



BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS STAFF BY PARENTS, CARERS AND VISITORS: EXPECTATIONS AND PROCEDURES

1. Expectations of parents, carers and visitors to the school

Priory School actively encourages close links with parents/carers and the community. We know that students benefit when the relationship between home and school is a positive one and we welcome visitors to our school and encourage parents to communicate with us by phone or via email. If a parent or carer has concerns, we will always listen to them and seek to respond, within 72 working hours of receipt of a phone message or email.

We will always act to ensure the school remains a safe place for students, staff and all other members of our community and therefore abusive, threatening or aggressive behaviour will not be tolerated. If such behaviour occurs we will follow the procedures outlined in this policy.

Types of behaviour that are considered serious and unacceptable and which will not be tolerated in relation to members of staff, and other members of the community include (the list is not exhaustive):

- shouting, either in person or over the telephone
- swearing, either in person or over the telephone
- emails which are sarcastic, combative or aggressive in tone and language
- constant emails and/or phone calls which amount to harassment and intimidation, despite the school's best efforts to address a situation
- inappropriate electronic activity including publishing abusive or inappropriate content with regards to the school, teachers or students on social networking websites such as Facebook and Twitter or in email communication
- any form of physical violence, such as pushing or hitting
- physical intimidation, e.g. standing unnecessarily close to her/him
- the use of rude or aggressive hand gestures, including shaking or holding a fist towards another person

2. Procedure to be followed when behaviour is inappropriate

a) Informal complaint

If a parent, carer or visitor behaves in an unacceptable way towards a member of the school community, the Headteacher and/or appropriate member of SLT (Senior Leadership Team) will seek to resolve the situation through discussion and mediation. Such discussion will highlight how the behaviour of the parent/carers did not meet the school's expectations and a request will be made that future communications with the school are modified in the light of this. A letter will be sent to the parent/carers to confirm this request.

b) Formal complaint

Following any interaction with a parent/carers or visitor, a member of staff reserves the right to submit a formal complaint about the incident to the Headteacher. Should such a formal complaint be made then the Headteacher or designated member of the Senior Leadership Team

will investigate the complaint, by speaking with the parent/carer and the member of staff. During the investigation, any contact with the school will be through a designated member of staff and by prior appointment only. The parent/carer will be informed of this by letter. The Headteacher will determine any action to be taken in response to the findings of the investigation.

3. Actions which could follow such an investigation

- A request to meet with the Headteacher to discuss events
- A letter clarifying to the parent/carer what is considered acceptable behaviour by the school
- The designation of one member of staff to act as the conduit for communication between the parent/carer and the school
- As a last resort, withdrawing permission for the parent/carer to enter the school site and/or buildings without prior appointment

4. Unacceptable communications

a) Dealing with abusive **telephone** calls

Sometimes staff may have to deal with challenging, abusive, aggressive or threatening telephone calls. It is unacceptable for any member of staff to be subjected to such abuse and this guidance has been produced to assist parents to understand conduct which the school expects parents/carers to follow during phone calls and to staff if they are faced with a difficult situation.

Guidance for parents/carers

- When you call Priory School you will speak initially to our Reception staff. They will do their very best to connect you with the person you wish to speak to, but given the vast majority of our staff will be teaching or engaged in work which prevents an immediate response, it is most likely that they will take a message or put you through to the voicemail of that member of staff
- At any time when speaking to a member of staff at Priory School, please do not raise your voice or use aggressive or threatening language

Guidance for staff

To reduce the likelihood of callers becoming abusive, staff should conduct themselves in a courteous and professional manner and make every attempt to meet the needs of the caller. Staff should also have the confidence that it is acceptable to end an abusive telephone call.

Always:

- remain calm and polite
- stay in control of the situation
- actively listen – repeat information back to the caller to test understanding of the issue and gain their agreement
- inform the caller you are trying to help them
- be positive and say what you can do
- be clear and avoid using jargon
- if necessary, apologise for an error and take action to put it right
- make notes of the conversation

- follow the procedure below and if appropriate refer the caller to the SLT Line Manager or to the Headteacher

Avoid:

- responding in the same manner as an abusive caller
- taking it personally
- allowing yourself to be bullied
- slamming the phone down

b) Dealing with unacceptable **email** communication

Sometimes staff may have to deal with challenging, abusive, aggressive or threatening emails. It is unacceptable for any member of staff to be subjected to such abuse and this guidance has been produced to assist parents/carers to understand conduct which the school expects parents/carers to follow when emailing the school and to staff if they receive such messages.

Guidance for parents/carers

- Always address the member of staff formally (e.g. Dear Ms Allen...)
- Always use formal and courteous language in the message
- Do not use bold text or capitalisation to emphasise concerns
- Only expect a response to the member of staff to whom you have directly sent the email, not those who you have included in the circulation
- Do not expect an instant response (the school will attempt to respond within 3 working days). The majority of staff will be teaching or engaged in work which prevents an immediate response/reply and may not have the opportunity to check their emails until the conclusion of meetings and training which may take place after the end of the student day.

Guidance for staff

- Always address the parent/carer formally (e.g. Dear Ms Allen...)
- Always use formal and courteous language in the message
- Do not use bold text or capitalisation to emphasise concerns
- If you receive an email which you believe does not follow the school's expectations of the use of email, forward the message to your SLT Line Manager.

5. **Cyberbullying**

Staff may become targets of cyber abuse or bullying which can have a significant impact on health, well-being and self-confidence. Protecting staff from abuse is best done within a prevention framework, including whole school policies and appropriate practices.

Cyber abuse/bullying may consist of threats, harassment, embarrassment, humiliation, defamation or impersonation. It may take the form of general insults, or prejudice based abuse, e.g. homophobic, sexist, racist, or other forms of discrimination. It may involve email, virtual learning environments, chat rooms, websites, social networking sites, mobile and fixed-point phones, digital cameras, games and virtual world sites. Abuse using cyber technology can occur at any time and incidents can intrude into the victim's private life.

The audience for such messages can be very large and can be reached rapidly. The content of electronically forwarded messages is hard to control and the worry of content resurfacing can make it difficult for the victim to move on.

While there is not a specific criminal offence called cyberbullying, activities can be criminal offences under a range of different laws, including:

- The Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- The Malicious Communications Act 1988
- Section 127 of the Communications Act 2003
- Public Order Act 1986
- The Defamation Acts 1952 and 1996

It is the duty of the school to ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all employees. Incidents that are related to employment, even those taking place outside the hours or place of work may fall under the responsibility of the employer.

Effectively tackling abuse using cyber technology

School behaviour policies and procedures explicitly refer to and outline how the school will deal with cyber abuse/ bullying of both staff and students. They include:

- rules on the use of equipment, software and network access provided by the school,
- the use of staff and student owned equipment and internet access routes, where they are used on school premises and within school hours, e.g. mobile phones, digital cameras and laptops

Guidance for staff: Responding to incidents

- Staff should never retaliate i.e. personally engage with cyberbullying incidents
- Keep any records of abuse – texts, emails, voice mails, or instant messages. Take screen prints of messages or web pages. Record the time, date and address of the site
- Inform the Line Manager or SLT Link as soon as possible
- Where the perpetrator is known to be a current student or co-worker, this should be dealt with through the school's own behaviour management / disciplinary procedures
- Monitoring and confiscation must be appropriate and proportionate – parents/carers, employees and learners should be made aware in advance of any monitoring (for example, of email or internet use) or the circumstances under which confiscation might take place
- A designated member of the leadership team should contact the police where it appears that a law has been broken – for example, where death threats, assault, or racially motivated criminal offences are involved. Where a potential criminal offence has been identified, the school should ensure that any internal investigation does not interfere with police inquiries. School staff are of course able to report incidents directly to the police.
- If a potential criminal offence has been committed and the school is not able to identify the perpetrator, the police may issue a Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) request to a service provider, enabling them to disclose the data about a message or the person sending it.