

FIVE RIVERS
Multi Academy Trust



Parent/Carer/Visitor Conduct Policy

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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 parents' conduct on school premises.

At Five Rivers Multi Academy Trust, we value the positive relationships forged with parents¹ and visitors to our academies. 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 schools a place where, as adults, we model for students the behaviour we teach and expect them to exhibit. In general, we place a high importance on good manners, positive communication and mutual respect.

Almost all parents, carers and visitors to our academies are keen to work with us and are supportive of the academies and the MAT behaviour standards.

However, on very rare occasions, the behaviour of a small number of parents falls short of what we expect. This sometimes manifests itself in aggression or abuse towards members of the school community, through 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 of other colleagues, as appropriate. Staff who face these situations, have the right to end any conversation (face to face or on the telephone), referring the incident to a senior manager, who will take appropriate action by invoking the provisions of this policy.

The overriding principle is that all members of the school community have the right to work or be in school without fear of aggression, intimidation or abuse from parents. The Trust Board has a requirement to protect staff and children from such aggression.

The progress and well-being of the child(ren) will be considered fully. Actions taken against the parent will be reasonable and proportionate. The parent 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 premises, robust review processes, involving the Senior Leadership Team, Executive Leadership Team and the Trust Board are in place to ensure fairness.

Definition of unacceptable behaviour

We consider that aggressive, abusive or insulting behaviour or language from a parent presents a risk to staff or children. Unacceptable behaviour is behaviour that makes a member of staff or a child feel threatened or intimidated. 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;
- spreading malicious rumours;
- any kind of threat;
- raising of voice so as to be intimidating;
- physical intimidation, e.g. by standing very close to a person, or the use of aggressive hand gestures;
- use of foul or abusive language;
- use of discriminatory (e.g. racist/sexist) language;
- any kind of physical abuse;

¹ For purposes of this policy, the term 'parent' includes carers, other family members and all visitors to the school.

- allegations which turn out to be vexatious or malicious;
- persistent and unreasonable criticism;
- any other behaviour witnessed by others which alarms or distresses them, or that makes them feel that violence may be used against them;
- **any parent/carer/visitor coming into school carrying an offensive weapon will be banned with immediate effect and the police informed immediately.**

The Trust's approach to dealing with incidents

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

The Trust will work with the police to prosecute those who continually abuse its staff.

Risk Assessment

The Principal/Head of School will carry out a risk assessment (low, medium, high) in order to help make a decision about the level of response to an incident. In all cases the response will be reasonable and proportionate. They 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 the incident will be repeated or, there will be retaliation for the school's action?

Recording of Incidents

Staff/pupils subjected to abuse and any witnesses will make written statements about the incident(s). These will be kept in a file with subsequent letters. This file will be kept by the Principal/Head of School. Depending on an assessment of the risk of retaliation to witnesses or individuals, statements made by adults may be made available to the parent, if they request it.

The Academy's Response

Following the completion of the risk assessment, the Principal/Head of School will decide the level of action to be taken. Actions will include the following:

1. Clarify to the parent what is considered by the school as acceptable behaviour

In some instances, it may be appropriate simply to ensure that the parent is clear about behaviour standards expected by the school. This could be explained by a letter from the Principal/Head of School. This letter may contain a warning about further action if there are further incidents. The parent will be invited to write to the Principal/Head of School

with his/her version of events within 10 working days. Depending on the parent's response, a meeting may then be held to discuss the situation and how this problem can be avoided in future.

2. Invite the parent to an informal meeting to discuss events

An informal meeting could be helpful to discuss and defuse the situation.

The safety and well-being of those attending such a meeting must be considered carefully. Members of the 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 who could potentially become aggressive. The Trust strongly advises school staff to avoid meeting with parents where they consider this to be a risk to staff safety and wellbeing.

The main points of discussion and any agreed actions should be noted, and a follow-up letter or email sent to confirm the school's expectations and any agreed actions.

3. Impose conditions on the parent'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 of enrolled pupils 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 exceeding this would be trespassing.

Depending on the type, level or frequency of the unacceptable behaviour, the school may consider imposing conditions on the parent'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 will be accompanied by a member of the senior leadership of the school;
- any other restriction as deemed reasonable and proportionate by the Principal/Head of School.

In this case, the parent will be informed by letter from the Principal/Head of School of the details of the conditions that are being imposed. The parent will then be given 10 working days from the date of that letter, to make representations in writing about the conditions to the CEO, who (with possible input from the Chair of the Trust Board) will then decide whether to confirm, modify or remove the conditions. This decision will be communicated to the parent in writing within 10 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 CEO after approximately six months (and every six months after that, if appropriate). The parent will be invited to make written representation to the CEO. This and the evidence from the Principal/Head of School will be considered by the CEO, who 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 Trust Board within 10 days of the review.

When deciding whether it will be necessary to maintain, extend or remove the conditions, the CEO will give consideration to the extent of the parent's compliance with the conditions, as well as any appropriate expressions of regret and assurance of future good conduct received from the parent. Any evidence of the parent's co-operation with the school in other respects will also be taken into consideration.

4. Imposing a ban

Where other procedures have been exhausted and aggression or intimidation continues, OR, where there is an extreme act of violence, aggression or intimidation, then the school may consider banning the individual from school premises, and may also consider whether to inform the police. Such a ban will also 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 Chair of the Trust Board that a provisional ban is being imposed. The parent will then be given 10 working days from the date of that letter, to make representations about the ban in writing to the Chair of the Trust Board. The Chair will decide whether to confirm or remove the ban. This decision will be communicated to the parent in writing within 10 working days of the receipt of their letter.

If the Chair's decision is to confirm the ban, parents in these circumstances will be written to, to notify them about their child's progress, at the same time as other parents have their face to face meetings.

A decision to impose a ban will be reviewed by the Chair of the Trust Board after approximately six months (and every six months after that, if appropriate). The parent will be invited to make written representation to the Chair of the Trust Board. This and the evidence from the Principal/Head of School will be considered by the Chair, who may decide to remove the ban, extend the ban or impose other conditions on the parent's access to the school. The decision of the review will be communicated to the parent by the Clerk to the Trust Board within 10 days of the date of the review.

In deciding whether to remove or extend the ban or impose conditions, the Chair of the Trust Board will give consideration to the extent of the parent's compliance with the ban, any appropriate expressions of regret and assurance of future good conduct received from the parent. Any evidence of the parent's co-operation with the school in other respects will also be taken into consideration.

5. Removal from school

Section 547 of the Education Act 1996 makes it a criminal offence for a person who is on school premises without lawful authority to cause or permit a nuisance or disturbance. Parents 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 will be asked to leave the premises. Should they refuse to leave, police engagement will be sought and legal proceedings may be brought against the parent. This could result in a fine of up to £500.

6. Complaints policy

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

Appendix 1 List of possible letters

Warning

Model letter 1: This is an initial letter from the Principal/Head of School to ensure the parent 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 attendance at school events

Model letter 2: This is a letter from the Principal/Head of School informing parents of the school's decision to impose conditions on the parent's attendance at school events, pending review by the CEO and/or the Chair of the Trust Board.

Model letter 3: Letter from the CEO informing parents of the decision to confirm or remove the conditions.

Imposing a ban

Model letter 4: Letter from the Chair of the Trust Board informing parents of the intention to impose a ban on their presence on school premises, pending review by the Chair of the Trust Board. The review will be based on the written comments and responses submitted by the parent within 10 days of the date of the ban letter.

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

Reviewing the decision to impose conditions or impose a ban

Model Letter 6: Letter from the Clerk to the Trust Board requesting a statement from parents in advance of the Chair of the Trust Board's review of a decision.

Model letter 7: Letter from the Clerk to the Trust Board to confirm the outcome of the further review of a decision, stating whether the imposition of the conditions/ban has been extended or removed.

Appendix 2 Model letters

Warning

Model Letter 1 - sent by the Principal/Head of School by 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 what we expect of a parent of a pupil at one of the academies within the Five Rivers Multi Academy Trust.

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

I must inform you that the Five Rivers Multi Academy Trust will not tolerate aggression towards members of the school community and will act to protect its staff and pupils 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

Principal/Head of School

cc: CEO, Chair of Trust Board

Model Letter 2

Imposing conditions on the parent’s attendance at school events, pending review - sent by the Principal/Head of School by Recorded delivery

Dear

I have received a report from (name of staff member) 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 Five Rivers Multi Academy Trust, in line with our policy, will not tolerate conduct of this nature on the school premises and will act to defend school staff and pupils.

I am therefore, writing to inform you that I am imposing conditions on the contact you may have with the school. These are as follows: (delete as appropriate)

- you must be accompanied to any meeting with a member of school staff by a member of the senior leadership of the school;
- you may not contact by telephone or in writing any member of staff, apart from me;
- you may not attend any events for parents, except those to which you will be accompanied by a member of the senior leadership of the school;
- (other conditions as are reasonable and proportionate).

The restrictions above are provisional until they have been reviewed by the CEO and/or the Chair of the Trust Board. Please consider them to be in force until you receive confirmation.

The CEO or Chair of the Trust Board will decide whether it is appropriate to confirm or overturn this decision. You may, if you wish, send 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. The CEO will then write to you with the outcome of the review.

If on receipt of your comments, the CEO considers that my decision should be confirmed, you will be supplied with details of how the conditions will be reviewed.

Yours sincerely

Principal/Head of School
cc: CEO, Chair of Trust Board

Model Letter 3:

Letter to confirm or overturn Principal/Head of School’s decision to impose conditions - sent by CEO by 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 expect as a school. You will be aware that the Principal/Head of School (*delete as appropriate*) 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 (*delete as appropriate*)

....., the contents of which I have considered carefully.

In the circumstances, and after further consideration of the Principal/Head of School’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 Head’s letter)

This decision will be reviewed by me in approximately six months’ time. The Clerk to the Trust Board will write to you in advance of the review to ask you to provide a written statement for my consideration. When deciding whether it will be necessary to extend the application of the 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 co-operation with the school in other respects.

OR

In the circumstances, and after further consideration of the Principal/Head of School’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

CEO

cc: Chair of Trust Board, Principal/Head of School

Model Letter 4:

Imposition of a ban on contacting or attending the school, pending review - sent by Chair of Trust Board by Recorded delivery

Dear

I have received a report from the Principal / Head of School about your conduct on

..... at

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

You will recollect that the school has 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 Five Rivers Multi Academy Trust, in line with our policy, will not tolerate conduct of this nature on the school premises and will act to defend school staff and pupils.

Having considered the aggressive and abusive nature of your conduct and your unreasonable demands towards members of staff over a period of time (change as appropriate), I have advised the school that it is no longer appropriate for you to continue to be allowed on the school premises. When you bring your child(ren) to the school, you must bring them only as far as the school gate. You must not enter the school premises.

A member of staff will meet you at the school gates to ensure the safe handover of your child. If you wish for your child to attend breakfast club, (name of member of staff) will be on the door in order to watch him/her from the breakfast club gate from 8:00 - 8:15am. Notwithstanding this decision, the Principal/Head of School and staff at the school remain committed to the education of your child, who must continue to attend school as normal.

Please note that the withdrawal of permission to come onto school premises takes effect **immediately**. This arrangement is intended to ensure the safety of staff and pupils, and to make sure that the day-to-day running of the school is not affected.

However, I still must decide whether it is appropriate to confirm this decision. Before I do so, I wish to give you an opportunity to outline in writing any comments or observations of your own in relation to the report which I have received from the Principal/Head of School. These comments may include any expressions of regret on your part and any assurances you are prepared to give about your future good conduct. To enable me to take a decision on this matter, you are asked to send me any written comments you wish to make by XXX (10 days from the date of this letter).

On receipt of your comments I will consider your case and notify you of the outcome. The comments should be sent in the post to the Trust Office at the following address.

Five Rivers Multi Academy Trust Office
c/o Tinsley Meadows Primary Academy
34a Norborough Road

Sheffield S9 1SG

If you do not comply with this instruction, I shall arrange for you to be removed from the premises and prosecuted under section 547 of the Education Act 1996. This could involve the engagement of the police. If convicted, you are liable for a fine of up to £500.

Yours sincerely

Chair of the Trust Board

cc Principal / Head of School, CEO

Model Letter 5:

Letter to confirm or overturn Chair of Trust Board’s decision to impose a ban - sent by Chair of Trust Board by 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 expect as a school. You will be aware that they have 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 Principal/Head of School’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 letter, telephone or e-mail.

This decision will be reviewed by me in six months’ time. The Clerk to the Trust Board will write to you in advance of the review to ask you to provide a written statement for my consideration. When deciding whether it will be necessary to extend the ban on your entering school premises, consideration will be given to the extent of your compliance with the current decision, any appropriate expressions of regret and assurance of future good conduct received from you and any evidence of your co-operation with the school in other respects.

OR

In the circumstances, and after further consideration of the Principal/Head of School’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 the Trust Board
cc: Principal/Head of School, CEO

Model Letter 6:

Letter from Clerk to the Trust Board requesting parents' statement for review by Chair of Trust Board - sent by Clerk to the Trust Board by Recorded delivery

Dear

XX wrote to you on (date) to detail concerns that your behaviour towards school staff/pupils fell short of what we 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 Chair of the Trust Board on (date).

I am writing to ask whether you would like to make a written statement to the Chair of the Trust Board for their consideration in making the decision whether to remove the restriction or extend it?

If you wish to make a written statement, please post or email it to me at (address) by (date - parents should be given 10 days to respond).

Yours sincerely

Clerk to the Trust Board

cc: Principal/Head of School

Model Letter 7:

Letter detailing outcome of Chair of Trust Board's review - sent by Clerk to the Trust Board by Recorded delivery

Dear

I wrote to you on (date) to request a statement to enable the Chair of the Trust Board 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 Chair of the Trust Board on (date).

After further consideration of the Principal/Head of School's report and your letter, the Chair of the Trust Board has determined that the decision to impose conditions/ban you from attending or contacting school 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 by
- you may not contact by telephone or in writing any member of staff but you may contact XX.
- you may not attend any events for parents, except directly involving your child, in which case you will be accompanied by a member of the senior leadership of the school;
- any other condition imposed in model letter 2.

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

OR

In the circumstances, and after further consideration of the Principal/Head of School's report and your letter, the Chair of the Trust Board has 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 Trust Board

cc: Principal/Head of School



ZERO TOLERANCE

NO EXCUSE FOR ABUSE

All staff are committed to working with you in a professional and courteous manner and have the right to work in a safe and supportive working environment.

Inappropriate language, threats or acts of aggression / intimidation towards staff will not be tolerated on these premises. Anyone behaving in such a way will be asked to leave; they may receive a ban from the premises and their behaviour may be reported to the police.

Please set a good example for your child by behaving in a polite, kind and respectful manner towards school staff at all times.

Thank you