



Acceptable Communication and Conduct Policy

Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of the policy is to set out for all individuals what constitutes unacceptable behaviour and the action the School may take if this takes place.

St Bernadette's Vision and Values and how this policy support this

"Our Mission is to develop the whole person in a Catholic learning community, to provide a loving Christian environment and to strive for excellence, equality, justice and fairness."

We strive to create a happy and successful learning environment where all can achieve excellence in all aspects of their life and work and where there is positive partnership with home, parish and the wider community.

This policy supports this vision by allowing individuals to carry out their roles in the School without fear of violence or abuse

Outline of Policy

Approach

The Governors of St Bernadette Catholic Secondary School actively encourage close links with parents and the community. We believe that pupils benefit when the relationship between home and School is a positive one. We strive to make our School a place where we model for children the behaviour we teach and expect. The vast majority of parents, carers and other adults visiting our School are keen to work with us and are supportive of the School. From time to time it is necessary for parents and the School to deal with problems relating to particular pupils. It is important that discussions between parents and staff are conducted in a calm and respectful manner. In the vast majority of such situations this is what happens, but on rare occasions, aggression and verbal and or physical abuse is directed towards members of School staff or members of the wider School community.

The Governors expect and requires its members of 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 members of staff have the right to work without fear of violence and/or abuse.

We expect parents and other visitors to behave in a reasonable way towards School staff. Violence, threatening behaviour and abuse against School staff or other members of the School community, including other parents and pupils, will not be tolerated. All members of the School have a right to expect that their community is a safe place in which to work and learn. This policy outlines the steps that will be taken where behaviour is unacceptable. St Bernadette Catholic Secondary School is appreciative of the support of parents/carers and visitors in maintaining a peaceful and safe environment.

Behaviour

Types of behaviour that are considered serious and unacceptable and which will not be tolerated in relation to members of staff, and other members of the community are:

- shouting, either in person or over the telephone
- swearing or using offensive language, either in person or over the telephone
- making disparaging or libelous comments about any member of the school's staff
- inappropriate electronic activity including publishing abusive or inappropriate content with regards to the school, teachers or pupils on social networking websites such as Facebook and Twitter or in email communication
- disruptive behaviour which interferes or threatens to interfere with the operation of a classroom, an employee's office, office area or any other area of the school grounds including team matches
- threatening to do actual bodily harm to a member of school staff, Governor, visitor, fellow parent/carer or pupil regardless of whether or not the behavior constitutes a criminal offence
- damaging or destroying school property
- abusive or threatening emails or text/voicemail/phone messages or other written communication. Any correspondence that contravenes this could result in Police involvement or a ban on contacting the school
- the use of physical aggression or intimidation towards another adult or pupil. This includes physical punishment against your own child on school premises
- approaching someone else's child in order to chastise them because of the actions of this child towards their own child. (Such an approach to a child may be seen to be an assault on that child and may have legal consequences)

This is not an exhaustive list but seeks to provide illustrations of such behaviour. Whilst the use of such behaviour is unacceptable in all circumstances, the School is particularly concerned to protect its pupils from being exposed to such behaviour (whether or not directed at them).

Persistent and Vexatious Complaints

For the purpose of this policy, a persistent complainant is a parent/carer or member of the public who complains about issues, either formally or informally, or frequently raises issues that the complainant considers to be within the remit of the school, and whose behaviour is unreasonable. Such behaviour may be characterised by:

- Actions which are obsessive, persistent, harassing and repetitious
- Excessive correspondence, email or telephone contact about a concern or complaint
- Using Freedom of Information requests excessively and unreasonably
- An insistence upon pursuing unsubstantial complaints and/or unrealistic or unreasonable outcomes
- An insistence upon pursuing complaints in an unreasonable manner
- An insistence on only dealing with the Headteacher on all occasions irrespective of the issue and the level of delegation in the school to deal with such matters
- An insistence upon repeatedly pursuing a complaint when the outcome is not satisfactory to the complainant but cannot be changed, for example, if the desired outcome is beyond the remit of the school or because it is unlawful

For the purpose of this policy, harassment is the unreasonable pursuit of actions as outlined above in such a way that they:

- Appear to be targeted over a significant period of time on one or more members of school staff and/or
- Cause ongoing distress to individual member(s) of school staff and/or
- Have a significant adverse effect on the whole/parts of the school community and/or
- Are pursued in a manner which can be perceived as intimidating and oppressive by the recipient. This could include situations where persistent demands and criticisms, whilst not particularly taxing or serious when viewed in isolation, have a cumulative effect over time of undermining confidence, well-being and health

Appendix 1 details how this policy operates in practice.

Links to other policies:

Code of Conduct for Staff

Complaints policy

Safeguarding policy

Appendix 1

Parental/Visitor Access to the School Premises

Normally parents/carers (and those with parental responsibility), plus visitors, are granted what is known as “limited licence” to visit the grounds and buildings of a school. Where there are serious concerns regarding the conduct of a parent/visitor, and possible staff/pupil safety, the Headteacher (or Deputy Headteacher in her absence) can:

- initiate a meeting/dialogue with the individual
- write to the visitor, describing their misconduct, explaining its impact on the School and stating its unacceptability
- vary the person’s “licence”, say, through the addition of conditions
- warn of the possibility of a “ban” (i.e. the withdrawal of their licence) if the misconduct is repeated
- impose a ban with a review after a fixed period
- impose a ban without review

If a visitor is intimidating, threatening or aggressive towards a member of the school community, any interaction will be terminated immediately and the person will be instructed to leave the premises. Further action may be taken by the School. St Bernadette’s Catholic Secondary School will take action where behaviour is unacceptable or serious and breaches our related policies.

How this policy operates in practice

- The School reserves the right to take any necessary actions to ensure that members of the School community are not subjected to verbal abuse. The School may warn the aggressor, ban them from the School, and/or contact the police.
- When a visitor behaves in an unacceptable way during a telephone conversation, staff at the School have the right to terminate the call. The incident will be reported by staff to a member of the Strategic Leadership Team.
- When a visitor behaves in an unacceptable way in person towards a member of the School staff, a member of the SLT 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 continues, or where there is an extreme act of violence, the discussion will be terminated and the visitor will be asked to leave the school immediately. The police will be called if necessary.
- In the case of a ban:
 - The visitor will be informed, in writing, that he/she is banned from the premises, subject to review, and what will happen if the ban is breached.
 - The Chair of Governors will be informed of the ban.

Incidents of verbal or physical abuse towards staff may result in the police being informed, and may result in prosecution.

The member of staff who is involved in the incident will complete the Incident Report Form (Appendix 2) and pass it on to the Headteacher.

The school’s actions in cases of persistent or vexatious complaints or harassment

- The parent/carer/visitor will be informed in writing that their behaviour is considered to be unreasonable/unacceptable and, if it is not modified, further action may be taken in accordance with this policy.
- If the behaviour is not modified, the school will take some or all of the following actions as

necessary, having regard to the nature of the behaviour and the effect of this on the school community:

- Inform the complainant that all meetings with a member of staff will be conducted with a second person present and that notes of meetings may be taken in the interests of all parties.
- Inform the complainant that, except in emergencies, all routine communication with the complainant to the school should be by letter or email only.
- (in the event of physical or verbal aggression) take advice from HR/Legal Services and consider warning the complainant about being banned from the school site; or straight to a temporary ban.
- Consider taking advice on pursuing a case under Anti-Harassment legislation.
- Consider taking advice from HR/Legal Services about putting in place a specific procedure for dealing with complaints from the complainant, i.e. the complainant will not be able to deal directly with the Headteacher but only with a third person to be identified by the Governing Body of the school, who will investigate, determine whether or not the concern/complaint is reasonable or vexatious and then advise the Headteacher accordingly.

Appendix 2

Report of aggressive behaviour incident

Name of member of staff reporting the incident:

Name of individual whom was subjected to the aggressive behavior:

Date of incident: Time of incident:

Alleged perpetrator:

Other individuals involved or witnesses:

Description of the incident:

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Reason or cause of the incident:

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Suggested next steps:

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