



Policy on Managing Aggressive Behaviour from Parents & Visitors to our School.

Date of next Review **Spring 2021**

This policy applies to Iver Village Infant School and Nursery and is underpinned by our Equality and Diversity Statement available on the school web site.

The policy will be reviewed to take account of changes to legislation and advice.

Disruptive Visitors Policy

All members of the school community have a right to expect that their school is a safe place in which to work and learn. Abuse, threatening behaviour or violence against school staff, or other members of the school community is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Any incident will be treated seriously and a disruptive visitor may be banned from entering the school or even prosecuted.

Abuse, threatening behaviour or violence are not considered to be an acceptable part of any job, nor is it part of the duties of any employee to accept such behaviour. Throughout this document where the term 'visitor' is used it covers any abusive parent or visitor to the school and is not confined to adults.

The Governing Body of Iver Village Infant's School is committed to reducing the risks of its school staff from acts of violence and aggression by:

- Demonstrating to staff that the potential for violence at work is recognised
- Issuing clear procedures/guidelines, which include preventative and protective measures
- Providing adequate training to staff who may be subject to violence or abuse to develop their ability to anticipate violent incidents and deal with them
- Encouraging proper reporting of incidents and near misses and ensuring that school staff do not avoid reporting violent incidents in the belief that an assault may suggest a failure on the part of the member of staff concerned
- Supporting staff who have been subject to violent, threatening or abusive behaviour and offering counselling where appropriate
- Allocating adequate resources to support this Policy
- Reviewing this Policy statement and procedures and guidelines regularly.

Types of violence

In identifying types of violence, the governing body recognises that staff can be intimidated or threatened by a variety of circumstances, not simply physical assault, which includes:

- Threatening behaviour
- Gesturing
- Abusive telephone calls, letters, faxes, emails, website entries
- Swearing, shouting insults etc
- Innuendo
- Deliberate silence
- Intimidating behaviour causing fear or emotional upset.

Managing incidents

The school works to avoid any incidents involving violent, threatening or abusive behaviour. This includes:

- how to avoid incidents
- handling incidents
- what to do following an incident
- guidance for those who manage staff
- the role of the Local Authority and the police

All new members of staff are aware of this policy and the associated procedures as part of their induction to the school. Staff have access to appropriate training where required.

All staff are made aware that they can expect support from their manager/ Headteacher in managing parent interviews well.

A formal notice is displayed at the entrance(s) to the school informing visitors of the school's expectations about behaviour and/or that they may face prosecution for violent, threatening and abusive behaviour.

When an incident has taken place, the school will work with the Local Authority and the police in deciding what actions to take. These actions can include a warning letter, restrictions on visiting or a ban from visiting the school site. If abusive behaviour is repeated, then a visitor will be declared unwelcome and they can be ordered off the premises as a trespasser under Section 547 of the Education Act 1996.

Procedures for Staff

Dealing with Incidents involving Violent, Threatening or Abusive Visitors

These procedures have been drawn will be reviewed on a regular basis.

It should always be remembered that:

- The physical safety of employees is more important than the security of buildings or property
- When violence is threatened it is important that reasonable effort is made to control the situation
- If a situation is out of control it is better to retreat and get away if possible
- In controlling an incident, involvement of members of the public should be avoided
- If an implement has been involved in an attack, this should be retained, provided this can be done without any risk
- Physical intervention or restraint should always be regarded as an absolute last resort.

Generally, visitors to the school will be received by a member of the administrative team who will ensure that signing in procedures and ID checks are carried out and that the visitor is escorted to his/her destination. On occasions, other members of staff may also need to receive visitors and all staff are therefore aware that visitors must sign in, have ID checked and be escorted whilst on the premises.

If parents wish to meet with a teacher, they must arrange this through a phone call to the office. Staff must take responsibility for ensuring that someone is made aware of such meetings and support from another member of staff is organised if required. Staff are advised to politely withdraw from a situation if the visitor is behaving in a violent, threatening or abusive way.

Avoiding an Incident

Parents, or members of the public, may arrive in a tense, agitated state and how they are initially dealt with might well make the difference between a minor exchange of words and a violent confrontation.

Members of staff are entitled to support from their manager in handling a potentially difficult parent interview, so, if you have any concerns you should discuss them with your manager. Sensitivity towards parental difficulties is an asset. Many adults are still influenced by their own school and other childhood experiences, as well as their consequent expectations for their own children. Over anxious, or even ambitious, parents can feel very vulnerable.

Preparation is an essential ingredient in ensuring that interviews prove constructive rather than confrontational.

Always try to:

Prepare in advance by:

- Gathering information that might help
- Ensuring the layout of the room is not intimidating for visitors and allows you to escape quickly; if possible position your chair/desk with the door behind you
- Positioning seating at equal height so that the parent does not feel patronised, and, if possible, at a 45-degree angle as this is less threatening. Avoid barriers if it is safe to do so.
- Considering having a colleague present, or pre-arranging with a colleague to check that all is well, if you have reason to believe that the visitor has a previous history of aggression or violence, or appears to be aggressive or violent.
- During the meeting minimise the risk by:
- Removing an angry or upset person from an audience, or, if easier, removing the audience and don't leave them waiting unnecessarily. The fewer people that are involved in an incident, the easier it is for an aggressor to back down without losing face.
- Keeping the discussion as calm and friendly as possible, paraphrasing what has been said and using sympathy and empathy where appropriate.
- Summarising what has been said and follow through. This will help to build trust and respect.
- Minimise a parent/visitor's frustration by: -
- Being yourself. Do not hide behind authority, status or a job title. By using your name instead of a description of your status, you are presenting yourself as another human being. Later on, if may be important to explain what authority or status you have in order to reassure the visitor that you are in a position to act on their behalf.
- Keeping the visitor talking and explaining the problem, their perception of what has happened, why they feel aggrieved. Use verbal and non-verbal prompts (saying 'mmm' or 'yes' or nodding) to keep them talking. Use open questions to encourage them to talk and explain
- Listening and allowing the visitor to express any complaint, without preventing them from finishing what they have to say. Listen empathetically without pre-judging or patronising. Listen also for the feelings, concerns and possible intentions behind their words
- Responding promptly, paying attention and showing that you do care about their problem. Don't keep leaving the room as this gives the message that you have other more important matters to deal with
- Being polite, pleasant and reassuring and do not show anger. Resist arguing. It is very tempting to respond and become engaged in an argument, especially if you are the butt of aggression or accused in some way, but it is far more likely to result in conflict or confrontation than contribute to defusing the situation.
- Paying attention to your body language so it is as non-threatening as possible. Avoid aggressive or defensive stances, such as arms folded, hands on hips or

waving fingers or arms. Try to relax your facial muscles and convey openness and empathy with the speaker. Make eye contact, but avoid constant eye contact that may be threatening or trigger aggression because it is perceived as staring

- Trying to explain clearly in jargon free language precisely what your difficulty is in giving the aggressive person what they want. Repeat it until you are sure you are understood because upset people do not always hear the first time
- Not making any promises which you know you cannot keep as this may make things worse for you or your colleagues at a later date.

Make sure that you are aware of the school's emergency action plan/'lockdown' procedures and when these should be implemented.

Handling an Incident

If someone becomes abusive or threatening, consider whether or not you can cope with the situation. You should not feel you have to cope with it alone: you should seek help from other people, or leave altogether. If a situation appears to be getting out of control, make an excuse and leave and immediately report the incident to the headteacher/designated person.

It is important that you:

- Know whether you are in a position to offer the parent a realistic and reasonable answer to their expectations
- Know whether you are competent to handle the situation
- Be confident you have back up and be assured you can summon help
- Have a plan of how to approach the problem.

First keep calm, relax, allow yourself time to think and decide the best course of action. Ask yourself if what has occurred so far in the exchange means that someone else, specially briefed by you, would be better placed to handle the situation. Colleagues may have particular skills or experience that you do not have. The situation may be such that it requires specialist help, such as the police to eject a person; if so, you should get help quickly, before the situation deteriorates.

Following an incident

- Seek medical attention, if required
- Report verbally to your headteacher/manager as soon as possible. Other staff may be at risk from the same person
- Complete an Incident Report Form and pass to your headteacher/manager for investigation, having sought Union advice, if appropriate (Appendix B)
- Take time with your headteacher/manager to discuss the incident and your feelings
- Ask for assistance if you need it
- Consider Police involvement, if they are not already involved

In all cases of assault causing actual injury the employee sustaining the injury is advised to make a formal complaint to the Police against the assailant, unless this is considered inappropriate. This decision, although personal, should be discussed with the headteacher/manager.

Employees have joint responsibility with their employer to review any incidents and identify the need for appropriate training and counselling, and specific strategies to reduce the level of risk.