



DEVONPORT HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

SAFEGUARDING STAFF FROM ABUSE

A policy for dealing with Abusive parents/carers/visitors

Named person: Lee Sargeant

Category: Statutory

Review: When there are significant changes

This policy has been reviewed with regard to the work/life balance of staff.

Ratified by the Board of Trustees on 25/11/2024

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Safeguarding Staff from Abuse

1. Statement of principles

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

If anyone has concerns, we always listen to them and seek to address them. We know that young people benefit from positive relationships between home and school. Any complaint that arises from incidents of abusive behaviour will be dealt with in line with this policy.

Almost all visitors, including parents/carers, to DHSG are keen to work with us and are supportive of School. However, on very rare occasions the behaviour of a small number of people falls short of what we expect. This sometimes manifests itself in aggression or abuse towards members of staff at DHSG. This can be in written communication (including social media), on the telephone 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. 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 Head Teacher¹. The Head Teacher will take appropriate action or invoke the provisions of this policy.

All members of staff at DHSG have the right to work or be in School without fear of aggression or abuse from visitors. The Head Teacher has a requirement to protect staff and students from such aggression.

2. Definition of unacceptable behaviour

We consider that aggressive, abusive or insulting behaviour or language from a visitor presents a risk to staff or students. Unacceptable behaviour is such that makes a member of staff or student 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 or the use of aggressive hand gestures
- use of foul or abusive language
- any kind of physical abuse

¹ Where the Head Teacher faces abuse from a visitor to the School, then this will be reported to the Chair of Trustees. They will then assume the role that the Head Teacher takes within this policy.

If a visitor behaves in an unacceptable way towards a member of staff at DHSG, the Head Teacher 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.

3. Risk Assessment

In all cases, the response will be reasonable and proportionate. The Head Teacher will consider:

- 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'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).
- Has the individual been verbally aggressive/threatening/intimidating?
- Has the individual been physically aggressive/threatening/intimidating?
- Does the individual have a known previous history of aggression/violence? (*Information can only be sought from the Police when an official complaint has been made*).
- Have Students witnessed aggressive/threatening/intimidating behaviour from the individual?
- Have Students been approached inappropriately by the individual?
- Has the individual been abusive to school staff, Students or other visitors? • Is there a risk (low, medium or high) that the behaviour may be repeated?

4. Recording of Incidents

All incidents must be reported to the Head Teacher.

Staff/students subject to abuse and witnesses will make written statements about incident(s), which will be kept in a file with subsequent letters. This file will be kept by the Head Teacher's PA. Depending on an assessment of the risk of retaliation to witnesses or individuals, redacted statements made by adults may be made available to the visitor who has been alleged of abuse towards a member of staff, if requested.

5. School's response

The progress and wellbeing of the child(ren) will be fully considered. Actions taken against the visitor will be reasonable and proportionate. The visitor will have the opportunity to put their views forward at every stage.

Following the completion of the risk assessment, the Head Teacher will decide the level of action to be taken. These include warning letters and letters withdrawing permission for the visitor to enter the school site.

Actions will include the following:

a. Clarify to the visitor what is considered acceptable behaviour by the School

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

b. Invite the visitor 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. Members of School 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 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.

c. Impose conditions on the visitor'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. Visitors of enrolled students have an 'implied licence' to come onto DHSG premises at certain stated times (e.g. parents' evenings). Visitors exceeding this would be trespassing.

Depending on the type, level or frequency of the unacceptable behaviour, the Head Teacher may consider imposing conditions on the visitor's contact with School. These conditions may include (but this is not an exhaustive list):

- being accompanied to any meeting with a member of School staff by a member of the Senior 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 School events to those where the visitor will be accompanied by a member of the Senior Leadership Team
- any other restriction as deemed reasonable and proportionate by the Head Teacher.

In this case, the visitor will be informed by letter from the Head Teacher the details of the conditions that are being imposed. The visitor would then be given 10 working days from the date of that letter to make representations in writing about the conditions to the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees would elect a Trustee to deal with this situation and would then decide whether to remove the conditions. This would be communicated to the visitor in writing within 10 working days of the date of the visitor's letter.

If the decision is not to remove the conditions or the visitor does not write to make representations, then after approximately six months the original decision will be reviewed by the Head Teacher (and every six months after that, if appropriate).

When deciding whether it will be necessary to maintain, extend or remove the conditions, Head Teacher will give consideration to the extent of the 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 visitor's co-operation with School in other respects.

d. *Imposing a ban*

Where other procedures have been exhausted and aggression or intimidation continues OR where there is an extreme act of violence, aggression or intimidation then Head Teacher will consider barring the individual from the premises. This will include banning a visitor from accessing DHSG staff by written communication, telephone or face-to-face.

The visitor would then be given 10 working days from the date of that letter to make representations in writing about the ban to the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees would elect a Trustee to deal with this situation and would then decide whether to remove the ban. This would be communicated to the visitor in writing within 10 working days of the date of the visitor's letter.

If the decision is not to remove the ban or the visitor does not write to make representations, then after approximately six months the original decision will be reviewed by the Head Teacher (and every six months after that, if appropriate).

When deciding whether it will be necessary to maintain, extend or remove the ban, Head Teacher will give consideration to the extent of the 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 visitor's co-operation with School in other respects.

e. *Removal from School*

Parents who have been banned from School premises and continue to cause a nuisance will be deemed to have committed a section 547 offence under the Education Act 1996¹. In these circumstances, the offender may be removed from School. This may be carried out by a Police Officer or appropriate authority, such as the Head Teacher or delegated member of the senior leadership team. Legal proceedings may be brought against the visitor.

6. Support for Staff

If a member of staff is unfortunate enough to be subject to serious physical and/or verbal abuse, there are a variety of sources of support available to them:

- The staff member's line manager.

¹ It is a criminal offence for a person who is on school premises without legal permission to cause or permit a nuisance or a disturbance, and allows for the removal and prosecution of any person believed to have committed the offence. The penalty for a person convicted of the offence is a fine up to £500.

- The Head Teacher or any member of the School's Senior Leadership Team who should be informed immediately so they can provide appropriate support.
- The employee assistance programme (EAP). Details are available in the Staff Handbook.
- A Trade Union.

7. Support for Students

Students who are affected by any incident should be made aware that they can speak to a member of staff. This could be their Tutor, their Head of House, Student Support Officer, or any member of the senior team, who will ensure appropriate support is provided.

8. Monitoring and Review

School will keep an electronic log of any unacceptable behaviour along with the actions taken to address it. The Head Teacher will also report any incidents and how they have been dealt with to the Board of Trustees on a termly basis.

9. Related Policies and Other Documents

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Health and safety policy
- Complaints policy
- DHSG School Home School Agreement
- Staff Code of Conduct