



HURSTMERE SCHOOL

**Keeping staff and pupils safe from
abusive or threatening visitors**

Statement of Principles

This Procedure has been written taking into account the DfE Guidance ‘*Controlling access to school premises*’ November 2018.

At Hurstmere School, we value the positive relationships forged with visitors to the school. We pride ourselves and continue to encourage close links with visitors and the community and believe that pupils benefit when the relationship between home and school is a positive one. In general, we place a high importance on good manners and courtesy, positive communication and mutual respect.

Almost all visitors to Hurstmere School are keen to work with us and are supportive of the school. However, on rare occasions the behaviour of a small number of visitors falls short of what we expect or will tolerate. This sometimes manifests itself in aggression or abuse towards members of the school community. This can be in written communication (including social media), on the telephone or in face-to-face incidents.

In these situations, we expect members of staff to behave professionally, attempting to defuse the situation where possible and seek the involvement as appropriate of other colleagues. The first member of staff to deal with the visitor who has a grievance, may not have the answers to the issue but will take the time to listen to or read about the issue and then decide on the next course of action. Staff who face these situations may end any conversation (face-to-face or on the telephone) should they feel the behaviour/tone/mannerisms are deemed as aggressive, abusive or insulting. They should refer the incident to a senior leader who will take appropriate action or invoke the provisions of this Procedure.

The overriding principle is, however, that all members of the school community have the right to work or be in a school without fear of aggression or abuse from visitors. The Governing Board has a duty of care, to ensure that both staff and pupils are protected from such behaviours.

The progress and well-being of the visitor will be fully considered. Actions taken against visitors will be reasonable and proportionate. In line with DfE guidance 2018, ‘*schools can bar someone from the premises if they feel that their aggressive, abusive or insulting behaviour or language is a risk to staff or pupils. It is enough for a member of staff or a pupil to feel threatened.*’ If this is deemed to be the case, the school may inform the person in writing by the Principal that they have been barred or they intend to bar them. The visitor will have the opportunity to put their views forward at a subsequent meeting to discuss the issues that led to the barring being implemented and to try and find a solution that all parties are happy with. This should take place within 10 school days from when the letter was sent to the visitor. In the case of the imposition of conditions or a ban from the school, robust review processes are in place to ensure fairness.

1. Definition of unacceptable behaviour:

We consider that aggressive, abusive or insulting behaviour or language from a visitor presents a risk to staff or pupils. Unacceptable behaviour is such that it 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). 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 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.

2. The school's approach to dealing with incidents.

If a visitor behaves in an unacceptable way towards a member of the school community, the Principal or Vice Principals 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. Risk Assessment

We will expect the member of staff in situations where the visitor is demonstrating signs or actually being abusive or threatening to conduct a risk assessment to enable them to make a decision on the next course of action. Should the member of staff feel the need to report this to the Principal then a risk assessment will be completed in order to help make a decision about the level of response. In all cases the response will be reasonable and proportionate. The Principal 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 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 school's action? (low, medium, high).

4. Recording of incidents

Staff/pupils subject to abuse and witnesses, will make written statements about incident(s) which will be kept in a file with subsequent letters. This file will be kept by the Office Manager. Depending on an assessment of the risk of retaliation to witnesses or individuals, statements made by adults may be made available to the visitor if they request it.

5. The School's response

Following the completion of the risk assessment, the Principal will decide the level of action to be taken. Actions may include the following:

5.1. Clarify to the visitor what is considered acceptable behaviour by the school

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

5.2. Invite the visitor to an informal meeting to discuss events

The safety and well-being of those attending such a meeting must be carefully considered. Members of school 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 visitor who could potentially become aggressive. The main points of discussion and any agreed actions should be noted, and a follow-up letter sent to confirm the school's expectations and any agreed actions.

5.3. Impose conditions on the visitor's 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 of enrolled pupils have an 'implied licence' to come onto school premises at certain stated times. It is for schools to define and set out the extent of such access. Parents exceeding this would be trespassing.

Depending on the type, level or frequency of the unacceptable behaviour, the school may consider imposing conditions on the visitor's contact with the school. These conditions may include (but are not exclusively):

- being accompanied to any meeting with a member of school 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 school events to those where the parent will be accompanied by a member of the senior leadership of the school
- any other restriction as deemed reasonable and proportionate by the Principal.

In this case the visitor will be informed by letter from the Principal the details of the conditions that are being imposed. Should the visitor feel the outcome has been unsatisfactory they have the right to refer to and follow the Hurstmere School complaints procedure.

If the decision is to confirm the conditions imposed, this decision will be reviewed by the Principal after approximately six months (and every six months after that, if appropriate). The visitor will be invited to make written representation to the Principal. The Principal may decide to maintain, extend or remove the conditions. The decision of the review will be communicated to the visitor within 10 days of the date of the meeting.

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

5.4. Imposing a ban

Where other procedures have been exhausted and aggression or intimidation continues or where there is an extreme act of violence or threatening behaviour then the school may consider banning the individual from school premises. This will include banning a visitor from accessing school staff by written communication or telephone.

In these circumstances, the individual would be advised in writing by the Principal that a provisional ban is being imposed. The visitor would then be given 10 working days from the date of that letter to make representations about the ban in writing to the Chair of the Governing Board. The Chair of the Governing Board would then decide whether to confirm or remove the ban. This would be communicated to the person in writing within 10 working days of the receipt of their letter.

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

A decision to impose a ban will be reviewed by the Principal after approximately six months (and every six months after that, if appropriate). The person will be invited to make written representation to the Principal; this and the evidence from the Principal will be considered by the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors may decide to remove the ban, extend the ban or impose conditions on the visitor's access to the school. The decision of the review will be communicated to the person within 10 days of the date of the meeting.

In deciding whether to remove or extend the ban or impose conditions, The Chair of Governors will give consideration to the extent of the visitor's compliance with the ban, any appropriate expressions of regret and assurance of future good conduct received from him/her and any evidence of the person's co-operation with the school in other respects.

6. Removal from school

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 trespassers. In these circumstances the offender may be removed from the school. At this point the police will be called to carry out that decision. Legal proceedings may be brought against the person.

Addendum 1 - Letters

Warning

Model letter 1: This is an initial letter from the Principal to ensure the visitor is clear about

Dear

I have received a report about your conduct at the school on (enter date and time or details). This appears to fall far short of what we would expect of a parent of a pupil at Hurstmere School. (Add factual summary of the incident and of its effect on staff, pupils, and other parents.) I must inform you that Hurstmere School will not tolerate aggression towards members of the school community and will act to protect its staff and pupils from any form of abuse or intimidation. I should warn you that any future conduct of this nature could result in the school imposing conditions restricting your access to the school or banning you from contacting or attending the school altogether.

I wish to give you an opportunity to give me in writing any comments or observations of your own in relation to the report which I have received about your conduct. Please do so within 10 working days of the date of this letter. These comments may include any assurances you are prepared to give about your future good conduct. There is then an option for us to meet to discuss the situation and how it can be avoided in the future.

Details of our Procedure on dealing with threatening and abusive visitors can be found on our website.

Yours sincerely

Principal

cc: Chair of Governors

Model Letter 2 : Imposing conditions on the visitors' attendance at school events, pending review (sent by Principal)

Dear

I have received a report from the (name of staff) about your conduct on at (add summary of incident and its effect on staff and pupils) (You will recollect that I have already written to you about a previous incident on (date) warning you of the consequence of any further insulting or aggressive behaviour on your part) I must inform you that we, will not tolerate conduct of this nature on the school premises and will act to defend school staff and pupils. I am therefore writing to inform you that I am imposing conditions on the contact you may have with the school. These are as follows: (delete as appropriate)

- You must be accompanied to any meeting with a member of school staff
- You may not contact by telephone or in writing any member of staff.
- You may contact either myself or (Vice Principal).
- You may not attend any events for parents except those where you will be accompanied by a member of the senior leadership of the school.

I wish to give you an opportunity to give me in writing any comments or observations of your own in relation to the report which I have received about your conduct. Please do so within 10 working days of the date of this letter. These comments may include any assurances you are prepared to give about your future good conduct. There is then an option for us to meet to discuss the situation and how it can be avoided in the future.

At any point you may refer to Hurstmere School's Complaint Procedure.

Yours sincerely

Principal

cc: Chair of Governors

Model Letter 3: Imposition of a ban on contacting or attending the school, pending review (sent by Principal)

Dear

I have received a report from the (name of staff) about your conduct on at (add summary of incident and its effect on staff and pupils) You will recollect that I have already written to you about a previous incident on (date) warning you of the consequence of any further insulting or aggressive behaviour on your part. I must inform you that Hurstmere School, in line with our Procedure, will not tolerate conduct of this nature on the school premises and will act to defend school staff and pupils.

I am therefore writing to inform you that I am recommending imposing a ban on you attending or contacting the school. This means you may not attend school for any reason whatsoever. You must not make contact with any member of staff by telephone or e-mail. You do, however, have the right to attend one meeting per year to discuss your child's progress. This meeting will be with me. I will contact you to arrange this at the time of the next (insert period of reporting).

I wish to give you an opportunity to give me in writing any comments or observations of your own in relation to the report which I have received about your conduct. Please do so within 10 working days of the date of this letter. These comments may include any assurances you are prepared to give about your future good conduct. There is then an option for us to meet to discuss the situation and how it can be avoided in the future.

At any point you may refer to Hurstmere School's Complaint Procedure.

Yours sincerely

Principal

cc: Chair of Governors

Addendum 2 - Definitions

Visitor - the school views this as someone that is not employed by Hurstmere School. This could be a parent/ carer or any other visitor to the school site.