

Manor Farm Community Infant School's Policy covering Incidents involving Violent, Threatening or Abusive Visitors

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 Manor Farm Community Infant 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
- Providing appropriate equipment where applicable
- Clarifying violent incident reporting and monitoring procedures
- 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.

Model Procedures for Staff in dealing with Incidents involving Violent, Threatening or Abusive Visitors

These procedures have been drawn up in discussion with staff following an assessment of risk to staff and others from abusive and violent visitors. They will be reviewed on a regular basis.

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 items in the room that could be used as potential weapons
 - Ensuring there is enough space in the room, whilst also making it appear intimate and relaxing (this can be achieved through lighting and warm colouring). People can need greater personal space than normal when upset or angry and the proximity of others can be more threatening
 - Having an alarm readily available
 - 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.

- Remove an angry or upset person from an audience, or, if easier, remove 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.

- Keep the discussion as calm and friendly as possible, paraphrasing what has been said and using sympathy and empathy where appropriate.
- Summarise 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 procedures and when these should be implemented.

Handling an Incident – General Principles

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/deputy headteacher. 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
- 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.

Warning Signs

Someone who is potentially, or about to become, violent can give out signs and signals that constitute a recognisable warning: -

- Agitation
- Tapping the table
- Loud speech/shouting
- Muscle tension in face, hands, limbs; fidgeting, hand-wringing; clenching fists
- Drawing breath in sharply
- Colour of face: pale is dangerous – the body is ready for action; a red face is likely to indicate a bark worse than the bite, but this could change
- Finger- wagging or jabbing
- Inability to be still, even pacing about
- Swearing
- Staring eyes
- Sweating
- Oversensitivity to ideas, suggestions
- Rapid mood swings.

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.

Action to be taken 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 E)
- 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
- Seek advice on your entitlement to claim financial compensation, if appropriate.

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.

Support

Occupational health advice and telephone-based professional counselling is available through the Employee assistance programme. What to expect from your Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)- Your EAP is provided by PAM Assist and is a completely independent and confidential personal support service which is available entirely free to you. Call the Freephone number 0800 882 4102. No matter what time of day or night, when life gets challenging or you just simply need advice PAM Assist is there for you. Our experienced, professional advisors are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and will be happy to give you practical help and support.

Guidance for Headteachers/Managers

People with responsibility for staff management need to be committed to the objective of reducing violence and risks of violence to employees and ensuring that all staff receive appropriate training.

It is important to ensure that new members of staff are aware of this policy and procedures as part of their induction to the school and that they have access to appropriate training.

Staff should be aware that they can expect support from their manager/headteacher in managing parent interviews well.

A formal notice should be 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. (there is an example at Appendix A).

Role of Local Authority

Advice and support is available from the Local Authority through the School Improvement Service and the Legal Team and in LA maintained schools, the Local Authority will take a proactive role in taking all possible action to deal with incidents, in response to the wishes of the school.

Role of Thames Valley Police

Preventative Action

If headteachers or managers have any concerns or fears regarding a potentially violent, threatening or abusive visitor, they should not hesitate to contact the Police in advance for help and advice. Thames Valley Police are keen to support schools in the prevention of such incidents and will not consider any issue too small, if a school has concerns. They can provide advice and support, including being present on the premises when a visit is made, if it is agreed this would be helpful.

Action following an Incident

Where there has been any kind of affray, where an assault* has resulted in actual injury, or where an employee has been seriously threatened, the Police should be called.

**An assault occurs when a person suffers, or is put in immediate fear of, personal injury by the deliberate or reckless act of another.*

Any incidents of a less serious or ambiguous nature should still be discussed with the Police.

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. Assault is a criminal offence which may result in prosecution at court.

Contacting the Police

For non-urgent, preventative advice and support the non-emergency number for Thames Valley Police is 101. Whenever there is an emergency and urgent support is required, the emergency 999 number should be used.

Action to be taken following an incident

- Provide access to a private area for as long as necessary where the member of staff can sit with a friend or colleague.
- Provide assistance, if necessary, for the member of staff to go home/visit their GP/attend hospital etc. A medical assessment of any injury should be made as soon as practicable and, in case of visible injuries, it is helpful to obtain photographs.
- Make time for the employee to talk to you.
- Explain the employee's right to involve the Police if they so wish.
- Contact the Police as above under 'Role of Thames Valley Police.'
- Provide the opportunity for the member of staff to consult his/her trade union representative before submitting their completed Incident Report Form/Statement (Appendix E).
- Report the incident by calling the Local Authority's Contact Centre having made use of the checklist of information required, included in Appendix F. It is recommended that Foundation and Voluntary Aided schools also do this.
- Carry out a thorough investigation into the incident. Available photographic evidence of any injuries or damage is retained.
- Obtain written statements from witnesses as soon as possible after the incident (the sooner the better).
- All evidence obtained should be retained to support any action taken.
- Maintain regular contact with the person if they are off work because of the incident.
- Make the member of staff aware of the availability of occupational health advice and telephone-based professional counselling through the Employee Assistance Programme (0800 243 458).
- Review risk assessments and procedures following an incident and amend if necessary without delay.
- Ensure other relevant staff are informed of the incident and of any changes to working practices.

Reporting Procedures

A great deal of crime and other incidents often go unreported, sometimes because they are considered too trivial to report or, there is a view that no action will be taken when incidents do occur. Consequently, failure to report incidents and near misses gives a false picture of the real situation. As the employer, the Council Council/ has a duty to ensure a safe and secure workplace, but cannot help if it is unaware of problems.

Managers and staff must ensure that all incidents are properly reported and acted upon so that recurrence can be prevented. It is important to record the circumstances that led to violence as this may help identify what events may have triggered the incident and what systems or procedures may need revision.

As soon as practicable after the incident, a written statement/Incident report Form (Appendix E) should be prepared by the member of staff concerned which includes the circumstances leading up to the incident. It needs to contain sufficient detail to help identify appropriate preventive measures, and to help assess whether those measures were successful. Suggested details include information on:

- Where the incident occurred, including physical environment; the time of day;
- Activity at the time of the incident
- Details of the perpetrator
- The relationship between the victim and the perpetrator
- An account of what happened
- the outcome
- If preventive measures have been introduced, did they help?

The Headteacher should inform the Chairman of Governors in confidence of each incident. The Local Authority will be informed via the Contact Centre report, but, in addition, a telephone call to the School Improvement Area Offices will provide an immediate alert.

The school will need to retain proper evidence so that it can be used to support any action taken. Recording details of incidents will also help in reviewing the school's policy and should inform future risk assessments.

Follow up

The Headteacher will need to make a judgement as to whether the visitor is likely to become involved in such an incident again, or whether there were unique circumstances in this specific case. If it is likely that the behaviour will be repeated a warning letter should be sent, explaining that the behaviour is unacceptable and will not be tolerated on the school premises (this should be copied to the Legal Team). Depending on the circumstances, it may be helpful to discuss the warning letter with a School Improvement Manager, or the Legal Team.

For future visits to the school, advance notice of an intention to visit could be required and an independent witness could be present.

In all cases of assault causing actual injury the employee sustaining the injury should be advised to make a formal complaint to the Police against the assailant, unless this is considered inappropriate.

The Local Authority has the power to ban anyone from coming onto school premises for a specified period of time and will liaise with the headteacher, taking into account their views in making such a decision. This decision will be communicated to the person concerned. When the period elapses, the Local Authority will review whether the visitor's ban from the school premises should continue or whether it should be lifted, in liaison with the Headteacher. The Local Authority will take a lead in this role and should be contacted if a disruptive person enters the school and the headteacher considers action is necessary.

If abusive behaviour is repeated, the visitor should be declared unwelcome and they can be ordered off the premises as they then become a trespasser under Section 547 of the Education Act 1996. This power is usually delegated by the Local Authority (community, voluntary controlled and community special schools) to the Headteacher and caretaker.

In Buckinghamshire Community, Community Special and Voluntary Controlled Schools the view is taken that the governing body and headteacher have control of the occupation of the school premises, so the headteacher is the authorised person for the purposes of Section 547 of the Education Act.

To be reviewed: January 2025

Portfolios	Risk Assessment Regarding Disruptive/Violent Behaviour
Establishment	Manor Farm Community Infant School
Work Activity (brief description) Hazards:	Managing School Visitors Disruptive Behaviour: Reception Area SEN Annual Reviews/meetings Parent Consultation Evening Open Days Children’s Performances Sports Day School’s Fete Verbal abuse Physical Assault/Injury Psychological Distress Emotional Distress Damage to property
Estimation of Risk	Low/Medium
Duration/ Frequency of Exposure	Rare
Who is at Risk? (Employees)	Staff
Who Is At Risk? (Non-Employees)	Pupils, visitors, Governors, contractors
Is Anyone at Special Risk	Pregnant women, small children. Person with disabilities, persons with relevant medical conditions and Special needs.
Existing Precautions (Safe Working Procedures, Training etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lone Working Guidelines • Policy on Managing Visitors’ Disruptive Behaviour • Policy on Complaints Procedure • Guidelines on Communication • Ensure front line staff are trained in managing disruptive behaviours. e.g. de-escalation technique, personal safety etc. • Ensure there is an arrangement for summoning help and support in case of crisis management • Ensure there is easy access to escape route • Ensure communication is accessible and open at all times • Ensure Lock down Emergency Plan is communicated to whole school community and all are aware of the procedures.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organise meetings during school time, inform people concerned of the planned procedure on that day. If possible, avoid impromptu meetings. • Prepare the designated room for meetings where possible weapons are removed e.g. flower vase • If possible, remove the distressed individual to a “designated room” for time-out to diffuse situation and to control risk to other people in the vicinity. • If possible, know the history of the person visiting the school (meetings), if known with past violent behaviour; arrange colleagues support. • Keep notes of the meetings to include unwanted behaviours. • If crisis occurs, follow the school’s lock down procedure and the school’s arrangement in summoning outside help. e.g. police • DO NOT ATTEMPT to eject distressed visitor out of the building or to physically restrain them. • After the event, record details of the incident and report it on ANC County’s on-line reporting method. If serious incident happen, ensure HSE is involved. • De-brief every person involved in the incident • Suggest alternative therapy if needed • Evaluate the school’s Policies and procedures which are relevant in the incident, amend as required • Re-visit risk assessment, amend as required
Are Existing Precautions Adequate to Control Risk?	Yes
Further Action Required to Adequately Control Risk	none
Action by Whom	Headteacher
Action by Date	29.1.2023
Date Revision of Assessment Due	29.1.2025
Assessment Completed by	Headteacher
Date Completed	4 th February 2012
Reviewed	29.1.2023
Reviewed:	

Appendix E: Incident report form

This includes trespass, nuisance or disturbance on school premises, verbal abuse, sexual or racial abuse, threats, aggression, physical violence and intentional damage to personal property

This form should be completed as fully as possible (please use a continuation sheet if necessary). For an incident involving or witnessed by a pupil, a member of staff should complete the form on their behalf. However, any discussion between one witness and another should not precede completion of the form, as this might lead to allegations of collusion.

Date of incident _____

Day of week _____

Time _____

1. Member of staff reporting incident

Name _____

Work address (if different from school address) _____

Position _____

2. Personal details of person assaulted/verbally abused (if appropriate)

Name _____

Work address (if different from school address)/home address (if pupil) _____

Job/Position (if member of staff) _____

Dept/Section/Class _____

Age _____ Sex _____

3. Details of trespasser/assailant(s) (if known)

4. Witness(es) if any

Name _____

Address _____

Age (approx) _____ Sex _____

Other information

Relationship between member of staff/pupil and trespasser/assailant, if any

5. Details of incident

a) **Type of incident** (e.g. if trespass, was the trespasser causing a nuisance or disturbance and how; if assault, give details of any injury suffered, treatment received etc)

b) **Location of incident** (attach sketch if appropriate)

c) **Other details:** describe incident, including, where relevant, events leading up to it; relevant details of trespasser/assailant not given above; if a weapon was involved, who else was present

6. Outcome: (e.g. whether police called; whether trespasser was removed from premises under section 547; whether parents contacted; what happened after the incident; any legal action)

7. Other information (to be completed as appropriate)

a) Possible contributory factors

b) Is trespasser/assailant known to have been involved in any previous incidents YES/NO

c) Give date and brief details of (b) if known

d) Had any measures been taken to try to prevent an incident of this type occurring? If so, what? Could they be improved?

e) If no measures had been taken beforehand, could action now be taken? If so, what?

f) Name and contact details of police officer involved, and incident number or crime reference number, as appropriate

g) Any other relevant information

Signed _____

Date _____

Please return as soon as possible to:
