

KNOCKEVIN SCHOOL DRAFT POLICY ON MANAGING AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR FROM PARENTS AND VISITORS TO OUR SCHOOL

STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

The Rights Respecting Schools Award (RRSA) recognises Knockevin's achievement in putting the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) at the heart of the school's planning, policies, practice and ethos. A rights respecting school not only teaches about children's rights but also models rights and respect in all its relationships between pupils and adults and between adults and pupils.

The Board of Governors together with the Principal set the direction and tone of the school in all that they do and are fully committed to working with parents and other stakeholders in the best interests of the child's education.

In recognising that the education of our children is a collaborative partnership between home and school, the Board of Governors, Principal, Teaching staff, therapists and entire school community seek to ensure that all contact between home and school is conducted in a manner which will promote a positive partnership that is focused on promoting the educational interests of the child at all times.

The Principal as the day to day manager of the school (and the Vice-Principals in her absence) has been delegated by Governors the responsibility to ensure these contacts are conducted in a way which allows for the safety and welfare of staff and children alike.

As parental attitudes to school life and school staff can directly influence the child's relationship with staff, it is important that all exchanges between school and home should be informed by mutual respect for each other's knowledge, understanding and concern for the child's welfare. The children and young people have much to gain from shared interest of parents/guardians and school staff. Each has an in-depth knowledge of the child in different settings and contexts, and we strongly believe the sharing of this information in a positive way produces a true collaborative working partnership which helps the pupil to feel valued and supported by everyone around him or her. It is therefore important that pupils feel safe and secure in the working relationship that exists between home and school.

The means of expressing an effective working relationship are diverse and we have in recent years taken on board your feedback regarding home/school communication. Examples of ways in which Knockevin School has done so include:

- SeeSaw trial and questionnaires during phased introduction
- Recent surveys
- External assessor parent interviews as part of our Social Schools and Inclusion Quality Mark assessments

-Informal conversations with parents

We know from this feedback that the vast majority of parents and guardians are very happy with the communications between home and school and enjoy good relationships with staff.

While Knockevin prides ourselves on excellent working relationships with parents and carers, like others working in the public sector, we acknowledge that some guidelines are required to ensure that all exchanges are conducted in a respectful and tolerant manner at all times.

The school has put into place arrangements for addressing the most serious situations where the approach of a parent/guardian or visitor might amount to verbal abuse or verbal aggression, physical aggression or harassment, or bullying of staff in the workplace. Thankfully such situations are rare in the schools system, and we trust they are unlikely ever to occur in the context of everyday school business.

Governors expect and require staff to behave professionally in these difficult situations and attempt to diffuse the situation where possible, seeking the involvement as appropriate of other colleagues. However, all staff have also the right to work without fear of violence and abuse and the right, in an extreme case, to end phone calls or to order the person from the building in the interests of their personal safety or the safety of others (including children).

We expect parents and visitors to behave in a socially acceptable way and to communicate their feelings and/or discussions using socially acceptable means of communication. We are successful in most cases in teaching our children self-management or anger-management strategies and we expect staff, visitors and parents to lead by example.

TYPES OF BEHAVIOUR or ACTIVITIES CONSIDERED TO BE INAPPROPRIATE AND UNACCEPTABLE

It is important for us to clarify types of behaviours that are considered serious and therefore unacceptable. They are as follows:

- Verbally aggressive behaviours, tone or language , either in person or by telephone;
- Physically intimidating a member of staff (eg standing intimidatingly close to him/her);
- The use of aggressive or threatening hand gestures;
- Directly threatening school staff;
- Shaking or holding a fist towards another person on school premises – visitor or otherwise;
- Swearing at a member of school staff;
- Hitting (eg. Slapping, punching and /or kicking);
- Spitting;

- Racist, sexist, derogatory or in any way demeaning comments;
- Breaching the school's safeguarding and/or security procedures;
- Breaching Covid procedures e.g. entering school without pre-arranging a meeting;
- Any forms of written correspondence (letter, email or text) of a threatening or abusive nature;
- The use of twitter, face-book or other social media sites to threaten or abuse a staff member;

This is not an exhaustive list, but merely seeks to illustrate types of inappropriate behaviour.

KNOCKEVIN SCHOOL PROCEDURES FOR MANAGING INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR

PHONE CALLS

If a parent, carer or member of the public begins to exhibit aggressive or abusive behaviour towards any member of staff during a telephone call, the member of staff will warn them that their behaviour is unacceptable and that they will end the call if it continues. They will establish the nature of the complaint and arrange follow up from a senior member of staff. Staff members will terminate calls immediately if parents/carers continue using unacceptable language/tone or threats.

WRITTEN

If a member of staff receives written correspondence (eg letter, e-mail, SeeSaw, face book or twitter message) of a threatening or abusive nature from a parent, carer or member of the public, this shall be reported immediately to a member of the Leadership Team and a copy retained as evidence.

The receiving member of staff will not reply to the correspondence without first agreeing the response with the Leadership Team member (or, in preference, the LT member will respond on their behalf).

Whilst the School will make every effort to resolve any issue raised by the complainant, Consideration may also be given to involving the Police, especially where there are threats of violence.

If a parent has posted on social media or uploaded any documents critical of the school which Governors have considered to be controversial, they will be asked to remove it immediately and be invited to attend school to discuss the grievance they may have.

IN PERSON

When a parent or visitor behaves in an unacceptable manner towards a member of staff or another visitor on the school premises, the Principal, Vice-Principal or senior teacher will seek to resolve the situation through discussion or mediation. If necessary, the school's complaints procedure should be followed.

Where all attempts at diffusing the situation have been exhausted or mediation has failed, and aggression or intimidation continues, or where there is an extreme act of violence, a parent or visitor may be immediately ordered off the premises and banned by the Principal for a period of time, subject to review.

An investigation will be conducted, and an incident report completed and evidence taken from witnesses. A copy of the report and any subsequent recommendations will be made available to all those concerned.

Prior to being banned, the following steps will be taken

1. The parent/visitor will be informed, in writing, that he or she is banned from the premises, subject to review, and what will happen if the ban is breached (eg. That an injunction application may follow);
2. Where an assault has led to a ban, a statement indicating that the matter has been reported to the Education Authority and the Police have been notified;
3. The Chair of Governors will be informed of the ban;
4. Where appropriate, arrangements for pupils being delivered to, and collected from the school will be clarified;

In extreme cases (eg threatened or actual physical violence or assault, refusal to leave the school premises etc), the Senior Member of Staff will summon the PSNI immediately.

CONCLUSION

Knockevin is a rights respecting school that cares about the welfare of staff and children alike. The school will therefore take the appropriate action to ensure everyone on their school site works in a safe and secure environment.

This policy will be reviewed annually.