



Code of Conduct for Parents, Carers and Visitors Policy

Principles

At Waingels, we value the positive relationships with parents, carers and visitors to our school. We encourage close links with parents, carers and visitors 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 as adults we model for students the attitudes and behaviour we teach and expect. We place high importance on our values of Kindness, Respect, Resilience and Pride. We take the safety of all our stakeholders seriously. Staff are entitled to carry out their work without threat of verbal abuse or physical violence. Any displays of aggression to our staff by parents, carers and visitors will be taken seriously and will be investigated fully, to establish the appropriate action to take.

We know all parents, carers and visitors to Waingels are keen to work with us and are supportive of the school. However, on very rare occasions the behaviour of a small number of parents, carers and visitors falls short of what we expect. This sometimes manifests itself in aggression or abuse towards members of the school community. This can be in written communication (including social media), on the telephone or in face-to-face incidents.

Our overriding principle is that all members of the school community have the right to work or be in school without fear of aggression or abuse from parents, carers and visitors. The purpose of this code of conduct is to provide the expectations around the conduct of all parents, carers and visitors connected to our school.

We are committed to resolving difficulties in a constructive manner, through an open and positive dialogue. However, we understand that everyday misunderstandings can cause frustrations and can have a negative impact on our relationships.

Often parent/carers and visitors would like their issues to be resolved in the quickest possible time. Occasionally, this can manifest in behaviours such as:

- Parent/carer or visitors attending school and demanding to see a member of staff; without appointment
- Parent/carer or visitors attending school and demanding to see a member of staff; without appointment and refusing to leave reception
- Parent/carer or visitors emailing staff "out of hours" including weekends and expecting an immediate response; with further emails being sent

Staff have a timetable and other commitments in order to ensure the smooth running of the school. It is not always possible for parent/carers or visitors to meet with staff without appointment. Therefore, parent/carers and visitors should make an appointment either directly with the staff member or via reception. Failure to do so may lead to disappointment.

It is also not feasible for parent, carers or visitors to expect staff to respond immediately to emails/written communication. As written at the end of all of staff emails, Waingels values the work

life balance of its staff. Therefore, if emails are sent out of normal school working hours, there is no expectation for parent/carers and visitors to provide an immediate response. We in turn endeavour to respond to all emails within 48 working hours.

Where issues arise or misconceptions take place, please contact your child's Tutor or the relevant Head of Subject, who will be able to meet with you and go through the issue and hopefully resolve it. Where issues remain unresolved, please follow the school's complaint procedure. This is available on the school website <https://www.waingels.wokingham.sch.uk/243/policies-1>.

Staff who face aggression or abuse from parents, carers and visitors have licence to end any conversation (face to face or on the telephone).

This code aims to clarify the types of behaviour that will not be tolerated.

Definition of unacceptable behaviour

We consider that aggressive, abusive or insulting behaviour or language from parents, carers and visitors presents a risk to staff or students. Unacceptable behaviour is such that makes a member of staff or student **feel** threatened or uncomfortable. 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 towards a member of staff, visitor fellow parent/carer or child
- raising of voice so as to be intimidating or displaying temper
- 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
- any inappropriate behaviour on the school premises
- damaging or destroying school property
- sending abusive or threatening emails/voicemails/phone messages or other written communications (including social media) to anyone within the school community
- defamatory, offensive or derogatory comments regarding the school or any of the students/parents/staff/Governors at the school on social media or public forum
- approaching someone else's child in order to discuss or chastise them because of the actions of this child towards their own child
- Breaching school security procedures such as entering site without signing-in at reception etc.

This code of conduct also covers issues of conduct with the use of **Social Media**.

Most people take part in online activities and social media. It's fun, interesting and keeps us connected. We ask that you use common sense when discussing school life online. We ask that social media, whether public or private, should not be used to voice complaints about the school, staff, parents or students.

We take very seriously inappropriate use of social media by parents, carers and visitors to publicly humiliate or criticise another parent, staff or student.

If parents, carers and visitors have any concerns about their child in relation to the school, as we have said above, they should:

1. Contact their child's Tutor
2. If the concern remains they should contact their child's Head of Year
3. If the concern remains they should contact a member of the Senior Leadership Team
4. If the concern remains they should contact the Headteacher
5. If still unresolved, they should follow the Complaints Policy

Parents, carers and visitors should not use social media as a medium to air any concerns or grievances.

Online activity which we consider inappropriate:

- Identifying or posting images/videos of students
- Abusive or personal comments about staff, students, governors or other parents
- Bringing the school into disrepute
- Posting defamatory or libellous comments
- Emails circulated or sent directly with abusive or personal comments about staff or students
- Using social media to publicly challenge the school policies or discuss issues about individual students or staff
- Threatening behaviour, such as verbally intimidating staff, or using bad language

At our school we take our safeguarding responsibilities seriously and will deal with any reported incidents appropriately in line with policy.

The school's approach to dealing with incidents

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

Risk Assessment

The Headteacher or appropriate senior staff will carry out a risk assessment in order to help decide about the level of response. In all cases the response will be reasonable and proportionate.

The Headteacher or appropriate senior staff 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 this will be repeated or there will be retaliation at the school's action? (low, medium, high).

The School's response

Following the completion of the risk assessment, the Headteacher will decide the level of action to be taken. Actions could include the following:

1. Clarify to the parent, carer and visitor what is considered acceptable behaviour by the school

In some instances, it may be appropriate to simply ensure the parent, carer and visitor is clear about behaviour standards expected by the school. This could be explained by letter from the Headteacher or appropriate senior staff. This letter may contain a warning about further action if there are further incidents.

2. Invite the parents, carers and visitors to an informal meeting to discuss events

This could be helpful to discuss and diffuse 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. Consideration should be given to the seating arrangements, and care taken to ensure exits cannot be blocked by a parents, carers and visitors who could potentially become aggressive.

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 the parents, carers and visitors 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 and carers of enrolled students 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 and carers exceeding this would be trespassing.

Depending of the type, level or frequency of the unacceptable behaviour, the school may consider imposing conditions on the parents, carers and visitors 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 Headteacher

In this case the parents, carers and visitors will be informed by letter from the Headteacher or appropriate senior staff the details of the conditions that are being imposed.

4. Imposing a ban

Where other procedures have been exhausted and aggression, abuse or insulting behaviour or language continues and it is deemed to be a risk to staff or students then The Chair of Governors in line

with the DFE Guidance: Controlling Access to School Premises – November 2018 may consider banning the parent, carer or visitor from school premises. It's enough for a member of staff or a pupil to feel threatened. A ban includes a parent/carers from accessing school staff by written communication or telephone.

In these circumstances, the individual would be advised in writing by the Chair of Governors that a ban is being imposed. Parents, carers and visitors in these circumstances will be offered an annual meeting about their child's progress, usually with a member of senior staff.

A decision to impose a ban will be reviewed by the Headteacher (or Chair of Governors) after approximately six months (and every six months after that, if appropriate). In deciding whether to remove or extend the ban or impose conditions, the Headteacher will give consideration to the extent of the parents, carers and visitors compliance with the ban, any appropriate expressions of regret and assurance of future good conduct received from him/her and any evidence of the parents, carers and visitor's co-operation with the school in other respects.

In imposing a ban, the following steps will be taken:

- The parents, carers and visitors will be informed, in writing, that they are banned from the premises, subject to review, and what will happen if the ban is breached, e.g. that police involvement or an injunction application may follow
- Where an assault has led to a ban, a statement indicating that the matter has been reported to the local police
- The Chair of Governors will be informed of the ban
- As appropriate, arrangements for meetings at school regarding students, and arrangements for students being delivered to and collected from the school will be clarified

5. Removal from school

Parents, carers and visitors 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 may be removed from school. This may be carried out by a police officer or person authorised by the Governing Body. Legal proceedings may be brought against the parent/carers or visitor

6. Complaints policy

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

Recording of Incidents

Staff/students subject to abuse and witnesses will make written statements about incident(s) which will be kept in a file with subsequent letters. These will be sent to the Headteacher. Depending on an assessment of the risk of retaliation to witnesses or individuals, statements made by adults these may be made available to the parent if they request it.

Staff Responsibilities & Record Keeping

- In all situations outlined in this code of conduct, we expect members of staff to behave professionally, attempting to defuse the situation where possible and seeking the involvement as appropriate of other colleagues or call out for support from Senior Staff.
- Staff who face these situations have licence to end any conversation (face to face or on the telephone).
- Staff should then refer the incident along with a written statement and enclosing any emails or voicemails to the Headteacher who will take appropriate action or invoke the provisions of this policy.
- Staff are advised not to respond in writing where they feel that the written communication that they have received is “unacceptable behaviour” as defined above. Staff should refer the incident along with a written statement and enclosing any emails to Headteacher who will take appropriate action or invoke the provisions of this policy.

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