



# Managing Abusive Encounters with Parents, Guardians or Family Members

**Date Implemented:** March 2019

**Staff Responsibility:** Josh Pollard

**Date for Next Review:** February 2021

## **1. Statement of principles**

- 1.1 This policy has been written taking into account the DfE Guidance 'Advice on school security: Access to, and barring individuals from school premises' December 2012, The Education Act (1996), as well as other guidance on dealing with abusive from members of the public in schools.
- 1.2 At The Blue Tangerine Federation, we value the positive relationships forged with parents and visitors to the school. We encourage close links with parents 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 schools a place where as adults we model for students the behaviour we teach and expect. In general, we place a high importance on good manners, positive communication and mutual respect.
- 1.3 Almost all parents, carers and visitors to The Blue Tangerine Federation of schools are keen to work with us and are supportive of the schools. However, on very rare occasions the behaviour of a small number of parents falls short of what we expect. This sometimes manifests itself in aggression or abuse towards members of the Federation's community. This can be in written communication (including social media), on the telephone or in face-to-face incidents.
- 1.4 In these situations, the governing body expects and requires its members of staff to behave professionally, attempting to defuse the situation where possible and seeking the involvement as appropriate of other colleagues. Staff who face these situations have licence to end any conversation (face to face or on the telephone). They should then refer the incident to the Executive Head or Head of School who will take appropriate action or invoke the provisions of this policy.
- 1.5 The overriding principle is, however, that all members of the federation's communities have the right to work or be in school without fear of aggression or abuse from parents/carers/visitors. Aggression and abuse can be physical or implied. The governing body has a requirement to protect staff and students from such aggression.
- 1.6 The progress and well-being of the specific child(ren) where relevant will be fully considered. Actions taken against the parent/carer/visitor will be reasonable and proportionate. The parent/carer/visitor will have the opportunity to put their views forward at every stage. In the case of the imposition of conditions or a ban from school, robust review processes involving the Chair of Governors and then the governing body are in place to ensure fairness.

## **2. Definition of unacceptable behaviour**

- 2.1 We consider that aggressive, abusive or insulting behaviour or language from a parent/carer/visitor presents a risk to staff or students. Unacceptable behaviour is such that makes a member of staff or student feel threatened. 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;
  - Raising of voice so as to be intimidating;
  - 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.

### **3. The Federation's approach to dealing with incidents**

3.1 If a parent/carer/visitor behaves in an unacceptable way towards a member of the Federation's community, the Executive Head, Heads of School or appropriate member of 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.

#### **3.2 Risk Assessment**

The Executive Head or Heads of School will carry out a risk assessment in order to help make a decision about the level of response. In all cases, the response will be reasonable and proportionate. The Executive Head or Heads of School 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?
- Is there a risk that a similar incident will be repeated or that there will be retaliation to the school's action? (low, medium, high).

#### **3.3 Recording of Incidents**

Staff, students subject to the abuse and witnesses will be asked to make a written statement about the incident(s), this information will be kept on file with subsequent letters. Depending on an assessment of the risk of retaliation to witnesses or individuals, statements made by adults maybe made available to the parent/carer/visitor if they request it.

#### **3.4 The Federation's response**

Following the completion of the risk assessment, the Executive Head or Head of School will decide the level of action required. The actions that could be taken include the following:

a) *Clarify to the parent/carer/visitor what is considered acceptable behaviour by the school*

In some instances, it may be appropriate simply to ensure the parent/carer/visitor is clear about behaviour standards expected by the school. This could be explained by letter from the Executive Head or Head of School. This letter may contain a warning about further action if there are further incidents. The parent/carer/visitor will be invited to write to the Executive Head or Heads of School with his/her version of events within 10 working days. Depending on the parent's response, a meeting may then be held to discuss the situation and how this can be avoided in the future.

b) *Invite the parent/carer/visitor to an informal meeting to discuss events*

This could be helpful to discuss and diffuse the situation. The safety and wellbeing of those attending such a meeting must be carefully considered. Federation staff members 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 a potentially aggressive attendee cannot block the exit. The main points of discussion and any agreed actions should be noted, and a follow-up letter or email sent to confirm the school's expectations and any agreed actions. The police may be invited to the meeting.

c) *Impose conditions on the parent/carer/visitor 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/carers of enrolled students have an 'implied licence' to come onto Federation premises at certain stated times. It is for the Federation to define and set out the extent of such access. Parents/carers exceeding this would be trespassing. Depending of the type, level or frequency of the unacceptable behaviour, the Federation may consider imposing conditions on the parent's/carers contact with the Federation. These conditions may include (but are not exclusive):

- Being accompanied to any meeting with a member of Federation staff by a more senior member of staff;
- Restricting contact by telephone to named members staff agreed by the Head of School;
- Restricting written communications to named members staff as agreed with the Head of School;
- Inviting the police to attend meetings;
- Restricting attendance at Federation events to those where the parent/carer will be accompanied by an agreed member of staff from the Federation.
- Any other restriction as deemed reasonable and proportionate by the Executive Head or Head of School.

In any case, the parent/carer will be informed by letter from the Executive Head or Head of School the details of the conditions that are being imposed. The parent/carer will then be given 10 working days from the date of that letter to make representations in writing about the conditions to the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors would then decide whether to uphold the schools conditions. This outcome will be communicated to the parent/carer in writing within 10 working days of the date of the decision.

If the decision is to confirm the conditions imposed, this decision will be reviewed by the governing body after approximately six months (and every six months after that, if appropriate). The parent/carer will be invited to make written representation to the governors. This and the evidence from the Executive Head or Head of School will be considered at a meeting of the full governing body. Governors may decide to maintain, extend or remove the conditions. The decision of the review will be communicated to the parent/carer by the clerk to the governors, within 10 days of the date of the meeting.

When deciding whether it will be necessary to maintain, extend or remove the conditions, governors will give consideration to the extent of the parent's/carers compliance with the conditions to date, any appropriate expressions of regret and assurance of future good conduct received from him/her and any evidence of the parent's/carers co-operation with the Federation in other respects.

d) *Imposing a ban*

Where other procedures have been exhausted and aggression or intimidation continues, then the Federation may consider banning the individual from Federation premises. This will include banning a parent/carer from accessing Federation staff by written communication or telephone.

Should there be any act of violence the police will be contacted immediately.

In these circumstances, the individual will be advised in writing by the Executive Head or Head of School that a provisional ban is being imposed. The parent/carer will then be given 10 working days from the date of that letter to make representations about the ban in writing to the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors would then decide whether to uphold or remove the ban. This outcome will be communicated to the parent in writing within 10 working days of the receipt of their letter.

If the Chair's decision is to uphold the ban, parents/carers in these circumstances will be offered an annual meeting about their child's progress (where relevant), usually with the Executive Head or Head of School.

A decision to impose a ban will be reviewed by the governing body after approximately six months (and every six months after that, if appropriate). The parent/carer will be invited to make written representation to the governors; this and the evidence from the Executive Head or Head of School will be considered at a meeting of the full governing body. Governors may decide to remove the ban, extend the ban or impose conditions on parent's/carers access to the Federation. The outcome of the review will be communicated to the parent/carer by the clerk to the governors within 10 days of the date of the meeting.

In deciding whether to remove or extend the ban or impose conditions, governors will give consideration to the extent of the parent's/carers compliance with the ban to date, any appropriate expressions of regret and assurance of future good conduct received from him/her and any evidence of the parent/carers co-operation with the Federation in other respects.

*e) Removal from the Federation premises*

Parents/carers/visitors who have been banned from the Federation premises and continue to cause a nuisance will be deemed to have committed a section 547 offence (The 1996 Education Act). They will be considered as trespassers. In these circumstances, the offender may be removed from school by a police officer or person authorised by the governing body. In addition, legal proceedings may be brought against them.

*f) Complaints policy*

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

#### **4. Conclusion**

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

**All meetings will be conducted respectfully, regardless of the content.**

Parents can expect:

- To be treated with respect at all times
  - To be spoken to in a calm voice
- To not experience any threatening behaviour or body language

Staff expect:

- To be treated with respect
  - To be spoken to in a calm voice
- To not experience any threatening behaviour or body language

**It is expected that should any parent or member of staff feel uncomfortable with the manner of the other party that the meeting should be immediately stopped and authority informed.**

Should threatening behaviour be experienced it will be...

- Investigated
  - Recorded
- May be passed on to an appropriate authority such as the police.