

Guidance for Schools on Visitor Conduct

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1. Scope

This guidance aims to assist school leaders in dealing with behaviour from visitors that raises cause for concern. In particular, the guidance deals with situations where visitors are being threatening, abusive or aggressive towards other members of the school community. Such behaviour will not be tolerated. Staff and pupils have a right to expect their school to be a safe place in which to work and learn.

Section 547 of the Education Act, 1996 makes it a criminal offence for a person who is on school premises, without lawful authority, to cause or permit a nuisance or disturbance.

For the purpose of this Policy 'visitor' also includes parents, carers, relatives of a pupil or associated person.

School leaders are encouraged to make all staff aware of this guidance and also to consider the guidance in relation to the School Emergency Response Plan.

Each school should have a written policy (see template Appendix A) setting out the behaviour expected of visitors and the procedures to be followed when a school wishes to restrict a visitors access to the school premises.

For any school without a LGB, please consult with the Trust as appropriate.

2. Review the risk

If a visitor has behaved in an inappropriate way, the school leader should review and consider the situation before deciding on the next most appropriate course of action. School leaders may consider:

- Has the visitor been verbally or physically aggressive/threatening/intimidating?
- What evidence is there? Were there witnesses present?
- Have there been previous occurrences of this behaviour from the same visitor?
- Have pupils witnessed this behaviour?
- Have pupils been inappropriately approached by the visitor?
- Has the visitor been abusive to school staff, pupils or other visitors?
- Was the visitor provoked in any way and is there evidence of this?
- Is there a risk that there will be repeat behaviour from the visitor?

3. Actions

In all circumstances school leaders should complete an incident report form online (which can be accessed via the Trust intranet).

After reviewing the risk, school leaders may decide to take the following actions:

a) Invite the visitor to a meeting to discuss the event

The safety and well-being of staff should be considered when taking this action. Two members of leadership/school staff should be present at the meeting and the main points of discussion and any agreed subsequent actions should be noted. A follow-up letter should be sent after the meeting confirming the school's expectations and any agreed subsequent actions.

b) Clarify to the visitor what is considered acceptable behaviour

It may be appropriate to clarify the school visitor Code of conduct with the visitor. This could be at a meeting or by letter. Any verbal confirmation should be followed with a written confirmation of any discussion.

c) Form strategies for avoiding any potential future conflict

It might be possible to put in place some strategies to avoid future conflicts, for example, it may be appropriate that the visitor must make future appointments with school staff via reception, rather than approaching school staff directly.

d) Send an initial warning letter

School leaders could send an initial warning letter if it is felt that there might be a repeat behaviour or the case warrants such a letter (see appendices for template letters).

e) Withdraw permission for the visitor to enter school premises

In serious or persistent cases, school leaders may need to consider whether it is safe for the visitor to still enter school premises. In this circumstance, school leaders should consult with their chair of governors or a member of the Trust executive team to review the case and agree options.

In some cases, it may be appropriate to ban a visitor from school premises. A template letter can be found in the appendices, which should be signed by the chair of governors (or relevant nominated body). The ban would take effect immediately, however the banned visitor must be enabled to make representations. A period of 10 school days is recommended to allow for this, at the end of which the chair of governors should consider any representations made, then make a decision as to whether the ban is confirmed or discontinued.

In cases where a ban is in place but is ignored and the visitor enters the school premises, the police should be notified immediately. Staff will need to be aware of any ban and the school procedures they should follow if the banned visitor enters the school premises.

4. Police assistance

In an emergency and/or if there is an immediate threat to the well-being and health and safety of members of the school community, the police should be called.

In situations where there is no immediate threat to the school community or school property, school leaders may wish to inform their local PCSO.

5. Records

Clear records should be kept of any situation, meeting or actions. Notes should be signed and dated. Any witness statements should also be kept and signed and dated.

6. Support

If any member of staff is subject/witness to a situation, there is a variety of support available.

Colleagues should be supportive and staff can contact the Hamwic Education Trust HR Team on hr@hamwic.org. There is also the Trust counselling service and Employee Assistance Programme, Health Assured – 0800 030 5182.

Trade unions can also be a source of assistance.

7. Other relevant policies/guidance:

- Complaints Policy
- School Emergency Response Plan

Appendix A: Model Wording for Visitor Code of Conduct Policy

We welcome visitors to Westover Primary school and we will act to ensure it is a safe place for pupils, staff and all other members of our school community. We encourage close links with parents and the community and believe that pupils benefit when the relationship between home and school is a positive one.

We seek to maintain positive relationships with all members of our school community and value our strong relationship with parents/carers which together helps us achieve the very best for the pupils in a mutually supportive partnership between parents, class teachers and the school community. If a parent/carer/visitor has concerns we will always listen to them and seek to address them.

We ask that every parent/carer/visitor to our school:

- respects the caring ethos of the school;
- approaches school staff for help with any issues in an appropriate manner;
- corrects their child's actions, especially where they could lead to conflict, aggressive or unsafe behaviour.

We will not tolerate abusive, threatening or violent behaviour including:

- using offensive language or displaying temper;
- threatening, abusive or violent behaviour to any member of staff, visitor, fellow parent/carer, pupil or any other member of the school community;
- damaging or destroying school property;
- sending abusive or threatening emails or text/voicemail/phone messages, or other written communications to anyone within the school community;
- defamatory, offensive or derogatory comments regarding the school or any of the pupils/parent/staff, at the school on Facebook or other social media sites;
- approaching someone else's child in order to discuss or chastise them because of the (perceived/actual) actions of this child towards their own child;
- smoking, taking illegal drugs or the consumption of alcohol on school premises;
- dogs being brought on to school premises (other than guide/assistance or school owned dogs).

Should any of the above occur on school premises, the school may feel it is necessary to take action by contacting the appropriate authorities and/or consider banning the offending adult from entering the school premises.

Note: Can parents please ensure they make all persons responsible for collecting their children aware of this policy

Inappropriate use of social network sites

Any concerns you may have about the school or your child must be made through the appropriate channels by speaking to the school or following the school complaints policy and procedure.

Any inappropriate comments (including libellous or defamatory) made about the school, staff or pupils on any social media site will be reported to the appropriate 'report abuse' section of the site and the parent/carer will be asked to remove any such comment.

The school take very seriously the use of cyber bullying by one child or a parent to publicly humiliate another by inappropriate social network entry. We will take and deal with this as a serious incident of school bullying. The school will also consider its legal options to deal with any such misuse on social networking and other sites.

Please note that no meeting at the school may be electronically recorded without the express permission of all parties, and that information obtained without such permission will not be admissible in any proceedings.

Appendix B: Letter 1 - Template Warning Letter

Please note this letter will need to be adapted to each individual case

(Sent by School leader)

On school headed paper

Date

Dear

In line with expectations of adult visitors to the school, as outlined in our policy, I am writing to advise you formally that your behaviour towards on was totally unacceptable.

Or

I am very concerned about the unsatisfactory nature of our meeting/telephone conversation on and I have taken advice on how to proceed.

(add factual summary of incident and the effect on staff, pupils, school community)

I have now been able to investigate the incident further and I understand that.....

Or

As I witnessed your behaviour myself there is no need for me to investigate the incident further.

Optional

As a school, we will not accept such behaviour. If parents are unhappy about any aspect of their child's education they can arrange to have a meeting with me at an appropriate place and time.

Optional

In the circumstances, I must ask you not to approach any member of staff directly until further notice, though you will be able to make contact through me.

If parents are unhappy about any aspect of their child's education they can arrange to have a meeting with me at an appropriate place and time.

For the future, I must inform you that any repetition of such behaviour towards any of the school staff, pupils or others connected with the school will be followed by an immediate withdrawal of permission for you to enter the school premises.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of Governors and the Hamwic Education Trust.

Should you wish to discuss the contents of this letter please make an appointment to see me via the school office.

Yours sincerely

School Leader

cc: Chair of Governors
Hamwic Education Trust

Appendix C: Letter 2 - Withdrawing Permission to Enter/Access School Grounds Pending Review
(Sent by Chair of Governors)

On school headed paper

Date

Dear

I have received a report from the school leader of School about your conduct on at

(Insert a factual summary of incident and its effect on staff/pupils)

(Refer to first letter if appropriate)

I must inform you that the governors, in line with our policy, will not tolerate conduct of this nature on the school premises and will act to protect school staff, pupils and members of the school community. On the advice of the school leader, I am therefore instructing you that until **(INSERT DATE)**, you are not permitted on the school premises. If you do not comply with this instruction, I shall arrange for you to be removed from the premises and prosecuted under Section 547 of the Education Act 1996.

For the duration of this decision you may bring your child(ren) to school and collect them at the end of the school day, but you must not go beyond the school gate.

For infant children – arrangements have been made for your child(ren) to be collected and returned to you at the school gate by a member of the school staff.

Special arrangements can be made for you to meet with the school Leader, if necessary, but this may only be with the written permission of the governors.

The withdrawal of permission for you to enter the school premises takes effect immediately. 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 provide me with, in writing, any comments or observations of your own in relation to the report that I have received from the school leader. These comments may be to challenge or explain the facts of the incident, to express regret and give assurance about your future good conduct. To enable me to make a decision on this matter, please send me any written comments you wish to make by **(state 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 **(INSERT APPROPRIATE DATE)**. That review will take account of any representations that you may have made and of your subsequent conduct.

A copy of this letter will also be sent to the Hamwic Education Trust.

Yours sincerely

Chair of Governors

Cc: Hamwic Education Trust

Appendix D: Letter 3a - Withdrawal of Permission to Enter/Access School Grounds Confirmed

(Sent by Chair of Governors)

On school headed paper

Date

Dear

On, I wrote to you informing you that, on the advice of the school leader, I had withdrawn permission for you to come onto the premises of (INSERT SCHOOL NAME) School (INSERT DATE). To enable me 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 (INSERT DATE).

I have not received a written response from you.

Or

I have received a letter from you dated (INSERT DATE), the contents of which I have carefully considered.

In the circumstances, and after further consideration of the school leader'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 school leader. 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.

Even though we have taken this decision, the school leader and staff at (INSERT SCHOOL NAME) School remain committed to the education of your child(ren), who must continue to attend school as normal (insert for primary age children) under the arrangements set out in my previous letter.

The decision will be reviewed again (INSERT DATE WHICH SHOULD BE WITHIN 15 SCHOOL DAYS OF INITIAL BAN). When deciding whether it is necessary to extend the withdrawal of permission to come onto the school premises, consideration will be given to 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.

If you wish to pursue the matter further you have a right to complain to a panel of school governors (or relevant nominated body) who have not been previously involved and who will consider the circumstances of the decision to withdraw permission for you to come on to the school site. Any requests should be in writing and addressed to the clerk to the Governors, c/o (INSERT SCHOOL NAME).

(Where the incident has arisen in the context of a parental complaint against the school, the following may be inserted): Finally, I would advise you that I have asked the school leader to ensure that your complaint (INSERT BRIEF DETAILS) is considered under the appropriate stage of the school's complaints policy. The school will contact you about this in due course.

Yours sincerely

Chair of Governors

Cc: Hamwic Education Trust

Appendix E: Letter 3b - Restoring Permission to Enter/Access School Grounds after Review

(Sent by Chair of Governors)

On school headed paper

Date

Dear

On (INSERT DATE), I wrote to inform you that, on the advice of the school leader, I had temporarily withdrawn permission for you to come onto the premises of (INSERT SCHOOL 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 considered.

In the circumstances, and after consulting with the school leader, 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.

(Optional) 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 once again.

Yours sincerely

Chair of Governors

Cc: Hamwic Education Trust

Appendix F: Letter 4a Continuing Ban following Formal Review

(Sent by Chair of Governors)

On school headed paper

Date

Dear

I wrote to you on (INSERT DATE) withdrawing permission for you to come onto the premises of (INSERT NAME) School until (INSERT DATE / further notice). 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 School Leader, I have determined that it is not yet appropriate for me to withdraw my decision. **(Add a brief summary of reasons).**

I therefore advise that the instruction that you are not to come onto the premises of (INSERT SCHOOL NAME) school without the prior knowledge and approval of the school leader remains in place until further notice. If you do not comply with this instruction, I shall arrange for you to be removed from the premises and you may be prosecuted under section 547 of the Education Act 1996.

I shall undertake a further review of this decision by (INSERT REVIEW DATE WHICH SHOULD BE WITHIN A REASONABLE PERIOD AND NO LONGER THAN SIX MONTHS).

If you are dissatisfied with this decision, you have a right to request a review of the decision by the governing body / relevant nominated body.

Yours sincerely

Chair of Governors

Cc: Hamwic Education Trust

**Appendix G: Letter 4b Ending Ban / Restoring Permission to Enter/Access School Grounds
Following Review of a Banning Letter**

(Sent by Chair of Governors)

On school headed paper

Date

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 / further notice).

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 school leader, I have decided that it is now appropriate to restore permission for you to come onto the school premises, with immediate effect.

I trust that you will now work together 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.

(Optional) 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

Chair of Governors

Cc: Hamwic Education Trust

Appendix H: Flowchart for Process of Banning a Visitor to the School Site

