

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR PARENTS

Dealing with aggressive parents

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STATEMENT OF INTENT

Gotham Primary School encourages close links with parents and the community. We believe that children benefit when the relationship between home and school is a positive one. The vast majority of parents, carers and others visiting the school are keen to work with us and are supportive of the school. However, a tiny minority of parents have a negative attitude towards the school and sometimes, this can result in aggression, verbal and/or physical abuse towards school staff.

Gotham Primary School expects its staff to behave professionally in these difficult situations and attempt to defuse the situation where possible, seeking the involvement as appropriate of other colleagues. However, all staff have the right to work without fear of violence and abuse and the right, in extreme cases, of appropriate self-defence.

The Governors of Gotham Primary School expect parents and other visitors to behave in a reasonable way towards school staff. This policy outlines the steps that will be taken where parents' behaviour is unacceptable.

BEHAVIOUR

Types of behaviour that are considered serious and unacceptable and will not be tolerated This is not an exhaustive list but seeks to provide illustrations of unacceptable behaviour:

- Shouting at school staff, either in person or over the telephone. Swearing at a member of school staff either in person or over the telephone.
- Physically intimidating a member of staff e.g. standing very close to him/her
- The use of aggressive hand gestures e.g. two fingers raised , shaking or holding a fist
- Threatening school staff either directly or through implied threatening comments
- Writing inappropriate or abusive comments about a member of staff on social media (see appendix 1)

- Any aggressive physical action towards a member of school staff- Pushing, hitting, slapping, punching, kicking or spitting
- Racist or sexist comments
- Breaking the school's security procedures

Section 547, Education Act 1996 – (see appendix 2)

Section 547 makes it an offence for a trespasser on school premises to cause or permit a nuisance or disturbance, and allows for the removal and prosecution of any person believed to have committed the offence. Unacceptable behaviour will result in Nottinghamshire County Council and the Police being informed of the incident.

PROCEDURE

When a parent or member of the public behaves in an unacceptable way towards a member of the school staff the Headteacher or appropriate senior staff will seek to resolve the situation through discussion and mediation. If necessary, the school's complaints procedure should be followed.

Where all procedures have been exhausted, and aggression or intimidation continue, or where there is an extreme act of violence, a parent or carer may be banned by the Headteacher, in agreement with the Governing Body, from the school premises for a period of time, subject to review.

Prior to being banned the following steps will be taken:

- The parent will be warned, in writing, that s/he is banned from the premises, subject to review, and what will happen if the ban is breached, eg that an injunction may follow. (see appendix 2)
- Where an assault has led to a ban, a statement indicating that the matter has been reported to Nottinghamshire Council and the Police will be included. (see appendix 3)
- Where appropriate, arrangements for students being delivered to, and collected from the school gate will be clarified.

CONCLUSION

Pupils learn best when there is a positive partnership between home and school. Whilst every effort will be made to work with parents, this will only be possible where parents behave in an acceptable way. Unfortunately, where a parent's behaviour is either unacceptable or serious it will not be possible to continue working with him/her and, as a final resort, legal action may be taken. The school will take action where behaviour is unacceptable or serious.

Appendix 1 – Inappropriate use of Social Networking Sites

Social media websites are being used increasingly to fuel campaigns and complaints against schools, Head teachers, school staff, and in some cases other parents/pupils. The Governors of our school consider social media websites being used in this way as unacceptable and not in the best interests of the children or the whole school community. Any concerns you may have must be made through the appropriate channels by speaking to the class teacher, so they can be dealt with fairly, appropriately and effectively for all concerned. If you believe further action is required please refer to our Complaints Policy on the school website.

In the event that any pupil or parent/carer of a child/ren being educated at our school is found to be posting libellous or defamatory comments on Facebook or other social network sites, they may be reported to the appropriate 'report abuse' section of the network site. All social network sites have clear rules about the content which can be posted on the site and they provide robust mechanisms to report contact or activity which breaches this. Our school also expects that any parent/carer or pupil removes such comments immediately.

In serious cases school will also consider legal options to deal with any such misuse of social networking and other sites. Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, is the issue of cyberbullying and the use by one child or a parent with the intention to publicly humiliate another by inappropriate social network entry. This will be dealt with this as a serious incident of school bullying.

Appendix 2

Section 547, Education Act 1996

Section 547 makes it an offence for a trespasser on school premises to cause or permit a nuisance or disturbance, and allows for the removal and prosecution of any person believed to have committed the offence. The penalty for a person convicted of the offence is a fine of up to £500.

A parent/carer of a child attending a school normally has implied permission (limited licence) to be on the school's premises at certain times and for certain purposes but if their behaviour is unreasonable this permission may be withdrawn and they will become a trespasser.

A person who nevertheless persists in entering the school premises and displaying unreasonable behaviour may be removed and prosecuted under section 547.

The LA may take the lead in authorising the removal of a person believed to be causing or permitting a nuisance or disturbance and may bring proceedings against them. Additionally, in all situations the police are authorised to remove someone from school premises and to bring proceedings for an offence under this section.

It is not set down in law how a person should be authorised. Good practice suggests that this is done in writing. Schools should clarify who has been authorised to remove anyone causing a disturbance, and they should ensure they have received appropriate training.

Schools wishing action to be taken against someone they believe has committed an offence under Section 547 should contact their LA as appropriate. If the police have been involved the school should clarify whether the police intend to summons or charge and whether the Crown Prosecution Service has decided that there is sufficient evidence to prosecute. In most cases it will be in the public interest to prosecute if there is sufficient evidence to support a prosecution

Appendix 3 – Warning Letter



Date

Dear

I have received a report about your conduct at the school on **(enter date and time)**.

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

I must inform you that the governing body will not tolerate conduct of this nature on its premises and will act to protect its staff and pupils.

Therefore if, in the future, I receive any reports of conduct of this nature I will be forced to consider removing your licence to enter the school grounds and buildings. If you do not comply with that instruction I will be able to arrange for you to be removed from the premises and prosecuted under Section 547 of the Education Act 1996. If convicted under this section, you are liable to a fine of up to £500.

Nevertheless, 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. 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 at an early point, you are asked to send me any written comments you wish to make by **(state date ten working days from the date of letter)**.

Yours sincerely,

Janette Allen
Head Teacher

Appendix 4 Letter Imposing Ban

Recorded delivery

Date



Dear

I have received a report from the head teacher at Gotham Primary School about your conduct on **(enter date and time)**.

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

I must inform you that the governing body **will** not tolerate conduct of this nature on its premises and will act to protect its staff and pupils.

On the advice of the head teacher I am therefore instructing that until **(add date)** you are not to reappear on the premises of the school. If you do not comply with this instruction I may arrange for you to be removed from the premises and prosecuted under Section 547 of the Education Act 1996. If convicted under this section, you are liable to a fine of up to £500.

For the duration of this decision you may bring your son(s)/daughter(s) **(complete as appropriate)** to school and collect them/him/her (delete as appropriate) at the end of the school day, but you must not go beyond the school gate.

In the case of infant children, also insert Arrangements have been made for your **(delete as appropriate)** son(s)/daughter(s) (insert child/rens names) to be collected, and returned to you, at the school gate by a member of the school's staff.

The withdrawal of permission for you to enter the school premises takes effect straightaway.

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 from the head teacher. These comments may include any expressions of regret on your part and any assurances you are prepared to give about your future good conduct.

The decision to withdraw your licence to enter the school premises will be reviewed by (complete as appropriate). That review will take account of any representations that you may have made and of your subsequent conduct.

Yours sincerely,

Chair of Governors