

St Martin-in-the-Fields High School for Girls

A CHURCH OF ENGLAND ACADEMY
Service Compassion Justice Perseverance



MANAGING ABUSIVE AND AGGRESSIVE PARENTS POLICY

APPROVED: November 2019
REVIEWED: November 2022

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Christ is at the centre of our Church of England school community where we live, love and learn together within an inclusive and equalities framework, and where students of all faiths and none are welcomed into our Anglican Christian community. In all that we do, we seek to show God's care for our students. We value, respect and celebrate all faiths and cultures because we are inspired by a welcoming, inclusive and loving God, seen in Jesus Christ and lived out through the Holy Spirit alive in every person.

Our vision is to create a safe, caring, happy and inclusive community underpinned by our Christian values of service, compassion, justice and perseverance and our motto CARITATE ET DISCIPLINA - WITH LOVE AND LEARNING which come from the story of St Martin of Tours. Central to this is our school Bible verse from St Paul's first letter to the Corinthians.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.
1 Corinthians 13:4-8

Statement of principles

This policy has been written taking into account the DfE Guidance 'Advice on school security: Access to, and barring individuals from school premises' December 2012 as well as NAHT guidance on dealing with abusive parents.

At St Martin's, we value the positive relationships forged with parents/carers and visitors to the school. We encourage close links with parents/carers and the community and believe that students benefit when the relationship between home and school is a positive one. We also strive to make our school a place where as adults we model for students the behaviour we teach and expect. In general, we place a high importance on good manners, positive communication and mutual respect, in all we we adhere to our values of service, compassion, justice and perseverance.

Almost all parents, carers and visitors to St Martin's 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/carers falls short of what we expect. This sometimes manifests itself in aggression or abuse towards members of the school community. This can be in written communication (including social media), on the telephone or in face-to-face incidents. In these situations we expect members of staff to behave professionally, attempting to defuse the situation where possible and seeking the involvement as appropriate of other colleagues. Staff who face these situations have licence to end any conversation (face to face or on the telephone). They should then refer the incident to a senior leader who will take appropriate action or invoke the provisions of this policy.

The overriding principle is, however, 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. The governor board

has a requirement to protect staff and students from such aggression. The progress and well-being of the parent's/carer's child(ren) will be fully considered. Actions taken against the parent/carer will be reasonable and proportionate. The parent/carer will have the opportunity to put their views forward at every stage. In the case of the imposition of conditions or a ban from school, robust review processes involving the Chair of Governors and then the governing board are in place to ensure fairness.

Definition of unacceptable behaviour

We consider that aggressive, abusive or insulting behaviour or language from a parent/carer presents a risk to staff or students. Unacceptable behaviour is such that makes a member of staff or student feel threatened. This can be through face-to-face contact, on the telephone or in written communication (including social media). The following is not an exhaustive list but seeks to provide illustrations of such behaviour:

any kind of insult as an attempt to demean, embarrass or undermine

any kind of threat raising of voice so as to be intimidating

physical intimidation, eg by standing very close to her/him or the use of aggressive hand gestures

use of foul or abusive language

any kind of physical abuse

allegations which turn out to be vexatious or malicious.

The school's approach to dealing with incidents

If a parent/carer/visitor behaves in an unacceptable way towards a member of the school community, the Headteacher or appropriate senior staff will assess the level of risk before deciding on a future course of action. The course of action will be reasonable and commensurate with the assessed level of risk.

Risk Assessment

The Headteacher will carry out a risk assessment in order to help make a decision about the level of response. In all cases the response will be reasonable and proportionate. 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/students feel intimidated by the parent'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 school's action? (low, medium, high).

Recording of Incidents

Staff/students subject to abuse and witnesses will make written statements about incident(s) which will be kept in a file with subsequent letters. This file will be kept by the Headteacher's PA.

Depending on an assessment of the risk of retaliation to witnesses or individuals, statements made by adults these may be made available to the parent/carer if they request it.

The School's response

Following the completion of the risk assessment, the Headteacher will decide the level of action to be taken. Actions will include the following:

1. Clarify to the parent/carer what is considered acceptable behaviour by the school In some instances it may be appropriate simply to ensure the parent/carer is clear about behaviour standards expected by the school. 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/carer will be invited to write to the Headteacher with his/her version of events within 10 working days. Depending on the parent's/carer's response a meeting may then be held to discuss the situation and how this can be avoided in future.

2. Invite the parent/carer 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 school 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/carer who could potentially become aggressive. The main points of discussion and any agreed actions should be noted, and a follow-up letter or e-mail sent to confirm the school's expectations and any agreed actions.

Impose conditions on the parent's/carer's contact with the school and its staff

Although fulfilling a public function, schools are private places. The public has no automatic right of entry. Parents/carers of enrolled students have an 'implied licence' to come onto school premises at certain stated times. It is for schools to define and set out the extent of such access. Parents/carers exceeding this would be trespassing. Depending of the type, level or frequency of the unacceptable behaviour, the school may consider imposing conditions on the parent's/carer's contact with the school. These conditions may include (but are not exclusively):

- being accompanied to any meeting with a member of school 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 school events to those where the parent/carer will be accompanied by a member of the senior leadership of the school
- any other restriction as deemed reasonable and proportionate by the Headteacher.

In this case the parent/carer will be informed by letter from the Headteacher the details of the conditions that are being imposed. The parent/carer would then be given 10 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/carer in writing within 10 working days of the date of the parent's/carer's letter.

If the decision is to confirm the conditions imposed, this decision will be reviewed by the governing board after approximately six months (and every six months after that, if appropriate). The parent/carer 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 board. Governors may decide to maintain, extend or remove the conditions. The decision of the review will be communicated to the parent/carer by the clerk to the governors within 10 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/carer's compliance with the conditions, any appropriate expressions of regret and assurance of future good conduct received from her/him and

any evidence of the parent's/carer's co-operation with the school in other respects.

Imposing a ban

Where other procedures have individual from school premises. This will include banning a parent from accessing school staff by written communication or telephone.

In these circumstances, the individual would be advised in writing by the Headteacher that a provisional ban is being imposed. The parent/carer would then be given 10 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/carer in writing within 10 working days of the receipt of their letter. If the Chair's decision is to confirm the ban, parents/carers 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 board 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 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 parent's/carers compliance with the ban, any appropriate expressions of regret and assurance of future good conduct received from him/her and any evidence of the parent's co-operation with the school in other respects.

Removal from school

Parents/carers 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 parent.

Complaints policy

Any parental complaint that arises from incidents of abusive behaviour will be dealt with under the complaints policy.

Other associated policies

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Prevent Policy

Health and safety Policy

Other documents useful to refer to

Keeping children safe in Education 2018

Keeping schools safe from threats, abusive and violence - surrey county council (useful exemplar)

Advice on school security - DfE document

<https://childlawadvice.org.uk/information-pages/banning-parents-from-school-premises/>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/controlling-access-to-school-premises/controlling-access-to-school-premises>

Appendices

Appendix A Incident report form

Incident report form

This includes trespass, nuisance or disturbance on school premises, verbal abuse, sexual or racial abuse, threats, aggression, physical violence and intentional damage to personal property. This form should be completed as fully as possible (please use a continuation sheet if necessary). For an incident involving or witnessed by a student, a member of staff should complete the form on their behalf. However, any discussion between one witness and another should not precede completion of the form, as this might lead to allegations of collusion.

Date of incident

Day of week Time

1. Member of staff reporting incident

Name Work address (if different from school address)

Position

2. Personal details of person assaulted/verbally abused (if appropriate)

Name

Work address (if different from school address)/home address (if student)

Job/Position (if member of staff) Dept/Section/Class

Age

Sex

3. Details of trespasser/assailant(s) (if known)

4. Witness(es) if any

Name

Address

Age (approx)

Sex

Other information Relationship between member of staff/student and trespasser/assailant, if any

5. Details of incident

a) Type of incident (eg. if trespass, was the trespasser causing a nuisance or disturbance and how; if assault, give details of any injury suffered, treatment received etc)

b) Location of incident (attach sketch if appropriate)

c) Other details: describe incident, including, where relevant, events leading up to it; relevant details of trespasser/assailant not given above; if a weapon was involved, who else was present

6. Outcome: (eg. whether police called; whether trespasser was removed from premises under section 547; whether parents/carers contacted; what happened after the incident; any legal action

Appendix B - Model Letters Summary

Warning

Model letter 1: This is an initial letter from the Headteacher to ensure the parent/carer is clear about behaviour standards expected by the school. This letter contains a warning about further action if there are other incidents. The letter invites a written response and suggests a meeting.

Imposing conditions on the parent's/carer's attendance at school events

Model letter 2: This is a letter from the Headteacher informing parents of the school's decision to impose conditions on the parent's attendance at school events, pending review by the Chair of Governors.

Model letter 3: Letter from the Chair of Governors informing parent of her decision to confirm or remove the conditions.

Imposing a ban

Model letter 4: Letter from Headteacher Informing parents of the school's intention to impose a ban on their attendance at school premises, pending review by the Chair of Governors

Model letter 5: Letter from the Chair of Governors informing parent of her decision to confirm or remove ban.

Reviewing the decision to impose conditions or impose a ban

Model Letter 6: Letter from clerk to governors requesting statement from parents to governing body for review of decision.

Model letter 7: Letter from clerk to the governors to confirm the outcome of further reviews of decisions where the imposition of conditions/ban has been extended or removed.

Appendix B - Model Letters 1 - 7

Model Letter 1 Warning (sent by Headteacher)

Recorded delivery

Dear

I have received a report about your conduct at the school on (enter date and time or details). This appears to fall far short of that we would expect of a parent/carer of a student at St Martin's. (Add factual summary of the incident and of its effect on staff, students, and other parents/carers.)

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

I should warn you that any future conduct of this nature 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 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. Please do so within 10 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 policy on dealing with abusive parents can be found on our website.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

cc: Chair of Governors

Model Letter 2: Imposing conditions on the parent's attendance at school events, pending review (sent by Headteacher)

Recorded delivery

Dear

I have received a report from the (name of staff) about your conduct on at (add summary of incident and its effect on staff and pupils) (You will recollect that I 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) I must inform you that the governors, in line with our policy, will not tolerate conduct of this nature on the school premises and will act to defend school staff and students.

I am therefore writing to inform you that I am imposing conditions on the contact you may have with school. These are as follows: (delete as appropriate) You must be accompanied to any meeting with a member of school staff You may not contact by telephone or in writing any member of staff. You may contact either myself or You may not attend any events for parents/carers except those where you will be accompanied by a member of the senior leadership of the school. Other as are

reasonable and proportionate. 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 his confirmation. The Chair of Governors, xx, will need to decide whether it is appropriate to confirm or overturn this decision. You may, if you wish, send him in writing any comments or observations of your own within 10 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. He will then write to you with the outcome of her decision.

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 the conditions will be reviewed by the governing body.

Yours sincerely
Headteacher
cc: Chair of Governors

Model Letter 3: Letter to confirm or overturn Headteacher's decision to impose conditions (sent by chair of governors)
Recorded delivery

Dear

xx wrote to you on (date) to detail concerns about an incident when your behaviour towards (name) fell short of what we would expect as a school. You will be aware that she 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 Headteacher's report and your letter, I have determined that the decision to impose conditions on your contact with school should be confirmed. The conditions are as follows: (Copy conditions from HT's letter)

This decision will be reviewed by the governing board 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 school 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 cooperation with the school 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 hence attend school 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

Model Letter 4: Imposition of a ban on contacting or attending the school, pending review (sent by Headteacher)

Recorded delivery

Dear

I have received a report from the (name of staff) about your conduct on at (add summary of incident and its effect on staff and pupils) You will recollect that I 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. I must inform you that the governors, in line with our policy, will not tolerate conduct of this nature on the school premises and will act to defend school staff and students.

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 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. I will contact you to arrange this at the time of the next Progress evening.

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 his confirmation. The Chair of Governors,xx, will need to decide whether it is appropriate to confirm or overturn this decision. Please send him, in writing, any comments or observations of your own within 10 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 board.

Yours sincerely
Headteacher
cc: Chair of Governors

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

Recorded delivery

Dear

xx wrote to you on (date) to detail concerns about an incident when your behaviour towards (name) fell far short of what we would expect as a school. You will be aware that she 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 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 school 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 board. The Clerk to the Governors will write to you in advance of the meeting of the governing board 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 school 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 cooperation with the school 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 a ban should be overturned. You may hence attend school 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

Letter 6: Letter from clerk to the governors requesting parents' statement for review by GB (sent by clerk to governors)
Recorded delivery

Dear
xx wrote to you on (date) to detail concerns about your behaviour towards school staff/students fell short of what we would expect as a school. As a result of this incident, conditions were imposed on you/a ban was imposed.

This decision will be reviewed by the governing board 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 can you email it to me at (address) by (date – parents/carers should be given 10 days to respond).

Yours sincerely
Clerk to Governors
cc: Headteacher

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 school's decision to impose conditions/ban you from attending school 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 school 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 school staff You may not contact by telephone or in writing any member of staff. You may contact either xxx or xxx. You may not attend any events for parents/carers except those where you will be accompanied by a member of the senior leadership of the school. Any other condition imposed

OR You must not attend any event in school except for an annual meeting about your child's progress. This meeting will be conducted by xx. 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 school 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 cooperation with the school in other respects.

OR In the circumstances, and after further consideration of the Headteacher'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