



STRATFORD RURAL SCHOOLS FEDERATION

LOXLEY C OF E COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

SNITTERFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL

WILMCOTE C OF E PRIMARY SCHOOL

Small schools, big ambitions...

Federation Policy for Managing Unacceptable Behaviour

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Introduction

The governing body is committed to providing a safe working environment in which all staff can operate. We consider acts of harassment or unacceptable behaviour from within or outside the school to be harmful to the health and safety of our staff.

Threatening and unacceptable behaviour causes fear, anxiety and stress to the person on the receiving end. Work, personal and family life can be affected by such acts leading to illness, absenteeism, accidents, poor performance, lack of commitment and individuals leaving the organisation. This has a direct impact on other colleagues, service delivery and overall effectiveness of the school.

The purpose of this policy is to provide a means of redress. If an individual has been subject to unwanted or unacceptable behaviour this policy provides a means of action to stop that behaviour. It outlines our approach to managing those individuals whose actions or behaviour are considered unacceptable and are either having a harmful impact on our staff or their ability to provide a consistent level of service to other pupils.

Equality and Diversity

The governing body recognises that, in some circumstances, parents/carers may have communication difficulties where it may be difficult for them to either express themselves or communicate clearly and/or appropriately. Where unacceptable behaviour is evidenced under these circumstances, we will consider the needs and circumstances of the individual and our staff before deciding on how best to manage the situation.

Scope

This policy covers all areas of work undertaken by staff, volunteers and governors who work with pupils in the schools in the Stratford Rural Schools Federation. Incidents that are related to being employed within the federation, even those taking place outside of the hours or place of work, will fall under the scope of this policy.

Defining Unacceptable Behaviour

What is deemed to be unacceptable behaviour will often differ depending upon the individual(s) involved and their particular circumstances. Examples of unacceptable behaviour are grouped under two broad headings, as follows:

- Aggressive, abusive or offensive language or behaviour
- General unreasonable behaviour

Aggressive, abusive or offensive language or behaviour

All of our staff have the right to not be subjected to aggressive, abusive or offensive language or behaviour, regardless of circumstances.

Examples of this behaviour include, but are not limited to:

- Threats or acts of physical violence
- Swearing
- Inappropriate cultural, racial or religious references
- Rudeness, including derogatory remarks.

Violence is not just restricted to acts of aggression that may result in physical harm. It also includes behaviour or language (written or spoken) that may result in physical harm. It also includes behaviour or language (written or spoken) that may cause staff to feel distressed, threatened or abused.

General unreasonable behaviour

Individuals may persist in disagreeing with an action, decision or level of service their child has received from a school within the federation. The method or tone in which these communications are received may not in itself be unreasonable – it may be the *persistent* behaviour in continuing to do so that is considered to be unacceptable.

What amounts to general unreasonable behaviour or demands depends on the circumstances surrounding the behaviour and the seriousness of the issues raised.

Examples of this behaviour include, but are not limited to:

- Demanding responses within an unreasonable time-scale
- Excessive telephone calls, emails or letters
- Persistent refusal to accept a decision or explanation

Threats to staff

We take any threat to our staff extremely seriously. In such circumstances, the matter must be immediately reported to a member of the leadership team who will work with that staff member to ensure all necessary steps are taken to ensure their well-being. The incident may be reported to the police if a crime has been committed. It should also be reported to the Local Authority Legal Services and to the Chair of Governors. In some circumstances Legal Services may take the lead in issuing action on the school's behalf. Where police involvement is needed the LA should support the school with any necessary action.

Cyberbullying

School workforce unions, professional associations and industry providers have noted an increase in cyberbullying reports and related injuries. Incidents can be extremely upsetting for the victim, whatever age they are.

Activities relating to cyberbullying may be criminal offences under a range of different laws.

Dealing with cyberbullying, abusive, aggressive or offensive language or behaviour

If a staff member is misrepresented or treated unfairly online they should, in the first instance, report this to a member of the leadership team. The school should seek advice from LA Legal Services on the appropriateness of the planned response. The Head of School or Executive Headteacher will ask the poster to take down the offending post in the first instance. If the post remains in place the incident must be reported to the on-line host for removal. A formal response will be given to the staff member and either disciplinary action (if the poster is another staff member) or in more serious cases, legal action may be taken.

Harassment

Harassment can be defined as: Unwanted conduct which violates people's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. It may be related to age, sex, sexual orientation, race, disability, religion, nationality or any other personal characteristic of the individual, and may be persistent or an isolated incident. Actions or comments are viewed as demeaning and unacceptable to the recipient.

Available restrictions

Where a parent/carer continues to communicate in an unacceptable manner, the governing body or Executive Headteacher will exercise their right to restrict contact. The precise nature and action will be appropriate and proportionate to the nature of the unacceptable behaviour and the circumstances of our staff.

When making a decision to restrict contact, any special requirements of those affected by that decision will be considered. For example, where someone cannot read we are unlikely to limit communications to writing only, unless we are satisfied there are reasonable adjustments in place for the recipient to read our response.

We may decide, amongst other considerations to:

- Arrange for a single, named member of staff to deal with all future calls or correspondence from the individual concerned
- Block telephone calls and/or emails from being received by staff, or
- Limit future contact to a particular form and/or frequency – for example, emails or letters only
- Inform the individual that their correspondence will be read
- Refer the matter to the police where a criminal offence has been threatened or committed
- Ban the offender from school premises.
- Take legal action, such as applying for an injunction or court order to prohibit contact/ poor behaviour. In this instance, advice must be sought in advance from the LA Legal Services Team.

Telephone calls

None of our staff should tolerate unacceptable behaviour over the telephone. Where this occurs, all of our staff have the right to place callers on hold or to end the call. Before taking such action, the caller should be warned that their conduct is considered to be offensive, to allow them the opportunity to moderate their behaviour.

Standard responses to offensive behaviour are contained in **Appendix 1**, along with guidance on handling a complaint. All staff should familiarise themselves with these responses in order to react appropriately when confronted with unacceptable behaviour or language.

Where a call is terminated by a member of staff, they must keep a log of the call, noting the reason for the termination. The matter must also be reported to the Head of School or Executive Headteacher. Where these records contain evidence of multiple instances of offensive behaviour and this continues, a more permanent restriction may be considered necessary by, for example, 'call barring' the inbound telephone number.

Emails and letters

As with telephone calls, none of our staff has to tolerate unacceptable behaviour communicated via email or letter. Where there is a legitimate request for information contained within that communication, irrespective of the language used, that information should be reasonably provided. The individual will, however, be informed that their conduct is considered to be offensive and will not be tolerated in the future.

Where no legitimate information or action is being requested, staff do not have to respond to an abusive email or letter. It would be good practice to issue a warning that the conduct is considered to be offensive and will not be tolerated in the future.

It is appreciated that some staff may feel uncomfortable responding to abusive emails and letters. If this is the case, they should refer the matter to The Head of School or Executive Headteacher who will take matters forward on their behalf.

Communicating restriction decisions

Where contact is being restricted, the individual must be told of the decision. Wherever possible this should be by letter or email but may be done by telephone and supported by a suitable case note in the relevant file.

The communication should contain the following information:

- The reason why their behaviour is considered unacceptable
- Details of any earlier warning(s) issued about their conduct
- The restriction(s) being imposed; and, if appropriate
- How long the restriction(s) will last

A copy of the letter/email should be kept on the case file and it is the responsibility of the person authorising the restriction to ensure the appropriate record has been updated.

The Executive Headteacher has the right to decide who can enter school premises but any letter which issues a ban must come from the LA Legal Services Team.

Monitoring and Review

The governors and Executive Headteacher will monitor this policy and ensure that it is being used in a fair, reasonable and consistent manner. They will also monitor the outcomes of the policy against the Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics: age, sex, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, disability and sexual orientation. This policy will be reviewed biannually in line with the existing federation framework for policy review.

Further reading:

www.naht.org.uk for legal remedies for violence or abuse against members of a school community

The Department for Education's school security website:

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

The Department for Education's publication Health & Safety: advice on legal duties and powers for local authorities, head teachers, staff and governing bodies:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-and-safety-advice-for-schools>

Guidance on Police-School Protocols: Principles and guidance on Safer School Partnerships

https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20120106151838/https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderinDownload/Safer_Schools_Guidance.pdf

Appendix 1

Guidance for Handling Unacceptable Behaviour or Language on the Telephone

Standard responses:

- Place callers on hold or end the call
- Before ending a call warn the caller:

“Your conduct is considered to be offensive”

and allow them the opportunity to moderate their behaviour

- If conduct continues to be offensive or threatening inform the caller that you are going to end the call. Then end the call (If violence has been threatened call the police - refer to policy).

Guidance for handling a complaint

When making a complaint the complainant will possibly be angry or upset. They will want to know:

- 1) You have listened to the details of the complaint
 - 2) You are sorry that they feel aggrieved
 - 3) You will take action to remedy the complaint or reach an agreement.
- Always listen carefully to the complainant.
Allow them to fully explain their complaint, without interrupting them if possible. Show you have listened to the details and inform them that you are taking notes (if appropriate).
 - Inform them, “I hear what you are saying” and repeat the complaint back to them, “So, just to be clear, you have said you are unhappy/ cross about”.
 - Thank the caller for raising the issue and assure them that you will give the matter your full attention.
 - Try not to sound defensive. If you are feeling flustered:
 1. inform the caller that you will investigate the matter and will get back to them (follow the protocol in the Complaints Policy) and end the call. Or,
 2. inform the caller that you will consider the information given and plan your approach or seek advice from the Head of School or Executive Headteacher before discussing the matter further.
 - Follow the procedure detailed in the Federation Complaints Policy.