



RESPECT FOR STAFF & VOLUNTEERS POLICY

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Our academies are orderly, safe places where relationships between staff/volunteers and visitors, especially parents, are normally good. However, at times the behaviour of a few individuals can cause severe disruption or result in abusive and aggressive behaviour towards staff members and other members of the Academy community.

LEAP Trust and the Academy's Governing Body are responsible for protecting the health, safety and welfare of staff and pupils and, as such, procedures are in place to protect individuals from abuse and threatening behaviour.

This document deals with the consequences of abuse and/or threatening behaviour, including the barring of a person from Academy premises or as a result of trespass on Academy premises.

Definitions

Abusive or Threatening Behaviour

The Public Order Act 1986 defines "disorderly conduct" as: verbal abuse, threatening abusive or insulting words or behaviour or any disorderly behaviour whereby a person is caused alarm, harassment or distress. "Threatening behaviour" is when a person fears that violence or threat of violence is likely to be provoked.

In a school context this could mean someone shouting at a member of staff or volunteer, either in person, on the telephone or via email communication: acting aggressively, including using intimidating body language, threatening/intimidating comments, as well as actual violence. It also covers comments posted on social networking sites or situations where members of staff or volunteers are approached.

Volunteers

This includes Trustees, Governors, anyone undertaking work placements and those helping on school trips or events. This list is not exhaustive.

The Law

Violence at work is defined as 'any incident in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work' This covers the serious or persistent use of verbal abuse – which can add to stress or anxiety. It also covers staff who are assaulted or abused outside their place of work; for example, while going home, while working in the community or while travelling, as long as the incident relates to their work (Health & Safety Executive).

Please also note that commenting negatively about the school or individual members of staff on Social Media is a breach of libel laws.

Expectations of School Communities

All members of our school communities have a right to expect that their school is a safe place in which to work and learn.

Threats or acts of violence, threatening behaviour and disorderly conduct, including abuse in all forms, against Academy staff, volunteers or other members of the school community will not be tolerated. This includes abusive comments posted online. Where individuals have concerns/complaints, the school's Complaints Policy should be followed.

In the unlikely event that such behaviour does occur, then action will be taken to deal with those people concerned.

Procedure

If an incident involving threatening behaviour or abuse does occur, then an incident report form will be completed by the member of the Academy community against whom the abuse was directed. Footage or any information gleaned through the school's CCTV system can be used as evidence if required.

Where appropriate, the school may report serious incidents of abuse and threatening behaviour to the relevant authorities and the school has a statutory responsibility to report any racist or discriminatory incidents to the Local Authority. Any act of actual or threatened violence will also be referred to the police immediately.

All incidents will be recorded and passed onto the relevant authorities so that patterns of behaviour can be monitored.

Step 1 – First warning

Where possible the Principal will speak to the person(s) perpetrating such an incident privately. (If it is not possible to meet in person, then this stage can be confirmed in writing to those involved.) It will be put to them that such behaviour is unacceptable, and an assurance will be sought that such an incident will not be repeated. It will be stressed that on this occasion, the repetition of such an incident will result in further action being taken. If the Principal has been subject to abuse this may also be done by the Chief Executive/LGB Chair of Governors/Trust Chair.

If a Trustee/Governor has been subject to abuse this will be done by the Chief Executive/Chair of Governors/Trust Chair. If appropriate, the Lead Governance Professional will seek support from the Trust's solicitors.

If the Chief Executive has been subject to abuse this will be done by the Chair of Governors. If appropriate, the Lead Governance Professional will seek support from the Trust's solicitors.

Step 2 – Second warning

If a further incident occurs involving the same person(s) or if the first incident is particularly extreme, the Principal will write to the adult(s) informing them once again that this conduct is unacceptable and that further repetition may lead to further action, including barring from access to the Academy site. As with Step 1, if the Principal has been subject to abuse, this may be done by the Chief Executive/LGB Chair/Trust Chair or other appointed Governor. If a Trustee/Governor has been subject to abuse this will be done by the Chief Executive/Chair of Governors/Trust Chair and if the Chief Executive has been subject to abuse this will be done by the Chair of the Trust. If appropriate, the Lead Governance Professional will seek support from the Trust's solicitors.

Step 3 Governors review

If such an incident recurs, or if the initial incident is considered serious enough by the Principal will enforce any action deemed necessary. This may result in a person(s) being barred from school premises. Where this action is pursued, the Chief Executive/LGB Chair/Trust Chair (or other appointed Trustee/Governor) would review the decision within 2 school days in order to be satisfied that the decision to bar was justified. The site ban would be for 7 weeks in the first instance. A review of the decision will be scheduled in advance of the end date so that either (a) the ban will be lifted; or (b) the end date will be extended. A panel of three governors and/or Trustees from across the Trust, with no prior involvement of the case will be selected by the LGB Governance Professional. In some cases, the Lead Governance Professional may seek the support of independent panel members. The outcome of this review will be communicated to the person in question.

If following a decision to bar a person from the Academy site that person persists in accessing or trying to access the site and displaying unreasonable behaviour then it may be necessary to involve the Police and for that individual to be removed from the site under Section 547 of the Education Act 1996 and charged with an offence under the Public Order Act 1986.

At all stages of the process, the person or persons will have the right to appeal and this can be done by writing to the Lead Governance Professional (email: info@leap-mat.org.uk) stating clearly the grounds for the appeal. Any appeal should be submitted within 5 days of the warning notice. The appeal will be considered by a senior member of the Trust (Principal of another Trust school/ Chief Executive/Chief Executive's delegated representative) and a Trustee or Governor.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Covid-19 – interruption to normal application of policy: during the pandemic, methods of delivering policy and usual timescales may be affected. For instance, communication may include a virtual / video meeting rather than an in-person one.