


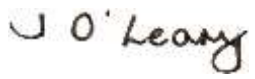
SHINE Multi Academy Trust

Dealing with abusive parents

part of SHINE's suite of 'Take Care' policies for staff



Management log

Document	Dealing with abusive parents (part of SHINE's suite of 'Take Care' policies for staff)
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Chair of the board	CEO

Document history

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V1	31 January 2020	Helena Brooks	5 March 2020	6 March 2020	To secure a policy to guide how SHINE will deal with abusive parents

Related policies

Policy	Website link
Complaints	http://www.shine-mat.com/business/
General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)	http://www.shine-mat.com/gdpr/
Keeping our academies safe	http://www.shine-mat.com/business/
Whistleblowing	http://www.shine-mat.com/business/

Please note that the version of this document contained at <https://www.shine-mat.com/policies/> is the only version that is maintained.

Any printed copies should therefore be viewed as 'uncontrolled' and as such, may not necessarily contain the latest updates and amendments.

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1. Equal opportunities statement

1.1 The SHINE Multi Academy Trust (SHINE)¹ is committed to promoting equal opportunities and all stakeholders² will receive equal treatment regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partner status, pregnancy or maternity, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation (protected characteristics).

2. Statement of principles

2.1 This policy has been written taking into account the Department for Education (DfE) Guidance 'Controlling access to school premises' published 27 November 2018³.

2.2 At SHINE, we value the positive relationships forged with parents and visitors to our academies. We encourage close links with parents⁴ and the community and believe that pupils benefit when the relationship between home and school is a positive one. We also strive to ensure our academies are a place where as adults we model for pupils the behaviour we teach and expect. In general, we place a high importance on good manners, positive communication and mutual respect.

2.3 We acknowledge that almost all parents and visitors to SHINE are keen to work with us and are supportive of our academies. However, on very rare occasions the behaviour of a parent does fall short of what we expect. This sometimes manifests itself in aggression or abuse towards one or more of our stakeholders. This can be in written communication (including social media), on the telephone or in face-to-face incidents.

2.4 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. Staff who face these situations have licence to end any conversation (face to face or on the telephone). They should then refer the incident to the headteacher (and the headteacher must

¹ As at approval of this policy, SHINE supports four five academies – Ironville and Codnor Park Primary School, Langold Dyscarr Community School, Ranskill Primary School (and Nursery), Scotholme Primary and Nursery School, and Whitemoor Academy.

² SHINE defines stakeholders as anyone who is invested in the welfare and success of SHINE and its pupils, including premises staff, administrators, teachers, support staff, pupils, parents/carers, families, community members, businesses, and elected officials such as school board members, city councillors, and state representatives.

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/controlling-access-to-school-premises/controlling-access-to-school-premises>

⁴ Definition of Parent, Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 defines 'parent' to include:

- natural parents, whether they are married or not; and
- any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person; and
- any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or a young person.

Having parental responsibility means assuming all the rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authority that a parent of a child has by law. People other than a child's natural parent can acquire parental responsibility.

alert the CEO and leader of governance) who will take appropriate action as set out in this policy.

2.5 The overriding principle is, however, that all stakeholders have the right to work or be in our academies without fear of aggression or abuse from parents. The board of trustees (board) have a duty of care to protect staff and pupils from such aggression.

2.6 The progress and well-being of the parent's child(ren) will be fully considered. Actions taken against the parent will be reasonable and proportionate. The parent will have the opportunity to put their views forward at every stage. In the case of the imposition of conditions or a ban from one of our academies, robust review processes involving the chair of the board (chair) and then the board are in place to ensure fairness.

3. Definition of unacceptable behaviour

3.1 We consider that aggressive, abusive or insulting behaviour or language from a parent presents a risk to staff, pupils, or other stakeholders. Unacceptable behaviour is such that makes a member of staff or pupil feel threatened. This can be through face-to-face contact, on the telephone or in written communication (including social media). 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, e.g. by standing very close to him/her or the use of aggressive hand gestures
- use of foul or abusive language
- any kind of physical abuse
- allegations which turn out to be vexatious or malicious.

4. Our academies' approach to dealing with incidents

4.1 If a parent or visitor behaves in an unacceptable way towards another stakeholder of our community, the headteacher or CEO will assess the level of risk before deciding on a future course of action. The course of action will be reasonable and commensurate with the assessed level of risk.

5. Risk assessment

5.1 The headteacher (or CEO) will carry out a risk assessment in order to help make a decision about the level of response. The headteacher (or CEO) 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, pupils or other stakeholders feel intimidated by the parent's behaviour?
- Is there any evidence of provocation?
- How high is the assessed risk that this will be repeated or there will be retaliation for action taken? (low, medium, high).

5.2 The headteacher (or CEO) will seek the support of the leader of governance and SHINE's appointed solicitor (as necessary). To ensure the response is reasonable and proportionate.

6. Recording of incidents

6.1 Staff and pupils who are subject to or witness abuse will make written statements about incident(s), which will be kept in a file with subsequent correspondence. Other stakeholders who are subject to or witness abuse will also be invited to provide written statements. This file will be kept by SHINE's appointed leader of governance. Depending on an assessment of the risk of retaliation to witnesses or individuals, statements made by adults may be made available to the parent if they request it.

7. The academy's response

7.1 Following the completion of the risk assessment, the headteacher will decide the level of action to be taken with the support of the leader of governance and any legal direction will be sought from SHINE's appointed solicitor (as necessary). Actions to be taken are set out in paragraphs 7.2 to 7.5 below.

7.2 Clarify to the parent what is considered acceptable behaviour

7.2.1 In some instances it may be appropriate simply to ensure the parent is clear about

behaviour standards expected. This could be explained by letter from the headteacher. This letter may contain a warning about further action if there are further incidents. The parent will be invited to write to the headteacher with his/her version of events within five working days. Depending on the parent's response a meeting may then be held to discuss the situation and how this can be avoided in future.

7.3 Invite the parent to an informal meeting to discuss events (this could be helpful to discuss and defuse the situation).

7.3.1 The safety and well-being of those attending such a meeting must be carefully considered. Members of staff will always 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 who could potentially become aggressive.

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

7.3 Impose conditions on the parent's contact with the academy and its staff

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

7.4.2 Depending on the type, level or frequency of the unacceptable behaviour, the headteacher (or CEO) and supported by the leader of governance, may consider imposing conditions on the parent's contact with the academy. These conditions may include (but are not exclusively):

- being accompanied to any meeting with a member of staff by a member of the leadership team
- restricting contact by telephone to named members of the senior leadership team
- restricting written communications to named members of the senior leadership team
- restricting attendance at events to those where the parent will be accompanied by a member of the senior leadership team
- any other restriction as deemed reasonable and proportionate by the headteacher (or CEO).

7.4.3 In this case the parent will be informed by letter from the headteacher the details of the conditions that are being imposed. The parent would then be given five working days from the date of that letter to make representations in writing about the conditions to the chair of the

board (chair). The chair will then decide whether to confirm or remove the conditions. This will be communicated to the parent in writing within five working days of the date of the parent's letter.

7.4.4 If the decision is to confirm the conditions imposed, this decision will be reviewed by the board after approximately three months (and every three months after that, if appropriate). The parent will be invited to make written representation to the board. This and the evidence from the headteacher (or CEO) will be considered at a meeting of the board. Trustees may decide to maintain, extend or remove the conditions. The decision of the review will be communicated to the parent by the leader of governance within five days of the date of the meeting.

7.4.5 When deciding whether it will be necessary to maintain, extend or remove the conditions, trustees will give consideration to the extent of the parent'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's co-operation with the academy in other respects.

7.4 Imposing a ban

7.5.1 Where other procedures have been exhausted and aggression or intimidation continues or where there is an extreme act of violence then the headteacher (or CEO), with the support of the leader of governance, may consider banning the individual from the academy's premises. This will include banning a parent from accessing staff by written communication or telephone.

7.5.2 In these circumstances, the parent will be advised in writing by the headteacher (or CEO) that a provisional ban is being imposed. The parent would then be given five working days from the date of that letter to make representations about the ban in writing to the chair.

7.5.3 The chair will then decide whether to confirm or remove the ban. This would be communicated to the parent in writing within five working days of the receipt of their letter.

7.5.4 If the chair's decision is to confirm the ban, parents in these circumstances will be offered an annual meeting about their child's progress, usually with a member of senior leadership team.

7.5.5 A decision to impose a ban will be reviewed by the board after approximately three months (and every three months after that, if appropriate). The parent will be invited to make written representation to the board. This and the evidence from the headteacher (or CEO) will be considered at a meeting of the board. Trustees may decide to maintain, extend or remove the conditions. The decision of the review will be communicated to the parent by the leader of governance within five days of the date of the meeting.

7.5.6 In deciding whether to remove or extend the ban or impose conditions, the board will give

consideration to the extent of the parent'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's co-operation with the school in other respects.

8. Removal from our academies

8.1 Parents who have been banned from the academy premises and continue to cause a nuisance will be deemed to have committed an offence under section 547 of the Education Act 1996. They will be considered as trespassers. In these circumstances the offender may be removed from the academy. This may be carried out by a police officer or person authorised by the board. Legal proceedings may be brought against the parent.

9. Complaints policy

9.1 Any parental complaint that arises from incidents of abusive behaviour will be dealt with under the complaints policy.

10. Monitoring by the board

10.1 All actions taken under this policy are also monitored by the board. Details of incidents are reported to the trustees as part of the CEO's report, at least once per term. Parents' names and details are not identified to the board.

Appendices

Warning

[Model letter 1](#): This is an initial letter from the headteacher to ensure the parent is clear about behaviour standards expected by the academy. 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's attendance at school events

[Model letter 2](#): This is a letter from the headteacher informing parents of the academy's decision to impose conditions on the parent's attendance at events, pending review by the chair.

Model letter 3: Letter from the chair of the board informing parent of their decision to confirm or remove the conditions.

Imposing a ban

[Model letter 4](#): Letter from headteacher informing parents of the academy's intention to impose a ban on their attendance at the academy, pending review by the chair.

[Model letter 5](#): Letter from the chair informing parent of their decision to confirm or remove ban.

Reviewing the decision to impose conditions or impose a ban

[Model Letter 6](#): Letter from leader of governance requesting a statement from the parent to submit to the board of trustees to aid the review of the decision.

[Model letter 7](#): Letter from leader of governance to confirm the outcome of further reviews of decisions where the imposition of conditions/ban have been extended or removed.

Model Letter 1 Warning (sent by headteacher supported by the leader of governance)

Recorded delivery

Dear

I have received a report about your conduct at **enter academy** on **enter date and time or details**.

This appears to fall far short of that we would expect of a parent of a pupil at **enter academy**.

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

I must inform you that the SHINE board of trustees will not tolerate aggression towards members of their community and will act to protect its staff and pupils from any form of abuse or intimidation. I should warn you that any future conduct of this nature could result in the academy imposing conditions restricting your access to the academy or banning you from contacting or attending the academy 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 five 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 can be found on the SHINE website.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

cc: Chair of the board and CEO

Model Letter: 2 Imposing conditions on the parent's attendance at school events, pending review (sent by headteacher supported by the leader of governance)

Recorded delivery

Dear

I have received a report from the **name of staff** about your conduct at **enter academy** on **enter date and time or details**. **(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 trustees, in line with their policy, will not tolerate conduct of this nature on the academy premises and will act to defend staff and pupils. I am therefore writing to inform you that I am imposing conditions on the contact you may have with the academy. These are as follows: **(delete as appropriate)**

- being accompanied to any meeting with a member of staff by a member of the leadership team **or named member of staff**
- You may not contact any member of staff except myself **or the deputy headteacher** and may only do so in **writing or by telephone**
- You may not attend any events for parents except those where you will be accompanied by a **named member of leadership team**
- **Other as are reasonable and proportionate**

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

The chair, **enter name**, will need to decide whether it is appropriate to confirm or overturn this decision. You may, if you wish, send her in writing any comments or observations of your own within five 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. They will then write to you with the outcome of their decision.

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

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

cc: Chair of the board and CEO

Model Letter 3: Letter to confirm or overturn Headteacher's decision to impose conditions (sent by chair of the board)

Recorded delivery

Dear

Name of headteacher 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 Trust. You will be aware that **s/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 headteacher's report **and your letter**, I have determined that the decision to impose conditions on your contact with the **name of the academy** should be confirmed. The conditions are as follows:

(Copy conditions from headteacher's letter)

This decision will be reviewed by the board of trustees in approximately three months' time. The leader of governance 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 headteacher's report and your letter, I have determined that the decision to impose conditions on you should be overturned. You may hence attend academy events as normal. However, should there be a repeat of inappropriate behaviour towards staff all of the above sanctions may be applied, as set out in the policy published on our website.

Yours sincerely

Chair of the board

c.c CEO and headteacher

Model Letter 4: Imposition of a ban on contacting or attending the school, pending review (sent by headteacher)

Recorded delivery

Dear

I have received a report from the **name of staff** about your conduct on **enter academy** on **enter date and time or details**. **(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 trustees, in line with their policy, will not tolerate conduct of this nature on the academy's premises and will act to defend staff and pupils.

I am therefore writing to inform you that I am recommending imposing a ban on you attending or contacting **name of the academy**. This means you may not attend the academy 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 and I will contact you to arrange this.

The restrictions above are provisional until they have been reviewed by the chair. Please consider them to be in force until you receive their confirmation.

The chair, **enter name**, will need to decide whether it is appropriate to confirm or overturn this decision. You may, if you wish, send her in writing any comments or observations of your own within five 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. They will then write to you with the outcome of their decision.

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

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

cc: Chair of the board and CEO

Model Letter 5: Letter to confirm or overturn headteacher's decision to impose a ban (sent by chair of the board)

Recorded delivery

Dear

Name of headteacher wrote to you on **date** to detail concerns about an incident when your behaviour towards **enter name** fell far short of what we would expect as a Trust. You will be aware that **s/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 headteacher'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 the academy 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 **name of headteacher or a member of the senior team**.

This decision will be reviewed by the board of trustees in approximately three months' time. The leader of governance 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 headteacher's report and your letter, I have determined that the decision to impose conditions on you should be overturned. You may hence attend academy events as normal. However, should there be a repeat of inappropriate behaviour towards staff all of the above sanctions may be applied, as set out in the policy published on our website.

Yours sincerely

Chair of the board

c.c. CEO and headteacher

Model Letter 6: Letter from the leader of governance requesting parents' statement for review by the board

Recorded delivery

Dear

Name of headteacher wrote to you on **date** to detail concerns about your behaviour towards **staff/pupils** fell short of what we would expect as a Trust. As a result of this incident, **conditions were imposed on you/a ban was imposed.**

This decision will be reviewed by the board of trustees at their next meeting on **date**.

I am writing to ask whether you would like to make a written statement to trustees 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 clerk@shine-mat.com by (**date** – parents should be given five days to respond).

Yours sincerely

Leader of Governance

cc: Chair of the board, CEO and headteacher

Model Letter 7: Letter detailing outcome of board of trustees review (sent by leader of governance)

Dear

I wrote to you on **date** to request a statement to enable trustees to review the academy's decision to **impose conditions/ban you from attending name of academy** 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 trustees at their meeting on **date**.

In the circumstances, and after further consideration of the headteacher's report **and your letter**, Trustees have determined that the decision to **impose conditions/ban you from attending or contacting** the academy should be confirmed. The conditions of your attendance on their premises are as follows: **(delete as appropriate)**

- being accompanied to any meeting with a member of staff by a member of the leadership team **or named member of staff**
- You may not contact any member of staff except myself **or the deputy headteacher** and may only do so in **writing or by telephone**
- You may not attend any events for parents except those where you will be accompanied by a **named member of leadership team**
- **Other as are reasonable and proportionate**

OR

- You must not attend any event at **name of academy** except for an annual meeting about your child's progress. This meeting will be conducted by the headteacher
- You may not contact by telephone or in writing any member of staff.

This decision will be reviewed again in three months' time. When deciding whether it will be necessary to extend the application of conditions to attend the academy 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 cooperation with the academy in other respects.

OR

In the circumstances, and after further consideration of the headteacher's report and your letter, Trustees have determined that you should once again be allowed to attend parents' 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

Leader of Governance

cc: Chair of the board, CEO and headteacher