



## **ST. THERESA'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

# Unacceptable behaviour by parents & visitors on the school premises

### **Our Mission Statement**

At St. Theresa's School  
We learn together  
We play together  
We pray together  
We grow together in the love of God.

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Policy written by: Headteacher  
Policy reviewed by: Resources Committee  
Ratified by: the Full Governing Body



## **POLICY FOR DEALING WITH UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR BY PARENTS AND VISITORS ON THE SCHOOL PREMISES**

### **Mission Statement**

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At St. Theresa's, we value the positive relationships forged with our parents and visitors to our School.

### **Promoting Positive Behaviour**

We strive to make our school a place where we model for children the Christian behaviour we teach and expect. As a School aiming to reflect a respectful ethos, we promote respect for all with whom we work, and celebrate differences in a positive manner. We place a high importance on good manners and positive communication, founded on mutual respect.

The School community is clear about actions which will be taken if instances of unacceptable behaviour occur, including verbal or physical threats or assaults to staff.

Being on the receiving end of any unacceptable behaviour or act of aggression (verbal or physical) won't ever be regarded by school staff as a "normal part of the job".

In cases of unacceptable behaviour, verbal abuse, or harassment, a judgement will be made as to the appropriate level of action required. In most instances, if a child or member of staff is upset by the unacceptable behaviour of another, the situation can be resolved satisfactorily through mediation without the need for any further action.

### **Vexatious Complaints**

A vast majority of complaints are resolved by informal contact. Problems arise where the complainants are unreasonable and are not seeking to have a situation remedied but instead are determined to extract retribution for some real or imagined wrong.

It is these latter circumstances that can lead a school, which is acting very reasonably, to be drawn into an interminable saga with letters flying back and forth with each reply demanding more and more answers to more and more questions. Often an attempt to clarify the situation will



trigger a multitude of questions, none of the possible answers to which serve any constructive purpose. It is these vexatious complainants from which schools need protection.

The Headteacher and Governing Body are fully committed to the improvement of our school. We welcome feedback from parents / carers and will always try to resolve any concerns as quickly as possible. There is a procedure and policy for parents to use if they wish to make a formal complaint.

Sometimes, however, parents or carers pursuing complaints or other issues treat staff and others in a way that is unacceptable. Whilst we recognise that some complaints may relate to serious and distressing incidents, we will not accept threatening or harassing behaviour towards any members of the school community.

St Theresa's "considers that aggressive, abusive or insulting behaviour or inappropriate language, from a parent presents a risk to staff or pupils. It is enough for a member of staff or a pupil to feel threatened. In such a circumstance, the governors have a power in common law to bar the parent from the premises." Please see "Advice on school security: Access to and barring of individuals from school premises. For Local authorities, school leaders and school staff" DFE December 2012

### **What do we mean by 'an unreasonably persistent complainant'?**

An unreasonably persistent complainant may be anyone who engages in unreasonable behaviour when making a complaint. This will include persons who pursue complaints in an unreasonable manner.

#### **Unreasonable behaviour may include:**

- Actions which are out of proportion to the nature of the complaint, or persistent – even when the complaints procedure has been exhausted, or personally harassing, or unjustifiably repetitious.
- An insistence on pursuing unjustified complaints and / or unrealistic outcomes to justified complaints; pursuing justifiable complaints in an unreasonable manner (e.g. using abusive or threatening language); making complaints in public or via a social networking site such as Facebook; or refusing to attend appointments to discuss the complaint.

### **What is 'harassment'?**

We regard harassment as the unreasonable pursuit of issues or complaints, particularly if the matter appears to be pursued in a way intended to cause personal distress rather than to seek a resolution.

#### **Behaviour may fall within the scope of this policy if:**

- It appears to be deliberately targeted at one or more members of school staff or others, without good cause;



- The way in which a complaint or other issue is pursued (as opposed to the complaint itself) causes undue distress to school staff or others;
- It has a significant and disproportionate adverse effect on the school community.

### **What does the school expect of any person wishing to raise a concern?**

The School expects anyone who wishes to raise concerns with the school to:

- Treat all members of the school community with courtesy and respect;
- Respect the needs of pupils and staff within the school;
- Avoid the use of violence, or threats of violence, towards people or property;
- Recognise the time constraints under which members of staff in schools work and allow the school a reasonable time to respond to a complaint.
- Follow the school's complaints procedure and policy.

### **School's responses to unreasonably persistent complaints or harassment**

This policy is intended to be used in conjunction with the school's complaints procedure and policy. Taken together, these documents set out how we will always seek to work with parents, carers and others with a legitimate complaint to resolve a difficulty.

However, in cases of unreasonably persistent complaints or harassment, the school may take some or all of the following steps, as appropriate:

- Inform the complainant informally that his / her behaviour is now considered by the school to be unreasonable or unacceptable, and request a changed approach;
- Inform the complainant in writing that the school considers his / her behaviour to fall under the terms of this policy.
- Require all future meetings with a member of staff to be conducted with a second person present. In the interests of all parties, notes of these meetings may be taken;
- Inform the complainant that, except in emergencies, the school will respond only to written communication and that these may be required to be channelled through the Local Authority.

### **Physical or verbal aggression**

The Governing Body will not tolerate any form of physical or verbal aggression against members of the school community. If there is evidence of any such aggression the school may:

- Ban the individual from entering the school site, with immediate effect;
- Call the police to remove the individual from the premises, under powers provided by the Education Act 1996.

The Governing Body, in conjunction with the Headteacher and London Borough of Barnet will take the lead in authorising the removal of a person believed to be causing a nuisance or disturbance, and, if necessary, will bring legal proceedings against them.



If it is felt that an individual is likely to cause further threats or harm to staff, **an immediate temporary ban** would be imposed for a specified period, with an opportunity given to explain, after which a decision would be taken whether to remove or extend the ban.

If after a ban has been imposed, and the individual comes on to School premises, the Police would be called immediately. The Governing Body would then decide, in conjunction with the Diocese of Westminster and the London Borough of Barnet whether to consider taking a Court Injunction preventing this from happening again.

Legitimate new complaints will always be considered, even if the person making them is (or has been) subject to this policy.

The School nevertheless reserves the right not to respond to communications from individuals subject to the policy.

### **Implications for Serious Incidents**

Section 547 of the Education Act 1996 makes it an offence for any person to be on School premises to cause or permit a nuisance or disturbance and allows for the removal and prosecution of any person believed to have committed an offence.

A parent of a child attending a school normally has implied permission to be on School premises at certain times and for certain purposes, but if the parent's behaviour is unreasonable, this permission may be withdrawn. They could have a ban imposed on them. They would then become a trespasser on the School site.

Policy Approved by the Resources Committee

Date July 2019

To be reviewed July 2020