



Ringwood School

Policy on managing all forms of communication from parents and visitors

Policy Details:

Policy Name	Managing all forms of communication from parents and visitors
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Author	Ms. Leanne Symonds, Headteacher
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Authorised By	Headteacher
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Rationale for Policy	None Statutory

Statement of principles

The Governing Body of Ringwood School encourages close links with parents and the community. It believes that students benefit when the relationship between home and school is a positive one.

The vast majority of parents and others visiting our school are keen to work with us and are supportive of the school. Sometimes things do go wrong and the first port of call in this instance is the school's complaints policy and procedure that can be found on the school's website. We would always encourage parents to use this process to raise their concerns.

On the rare occasions when a negative attitude towards the school is expressed, this can result in aggression, verbal and or physical abuse to include use of intimidating language towards members of school staff or the wider school community. The governing body 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, the school expects that all members of staff have the right to work without fear of violence, abuse and intimidation (verbally and in writing) and the right, in an extreme case, of appropriate self-defence.

We expect parents and other visitors to behave in a respectful and reasonable way towards members of school staff both face to face; by telephone or in writing. All members of the school community have a right to expect that the school is a safe place in which to work and learn.

Reasonable response to parental communication

We will always investigate concerns raised to us by parents. But we ask that parents and carers afford us the time to find out what has happened when something has gone wrong. We ask parents and carers to understand and accept that their child's version of a situation is subject to their child's interpretation and is not fact. We will seek to find out the full situation and get back to you.

When a parent/carer contacts the school by telephone or by email a member of staff will aim to return the telephone call or email at their earliest convenience but within 48 hours. A member of staff may well be out of school or teaching a full timetable on the day a telephone call or email is received. A same day response may well not be possible and should not be expected.

Members of staff will not be able to meet with parents without a pre-arranged appointment. Arriving at reception without an appointment will not result in an immediate meeting and we ask that parents and carers do not do this.

This policy outlines the steps that will be taken where behaviour is unacceptable.

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

- displaying a temper, or shouting at members of the school staff, either in person or over the telephone;
- disciplining another person's child – please bring any behaviour incidents to a member of staff's attention
- physically intimidating a member of staff, e.g. standing very close to her/him;
- the use of aggressive hand gestures;
- threatening behaviour – in person, over the phone or in writing;
- shaking or holding a fist towards another person;
- using inappropriate or offensive language towards a person over the phone or in writing either directly or over social media.
- using physical aggression against another person, such as pushing; hitting, e.g. slapping, punching and kicking or spitting;
- breaching the school's security procedures;
- persistent demanding / intimidating email correspondence to a member(s) of staff (persistent being more than twice on the same matter);
- inappropriate communication (including defamatory, offensive or derogatory comments) about the school, individual named member of staff or any member of the school community through social networking sites and/or casual communication.
- Smoking or drinking alcohol on the school premises (unless alcohol has been allowed at a specific event).
Being in possession of or under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol on the school site.
- Bringing an offensive weapon onto site.

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

Procedure to be followed

If a parent behaves in an unacceptable way towards a member of the school community, the Headteacher or an appropriate senior member of staff will seek to resolve the situation through discussion and mediation.

A written warning will be given by the Headteacher or appropriate member of senior staff, in the first instance, to a parent whose behaviour continues to be unacceptable.

Where all procedures have been exhausted, and aggression or intimidation continues, or where there is an extreme act of violence, a parent may be banned from the site by the Headteacher from the school premises for a period of time, subject to review.

If the aggression or intimidation are repeatedly taking place in a written form or verbally on the telephone, the Headteacher will issue an initial warning and further communication of a similar kind will then result in a restriction over written and telephone communication with the school for a period of time, subject to review. This may happen in the case of persistent and harassing emails that seek to continually raise the same issues. In this case the parent will be advised to use the Complaints Policy first.

In imposing a ban/ communication restriction the following steps will be taken:

1. The parent will be informed, in writing, that she/he is banned from the premises or that their written or verbal communication will be restricted, subject to review, and what will happen if the ban is breached, e.g. that police involvement or an injunction application may follow
2. Where an assault has led to a ban, a statement indicating that the matter has been reported to the local authority and the police will be included. Where communication breaches harassment legislation the police will be informed.
3. The Chair of Governors will be informed of the ban/restriction.
4. Where appropriate, arrangements for students being delivered to, and collected from the school gate will be clarified. As will arrangements for communicating with parents over any safeguarding or critical educational matters involving their child if they are subject to a communication restriction.
5. The ban/ restriction will be reviewed following a specified period of time.

Ringwood School has a close working relationship with the local police. Unacceptable behaviour may result in the police being informed of unacceptable behaviour(s).

Conclusion

The Governing Body itself may take action where behaviour is unacceptable or there are serious breaches of our home-school code of conduct or health and safety legislation. In implementing this policy, the school will, as appropriate, seek advice from the school's health and safety and legal departments, to ensure fairness and consistency.

Appendix 1: Inappropriate use of Social Network Site

Nationally, social media websites are being used increasingly to fuel campaigns and complaints against schools, school staff, and in some cases other parents/students. The Governors considers the use of social media websites being used in this way as unacceptable and not in the best interests of the students or the whole school community. Any concerns you may have must be made through the appropriate channels by speaking to the School as described in the Complaints Policy. This allows concerns to be dealt with fairly, appropriately and effectively for all concerned.

In the event that any student or parent/carer of a child/ren being educated in the school is found to be posting libellous or defamatory comments on any social media network sites, they will be reported to the appropriate 'report abuse' section of the network site. All social network sites have clear rules about the content, which can be posted, on the site and they provide robust mechanisms to report contact or activity which breaches this. The school will also expect that any parent/carer or student removes such comments immediately. **In serious cases the school will also consider its legal options to deal with any such misuse of social networking and other sites.**

Additionally, and perhaps more importantly is the issue of cyber bullying and the use by one child or a parent to publicly humiliate another by inappropriate social network entry. We will take and deal with this as a serious incident of school bullying. Thankfully such incidents are extremely rare.