



# **Parent and Visitor Conduct POLICY**



## Parent and Visitors Conduct Policy

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Written by	Colin Raraty
Chair's Name	Steph Green

## **Policy on managing the conduct of parents and visitors to our school**

### **Statement of principles**

The Governing Board of Rodings Primary School encourages close links with parents and the community. It believes that pupils benefit when the relationship between home and school is a positive one.

The vast majority of parents, carers and others visiting our school are keen to work with us and are supportive of the school. However, on the rare occasions when a negative attitude towards the school is expressed, this can result in aggression, verbal and or physical abuse towards members of school staff or the wider school community.

The Governing Board expects and requires its 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.

However, all members of staff have the right to work without fear of violence and abuse, and the right, in an extreme case, of appropriate self defence.

We expect parents and other visitors to behave in a reasonable way towards members of school staff. This policy outlines the steps that will be taken where behaviour is unacceptable.

Types of behaviour that are considered serious and unacceptable and will not be tolerated:

- shouting at members of the school staff, either in person or over the telephone
- physically intimidating a member of staff, e.g. standing very close to her/him/them
- the use of aggressive hand gestures
- threatening behaviour
- shaking or holding a fist or finger towards another person
- swearing
- pushing
- hitting, e.g. slapping, punching and kicking
- spitting
- racist, sexist, disablist comments
- breaching the school's security procedures

This is not an exhaustive list but seeks to provide illustrations of such behaviour.

## **Unacceptable behaviour may result in the local authority and the police being informed of the incident.**

### **Aggressive and abusive behaviour on Social Media**

The way individuals communicate is changing. Parents and carers are entitled to hold opinions about schools, however, negative comments can cause significant distress to staff and reputational damage to the school.

The school takes a proactive approach to minimise these incidents by sharing our expectations about the use of social media and online behaviours and encourages all parents and carers to contact the school directly if you have a complaint or concern. In most instances these can be resolved immediately in a professional manner. As a school, we try hard to be as transparent as possible and make as easy possible routes available to parents and carers who wish to raise concerns or put forward their opinion. This includes having the headteacher and senior leaders on the school gate every day, the note and email system to contact teachers, the parent forum and the complaints policy on the website.

Our school has a proud history and an excellent reputation. We politely ask that you do not post malicious or offensive comments on any form of social media. Action will be taken if comments that contain threats, are defamatory, name individuals or constitute harassment, if brought to our attention. All parents have the right to register their children at an alternative school if they are unhappy with the service or care they receive.

### **Procedure to be followed**

If a parent/carer behaves in an unacceptable way towards a member of the school community, the head teacher or appropriate senior member of staff will seek to resolve the situation through discussion and mediation. If necessary, the school's complaints procedures should be followed. Where all procedures have been exhausted, and aggression or intimidation continue, or where there is an extreme act of violence, the police may be called and a parent or carer may be banned by the head teacher from the school premises for a period of time, subject to review.

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 authority and the police will be included
3. The chair of governors/LA will be informed of the ban

4. Where appropriate, arrangements for pupils being delivered to, and collected from the school gate will be clarified.

### **The length of a ban**

The ban should be finite in length, as only the most serious misconduct would justify an indefinite ban. The duration needs to be sufficient to convey a clear message about the seriousness of the associated misconduct, but not so long as to be disproportionate. The aim should always be to restore “normal” relations as soon as is reasonably practicable.

Even if a ban is permanent, it should be reviewed periodically, taking account of subsequently demonstrated patterns of behaviour.

### **What does a ban achieve?**

- It confirms to a parent that the school will not tolerate misbehaviour
- Shows the school takes health and safety of its staff, community, visitors and pupils seriously
- It provides a key element in making it easier to use legal remedies to prevent repeated misconduct, including use of S547 of the 1996 Education Act to enable Police removal and possible prosecution of those on school premises without permission
- It may form the basis for an application for an injunction to curtail repeated instances of misbehaviour.

### **Parental Rights**

Every attempt should be made to maintain normal communications with parents/carers. Even where a parent/carer has been banned from the school premises, they retain their right to usual parent consultations in relation to the educational progress of their child/ren. However, the school may determine who will be present at the meeting (e.g. a senior member of staff might accompany the class teacher) and its location (e.g. it may well be arranged off site). This may also take the form of a written report or telephone call if a face to face meeting is deemed inappropriate.

### **Options for the Headteacher**

After evaluating all available information, and any other relevant factors, there are several actions the Headteacher may wish to take. These can include:

#### **Inviting the parent to a meeting to discuss events**

This could be helpful where a planned and structured meeting has either not been held before or has previously been productive. Skilled facilitators may need to be used. A full restorative meeting may be considered, but if it is not safe to bring all the parties together at a meeting, a restorative process can still take place through the exchange of information. The safety and well-being of those attending such a meeting must be carefully considered. It is strongly recommended that members of school staff should 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 sent to confirm the school's expectations and any agreed actions. Some parents may covertly record meetings and then seek to use the information obtained to support their case, and therefore schools should state explicitly that information obtained without permission will not be permissible.

### **Clarifying to the parent what is considered acceptable behaviour by the school**

In some instances, it may be appropriate simply to ensure the parent is clear about behaviour standards expected by the school. This could be explained at a meeting, or by letter, however any verbal explanation should be followed by a written confirmation of the discussion and the standards of behaviour outlined.

### **Forming strategies to manage future situations of potential conflict**

It is sometimes possible to identify situations of potential conflict and to plan for these in a way that minimises potential risks. For example, where a parent persistently engages in arguments with staff in corridors at the beginning or end of the school day, the parent could be informed that any discussions with school staff must be held by prior appointment. Alternatively, the parent may be asked not to approach the class teacher, but should instead arrange to meet the Headteacher (or another member of the senior leadership team), who will deal with their concerns. In more serious cases a further option may be to advise the parent that in future their concerns should be dealt with by written communication. Any such arrangements should be confirmed in writing to the parent.

### **Withdrawing permission for the parent to enter the school site and/or buildings**

In more serious cases of actual or threatened aggression/violence, or persistent abuse/intimidation, the Headteacher may need to consider whether it is safe for the parent to continue to come onto the school site or enter the buildings. In such circumstances, it is strongly recommended that the Headteacher first consult with the Chair of Governors and, if necessary, Essex Legal services.

Cases of actual assault should be also reported to the Local Authority.

### **Calling for police assistance**

In an emergency, police assistance should be sought. In cases where a ban is in place but is ignored and the person comes onto the school site, the police should be notified immediately. (Staff will need to be aware of the ban and have agreed procedures in place should the person come onto the school site).

In situations where there is no immediate threat to staff, pupils, other members of the school community or the school's property, the Headteacher may still wish to make their local community police officer (e.g. neighbourhood support team, youth intervention officer) aware of the situation.

The police could consider warning the offender of formal action, which may include legal proceedings.

## **Legal proceedings**

Where individuals persist in coming onto the school site even when permission to do so has been withdrawn, it is possible for legal proceedings to be pursued. The options include:

### **Prosecution under section 547 of the Education Act 1996**

This requires substantial evidence to be gathered and presented by the police. Clearly it is not a quick process, and whilst in most cases the threat may prove to be a sufficient deterrent, prosecution can only be seen in the last resort as a punitive measure.

### **Appropriate behaviour contracts**

These are voluntary agreements made between people involved in anti-social behaviour, and the agency/school concerned. They are flexible in terms of content and format, and can be an effective means of encouraging young adults, children and parents to take responsibility for unacceptable behaviour. The person named does not always agree with the contract, but it can be used as evidence at a later stage for an application for an anti-social behaviour order. Conditions can be put on the contract, e.g. not to enter school grounds.

### **Anti-social behaviour orders (Crime and Disorder Act 1998)**

These are most likely to be used where the offender (aged over 10) has acted in a manner which causes harassment, alarm, or distress, and is needed to protect others in the same area from similar behaviour.

Anti-social behaviour orders (CBOs) may be sought by the local authority or the chief officer of police. CBOs are designed to deal with persistent bad behaviour, and the police will need to show that other options have been tried or are unsuitable.

### **Restraining orders (Protection from Harassment Act 1997)**

Section 2 of the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 provides for criminal or civil prosecution, for cases where someone causes alarm or distress to another person on more than two occasions. Section four provides for criminal or civil prosecution where people have been put in fear of violence on at least two occasions. In each case the sanctions include both criminal penalties (fines, imprisonment, or community sentences) and a restraining order. These orders are generally quicker and easier to obtain, but are part of a criminal conviction.

### **Prosecution for criminal damage/assault**

Prosecutions for causing deliberate damage or injury may occasionally be the most appropriate course of action. If the police are called, the option to make criminal allegations is readily available, and they may arrest suspected offenders there and then. Official allegations should only be made if there is no intention of later withdrawing the complaint. Criminal proceedings can be initiated at a later date. All possible steps should be taken to prevent the loss of evidence. In particular witnesses should be asked to make a record of exactly what they saw and heard at the earliest opportunity.

Legal advice is available through Essex Legal Services.

Individual cases should always be discussed with the Chair of Governors, who will work with the Headteacher and Legal Services to decide the most appropriate response.

Whilst the emphasis will usually be on ensuring safety and security of persons and property, and therefore the injunction route is likely to be the most effective deterrent legal action, it does not necessarily guarantee against the behaviour of the more persistent offender.

## **Record keeping**

There will be clear and detailed records of all events which must be kept up to date. Any witness statements (where appropriate) and notes of any subsequent meetings held to discuss the events should also be retained on the school electronic system (MyConcern and Arbor).

Any physical evidence should be bagged and labelled, and witnesses should be asked to make a record of exactly what they saw and heard at the earliest opportunity.

If the police are asked to deal with an incident as a criminal investigation, there are a number of actions that may thwart this process. Witness details should not be made known to suspected offenders or their families. Groups of witnesses or suspects should not be left together, or allowed to discuss what happened, before the police interview them. If in doubt, always seek the advice of the police officer first.

## **Support for employees**

If a member of staff is unfortunate enough to be one of the very small minority subject to serious physical and/or verbal abuse there are a variety of sources of potential support available to them. In such circumstances the immediate and ongoing support of colleagues will be invaluable.

## **Conclusion**

The local authority itself may take action where behaviour is unacceptable or there are serious breaches of our home-school code of conduct or health and safety legislation.

In implementing this policy, the school will, as appropriate, seek advice from the Local Authority's education, health and safety and legal departments, to ensure fairness and consistency.

We are guided by and may refer to the following:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/controlling-access-to-school-premises>

<https://www.localgovernmentlawyer.co.uk/education-law/343-education-features/42844-banning-parents-access-to-the-school-premises>



## Appendix 1

### Incident report form

Relevant incidents include trespass, nuisance or disturbance on school premises, verbal abuse, sexual or racial abuse, threats, aggression, physical violence, intentional damage to property and abuse on social media.

Where possible, the form should be completed before any discussion between witnesses is possible, as this might lead to allegations of collusion.

This form should be completed as fully as possible please, using a continuation sheet, if necessary. For any incident involving or witnessed by a pupil or parent/carer/visitor, a member of staff should complete the form on their behalf.

The completed form should be passed to the head teacher, for appropriate action and recording.

<b>Date of incident</b>	
<b>Time of incident</b>	
<b>Name of person reporting incident</b>	
<b>Date incident reported</b>	
<b>Member of staff recording incident</b>	
<b>Date incident recorded</b>	

<b>Name(s) of person(s) causing incident</b> (where name(s) is/are unknown, provide other details of which may allow their identification)
<b>Status(es)</b> (parents/carers/visitors/trespassers)
<b>Full description of incident</b> (e.g. names of persons involved; location; nature of any injuries; attendance of emergency services)

Names of any witnesses	Statuses

<b>Initial action/outcome</b> (e.g. Informal conciliation; police intervention; warning or banning letter issued)

<b>Summary of subsequent actions taken by the school, including risk assessments</b>

<b>Linked incidents</b> (if any)

## Appendix 2

**(Warning letter, from the head teacher: to parent/carer with child/ren at the school)**

Recorded delivery

Dear .....

I have received a report about your conduct at the school on **(enter date and time)**.

**(Add factual summary of the incident and of its effect on staff, pupils, other parents.)**

I must inform you that the local authority/ Governing Board **(delete as appropriate)** will not tolerate conduct of this nature on its premises and will act to protect its staff and pupils.

Therefore if, in the future, I receive any reports of conduct of this nature I will be forced to consider removing your licence to enter the school grounds and buildings. If you do not comply with that instruction I will be able to arrange for you to be removed from the premises and prosecuted under Section 547 of the Education Act 1996. If convicted under this section, you may be liable to a fine of up to £500.

Nevertheless, 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. These comments may include any expressions of regret on your part and any assurances you are prepared to give about your future good conduct. To enable me to take a decision on this matter at an early point, you are asked to send me any written comments you wish to make by **(state date ten working days from the date of letter)**.

Yours sincerely,

Head Teacher

**(Banning Letter, from the LA or Governing Board : to parent/carer with child/ren at the school)**

Recorded delivery

Dear .....

I have received a report from the head teacher at X Primary School about your conduct on **(enter date and time)**.

**(Add factual summary of the incident and of its effect on staff, pupils, other parents.)**

I must inform you that the local authority/ Governing Board **(delete as appropriate)** will not tolerate conduct of this nature on its premises and will act to protect its staff and pupils. On the advice of the head teacher I am therefore instructing that until **(add date)** you are not to reappear on the premises of the school. If you do not comply with this instruction I may arrange for you to be removed from the premises and prosecuted under Section 547 of the Education Act 1996. If convicted under this section, you may be liable to a fine of up to £500.

For the duration of this decision you may bring your son(s)/daughter(s) **(complete as appropriate)** to school and collect them/him/her (delete as appropriate) at the end of the school day, but you must not go beyond the school gate.

**In the case of infant children, also insert**

Arrangements have been made for your **(delete as appropriate)** son(s)/daughter(s) (insert child/rens names) to be collected, and returned to you, at the school gate by a member of the school's staff.

The withdrawal of permission for you to enter the school premises takes effect straightaway. However, I still need to decide whether it is appropriate to confirm this decision. Before I do so, 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 from the head teacher. These comments may include any expressions of regret on your part and any assurances you are prepared to give about your future good conduct. To enable me to take a decision on this matter at an early point, you are asked to send me any written comments you wish to make by **(state date ten working days from the date of letter)**.

If on receipt of your comments I consider that my decision should be confirmed, or extended, you will be supplied with details of how to pursue a review of the circumstances of your case.

In any event, the decision to withdraw your licence to enter the school premises will be reviewed by  
... (complete as appropriate). That review will take account of any representations that you

may have made and of your subsequent  
conduct. Yours sincerely,

**(Banning Letter, from the LA or Governing Board : to member of the public)**

Recorded delivery

Dear .....

I have received a report from the head teacher at **(insert name)** school about your conduct on **(enter date and time)**.

**(Add factual summary of the incident and of its effect on staff, pupils, other parents.)**

I must inform you that the authority/ Governing Board (delete as appropriate) will not tolerate conduct of this nature on its premises and will act to protect its staff and pupils. On the advice of the head teacher I am therefore instructing that you are not to reappear on the premises of the school. If you do not comply with this instruction I may arrange for you to be removed from the premises and prosecuted under Section 547 of the Education Act 1996. If convicted, you may be liable to a fine of up to £500.

Yours sincerely,

LA Officer / Chair of Governing Board

**(Letter updating a banning letter, from the LA or Governing Board , confirming ban: to parent/carer with child/ren at the school)**

Recorded delivery

Dear .....

On **(give date)** I wrote to you informing you that on the advice of the head teacher, I had withdrawn permission for you to come onto the premises of (insert name) School until **(insert date)**.

To enable the local authority/Governing Board **(delete as appropriate)** to determine whether to confirm this decision, or to impose it for a longer period, I gave you the opportunity to give your written comments on the incident concerned by **(give date)**.

I have not received a written response from you / I have now received a letter from you dated

... **(insert the date)**, the contents of which I have noted. **(delete either sentence as appropriate)**

In the circumstances, and after further consideration of the head teacher's report, I have determined that the decision to withdraw permission for you to come onto school premises should be confirmed/extended. **(delete as appropriate)** I am therefore instructing that until

(insert date) you are not to come onto the premises of the school without the prior knowledge and approval of the head teacher. If you do not comply with this instruction I may arrange for you to be removed from the premises and prosecuted under Section 547 of the Education Act 1996. If convicted, you may be liable to a fine of up to £500.

Notwithstanding this decision the head teacher and staff at **(insert name)** school remain committed to the education of your child/children **(delete as appropriate)**, who must continue to attend school as normal **insert in the case of a primary school:** under the arrangements set out in my previous letter.

The authority/ Governing Board **(delete as appropriate)** will take steps to review the continuance of this decision by **(give date)**. When deciding whether it is necessary to extend the withdrawal of permission to come onto the school's premises, the authority/ Governing Board **(delete as appropriate)** will take into account the extent of your compliance with the decision, any appropriate expressions of regret and assurances of future good conduct received from yourself and any evidence of your co-operation with the school in other respects.

**(Include where the incident has arisen within the context of a parental complaint against the school:)**

Finally I would advise you that I have asked the head teacher to ensure that your

complaint **(give brief details)** is considered under the appropriate school procedure. You will be contacted about this by the school in due course.

If you wish to pursue the matter further, you have a right to a review of the circumstances of this case by the school's Governing Board .



**(Letter updating a banning letter, from the LA or Governing Board , withdrawing ban: to parent/carer with child/ren at the school)**

Recorded delivery

Dear .....

On **(insert date)** I wrote to you informing you that, on the advice of the head teacher, I had temporarily withdrawn permission for you to come onto the premises of (insert name) School. To enable me to determine whether to confirm this decision for a longer period, I gave you the opportunity to let me have your written comments on this incident by **(insert date)**

I have not received a written response from you / I have now received a letter from you dated .....

**(insert date)**, the contents of which I have noted. **(delete either sentence as appropriate)**

In the circumstances, and after consulting with the Headteacher, I have decided that it is not necessary to confirm the decision, and I am therefore restoring to you the permission to come onto the school premises, with immediate effect.

Nevertheless I remain very concerned at the incident which occurred on **(insert date)**, and I must warn you that if there is any repetition of your behaviour on that occasion, I shall not hesitate to withdraw permission for you to come onto the premises.

Yours sincerely,

LA Officer / Chair of Governing Board

**(Letter, from the LA or Governing Board , following formal review of a banning letter, extending ban: to parent/carer with child/ren at the school)**

Recorded delivery

Dear .....

I wrote to you on **(insert date)** withdrawing permission for you to come onto the premises of **(insert name)** School until **(insert date)**. In that letter I also advised you that I would take steps to review this decision by **(insert date)**.

I have now completed the review. However, after consultation with the head teacher, I have determined that it is not yet appropriate for me to withdraw my decision. **(Give a brief summary of reasons)**

I therefore advise that the instruction that you are not to come onto the premises of (insert name) school without the prior knowledge and approval of the head teacher remains in place until ..... **(insert date)**.

I shall undertake a further review of this decision on **(insert date)**.

**(Insert if the letter is from the Governing Board )** If you are dissatisfied with this decision, you have a right to request a review of the decision by the Governing Board .

Yours sincerely,

LA Officer / Chair of Governing Board

**(Letter, from the LA or Governing Board , following formal review of a banning letter, ending ban: to parent/carer with child/ren at the school)**

Recorded delivery

Dear .....

I wrote to you on **(insert date)** informing you that I had withdrawn permission for you to come onto the premises of **(insert name)** School until **(insert date)**. In that letter I also advised you that I would take steps to review this decision by **(insert date)**.

I have now completed the review. After consultation with the head teacher, I have decided that it is now appropriate to change that decision and I am therefore restoring to you the permission to come onto the school premises, with immediate effect.

I trust that you can now be relied upon to act in full co-operation with the school and that there will be no further difficulties of the kind which made it necessary for me to prevent you entering the premises.

I should point out that if there is any repetition of your behaviour, I shall not hesitate to withdraw permission for you to come onto the premises once more.

Yours sincerely,

LA Officer / Chair of Governing Board

## Appendix 3

### Legal remedies, for violence or abuse against members of a school community

As well as invoking **section 547 of the Education Act 1996**, the following vehicles may be used by an LA on a school's behalf.

#### **Section 222 Local Government Act 1972**

Section 222 empowers a local authority to prosecute or defend proceedings where it is considered expedient for promoting or protecting the interests of those living in its area. It would potentially allow the local authority to prosecute an abusive parent under one of the other options mentioned here or, alternatively, to bring civil proceedings against the parent.

#### **Anti-social behaviour orders (CBOs) (under review)**

Anti-social behaviour orders are imposed under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

An anti-social behaviour order can be sought by the local authority or chief officer of police and can be made in respect of anyone aged 10 or over who has acted in an anti social manner (a manner which caused or is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress) and an CBO is necessary to protect others in the same area from repetition of similar behaviour.

The order can prohibit the defendant from doing anything described in the order provided those prohibitions are necessary to protect others from anti social behaviour. CBOs last for a minimum of two years (but can be discharged sooner with the consent of both parties) and carry a penalty for breach of a fine up to £5,000, a prison sentence of up to six months, or both (if imposed by the magistrates' court), or an unlimited fine, or up to five years imprisonment, or both (if the conviction was in the crown court).

In the circumstances above we would expect LAs or governing bodies to take the lead on taking relevant action under the above legislation as appropriate.

The LA or Governing Board has responsibilities as an employer (The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, sections 2 and 3) to ensure a safe place of work for its staff. School staff have every right to expect that where they wish action to be taken, the LA or Governing Board will do this. LAs or governing bodies should thus ensure that they are familiar with the relevant legislation and their powers under it.

#### **Protection from Harassment Act 1997 (under review)**

This Act is more informally described as anti-stalking legislation, although not only used for that purpose. This action can be taken either through criminal prosecution or a private action for damages in the civil courts. It can be done on behalf of an individual, or a group (e.g. a group of children or teaching staff). The sanctions include both criminal penalties (fines, imprisonment, or community sentences) and a restraining order, which is a flexible order which prohibits the offender from

continuing their offending behaviour. For example, it could prevent a parent from coming within a certain distance of a school, or from making phone calls to the school or a teacher's home.

The restraining order can last for as long as the court thinks appropriate.

Section 2 of the Act makes it an offence where someone pursues a course of conduct (on more than two occasions) that amounts to harassment of another, causing alarm or distress. The offence can only be tried in the magistrates' court with a maximum penalty of six months imprisonment, a fine of up to £5,000, or both.

Section 4 creates a more serious offence where people have been put in fear of violence on at least two occasions. It can be tried in the magistrates' court or the crown court. The maximum penalty for the offence is six months imprisonment, a fine up to £5,000, or both, in the magistrates' court. In the crown court, it is five years imprisonment, an unlimited fine or both. Where there is a racial element to either the section 2 or section 4 offence, a higher level of sanction applies under section 32 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

Section 3 of the Act provides for a civil route in relation only to the section 2 and 4 offence. The level of proof is lower for the civil proceedings, as it will be to the civil standard of a balance of probabilities rather than the criminal standard of beyond reasonable doubt. If a restraining injunction is imposed on a defendant under the civil route and the defendant breaches the restraining injunction, proceedings for breach of the order become criminal with the offender liable to up to five years imprisonment.

### **Injunctions**

These can be granted by a court to ban somebody from school premises. Generally they are viewed as less flexible and more expensive than alternatives such as a restraining order granted under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, described above.

### **Criminal Damage Act 1971**

Under this, if a parent or carer destroys or damages property belonging to the school, or to a teacher, he or she can be prosecuted for causing criminal damage. If the value of the damage is below £5,000, the case is tried in the magistrates' court, where the penalty is a fine up to £2,500 or up to three months imprisonment or both. If the damage is above £5,000, the case can be tried in the magistrates' court or the crown court. The penalty in the magistrates' court is a fine up to £5,000 or not more than six months imprisonment, or both. In the crown court, the penalty is an unlimited fine or ten years imprisonment, or both. Where the criminal damage is committed with an intent to endanger life, the maximum period of imprisonment is life. This includes cases of arson with the same degree of intent. There is a racially aggravated form, which carries higher maximum penalties (Crime and Disorder Act 1998, section 30).

**Common Assault**

Where a member of staff is assaulted by a parent or carer and minor injury is caused, the parent or carer may be charged with common assault in accordance

with section 39 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988. This can only be tried in the magistrates' court. Where there is a racial element to the offence, the parent or carer may be charged with the offence of racially aggravated assault contrary to section 29 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. This can be tried either in the magistrates' court or the crown court. The maximum penalty for common assault is a fine of up to £5,000, or six months imprisonment, or both. The maximum penalty for racially aggravated assault is six months imprisonment or a fine up to £5,000, or both, in the magistrates' court. In the crown court it is an unlimited fine, or two years imprisonment, or both

### **Assault Occasioning Actual Bodily Harm**

Under section 47 of the Offences Against the Persons Act 1861, a parent or carer can be charged with assault occasioning actual bodily harm where more serious injury is caused to a member of staff (such as broken teeth, extensive bruising or cuts requiring medical treatment). Again, there is a racially aggravated form of the offence. The first form is triable either way. In the magistrates' court, the maximum penalty is six months imprisonment, or a fine up to £5,000, or both. In the crown court, the maximum penalty is five years imprisonment. For the racially aggravated offence, the maximum sentence is the same in the magistrates' court. In the crown court, the maximum sentence is seven years, an unlimited fine or both.

### **Offences under the Public Order Act 1986**

There are four separate relevant offences under this Act. The behaviour that they criminalise has some overlap with the Protection from Harassment Act, but unlike that Act, one incident alone is sufficient to constitute a public order offence. Three of them (sections 5, 4A and 4) are heard within the magistrates' court.

Section 5 is the lower level of public disorder where a parent or carer causes a disturbance in or outside the school and causes alarm, harassment or distress.

Section 4A creates an intentional form of this offence.

Section 4 is more serious, where there is a fear or provocation of violence. The maximum sentence for section 5 is a fine up to £1,000. The maximum sentence for section 4 or 4A is a term of imprisonment not exceeding six months or a fine up to £5,000 or both. There is also a racially aggravated version of all three of the above offences, under section 31 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, with higher maximum penalties.

Section 3 of the Act, affray, may be tried either in the magistrates' court or the crown court. This offence is committed when a person uses or threatens unlawful violence such as would cause a reasonable person to fear for his safety; the threat cannot be made by the use of words alone. In the magistrates' court, the maximum penalty is six months, a fine up to £5,000, or both. In the crown court, the maximum sentence is three years, an unlimited fine or both. In the circumstances outlined above, although the LA may not have the relevant power to take action itself, it should – as the employer – work with the school to provide staff with full support in ensuring that action will be pursued against an alleged offender, under the above legislation as appropriate.

### **Criminal Justice Act 1988**

Section 139A of the Act (as amended by the Offensive Weapons Act 1996) makes it an offence to carry an offensive weapon or knife on school premises. Under section 139B a police officer may enter a school and search for a weapon; where one is found they may seize and retain it. A person who has a weapon on school premises will be guilty of an offence, unless he can prove a statutory defence. The



maximum penalty on conviction on indictment for carrying a knife is two years imprisonment or an unlimited fine or both. The maximum penalty on conviction on indictment for carrying an offensive weapon is four years imprisonment or an unlimited fine or both.

The weapons which are caught under section 139A and 139B include any article made or adapted for use for causing injury and any article which has a blade or is sharply pointed. A folding pocket knife with a blade under 3 inches long is, however, excepted although this does not prevent schools from imposing their own bans on pupils carrying them.

In general, where a school suspects a weapon to be on school premises the police should be called. Where the police have reasonable grounds for suspecting a weapon to be on a school's premises they can enter without permission from the school.

### **Non statutory remedies**

Aside from the legal remedies, there are other strategies that can help in preventing conflicts with parents or stopping them escalating. These include mediation and conflict resolution. Schools might also be able to develop non-statutory acceptable behaviour contracts for some parents similar to those that have been developed by the Metropolitan Police mainly in respect of pupils. These require the agreement of the person to an acceptable level of behaviour.

## **Appendix 4**

### **Useful**

#### **websites**

##### **The Department for Education's school security website**

<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/RR419#downloadableparts>

##### **The Department for Education's publication Health & Safety: advice on legal duties and powers for local authorities, head teachers, staff and governing bodies**

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/adminandfinance/healthandsafety/f00191759/departamental-health-and-safety-advice-on-legal-duties-and-powers-for-local-authorities-headteachers-staff-and-governing-bodies>

##### **Guidance on Police-School Protocols: Principles and guidance on Safer School Partnerships**

[http://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/youthjustice/prevention/SaferSchoolPartnershipsGuidancefinal05\\_09.pdf](http://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/youthjustice/prevention/SaferSchoolPartnershipsGuidancefinal05_09.pdf)

##### **Health and Safety Executive (HSE) guidance on risk assessments**

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/raindex.htm>

##### **Health and Safety Executive (HSE) guidance on reporting school accidents**

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/edis1.htm>

##### **The HSE RIDDOR website**

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/riddor/index.htm>

##### **NAHT guidance "Social Networking Websites"**

<http://www.naht.org.uk/welcome/advice/advice-home/parents-and-pupils-advice/guidance-on-social-networking/?locale=en>

## Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

<b>Term/Abbreviation</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
CBO	Criminal Behaviour Order
LA	Local Authority