



Watford Grammar School for Girls

Dealing with Abusive Adult Behaviour Policy

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1. Statement of principles

This policy has been written taking into account the DfE Guidance ‘Advice on school security: Access to, and barring individuals from school premises’ December 2012 as well as professional guidance on dealing with abusive parents/carers.

At Watford Grammar School for Girls, we value the positive relationships forged with parents/carers and visitors to the school. We encourage close links with parents/carers and the community and believe that students benefit when the relationship between home and school is a positive one. We also strive to make our school a place where, as adults we model for students the behaviour we teach and expect. In general, we place a high importance on good manners, positive communication and mutual respect.

Almost all parents, carers and visitors to Watford Grammar School for Girls are keen to work with us and are supportive of the school. However, **on very rare occasions** the behaviour of a small number of parents or visitors falls short of what we expect. This sometimes manifests itself in aggression or abuse towards members of the school community. This can be in written communication (including social media), on the telephone, via virtual platform such as Teams or in face-to-face incidents.

In these situations we expect members of staff to behave professionally, attempting to defuse the situation where possible and seeking the involvement as appropriate of other colleagues.

The overriding principle is, however, that all members of the school community have the right to work or be in school without fear of violence and abuse from parents/carers. The board of governors has a requirement to protect staff and students from such aggression.

The progress and well-being of the parent/carer's child(ren) will be fully considered. Actions taken against the parent/carer/visitor will be reasonable and proportionate. The parent/carer/visitor will have the opportunity to put their views forward at every stage. In the case of the imposition of conditions or a ban from school, robust review processes involving the Chair of Governors and then the governing body are in place to ensure fairness.

2. Definition of unacceptable behaviour

We consider that aggressive, abusive or insulting behaviour or language from a parent/carer/visitor presents a risk to staff or students. Unacceptable behaviour is such that makes a member of staff or student feel threatened. The following is not an exhaustive list but seeks to provide illustrations of such behaviour:

- any kind of insult as an attempt to demean, embarrass or undermine
- any kind of threat
- raising of voice so as to be intimidating
- physical intimidation, eg by standing very close to him/her or the use of aggressive hand gestures
- use of foul or abusive language
- Racist, homophobic or gender related comments
- Unfounded accusations of unprofessionalism
- any kind of physical abuse

3. Legislation and Guidance

This policy makes reference to the following legislation or guidance:

- DfE Guidance: Controlling access to school premises. November 2018.
- Digital Education Resource Archive: A legal toolkit for schools: Tackling abuse, threats and violence towards members of the school community. July 2021

4. Guidance on acceptable behaviour

The school will display a poster in Appendix 2 in the reception area as clear guidance for appropriate behaviour when in the school parent/carer/visitors.

The school will also publish protocols for behaviour for meetings such as Parents Consultation Evenings.

The school will provide a summary of guidance on the school website.

5. The School's approach to dealing with incidents

If a parent/carer/visitor behaves in an unacceptable way towards a member of the school community they should contact the Headmistress or appropriate senior staff as soon as possible

who will assess the level of risk before deciding on a future course of action. If the member of staff feels physically threatened they should seek safety first and then make contact. The course of action will be reasonable and commensurate with the assessed level of risk.

If the member of staff feels they can address the unacceptable behaviour or communication directly, then they should be supported in doing so.

5.1. Risk Assessment

The Headmistress or member of SLT will carry out a risk assessment in order to help make a decision about the level of response. In all cases the response will be reasonable and proportionate. The Headmistress or member of SLT will consider the following questions:

- What form did the abuse take?
- What evidence is there?
- What do witnesses say happened?
- Are there previous incidents to take into consideration?
- Do members of staff/students feel intimidated by the parent/carer's behaviour?
- Is there any evidence of provocation?
- How high is the assessed risk that this will be repeated or there will be retaliation at the school's action? (low, medium, high).

5.2. Recording of Incidents

Staff/students subject to abuse and witnesses will make written statements about incident(s) which will be kept in a file with subsequent letters. These will be recorded on CPOMS by the Headmistress or member of SLT. Depending on an assessment of the risk of retaliation to witnesses or individuals, statements made by adults may be made available to the parent/carer/visitor if they request it.

5.3. The School's response

Following the completion of the risk assessment, the Headmistress will decide the level of action to be taken. Actions will include the following:

5.3.1. Clarify to the parent/carer what is considered acceptable behaviour by the school

In some instances it may be appropriate simply to ensure the parent/carer/visitor is clear about behaviour standards expected by the school. This could be explained by letter **or by email** from the Headmistress **or member of SLT**. This letter may contain a warning about further action if there are further incidents. The parent/carer/visitor will be invited to write to the Headmistress with their version of events within 10 working days. Depending on the parent/carer's/visitor's response a meeting may then be held to discuss the situation and how this can be avoided in future.

5.3.2. Invite the parent/carer to an informal meeting to discuss events

This could be helpful to discuss and defuse the situation.

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/carer/visitor who could potentially become aggressive.

The main points of discussion and any agreed actions should be noted, and a follow-up letter or e-mail sent to confirm the school's expectations and any agreed actions.

5.3.3. Impose conditions on the parent/carer's contact with the school and its staff

Although fulfilling a public function, schools are private places. The public has no automatic right of entry. Parents/carers/visitors of enrolled students have an 'implied licence' to come onto school premises at certain stated times. It is for schools to define and set out the extent of such access. Parents/carers/visitors exceeding this would be trespassing.

Depending on the type, level or frequency of the unacceptable behaviour, the school may consider imposing conditions on the parent/carer/visitor's contact with the school. These conditions may include (but are not exclusively):

- being accompanied to any meeting with a member of school staff by a member of SLT
- restricting contact by telephone or Teams to named members of the senior leadership team
- restricting written communications to named members of the senior leadership team
- restricting attendance at school events to those where the parent/carer/visitor be accompanied by a member of the senior leadership of the school
- any other restriction as deemed reasonable and proportionate by the Headmistress.

In this case the parent/carer/visitor will be informed by letter from the Headmistress the details of the conditions being imposed. The parent/carer/visitor would then be given 10 working days from the date of that letter to make representations in writing about the conditions to the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors would then decide whether to confirm or remove the conditions. This would be communicated to the parent/carer/visitor in writing within 10 working days of the date of the parent/carer's letter.

If the decision is to confirm the conditions imposed, this decision will be reviewed by the governing body after approximately six months (and every six months after that, if appropriate). The parent/carer/visitor will be invited to make written representation to the governors. This and the evidence from the Headmistress will be considered at a meeting of the full governing body. Governors may decide to maintain, extend or remove the conditions. The decision of the review will be communicated to the parent/carer/visitor by the clerk to the governors within 10 days of the date of the meeting.

When deciding whether it will be necessary to maintain, extend or remove the conditions, governors will give consideration to the extent of the parent/carer/visitor's compliance with the conditions, any appropriate expressions of regret and assurance of future good conduct received from him/her and any evidence of the parent/carer/visitor's co-operation with the school in other respects.

5.3.4. Imposing a ban

Where other procedures have been exhausted and aggression or intimidation continues OR where there is an extreme act of violence then the school may consider banning the individual from school premises. This will include banning a parent/carer from accessing school staff by written communication, via remote platform such as Teams or SchoolCloud or telephone.

In these circumstances, the individual would be advised in writing by the Headmistress that a provisional ban is being imposed. The parent/carer/visitor would then be given 10 working days from the date of that letter to make representations about the ban in writing to the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors would then decide whether to confirm or remove the ban. This would be communicated to the parent/carer/visitor in writing within 10 working days of the receipt of their letter.

If the Chair's decision is to confirm the ban, parents/carers/visitor in these circumstances will be offered an annual meeting about their child's progress, usually with a member of senior staff.

A decision to impose a ban will be reviewed by the governing body after approximately six months (and every six months after that, if appropriate). The parent/carer/visitor will be invited to make written representation to the governors; this and the evidence from the Headmistress will be considered at a meeting of the full governing body. Governors may decide to remove the ban, extend the ban or impose conditions on parent/carer/visitor's access to the school. The decision of the review will be communicated to the parent/carer by the clerk to the governors within 10 days of the date of the meeting.

In deciding whether to remove or extend the ban or impose conditions, governors will give consideration to the extent of the parent/carer/visitor's compliance with the ban, any appropriate expressions of regret and assurance of future good conduct received from him/her and any evidence of the parent/carer's co-operation with the school in other respects.

5.3.5. Removal from school

Parents/carers/visitors who have been banned from the school premises and continue to cause a nuisance will be deemed to have committed a section 547 offence. They will be considered as trespassers. In these circumstances the offender may be removed from school. This may be carried out by a police officer or person authorised by the governing body. Legal proceedings may be brought against the parent/carer/visitor.

Appendices 1 : Model Letters

Warning

Model Letter 1: This is an initial letter from the Headmistress or member of SLT to ensure the parent / carer is clear about the impact of their written communication and to request a retraction and apology. This letter contains a warning about further action if there are other incidents.

Model letter 2: This is an initial letter from the Headmistress to ensure the parent/carer is clear about behaviour standards expected by the school. This letter contains a warning about further action if there are other incidents. The letter invites a written response and suggests a meeting.

Imposing conditions on the parent/carer's attendance at school events

Model letter 3: This is a letter from the Headmistress informing parents/carers of the school's decision to impose conditions on the parent/carer's attendance at school events, pending review by the Chair of Governors

Model letter 4: Letter from the Chair of Governors informing the parent/carer of any decision to confirm or remove the conditions

Imposing a ban

Model letter 5: Letter from the Headmistress informing parents/carers of the school's intention to impose a ban on their attendance at school premises, pending review by the Chair of Governors

Model letter 6: Letter from the Chair of Governors informing parent/carer of any decision to confirm or remove ban

Reviewing the decision to impose conditions or impose a ban

Model Letter 7: Letter from clerk to governors requesting statement from parents/carers to governing body for review of decision.

Model letter 8: Letter from clerk to the governors to confirm the outcome of further reviews of decisions where the imposition of conditions/ban has been extended or removed.

Model Letter 1 Warning about inappropriate written communication (sent by Headmistress or member of SLT)

Email

Dear

I have been forwarded the letter / email you sent to (name of member of staff) and (date) regarding (details).

I have carried out an investigation and found that your accusations are unfounded, and you did not give the school time / the opportunity to investigate.

In response I will ask for you to retract your accusations and to apologise. This email has been kept on file and once we have received your reply we will consider this matter to be closed.

Yours sincerely

Model Letter 2 Warning (sent by Headmistress)

Recorded delivery

Dear

I have received a report about your conduct at the school on (enter date and time or details). This appears to fall far short of that we would expect of a parent/carer parent/carer/visitor of a student at Watford Grammar School for Girls.

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

I must inform you that the governing body will not tolerate aggression towards members of the school community and will act to protect its staff and students from any form of abuse or intimidation. I should warn you that any future conduct of this nature could result in the school imposing conditions restricting your access to the school or banning you from contacting or attending the school altogether.

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. Please do so within 10 working days of the date of this letter. These comments may include any assurances you are prepared to give about your future good conduct. There is then an option for us to meet to discuss the situation and how it can be avoided in the future.

Details of our policy on dealing with abusive parents/carers parent/carer/visitor can be found on our website.

Yours sincerely,

Headmistress

cc: Chair of Governors

Model Letter 3 Imposing conditions on the parent/carer's attendance at school events, pending review (sent by Headmistress)

Recorded delivery

Dear

I have received a report from (name of staff) about your conduct on
..... at

(add summary of incident and its effect on staff and pupils)

(You will recollect that I have already written to you about a previous incident on (date) warning you of the consequence of any further insulting or aggressive behaviour on your part).

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 defend school staff and pupils.

I am therefore writing to inform you that I am imposing conditions on the contact you may have with school. These are as follows: (delete as appropriate)

- You must be accompanied to any meeting with a member of school staff
- You may not contact by telephone or in writing any member of staff. You may contact either myself or the Deputy Head.
- You may not attend any events for parents/carers parent/carer/visitors except those where you will be accompanied by a member of the senior leadership of the school.
- Other as reasonable and proportionate

The restrictions above are provisional until they have been reviewed by the Chair of Governors. Please consider them to be in force until you receive her confirmation.

The Chair of Governors will need to decide whether it is appropriate to confirm or overturn this decision. You may, if you wish, send him/ her in writing any comments or observations of your own within 10 working days of the date of this letter. These comments may be to challenge or explain the facts of the incident, to express regret and give assurances about your future good conduct. She/he will then write to you with the outcome of her/his decision.

If on receipt of your comments, the Chair of Governors considers that my decision should be confirmed, you will be supplied with details of how the conditions will be reviewed by the governing body.

Yours sincerely

Headmistress

cc: Chair of Governors

Letter 4 Letter to confirm or overturn Headmistress's decision to impose conditions (sent by chair of governors)

Recorded delivery

Dear

The Headmistress wrote to you on (date) to detail concerns about an incident when your behaviour towards (name) fell short of what we would expect as a school. You will be aware that she/he has written to you previously about your behaviour towards staff.

I have not received a written response from you/I have received a letter from you dated, the contents of which I have considered carefully.

In the circumstances, and after further consideration of the Headmistress's report and your letter, I have determined that the decision to impose conditions on your contact with school should be confirmed. The conditions are as follows:

- (Copy conditions from HT's letter)

This decision will be reviewed by the governing body in approximately six months' time. The Clerk to the Governors will write to you in advance of the meeting to ask you to provide a written statement for their consideration. When deciding whether it will be necessary to extend the application of conditions to attend school premises, consideration will be given to the extent of your compliance with the decision, any appropriate expressions of regret and assurance of future good conduct received from you; and any evidence of your co-operation with the school in other respects.

OR

In the circumstances, and after further consideration of the Headmistress's report and your letter, I have determined that the decision to impose conditions on you should be overturned. You may hence attend school events as normal. However, should there be a repeat of inappropriate behaviour towards staff all of the above sanctions may be applied.

Yours sincerely

Chair of Governors

cc: Headmistress

Model Letter 5 Imposition of a ban on contacting or attending the school, pending review (sent by Headmistress)

Recorded delivery

Dear

I have received a report from (name of staff) about your conduct on
..... at

(add summary of incident and its effect on staff and pupils)

You will recollect that I have already written to you about a previous incident on (date) warning you of the consequence of any further insulting or aggressive behaviour on your part.

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 defend school staff and pupils.

I am therefore writing to inform you that I am recommending imposing a ban on you attending or contacting the school. This means you may not attend school for any reason whatsoever. You must not make contact with any member of staff by telephone or e-mail. You do, however, have the right to attend one meeting per year to discuss your child's progress. This meeting will be with me. I will contact you to arrange this at the time of the next Parents Consultation Evening.

The restrictions above are provisional until they have been reviewed by the Chair of Governors. Please consider them to be in force until you receive her confirmation.

The Chair of Governors will need to decide whether it is appropriate to confirm or overturn this decision. Please send her, in writing, any comments or observations of your own within 10 working days of the date of this letter. These comments may be to challenge or explain the facts of the incident, to express regret and give assurances about your future good conduct.

If on receipt of your comments, the Chair of Governors considers that my decision should be confirmed, you will be supplied with details of how this ban will be reviewed by the governing body.

Yours sincerely

Headmistress

cc: Chair of Governors

Model Letter 6 Letter to confirm or overturn Headmistress's decision to impose a ban (sent by chair of governors)

Recorded delivery

Dear

The Headmistress wrote to you on (date) to detail concerns about an incident when your behaviour towards (name) fell far short of what we would expect as a school. You will be aware that she has written to you previously about your behaviour towards staff.

I have not received a written response from you/I have received a letter from you dated, the contents of which I have considered carefully.

In the circumstances, and after further consideration of the Headmistress's report and your letter, I have determined that the decision to impose a ban on you should be confirmed. This means you may not attend school for any reason whatsoever. You must not make contact with any member of staff by telephone or e-mail. You do, however, have the right to attend one meeting per year to discuss your child's progress. This meeting will be with The Headmistress or a member of the senior team.

This decision will be reviewed in six months' time by the governing body. The Clerk to the Governors will write to you in advance of the meeting of the governing body to ask you to provide a written statement for their consideration. When deciding whether it will be necessary to extend the application of conditions to attend school premises, consideration will be given to the extent of your compliance with the decision, any appropriate expressions of regret and assurance of future good conduct received from you and any evidence of your co-operation with the school in other respects.

OR

In the circumstances, and after further consideration of the Headmistress's report and your letter, I have determined that the decision to impose a ban should be overturned. You may hence attend school events as normal. However, should there be a repeat of inappropriate behaviour towards staff all of the above sanctions may be applied.

Yours sincerely

Chair of Governors

cc: Headmistress

Model Letter 7 Letter from clerk to the governors requesting parents'/ carers' statement for review by GB (sent by clerk to governors)

Recorded delivery

Dear

The Headmistress wrote to you on (date) to detail concerns about your behaviour towards school staff/students falling short of what we would expect as a school. As a result of this incident, conditions were imposed on you/a ban was imposed.

This decision will be reviewed by the governing body at their next meeting on (date).

I am writing to ask whether you would like to make a written statement to governors for their consideration in making the decision whether to remove the restriction or extend it.

If you should wish to make a written statement, please can you e-mail it to me at (address) by (date – parents/carers should be given 10 days to respond).

Yours sincerely

Clerk to Governors

cc: Headmistress

Model Letter 8 Letter detailing outcome of governing body's review (sent by Clerk to governors)

Dear

I wrote to you on (date) to request a statement to enable governors to review the school's decision to impose conditions/ban you from attending school premises.

I have not received a written response from you/I have received a letter from you dated, the contents of which were considered carefully by the governors at their meeting on (date).

In the circumstances, and after further consideration of the Headmistress's report (and your letter), governors have determined that the decision to impose conditions/ban you from attending or contacting school attend should be confirmed. The conditions of your attendance on site are as follows:

- You must be accompanied to any meeting with a member of school staff
- You may not contact by telephone or in writing any member of staff. You may contact either The Headmistress or the Deputy Head.
- You may not attend any events for parents/carers except those where you will be accompanied by a member of the senior leadership of the school.
- Any other condition imposed

OR

- You must not attend any event in school except for an annual meeting about your child's progress. This meeting will be conducted by The Headmistress.
- You may not contact by telephone or in writing any member of staff.

This decision will be reviewed again in six months' time. When deciding whether it will be necessary to extend the application of conditions to attend school premises, consideration will be given to the extent of your compliance with the decision, any appropriate expressions of regret and assurance of future good conduct received from you; and any evidence of your co-operation with the school in other respects.

OR

In the circumstances, and after further consideration of the Headmistress's report and your letter, governors have determined that you should once again be allowed to attend parents'/carers' events as usual. All conditions have been removed. However, should there be a repeat of inappropriate behaviour towards staff this decision may be revoked.

Yours sincerely

Clerk to Governors

cc: Headmistress

Appendix 2 : Poster to be displayed



We welcome visitors to our school.

We will act to ensure it remains a safe place for pupils, staff and all other members of our community.

If you have concerns, we will always listen to them and seek to address them.

Please be aware, however, that abusive, threatening or violent behaviour will not be tolerated in this school.

Visitors behaving in this way are likely to be removed from the premises and maybe prosecuted.

Sylvia Tai
Headmistress

Nick Moorhouse
Chair of Governors