circumstances and after further consideration of the SLT's report and your letter, I have determined that the decision to impose conditions on your contact with the academy should be confirmed.

The conditions are as follows:

- (Copy conditions from SLT's letter)

This decision will be reviewed by the governing body in approximately six months' time. The Clerk to the Governors will write to you in advance of the meeting to ask you to provide a written statement for their

consideration. When deciding whether it will be necessary to extend the application of conditions to attend academy premises, consideration will be given to the extent of your compliance with the decision, any appropriate expressions of regret and assurance of future good conduct received from you; and any evidence of your co-operation with the academy in other respects.

OR

In the circumstances, and after further consideration of the Headteacher's report and your letter, I have determined that the decision to impose conditions on you should be overturned. You may attend academy events as normal. However, should there be a repeat of inappropriate behaviour towards staff all of the above sanctions may be applied.

Yours sincerely

Chair of the Local Governing Body

cc Headteacher/SLT

Appendix 5 - Model Letter 4: Imposition of a ban on contacting or attending the academy, pending review (sent by Headteacher/SLT)

Dear

We have received a report from the (name of staff) about your conduct on (enter date and time). (add summary of incident and its effect on staff and pupils) You will recall that we have already written to you about a previous incident on (date) warning you of the consequence of any further insulting or aggressive behaviour on your part.

We must inform you that the governors, in line with our policy, will not tolerate conduct of this nature on the academy premises and will act to defend academy staff and pupils. We are therefore writing to inform you that we are recommending imposing a ban on you attending or contacting the academy. This means you may not attend the academy for any reason whatsoever. You must not make contact with 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 we will contact you to arrange this at the time of the next Academic Review Day.

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

The Chair of Governors, will need to decide whether it is appropriate to confirm or overturn this decision. Please send, in writing, to the Chair of Governors, any comments or observations of your own within 10 school (working) days of the date of this letter. These comments may be to challenge or explain the facts of the incident, to express regret and give assurances about your future good conduct. If on receipt of your comments, the Chair of Governors considers that my decision should be confirmed, you will be supplied with details of how this ban will be reviewed by the governing body.

Yours sincerely Headteacher/SLT

cc Chair of Governors

Appendix 6 - Model Letter 5: Letter to confirm or overturn Headteacher/SLT's decision to impose a ban (sent by chair of governors)

Dear

The Senior Leadership wrote to you on (date) detailing concerns about an incident when your behaviour towards (name) fell far short of the behaviour we would expect as an academy. You will be aware that the SLT has written to you previously about your behaviour towards staff. I have not received a written response from you/I have received a letter from you dated, the contents of which I have considered carefully (amend as appropriate).

In the circumstances and after further consideration of the Headteacher's report and your letter, I have determined that the decision to impose a ban on you should be confirmed. This means you may not attend the academy for any reason whatsoever. You must not make contact with 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 the Headteacher or a member of the senior team. This decision will be reviewed in six months' time by the governing body. The Clerk to the Governors will write to you in advance of the meeting of the governing body to ask you to provide a written statement for their consideration.

When deciding whether it will be necessary to extend the application of conditions to attend academy premises, consideration will be given to the extent of your compliance with the decision, any appropriate expressions of regret and assurance of future good conduct received from you and any evidence of your co-operation with the academy in other respects.

OR

In the circumstances and after further consideration of the Headteacher/SLT's report and your letter, I have determined that the decision to impose a ban should be overturned. You may hence attend academy events as normal. However, should there be a repeat of inappropriate behaviour towards staff, all of the above sanctions may be applied.

Yours sincerely

Chair of Governors

cc Headteacher/SLT

Appendix 7 - Model Letter 6: Letter from clerk to the governors requesting parents' statement for review by the governing body (sent by clerk to governors)

Dear

The Senior Leadership Team wrote to you on (date) detailing concerns about your behaviour towards academy staff/pupils, which fell short of the behaviour we would expect as an academy. As a result of this incident, conditions were imposed on you/a ban was imposed. This decision will be reviewed by the governing body at their next meeting on (date).

I am writing to ask whether you would like to make a written statement to governors for their consideration in making the decision whether to remove the restriction or extend it. If you should wish to make a written statement, please email it to me at (address) by (date – parents should be given 10 school (working) days to respond).

Yours sincerely

Clerk to Governors

cc Headteacher/SLT

Appendix 8 - Model Letter 7: Letter detailing outcome of governing body’s review (sent by Clerk to governors)

Dear

I wrote to you on (date) to request a statement to enable governors to review the academy’s decision to impose conditions/ban you from attending academy premises. I have not received a written response from you/I have received a letter from you dated, the contents of which were considered carefully by the governors at their meeting on (date). In the circumstances and after further consideration of the Headteacher’s report (and your letter), governors have determined that the decision to impose conditions/ban you from attending or contacting the academy attend should be confirmed.

The conditions of your attendance on site are as follows:

- You must be accompanied to any meeting with a member of the academy staff.
- You may not contact by telephone or in writing any member of staff. You may contact either the Principal or named senior member of staff.

- You may not attend any events for parents except those where you will be accompanied by a member of the senior leadership of the academy.

- Any other condition imposed

OR

- You must not attend any event in the academy except for an annual meeting about your child's progress. This meeting will be conducted by the Headteacher or member of the SLT.

- You may not contact by telephone or in writing any member of staff.

This decision will be reviewed again in six months' time. When deciding whether it will be necessary to extend the application of conditions to attend academy premises, consideration will be given to the extent of your compliance with the decision, any appropriate expressions of regret and assurance of future good conduct received from you; and any evidence of your co-operation with the academy in other respects.

OR

In the circumstances, and after further consideration of the Headteacher/SLT's report and your letter, governors have determined that you should once again be allowed to attend parents' events as usual. All conditions have been removed. However, should there be a repeat of inappropriate behaviour towards staff this decision may be revoked.

Yours sincerely

Clerk to Governors

cc: Headteacher/SLT