



Visitor Protocol

Our Guiding Relational Principles

At Thomas Hall School and Reach South Academy Trust we believe that:

- Relationships are the foundation for us all to thrive in school.
- Mutual respect is the starting point for all agreements about how we all behave.
- Behaviour is a means of communication.
- We should work as a community to develop behaviours and responses to provide a positive and safe environment for everyone.
- All behaviours have natural consequences, and every member of our community is working towards taking accountability for their behaviour and what happens as a result.

The purpose of this document is to provide a reminder to all parents, carers and visitors to our schools about the expected conduct. This is so we can continue to flourish, progress and achieve in an atmosphere of mutual understanding.

Educating children effectively is a process that involves partnership between parents, staff and the wider school community. As partners, our parents will understand the importance of a good working relationship to equip children with the necessary skills for adulthood. For these reasons, we continue to welcome and encourage parents and carers to participate fully in the life of our school.

The vast majority of parents, carers and others visiting our schools are keen to work with us and are supportive of the school. From time to time, it is necessary for parents/carers and the school to deal with problems relating to pupils. It is important that discussions between parents and staff are conducted in a calm and respectful manner. However, on occasion, 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.

Behaviour is communication and in some instances a parent/visitor may become overwhelmed and dysregulated, leading them to inappropriate reactions and responses. Behaviour, our life experiences and other factors can impact on how we interact with others. Every situation will be unique and needs to be looked at and dealt with accordingly.

The trust expects 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.

The trust is responsible for protecting the health and safety of staff and pupils. Violence, threatening behaviour and abuse against school staff or other members of the school community must not be tolerated. All members of the school community have a right to expect that their school is a safe place in which to work and learn. There is no place for violence, threatening behaviour or abuse in

schools. Where such behaviour does occur, schools must know that the trust will play a proactive role in taking all possible action to deal with it, in response to the wishes of the school.

In certain circumstances, this will mean the trust taking the lead in initiating action on the school's behalf with the school's support, and in other circumstances we expect the trust to support the school in action that the school itself will initiate. Schools should in the first instance ask the trust for advice on the appropriateness of the remedies available and trust should, where they have the power to do so, take the lead in initiating action. In circumstances where power does not lie with the trust (e.g. under the criminal law) the trust would support and advise schools and remove as much of the burden from them as possible

Day to day access to a school is within the control of the head teacher. Normally parents/carers (and those with parental responsibility) are granted "limited licence" to visit the grounds and buildings of a school. Most schools will establish procedures which set out: the acceptable purposes for such visits; the areas of the school that may be entered at particular times; the standard of behaviour expected etc.

Definition of unacceptable behaviour

We consider that aggressive, abusive or insulting behaviour or language from a parent, carer or visitor presents a risk to staff or pupils. Unacceptable behaviour is such that makes a member of staff or pupil feel threatened. This can be through face-to-face contact, on the telephone or in written communication (including social media).

- using a raised voice, creating an intimidating atmosphere, for example, refusing to take part in two-way dialogue and consistently talking/shouting over responses from staff
- filming/recording conversations using mobile phone or other technology – danger of safeguarding issues regarding recording other people's children and not taking due consideration of the wishes of the staff involved
- inappropriate use of social media eg posting defamatory, offensive or derogatory comments regarding the school or any of the pupils, parents or staff at the school on Facebook or other social sites
- shouting, either in person or over the telephone
- swearing, either in person or over the telephone/email
- constant emails and/or phone calls which amount to harassment and intimidation, despite the school's best efforts to address a situation
- inappropriate electronic activity including publishing abusive or inappropriate content with regards to the school, teachers or pupils on social networking websites such as Facebook and Twitter or in email communication
- any kind of insult as an attempt to demean, embarrass or undermine
- any kind of threat
- hitting, slapping, punching, kicking or pushing
- physical intimidation e.g. standing unnecessarily close to another person
- the use of rude or aggressive hand gestures, including shaking or holding a fist towards another person
- spitting
- use of foul or abusive language
- any kind of physical abuse
- allegations which turn out to be vexatious or malicious

- racist, sexist, homophobic or transgender comments
- breaching the academy's security procedures
- Unacceptable behaviour may result in the police being informed of the incident.

Where there is a breach of such procedures the school needs to respond in a measured way, depending on the seriousness of any inappropriate conduct e.g.:

- initiate a meeting/dialogue with the individual
- write to the visitor, describing their misconduct, explaining its impact on the school and stating its unacceptability
- vary the person's "licence", say, through the addition of conditions
- warn of the possibility of a "ban" (i.e. the withdrawal of their licence) if the misconduct is repeated
- impose a ban with a review after a fixed period
- impose a ban without review.

It is possible for a headteacher/SLT to initiate any of these actions on their own authority but is less likely to lead to personal confrontation if the more serious sanctions are initiated by the governing body or the trust, as appropriate.

Guidance for staff

- A staff member must report any matter of intimidation, aggression, abuse or violence to the Headteacher.
- If the member of staff is in a meeting with an aggressive, abusive or violent parent, carer or visitor they should calmly and professionally outline that they are unable to continue the meeting in the current circumstances and report this immediately to the Headteacher or other senior member of staff.
- At all times, should situations deemed to be dangerous or illegal arise on the school premises, any member of staff, irrespective of their job role, is empowered to call the police requesting intervention to help maintain public order and/or personal safety. The Headteacher must be informed immediately.

Recording of Incidents

- Staff and pupils subjected to abuse, including any witnesses, should record their statements about the incident(s), including as much factual information as possible on an **Incident Report Form (Appendix 1)**. They will then need to give this to the headteacher. **The Academy's response**
- Following the completion of the risk assessment, the Headteacher will decide the level of action to be taken. Headteachers can refer to their Trust DDE or the Trust DE for further guidance and support following an incident.

Risk Assessment

- The Headteacher or nominated senior member of staff will carry out a risk assessment in order to help make an informed decision about the level of response required. In all cases the response will be reasonable and proportionate. Support for the risk assessment process can be sort through Gary Musson, Health & Safety Advisor for the Trust. The Headteacher 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/pupils feel intimidated by the parent's, carer's or visitor's behaviour?
 - Is there any evidence of provocation?
 - How high is the assessed risk that this will be repeated or there will be retaliation at the academy's action? (low, medium, high)

Actions will include the following dependent on the particular circumstances:

1. Clarify to the parent what is considered acceptable behaviour by the academy. In some instances, it may be appropriate simply to ensure the parent is clear about behaviour standards expected by the academy. This could be explained by letter from the Headteacher. This letter may contain a warning about further action if there are further incidents. The parent will be invited to write to the Headteacher/SLT with their version of events within 10 school (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.

2. Invite the parent to an informal meeting to discuss events. This could be helpful to discuss and diffuse the situation. The safety and well-being of those attending such a meeting must be carefully considered. Members of academy staff 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 exits cannot be blocked by a parent who could potentially become aggressive. The main points of discussion and any agreed actions should be noted, and a follow-up letter or email sent to confirm the academy's expectations and any agreed actions.

3. Impose conditions on the parent's contact with the academy and its staff. Although fulfilling a public function, schools are private places, and therefore the public has no automatic right of entry. Parents of enrolled pupils have an 'implied licence' to come onto the academy premises at certain stated times. It is for the academy to define and set out the extent of such access. Parents exceeding this 'implied licence' would be trespassing. Depending on the type, level or frequency of the unacceptable behaviour, the academy may consider imposing conditions on the parent's contact with the academy. These conditions may include (but not exclusively)

* being accompanied to any meeting with a member of academy staff by a member of SLT

- restricting contact by telephone to named members of the senior leadership team
- restricting written communications to named members of the senior leadership team
- restricting attendance at academy events to those where the parent will be accompanied by a member of the senior leadership of the academy
- any other restriction as deemed reasonable and proportionate by the Headteacher.
- In this case the parent will be informed by a letter from the Headteacher/SLT the details of the conditions that are being imposed. The parent would then be given 10 school (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 confirm or remove the conditions. This would be communicated to the parent in writing within 10 school (working) days of the date of the parent's letter.
- 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 will be invited to make written representation to the governors. This, together with the evidence from the Headteacher 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 by the clerk to the governors within 10 school (working) 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 compliance with the conditions, any appropriate expressions of regret and assurance of future good conduct received from them and any evidence of the offender's co-operation with the school in other respects

4. Imposing a ban

Where all relevant procedures have been exhausted and aggression or intimidation continue, or where there is an extreme act of violence, a visitor (including a parent or carer of an existing pupil) may be banned by the headteacher from the school's premises for a defined period. In these circumstances, the individual would be advised in writing by the Headteacher/SLT that a provisional

ban is being imposed. The parent would then be given 10 school (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 confirm or remove the ban. This would be communicated to the parent in writing within 10 school (working) days of the receipt of their letter.

If the Chair's decision is to confirm the ban, parents in these circumstances will be offered an annual meeting about their child's progress, usually with a member of senior staff.

In imposing a ban, the following steps will be taken

- 1. The parent/carer will be informed, in writing, that they are banned from the premises, 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 police will be made.
- 3. The Chair of the Board of Trustees will be informed of the ban.
- 4. As appropriate, arrangements for meetings at school regarding pupils, and arrangements for pupils being delivered to and collected from the school will be clarified.
- 5. Remove from the academy parents, carers or visitors who have been banned from the school premises and continue to cause a nuisance will be deemed to have committed a section 547 offence. They will be considered as trespassers. In these circumstances the offender may be removed from school. This may be carried out by a police officer or person authorised by the governing body. Legal proceedings may be brought against the offender.

Review of a ban

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 will be invited to make written representation to the governors; this and the evidence from the Headteacher 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 access to the school. The decision of the review will be communicated to the parent by the clerk to the governors within 10 school (working) 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 offender's compliance with the ban, any appropriate expressions of regret and assurance of future good conduct received from them and any evidence of their co-operation with the school in other respects.