

St Paul's High School, Bessbrook

Parents and Caregivers demonstrating challenging behaviour policy

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Contents

1. Mission Statement	2
2. Statement of Principles.....	2
3. Aims of the Policy	4
4. Types of Unacceptable Behaviour	5
5. Procedures	6
5.1 On the telephone	6
5.2 On school premises.....	6
5.3 Off the school premises	8
5.4 Written abuse	8
6. Banning an individual from the school premises	9
7. Review and Evaluation of this policy.....	10

1. Mission Statement

- 1.1 We at St Paul's High School are committed to providing a loving and caring atmosphere which embodies our Catholic ethos in which the children can grow and develop to their full potential in all aspects of their lives.

2. Statement of Principles

- 2.1 The Board of Governors of St Pauls's High School encourages close links with parents and the community. It believes that pupils benefit when the relationship between home and school is a positive one. With this in mind, St Paul's High School operates a zero tolerance of abusive and threatening behaviour.
- 2.2 The vast majority of parents, carers and others visiting our school are keen to work with us and are supportive of the school. However, on the rare occasions when a negative attitude towards the school is expressed, this can result in aggression, verbal and or physical abuse towards members of school staff or the wider school community.
- 2.3 The Board of Governors expects 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 abuse, and the right, in an extreme case, of appropriate self-defence.

- 2.4 We expect parents and other visitors to behave in a reasonable way towards members of school staff. This policy outlines the steps that will be taken where behaviour is unacceptable.
- 2.5 As a general rule, schools are orderly, safe places, where relationships between staff and visitors, especially parents/carers, demonstrate mutual respect and recognition of shared responsibility for pupils' welfare and educational progress. Parental involvement is an important factor in educational success and in dealing with emerging problems at an early stage.
- 2.6 However, on occasions, the behaviour of a few parents/carers can cause severe disruption or worse, resulting in abusive or aggressive behaviour towards staff, pupils or other members of the school community. St Paul's High School will not tolerate physical or verbal abuse or aggressive behaviour directed towards any member of staff, a pupil, visitor or volunteer originating from a parent, carer or member of the public and will take appropriate action, as outlined in this policy, to calm and diffuse any situation that may arise in a fair and consistent manner.
- 2.7 Where conflict cannot be resolved or diffused or there is the possibility of imminent physical harm towards an individual or school property, the school reserves the right to call upon the Police Service Northern Ireland (PSNI) to intervene.
- 2.8 The school also reserves the right to consider banning an individual from school premises as a result of their abusive or aggressive behaviour.

3. Aims of the Policy

- 3.1 To protect all teaching and non-teaching staff and students, visitors and volunteers at St Paul's High School from potential physical/verbal or emotional abuse.
- 3.2 To defuse the potential conflict situation as far as possible.
- 3.3 To deal fairly and fully with any complaint.
- 3.4 To inform the complainants in a non-aggressive but firm manner of the results of any enquiry.
- 3.5 To inform the complainant of their right of appeal to the Governors' Complaints Panel if a complaint is not resolved by the School (via the St Paul's High School Complaints Policy).
- 3.6 To ensure that, where a ban from the school premises is considered, it is fair, consistent

4. Types of Unacceptable Behaviour

4.1 Types of behaviour that are considered serious and unacceptable and will not be tolerated:

- Shouting at members of the school staff, either in person or over the telephone.
- Physically intimidating a member of staff, e.g. standing very close to her/him.
- The use of aggressive hand gestures.
- Threatening behaviour.
- Shaking or holding a fist towards another person.
- Swearing.
- Pushing.
- Hitting, e.g. slapping, punching, and kicking.
- Spitting.
- Breaching the school's security procedures.

4.2 This is not an exhaustive list but seeks to provide illustrations of such behaviour.

4.3 Unacceptable behaviour may result in the local authority (e.g. Council for Catholic Maintained Schools and/or the Education Authority) and the PSNI being informed of the incident.

5. Procedures

5.1 On the telephone

If a parent, carer, or member of the public begins to exhibit aggressive or abusive behaviour (e.g. use of foul language or verbal threats) towards any member of staff during a telephone call, the member of staff shall:

- Put the call on loudspeaker so others can hear.
- Calmly state that the language used is unacceptable and that they will end the call if it continues.
- Try to establish the name and contact details of the complainant (and the nature of the complaint if possible) and state that the Principal will return their call as soon as possible.
- End the call. Make notes of what was said immediately on termination of the call and then report the incident to the Principal.
- The Principal will contact the complainant to establish the nature of the complaint and try to resolve the issue.

5.2 On school premises

If a parent, carer, or member of the public begins to exhibit aggressive or abusive behaviour towards any member of staff, a student, visitor, or volunteer whilst on the school premises the nearest member of staff shall:

- Contact the Principal or Vice-Principal and inform them of the situation. Where possible the senior member of staff will attend and take charge of further actions. The complainant **MUST NOT** be allowed access to a staff member about whom they are complaining. Staff should not try to

deal with aggressive parents, visitors, or members of the public and defer to the Principal or PSNI (dependent upon the circumstances).

- If it is safe to do so, the Vice-Principal/Principal shall: Try to get the complainant to sit down quietly in a private situation. (utilising the Board Room or office areas at the front of the school), invite another member of staff to join them. Leave clear access to the door, leaving the door open.
- If this is not possible, ensure the area is cleared of unnecessary people (pupils, staff, or visitors) who could be at risk from harm should the situation escalate.
- Explain that what the complainant is saying is important, that the individual they are concerned about is not available but that the school wishes to hear what they have to say.
- Take notes whilst the complainant is speaking and shall check with the complainant both during and at the end of their statement to ensure that the information they have provided has been recorded correctly.
- Explain that the information they have provided has been taken seriously and will have to be passed to the Principal who will investigate and respond directly to them.
- Confirmation that the school has the complainant's correct contact details shall be obtained.
- Explain that the investigation may take several days but that they will be contacted with updates.
- Explain that if they are not satisfied with the outcome, they are entitled to take their complaint to the school's Board of Governors, via the St Paul's Complaints Policy.

- Try to get them to leave in a calm and quiet manner.
- A copy of the school's Complaints Policy can be requested/offered to the complainant at a point in the immediate future when to do so will not exacerbate the situation.

If at any stage matters start to get out of control:

- **The interview shall be terminated as politely as possible.**
- **In extreme cases, (e.g. threatened or actual physical violence or assault, refusal to leave the premises etc) the Principal shall summon the PSNI immediately.**

5.3 Off the school premises

School business will not be discussed off school premises. If a parent, carer, or member of the public begins to exhibit aggressive or abusive behaviour towards any member of staff, a student, visitor or volunteer whilst off the school premises the member of staff shall contact the PSNI and inform the Principal immediately upon return to work.

5.4 Written abuse

If a member of staff receives written correspondence (e.g. letter, e-mail, text, or comment on social media) of a threatening or abusive nature from a parent, carer, or member of the public, this shall be reported immediately to the Principal and a copy retained as evidence.

Whilst the school will make every effort to resolve any issue raised by the complainant, consideration may also be given to involving the PSNI, especially where threats of violence have been made.

6. Banning an individual from the school premises

- 6.1 The school reserves the right to impose a temporary or permanent ban from the school premises on any parent/carer or member of the public who has demonstrated aggressive or abusive behaviour towards any member of staff, pupil, visitor or volunteer at the school.
- 6.2. This decision shall be made by the Principal in consultation with the Chair of Governors (or in their absence with the Vice-Chair of Governors) and the length of any ban shall be proportionate to the nature and circumstances of the incident. In the case of a parent/carer, prior to a ban being imposed (except in urgent situations), the Principal shall write to the individual indicating that a ban from the premises is being considered, stating the reasons for this and the date (usually 5 school days) by which any written representations by the individual should be received by the school before the decision is made.
- 6.3 In urgent situations, the Principal may impose an immediate temporary ban in writing and provide the parent/carer the opportunity to make written representations (within 5 school days) prior to formalising any extension to the ban.
- 6.4 Where the decision to impose a ban is made, notification of the ban shall be in writing and shall clearly state:
- The reason for the ban being imposed.
 - The date of commencement of the ban.
 - A date by which any written representations by the individual should be received by the school.

- A date for review of the ban and how this will be arranged.
- Provision to be made (if a parent or carer) for access to their child during the school day (e.g. should an emergency occur) and the process to be followed should the parent/carer wish to contact the school or need to attend meetings at the school.
- What action will be taken to remove the individual from the premises should the ban be breached¹
- The **maximum** period before a review of a ban will be 20 school days. The banned individual will be invited to make written representations and to attend a review meeting (accompanied by a friend or relative if required) with the Principal and a panel of Governors (this may take place away from the school site if appropriate). The Governors' Panel will review the ban and consider whether to lift it, make it permanent or continue it for a specified period.
- The Principal may remove the ban at any time prior to the review date if appropriate resolution has been achieved.

7. Review and Evaluation of this policy

- 7.1 In implementing this policy, the school will, as appropriate, seek advice from the Education Authority, education, health and safety and legal departments, to ensure fairness and consistency.

¹ Section 547 of the Education Act 1996 states that any person unlawfully present on the premises and causing or permitting nuisance or disturbance to the annoyance of persons who lawfully use the premises is guilty of an offence, may be removed from the premises by a police constable or authorised person and is liable to be fined.

7.2 The effectiveness of this policy will be monitored by the principal and will be reviewed regularly.