

Parent, Carer & Visitor Expectations and Code of Conduct

(in conjunction with the Peninsula Multi Academy Trust)

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BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS STAFF BY PARENTS, CARERS AND VISITORS:

EXPECTATIONS AND PROCEDURES

Expectations of parents, carers and visitors to Weatherhead High School:

1. Weatherhead High School actively encourages close links with parents/carers and the local community.
2. The school understands that students benefit when the relationship between home and school is a positive one and we welcome visitors and encourage parents to communicate by telephone or via email.
3. If a parent or carer has concerns, the school will always listen to them and seek to address such concerns as quickly and positively as possible.
4. We will always act to ensure that the school remains a safe place for students, staff and all other members of our community; abusive, threatening or aggressive behaviour will not be tolerated.
5. If such behaviour occurs, the school will follow the procedures outlined in this policy.

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

- Shouting, either in person or over the telephone.
- Swearing, either in person or over the telephone.
- Emails or letters which are sarcastic, combative or aggressive in tone and/or language.
- Constant emails, letters and/or phone calls which could be considered vexatious or amount to harassment and/or intimidation, despite the school's best efforts to address a situation.
- Inappropriate electronic communication, including publishing abusive or inappropriate content with regards to the school, teachers or students on social networks such as Facebook and Twitter or in email communication.
- Any form of physical violence, such as pushing or hitting.
- Physical intimidation; for example, standing unnecessarily close to a member of staff.
- The use of rude or aggressive hand gestures, including shaking or holding a fist towards another person.
- The use of derogatory or inflammatory language or comments towards or about a member of staff.

Procedure to be followed when behaviour is inappropriate

1. Informal resolution

If a parent, carer or visitor behaves in an unacceptable way towards a member of the school staff, the Headteacher and/or appropriate senior staff will seek to resolve the situation informally through discussion and mediation. Such discussion will highlight how the behaviour of the parent, carer or visitor did not meet the school's expectations and a request will be made that future communications with the school are modified in the light of this. A letter will be sent to the individual concerned to confirm this request.

2. Formal complaint

Following any interaction with a parent, carer or visitor, a member of staff reserves the right to submit a formal complaint about the incident to the Headteacher. Should such a formal complaint be made then the Headteacher or designated member of the Senior Leadership Team will investigate the complaint, by speaking with the parent, carer or visitor, the member of staff and any witnesses to the incident. During the investigation, any contact that the parent, carer or visitor requires with the school will be through a designated member of staff and by prior appointment only. The parent, carer or visitor will be informed of this by letter. The Headteacher will determine any action to be taken in response to the findings of the investigation.

Actions which could follow such an investigation include:

- A request to meet with the Headteacher to discuss events.

- A letter clarifying to the parent, carer or visitor what is considered acceptable behaviour by the school.
- The designation of one member of staff to act as a conduit for all future communication between the parent, carer or visitor and the school.
- The implementation of email only communication with school.
- As a last resort, withdrawing permission for the parent, carer or visitor to enter the school site and/or buildings without prior appointment.

If the inappropriate behaviour is directed towards the Headteacher, then the Headteacher will take action appropriate to the circumstances. Aggressive or violent behaviour may result in a call being made to the Police or Wirral Community Patrol for support.

A. Acceptable communication by telephone

Sometimes staff may have to deal with challenging, abusive, aggressive or threatening telephone calls. It is unacceptable for any member of staff to be subjected to such abuse and this guidance has been produced to assist parents to understand the expected conduct during phone calls and to staff if they are faced with a difficult situation.

Guidance for Parents / Carers

- When you call Weatherhead High School, you will speak initially to Reception staff. They will do their very best to connect you to the person you wish to speak with. Given the vast majority of the school's staff will be teaching, it is most likely that they will take a message or put you through to the voicemail of your requested member of staff.
- Please do not become frustrated with the Reception staff if they are unable to put you through directly to the member of staff requested or are unable to answer your concern themselves; this is not their fault and any frustrations vented at this time, will not serve to ensure your issue is dealt with any quicker.
- At any time when speaking to a member of staff at the school, please do not raise your voice or use aggressive or threatening language.

Guidance to staff to reduce the likelihood of callers becoming abusive

Staff of Weatherhead High School should conduct themselves in a courteous and professional manner at all times and make every attempt to meet the needs of the caller. Staff should also have the confidence to end an abusive telephone call when appropriate to do so.

Employees should always:

- Remain calm and polite.
- Stay in control of the situation.
- Actively listen – repeat information back to the caller to test understanding of the issue and gain their agreement.
- Inform the caller you are trying to help them.
- Be positive and say what you can (and cannot) do.
- Be clear and avoid using jargon.
- If necessary, apologise for an error and act to put it right.
- Make notes of the conversation.
- Follow the guidance set out below and if appropriate refer the caller to the Headteacher or a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

Employees should never:

- Respond in the same manner as an abusive caller.
- Take it personally.
- Allow yourself to be bullied.
- Slam the phone down.

Script for abusive telephone calls

When the caller starts to raise their voice/be abusive:

Mr/Mrs/Ms... please don't raise your voice / swear at me, I am not raising my voice / being rude to you. If you continue to raise your voice/be rude to me then I will be forced to terminate the call.

If the caller continues to raise their voice/be abusive:

Mr/Mrs/Ms.... I understand you are upset/frustrated; however, I am not prepared to continue to be shouted / sworn at. May I suggest you try to calm down and call back later if you feel you are able to? If you prefer, you can put your views in writing.

If, despite the two warnings above, the caller continues to raise their voice/be abusive:

Mr/Mrs/Ms.... I advised you earlier during this call about raising your voice / swearing and you have continued to do this, so I am afraid you have left me with no option but to terminate this call. (Hang up).

Further actions:

Make a written note of the telephone call and report the incident to your line manager or the Headteacher.

B. Acceptable communication by email or letter

Sometimes staff within Weatherhead High School may have to deal with challenging, abusive, aggressive or threatening emails or letters. It is unacceptable for any member of staff to be subjected to such abuse and this guidance has been produced to assist parents to understand conduct that the school expects parents to follow when emailing or writing to the school/staff and to assist staff if they receive such messages.

Guidance for Parents / Carers

- Address the member of staff formally (for example, Dear Ms Allen...).
- Use formal and courteous language in the message.
- Do not use bold text or capitalisation to emphasise concerns.
- Only expect a response from the member of staff to whom you have directly sent the email or letter, not those who you have included in the circulation.
- Do not expect an instant response. The majority of staff will be teaching for most of the day and do not have the opportunity to check their emails or mail until beyond the end of the school day.
- If the email or letter is unacceptable in any way, it will be directed to a member of the Senior Leadership Team or to the Headteacher to deal with.

Guidance for Staff

Staff should not use their personal school email when contacting parents. When an email is sent via the appropriate school email account, the following guidelines should be followed:

- Always address the parent / carer formally (for example, Dear Ms Allen...).
- Always use formal and courteous language in the message.
- Do not use bold text or capitalisation to emphasise concerns.
- If you receive an email or letter which you believe does not follow the school's expectations of the use of written communication, forward the message to a member of the Senior Leadership Team or to the Headteacher.

C. Acceptable Use of Technology

All members of staff at Weatherhead High School have received instruction and guidance on the appropriate use of social media and cyber technology, including:

- E-safety guidance
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Policy on the Use of Social Networking Sites

Any concerns regarding the use of social media or cyber technology by members of staff of the school should be addressed via the Complaints Policy.

Abuse / bullying using Cyber Technology

Members of staff may become targets of cyber abuse or bullying which can have a significant impact on health, well-being and self-confidence. Cyber abuse / bullying may consist of threats, harassment, embarrassment, humiliation, defamation or impersonation. It may take the form of general insults, or prejudice-based abuse; for example, homophobic, sexist, racist, or other forms of discrimination. It may involve email, virtual learning environments, chat rooms, websites, social media, mobile and fixed-point phones, digital cameras, games and virtual world sites. Abuse using cyber technology can occur at any time and incidents can intrude into the victim's private life. The audience for such messages can be very large and can be reached rapidly. The content of electronically forwarded messages is hard to control and the worry of content resurfacing can make it difficult for the victim to move on.

While there is not a specific criminal offence called cyberbullying, activities can be categorised as criminal offences under a range of different laws.

Guidance for Staff

Responding to incidents of abuse using social media / cyber technology:

- Staff should never retaliate i.e. personally engage with cyberbullying incidents, but refer matters to their line manager, a member of the Senior Leadership Team or the Headteacher.
- Keep any records of abuse – texts, emails, voice mails, or instant messages. Take screen prints of messages or web pages. Record the time and date any messages were posted and the address of the site.
- It is important to be clear about where the content is – for example by taking a screen capture of the material that includes the URL or web address.
- Where it appears that a law has been broken (for example, where highly offensive comments have been made, there are threats of death or assault, or racially motivated criminal offences are involved) a designated member of the Senior Leadership Team should contact the police. Where a potential criminal offence has been identified, the school should ensure that any internal investigation does not interfere with police inquiries. School staff are of course able to report incidents directly to the police.
- If a potential criminal offence has been committed and the school is not able to identify the perpetrator, the police may issue a Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) request to a service provider, enabling them to disclose the data about a message or the person sending it.
- Where abuse / bullying using cyber technology has taken place and/or upsetting / inappropriate content has been posted online and the parent / carer / person responsible for posting is known to the school, the Headteacher or a member of the Senior Leadership Team will address it directly with the poster, ensuring they understand why the material is unacceptable, and will request that they remove it immediately.
- If the person responsible has not been identified or will not take the material down, the school will contact the host (i.e. the social networking site) to make a request to have the content taken down. The material posted may breach the service provider's terms and conditions of use and can then be removed.