



Violence at Work from Visitors Policy Statement

Date of Adoption:

19th March 2018

Review date:

19th March 2019
(or sooner if required)

Signed by:
Chair of Local Academy Council

Paul Roberts

Date

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Introduction

A working definition of violence is:

‘Any incident in which an employee is abused, threatened or assaulted by a student, member of the public or other employee in circumstances arising out of the course of his or her employment’.

Most people accept that physical force against an individual is an example of violence, but violence can take many other forms, including:

- verbal abuse and threats (with or without a weapon);
- rude gestures – innuendoes;
- sexual or racial harassment or any other form of discriminatory behaviour.

Where there is no physical injury, there can still be considerable emotional stress; threats may indicate a risk of actual injury. Malicious damage to an employee’s property can also cause distress and fear of future physical attack.

It should also be remembered that people will have different perceptions about behaviour they find threatening or offensive, or which cause distress and fear of future physical attack.

Rationale:

The Head Teacher has a duty to safeguard all staff from the threat of violence within the school. The aim of this policy is to put in place all reasonable practical steps to ensure the safety of staff from aggressive verbal abuse, threatening behaviour, physical assault, sexual harassment, racial harassment, vandalism or theft.

Purpose:

- To formulate effective procedures for the removal or difficult, abusive or violent members of the public off the premises.
- To develop effective training for staff so that they can recognise potentially violent situations and prepare themselves to take necessary action.
- To record, assess and analyse all incidents so that follow-up action and employee support can be assured.
- To establish a welcoming school ethos with friendly staff showing visitors and parents to a reception area where waiting and queuing is kept to a minimum. Parents should feel that they are being dealt with promptly, appropriately and with dignity.

Guidelines

1. Recognition of potentially difficult situation

Assault on staff can occur at almost any point. The majority of contact with parents is calm, friendly and business like but potentially difficult problems can exist. In such cases staff need to be aware of:

- people with a history of aggressive or violent behaviour (risk assessments could be carried out);
- people under the influence of alcohol, drugs, stress or acute illness;
- people who have suffered continual frustration in their dealings with either the school or people in authority;
- making appointments wherever possible to see parents within school hours when assistance from other colleagues can be sought;
- that all external doors need to be locked to avoid unwelcome visitors entering the school building.

2. Reporting an incident within the school

A very small percentage of parents can be abusive, threatening and dangerous. If any incident of threatening behaviour, verbal abuse, physical assault, racism, or sexual harassment occur, the following procedures should be followed:

- Report the incident to the Head Teacher.
- Access counselling if required.

The Head Teacher should assess the situation and do one of the following:

- Once the parent has calmed down tell him/her what the outcome of his/her behaviour is likely to be e.g. exclusion from the school/legal actions.
- Remove the parent from the school premises. Only persuasion should be used, not force.
- Inform the Trust
- Involve the police and take the name/station of officer attending.
- Seek medical attention
- Give immediate support to the victim and arrange for a Trust officer to see him/her in a quiet place.
- If appropriate arrange for the victim to go home.

3. Following the Incident

The victim needs to:

- Help the Head Teacher compile a report.
- Speak to the Police if required.
- Seek medical advice however minor from the local hospital or G.P.
- Consider time off work if medically advised.
- Consider counselling.

The Head Teacher needs to:

- Complete an Incident Report Form.
- Take a statement from any witnesses.
- Take photographs of any injuries.
- Obtain copies of any medical reports.
- Make sure that the victim is supported by another colleague.
- Consider compassionate leave.
- When the victim returns to work, review work arrangements and make adjustments where appropriate to build up their confidence and reassure them of their ability to do the job.
- Discuss amendments to the policy in view of any future incidents.

4. Interactions with Parents

In order to ensure dealings with parents the following points should be observed:

- Be polite and helpful and where possible, remember that some parents are anxious, frightened or bewildered when they enter the school – this may turn to aggression as their way of coping and saying they need help, guidance and advice to sort out their affairs.
- Be clear in your advice and avoid ‘talking down’ to people. Remember how angry you are if this happens to you. Rather behave attentively and offer assistance.
- When someone appears angry or aggressive verbally, try not to overreact – remain calm and do not attempt to argue. Act positively and explain to the individual that they are not behaving properly and why.
- Avoid aggressive non-verbal behaviour (e.g. hands on hips, wagging finger, looking down on individual/person).
- Give the person time to vent their feelings. Listen to their point of view, ask for clarification when you are unclear and check your understanding of what is being said e.g. ‘So have I got it right?’ ‘What you’re saying is ...’. This shows that you are listening and wish to understand the other person’s position.
- Assert your own view in a calm and reasoned way. Discuss the issue under concern and avoid personal and emotive comments.
- If aggression continues, find a way to cut off the interaction e.g. arranging to discuss further at another time. Avoid the temptation to ‘have the last word’. Try to create a win-win situation.

5. Dealing appropriately with Physical Assault

People are advised to consider the following:

- Where possible leave the scene if you feel under threat.
- Do not position yourself where it is difficult to use the exit.
- Identify potential aggressive parents and arrange with your Head Teacher to take steps to prevent a difficult incident. This information may be passed to school from multi-agency partners. In extreme cases this may mean banning them from the building.
- If visiting the home of a child of a known difficult parent or interviewing such a parent, avoid doing so on your own.
- Try to keep a reasonable distance between you and the client and try to ensure that there are no objects in the room which could be used as weapons.
- Summon assistance as appropriate and never make appointments when no other member of staff is available on site to offer help if required.
- Make sure that no-one is left in the classroom or office alone where help could not be summonsed, including yourself. This includes lunchtimes.

6. Eliminating Risks

- Staff involved in home visits (avoiding evening visits) or mainstream school visits should keep a dual diary system and make sure other staff are aware of your movements.
- Consider removing anything you may be wearing which could be dangerous e.g. earrings, long scarves.
- Avoid transporting parents in your vehicle.
- Ensure all latches are secured on external doors.
- Ensure all visitors report to the school office and all unknown persons are challenged about what they are doing within the school.