



IMBERHORNE SCHOOL

Policy Document



The Cornerstones of our
Learning Community

Headteacher: Mr Martin Brown

Dealing with Unacceptable Behaviour Directed towards Members of the School Community	
Date of Review	September 2023
Prepared by	Lee Walker
Approved by Governing Board	
Policy based on	Internal policy
Date for next Review	September 2024
Links to other policies	Complaints Policy Behaviour for Learning Policy

Statement of Principles

This policy has been written taking into account the DfE Guidance 'Controlling access to school premises' November 2018.

At Imberhorne School, we value the positive relationships forged with parents, carers and visitors to the school. We encourage close links with parents 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 adults model the behaviour we expect students to exhibit. In general, we place a high importance on good manners, positive communication and mutual respect.

Almost all parents, carers and visitors to Imberhorne are keen to work with us and are supportive of the school. However, very occasionally the behaviour or approach of a parent, carer or visitor falls short of what we expect. This sometimes manifests itself in aggression or abuse towards members of the school community.

In these situations, we expect members of staff to behave professionally, attempting to defuse the situation, where possible, seeking the involvement of other colleagues, as appropriate. 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. The board of governors has a responsibility to protect staff and students from such aggression.

Where actions are considered in response to abuse they will be reasonable and proportionate, aimed at reducing any future risk. Where the abuse comes from a parent or carer the impact on their child(ren) will be fully considered. In such instances parents or carers 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 will ensure fairness.

Definition of Unacceptable Behaviour

We define unacceptable behaviour to be any form of aggression or abuse directed at members of the school community. 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

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- ☐ physical intimidation, e.g. by standing very close to him/her 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 or visitor behaves in an unacceptable way towards a member of the school community, this should always be communicated to the Headteacher either directly or via an appropriate senior member of staff. They will in turn assess the level of risk before deciding on a future course of action.

Risk Assessment

The Headteacher will oversee an investigation in order to help decide about the level of response. 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 staff/students feel intimidated by the parents/carers 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 school's action?

Recording of Incidents

Staff or students subject to abuse along with any witnesses will make written statements about the incident which will be kept on file, with subsequent correspondence.

The School's Response

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

1. Writing to the protagonist detailing the behaviour displayed and the concerns raised by this. The unacceptable behaviour will be described in a letter from the Headteacher (Appendix 1). This letter may contain a warning about further action if there are subsequent incidents. The protagonist will be invited to write to the Headteacher with his/her response within 10 school days. Depending on the response a meeting may then be held to discuss the situation and how this can be avoided in future.
2. Invitation to an informal meeting to discuss events. This could be helpful to discuss and defuse 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. 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.
3. Impose conditions on future contact with the school and its staff. Depending on the type, level or frequency of the unacceptable behaviour, the Headteacher may consider imposing conditions on 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
- ☐ any other restriction as deemed reasonable and proportionate by the Headteacher.

If any of the conditions are being imposed, parents or carers would then be given 10 school days from the date of that letter to make representations in writing to the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors would then decide whether to confirm or remove the conditions. This will normally be communicated to the parent or carer in writing within 10 school days of the date of the parent's or carer's letter.

The status of any such conditions will be reviewed regularly and where appropriate withdrawn at a later date. In making such decisions the Headteacher will consider the extent of compliance with the ban, any appropriate expressions of regret and assurance of future good conduct.

4. Imposing a Ban (in consultation with West Sussex County Council's legal services)

Where other procedures have been exhausted and aggression or intimidation continues OR where there is an act of violence then the school may consider banning the protagonist. They will be informed by letter from the Headteacher of the details of the ban. This will include a ban from accessing school staff through written communication or by telephone.

The protagonist will have the right to appeal as detail above.

The status of a ban will be reviewed regularly and where appropriate withdrawn at a later date. In making such decisions the Headteacher will consider the extent of compliance with the ban, any appropriate expressions of regret and assurance of future good conduct.

Threats and Violence

Where a person recklessly or intentionally applies unlawful force on another or puts another in fear of an immediate attack, it is an offence in law which constitutes an assault. The police would normally be contacted immediately in such cases.

There are three categories of assault, based on the severity of the injury to the victim:

- ☐ Common Assault - involving the threat of immediate violence or causing minor injury (such as a graze, reddening of the skin or minor bruise).
- ☐ Actual Bodily Harm - causing an injury which interferes with the health or comfort of the victim (such as multiple bruising, broken tooth or temporary sensory loss).
- ☐ Grievous Bodily Harm - causing serious injury (such as a broken bone or an injury requiring lengthy treatment).

There is also a racially aggravated form of assault, where there is a racial element to the offence, which carries higher maximum penalties.

It is important to note that no physical attack or injury needs to have occurred for a common assault to have taken place. It is sufficient for a person to have been threatened with immediate violence and put in fear of a physical attack for an offence to have been committed. Individual circumstances will influence the decision as to whether a particular incident should be reported to the Police. The Police would expect to be involved where there is a clear injury (whether physical or emotional) and acknowledge that other factors may need to be considered such as the previous behaviour of the offender and the likelihood of a repetition if action is not taken to prevent it.

Harassment

Situations can arise where staff find themselves subjected to a pattern of persistent and unreasonable behaviour from individual parents which is not abusive or overtly aggressive but which can be perceived as intimidating and oppressive. In these circumstances, staff may be faced with a barrage of constant demands or criticisms (on an almost daily basis) which, whilst not particularly taxing or serious when viewed in isolation, can have the cumulative effect over time of undermining their confidence, well-being and health. In extreme cases, such behaviour may constitute an offence under the protection from Harassment Act 1997. If so, the Police have powers to act against the offender.

Appendix 1

Model Letter 1 Warning (sent by Headteacher)

Dear

I have received a report about your conduct/communication at/with the school on (enter date and time or details). This appears to fall short of that we would expect of a parent/ carer/visitor at Imberhorne School.

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

I must inform you that the Board of Governors will not tolerate abuse or 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 /communication to/with the school.

I wish to give you an opportunity to provide, in writing, any comments or observations of your own in relation to the report which I have received about what has taken place. Please do so within 10 working days of the date of this letter. These comments may also include any assurances you are prepared to give about your future interactions with the school. There is then an option for us to meet to discuss the situation.

Details of our policy on dealing with abusive parents/ carers/ visitors can be found on the school website.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher