



ACET Parent Carer Visitor Code of Conduct Policy

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1.0	June 2023	New policy, replaces the previous 'Abuse to Staff Policy'	
2.0	September 2023	Added section 'Communication between Parents/Carers and the Academy'	
3.0	July 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minor grammatical amendments. • Page 6, clarified that anyone who is subjected to unacceptable conduct or abuse must make written statements about the incident(s). • Page 6, added detail to ensure Chairs of Governors are provided with all available evidence before they make a decision to support/amend/overturn any restrictions. • Page 6, added sentence about the principal reporting any incident to the CPO for monitoring Page 7, added Violence to Staff Policy to list of linked policies	

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INTRODUCTION

We value positive relationships with parents/carers, visitors and our wider communities. We encourage close links with parents and the community and believe that students/pupils benefit when the relationship between home and the academy is a positive one. We also strive to make our academies places where as adults we model for students/pupils the behaviour we teach and expect. In general, we place a high importance on good manners, positive communication, inclusivity and mutual respect.

This policy aims to set and maintain standards of conduct that we expect all parents/carers and visitors in our academies to follow. We aim to ensure that all ACET academies are environments where everyone is safe, happy and treated with respect.

OUR EXPECTATION OF PARENTS/CARERS AND VISITORS

We set clear expectations and guidelines on behaviour for all members of our community. This includes staff (through our Staff Code of Conduct) and students/pupils (through our Behaviour and Rewards Policy).

We expect parents/carers and visitors to:

- Respect the ethos, vision and values of our academy and the wider ACET trust
- Set a good example to our students/pupils with their own conduct
- Treat all members of the academy community with respect and dignity
- Seek a peaceful solution to all issues
- Work together with staff in the best interests of our students/pupils
- Always act in line with the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Correct their own child's behaviour (or those in their care), particularly where it could lead to conflict, aggression or unsafe conduct
- Follow academy communication procedures to ensure staff are able to help resolve any issues or concerns

DEFINITION OF UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR

We consider that aggressive, abusive or insulting behaviour or language from a parent/carer presents a risk to staff, governors or students/pupils. Unacceptable behaviour is such that makes a member of staff, student/pupil, governor or any other member of the academy community, feel threatened. This can be through face-to-face contact, on the telephone or in written communication (including online / social media).

Examples of behaviour that will not be tolerated include:

- Disrupting, or threatening to disrupt, school operations (including events on the school grounds and sports team matches)
- Swearing or using offensive/abusive language
- Displaying a temper (e.g. shouting at any member of the academy community)
- Threatening, aggressive or intimidating behaviour towards any member of the academy community (e.g. raising voice, physical intimidation, the use of aggressive hand gestures etc.)
- Sending abusive messages to another member of the academy community, including via text, email or social media
- Any kind of communication which is considered abusive, derogatory, harassing or threatening
- Posting defamatory, offensive or derogatory comments about the academy, its staff or any member of its community, on social media platforms

- Any kind of insult as an attempt to demean, embarrass or undermine
- Use of physical or aggressive punishment against your own child
- Disciplining another person's child (any issues should be raised with a member of staff to deal with)

Other examples of behaviour that may not be considered threatening towards individuals, but are still unacceptable, include:

- Smoking (including 'vapes'), drinking alcohol and/or possessing/taking drugs on academy premises
- Bringing dogs on the school premises (excluding guide dogs or therapy dogs)
- Any kind of abuse allegations which turn out to be vexatious or malicious.

Please note that the examples above are not an exhaustive list. If situations arise that are not covered by this code, staff will use their professional judgement and act in the best interests of our academies and their pupils/students.

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN PARENTS/CARERS AND THE ACADEMY

We believe that clear, open communication between school and home has a positive impact on student/pupils' learning because it provides parents/carers with the information they need to support their child's education, and it helps the academy to improve, through feedback and consultation with parents/carers.

The academy is responsible for:

Responding to communication from parents in a timely manner and respectfully. Staff will aim to respond to communication during core school hours, or their working hours (if they work part time), and to redirect communication to the most appropriate person if they are unable to assist themselves. In line with promoting staff wellbeing and a healthy work/life balance, staff may choose to work around other responsibilities and commitments and respond outside of core hours if they wish, but they are **not expected** to do so.

Parents/carers are responsible for:

Responding to communication from the academy in a timely manner and respectfully (any communication that is considered disrespectful, abusive or threatening will be treated as unacceptable behaviour in line with this policy). Parents/carers should aim to direct their communications to the appropriate member of staff or through the appropriate channels. Parents/carers should **not** expect staff to respond to their communication outside of core school hours or during school holidays.

Managing unreasonable communication

We are committed to working with parents/carers and will not normally limit the amount of communication between home and school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening, and sometimes communication from parent/carers can hinder the operations of the academy, due to the frequency or nature of their contact with the academy. Examples of unreasonable communication may include:

- making excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and/or complicated contact with staff, either in person, in writing, by email and by telephone
- frequently complaining about a variety of different things, or the same issue, in an obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific or repetitious manner
- seeking unrealistic outcomes to the issue being raised, and persisting until that outcome is achieved
- persistently contacting staff out of hours via email/text

- repeatedly contacting the academy/staff, and/or demanding for staff to be brought to the telephone/meeting without prior notice
- behaving aggressively or provocatively towards the academy and/or individual members of staff
- raising large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insisting they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales
- repeatedly raising the same issue, or refusing to acknowledge an issue has been dealt with and/or refusing to accept the academy's decision/stance on something
- making unjustified complaints about staff and/or seeking to have them replaced
- adopting a 'scatter gun' approach; pursuing parallel complaints or issues with various members of staff
- using Freedom of Information requests excessively or unreasonably

Parents/carers whose communication is deemed to be unreasonable may have restrictions placed on their contact with the academy – this will be at the discretion of the principal. Types of action **may** include limiting to one type of contact (i.e., email, telephone) or to one person, placing limits on the frequency or nature of contact, offering a restricted time slot for necessary correspondence, or informing the parent/carer/visitor that future communications will be read/filed but not acknowledged, unless it contains important new information.

Parents/carers who are dissatisfied with the academy's response to their communication should refer to the ACET Complaints Policy.

OUR APPROACH TO DEALING WITH INCIDENTS

In a situation where a member of staff or a governor is subject to unacceptable behaviour from a parent/carer or visitor, we expect our staff and governors to behave professionally, attempt to defuse the situation where possible and seek the involvement of other colleagues if appropriate, however, they **are not expected to tolerate abuse** and if they find themselves in this situation, they have license to terminate any conversation immediately (face-to-face or on the telephone). They should then refer the incident to the principal or a senior leader who will assess the issue and level of risk before deciding on a future course of action.

In the case of unreasonable communication, it is at the discretion of the principal to decide on a future course of action.

In considering any given situation, the progress and well-being of the child(ren) involved will be fully considered. Actions taken against the parent/carer/visitor will be reasonable and proportionate. The parent/carer/visitor will have the opportunity to put their views forward at every stage. In the case of the imposition of conditions or a ban from the academy, robust review processes involving the Chair of Governors are in place to ensure fairness.

RISK ASSESSMENT

The principal will carry out a risk assessment, if appropriate, 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, although it will not always be necessary to complete a risk assessment document. The principal will consider the following questions:

- What was the specific conduct that was unacceptable?
- What evidence is there? (witness statements should be collected and retained)

- What do witnesses say happened?
- Are there previous incidents to take into consideration?
- Do staff/governors/students/pupils feel intimidated by the parent/carer/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 academy's action? (low, medium, high).

RECORDING OF INCIDENTS

Anyone who is subjected to unacceptable conduct or abuse must make written statements about the incident(s), which will be kept securely. All breaches of this Code of Conduct, along with ensuing actions, will be recorded on our internal log. Any witnesses will also be asked to make written statements as appropriate. Depending on an assessment of the risk of retaliation to witnesses or individuals, statements made by adults **may** be made available to the parent/carer if they request it – this is at the discretion of the principal.

The Chief People Officer should be provided with copies of all documentation linked to an incident and any restrictions imposed by the principal, for monitoring purposes.

All data linked to this Code of Conduct will be processed in line with the ACET Data Protection Policy, and any Subject Access Requests will be referred to the ACET Data Controller.

THE ACADEMY'S RESPONSE

Following the completion of the risk assessment (if applicable), the principal will decide the level of action to be taken. Actions could include the following:

- Send a warning letter, highlighting expected standards of conduct and a warning about future action should there be any further incidents
- Invite the parent/carer/visitor into the academy to meet with a senior member of staff or the principal (if this is deemed appropriate by the Principal)
- Place restrictions on the parent/carer/visitor's contact or communication with the academy staff and wider community
- Ban the parent/carer/visitor from the academy site and/or from communications with staff
- Contact the appropriate authorities (in cases of criminal behaviour)
- Seek advice from the legal team regarding further action (for example, in cases of conduct that may be libelous or slanderous)

The decision for how to respond to breaches of the code of conduct rests with the principal. Any restriction or ban will be referred to the Chair of Governors who will have the authority to support the restriction or amend/overturn it. The Chair of Governors must be provided with a copy of all available evidence so that they are able to confirm or overturn the principal's decision. Any ban or restriction will include a review period, which is usually six months (determined by the principal).

REMOVAL FROM THE ACADEMY

Any parent/carer/visitor who has been banned from the academy premises and continues to cause a nuisance will be deemed to have committed a section 547 offence and will be considered as trespassers. In these circumstances they may be removed from the academy and support may be sought from the police. Legal proceedings may be brought against an individual committing such an offence.

COMPLAINTS

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

LINKS WITH OTHER POLICIES

- Safeguarding
- Whistleblowing
- Behaviour and Rewards
- Anti-bullying
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- Visitors to Academies
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Complaints
- Data protection

EXAMPLE / MODEL LETTERS AND DOCUMENTS

Example risk assessment, incident reports and model letters for each stage are available to staff. These are shared with principals and HR colleagues.