



# Lumen Learning Trust

Learning together for a brighter future

## Keeping Schools Safe from Abuse, Threats and Violence Policy

<b>DATE APPROVED BY LUMEN LEARNING TRUST</b>	6 <sup>th</sup> February 2023		
<b>REVIEW DATE [Annual]</b>	As required, as guidance is updated		
<b>SIGNED EXECUTIVE PRINCIPAL</b>	Mary Ellen McCarthy 	<b>DATE</b>	6 <sup>th</sup> February 2023
<b>SIGNED CHAIR OF DIRECTORS</b>	Ray Vango 	<b>DATE</b>	6 <sup>th</sup> February 2023

Lumen Learning Trust puts the children's needs at the heart of its provision. Our whole school community is committed to enabling them to become successful lifelong learners and happy, fulfilled adults who can make positive choices about their future.

## **INTRODUCTION**

This document references guidance from the Department of Education ("Controlling access to school premises", November 2018). <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/controlling-access-to-school-premises> and SCC Keeping Schools Safe September 2019.

This policy is in place to assist the Executive Leadership, Headteachers, Directors and Governing Bodies in cases where visitors are being threatening, abusive or aggressive towards other members of the school community. Such behaviour clearly cannot be tolerated. Staff and pupils have a right to expect their school to be a safe place in which to work and learn.

This policy incorporates the definition in the Education Act 1996 of the word "parent" and includes an individual who has care of the child whether or not s/he is the natural parent or has parental responsibility for the child. This includes step parents. Where an individual does not fall within this broad definition, the principles of this guidance should still be applied.

Headteachers are encouraged to make all staff aware of this guidance and also to consider the guidance in relation to their school's emergency plan.

### **Who can go onto school premises?**

Schools are private property and people do not have an automatic right to enter. Parents have an "implied licence" to come on to school premises at certain times, for instance:

- For appointments
- To attend a school event
- To drop off or pick up younger children
- Supporting school activities

### **What behaviour might cause concern?**

Behaviour which causes a pupil or member of staff to feel threatened may include:

- Aggression, abuse (including swearing) or use of insults
- Prejudice based language/behaviour
- Behaviour or language which presents a risk to staff or pupils

### **Immediate actions**

- For serious incidents take immediate actions to ensure the safety of the school community. This may include calling police and/or ambulance, and removing pupils and staff from the vicinity of the incident.
- For less serious incidents (for example, a parent who is being inappropriately demanding) a member of the Senior Leadership Team supported by a colleague should invite the visitor to a meeting in a private area in order to address the issue which has led to the concern, and remind the parent about acceptable conduct. It may be appropriate to warn the parent that a repeat of such behaviour may lead to a withdrawal of permission to enter the school site for a period of time.
- Provide support to those affected by the incident. In such circumstances the support and reassurance of senior leaders will be invaluable, as will the care and understanding of colleagues. Trust employees are able to obtain counselling support via the CEFM helpline who may be contacted by calling 0333 000 2082.
- As soon as possible after any incident, obtain witness statements, which should be signed and dated. However, if the police are investigating, then consult with them before taking any internal action (including obtaining witness statements). CCTV recordings will be reviewed as appropriate.

- Cases of actual assault should be recorded in line with the SCC Health & Safety recording procedure OSHENS.
- Any injuries should be photographed (if the victim consents) for the purpose of evidencing the assault. The victim should be clear about the purpose of the photographs, and who these can be shared with.
- A record of the events should be recorded on CPOMS (Safeguarding Software for Schools). This will enable all school staff to add to chronology of an incident as/when required.

## **Decision making**

In cases where the concerning behaviour has been directed at the Headteacher, then it may be appropriate for the Executive Principal and/or Chair of Directors to carry out the following.

## **Assessing evidence**

The Headteacher should carry out an assessment of the circumstances, evidence (including witness statements) and risk factors in order to identify the most appropriate course of action. Points to consider include:

- Has the parent been verbally abusive/aggressive/threatening/intimidating?
- Has the parent been physically aggressive/threatening/intimidating?
- What evidence is there? What do witnesses say happened? Are they consistent?
- Does the parent have a known previous history of aggression/violence? If so, what is the nature and frequency of this?
- Do members of the school staff/community feel intimidated by the parent's behaviour?
- Have pupils witnessed aggressive/threatening/intimidating behaviour from the parent?
- Have pupils been approached inappropriately by the parent?
- Was the parent provoked in any way prior to their behaviour and/or does the parent claim to have been provoked?
- Are there any other mitigating factors?
- Is there a risk (low, medium or high) that the behaviour may be repeated?

## **Possible actions**

After evaluating all available information, there are several actions the Headteacher may wish to take. These can include:

### *Clarify appropriate standards of behaviour*

In some instances it may be appropriate simply to ensure the parent is clear about behaviour standards expected by the school. This could be explained via a telephone or face-to-face discussion, or by letter. However any verbal explanation should be followed by a written confirmation of the discussion and the standards of behaviour outlined.

### *Invite the parent to a meeting to discuss events*

This could be helpful where a planned and structured meeting has either not been held before or has previously been productive. A full restorative meeting may be considered, but if it is not safe to bring all the parties together at a meeting, a restorative process can still take place through the exchange of information. The safety and well-being of those attending such a meeting must be carefully considered. It is strongly recommended that members of school staff should 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. You may wish to invite your SCC Area Schools Officer to attend/facilitate the meeting.

The main points of discussion and any agreed actions should be noted, and a follow-up letter sent to confirm the school's expectations and any agreed actions. Some parents may covertly record meetings and then seek to use the information obtained to support their case, and therefore schools should state explicitly that information obtained without permission will not be admissible in any proceedings. It should be noted that such actions inevitably have a detrimental impact on the relationship between schools and families as school staff need to have the space to deal with sensitive and confidential issues without the fear that those conversations will be shared with third parties (including on social media), or taken out of context.

*Put in place strategies/ arrangements to avoid future situations of potential conflict* (see Appendix A)

It is sometimes possible to identify situations of potential conflict and to plan for these in a way that minimises potential risks.

For example, where a parent persistently engages in inappropriate discussion with staff at the classroom door at the beginning or end of the school day, the parent could be informed that any discussions with school staff must be held by prior appointment, or that they are only able to have discussions with a designated member of staff (which is usually a member of the senior leadership team). Alternatively, it may be appropriate to require the parent to drop off and pick up their child from a designated area (e.g. the school office).

In more serious cases a further option may be to advise the parent that in future their concerns should be dealt with by written communication only. Any such arrangements should be confirmed in writing to the parent.

In order for these strategies to be effective, all staff must be aware of them, and should act consistently to ensure that they are rigorously applied.

*Issue a formal warning* (see Appendix B)

Where it is a significant but first offence, the Headteacher should warn parents that withdrawal of access to the school site would be considered if the behaviour is repeated.

*Withdraw permission for the parent to enter the school site* (see Appendix C)

Schools can withdraw permission to enter the school site if they feel that their aggressive, abusive or insulting behaviour or language is a risk to staff or pupils. It is enough for a member of staff or pupil to feel threatened.

The school should tell an individual that their permission to access to the school site has been withdrawn, or that they intend to withdraw access, in writing. Letters should usually be signed by the Headteacher, though in some cases (e.g. where the Headteacher was the victim, or personally involved in the incident), the Executive Principal or Chair of Directors may wish to write instead. The individual must be allowed to present their side. A school can either:

- Withdraw of permission to access temporarily (for a period of up to five school working days) to give the individual the opportunity to formally present their side. After representations from the parent have been considered the school can continue the withdrawal of access or lift it.
- OR
- Tell the parent that they intend to withdraw permission to access the school site and invite them to present their side by a set deadline i.e. within 10 school days of the date of the letter. After the parent's side has been heard, the school can decide whether to continue with the withdrawal of access.

In most cases, for a first offence, withdrawal of permission to access the school site for up to four weeks is appropriate and sufficient. In more serious cases a longer withdrawal of permission access period of up to six months may be considered but regular reviews (not more than half termly) should take place

**APPENDIX A – to be completed using the school's headed paper**

Dear

I understand that you have expressed concern about [**summarise issue**] and I am keen to work in partnership with you to resolve this. Therefore I would like to offer to meet with you [**details**]...

However, I have to advise you that your behaviour on the school site on [**date**] was unacceptable.

**(Summary of incident and its effect on staff and pupils)**

In order to avoid this situation arising again, I am putting the following measure(s) in place:

- **You should not approach (named member of staff) directly but should instead....**
- **Pick up and drop off your child from a designated area as follows....**

This measure(s) will be in place initially for **(up to four weeks)**, and will then be reviewed.

Yours sincerely

**APPENDIX B – to be completed using school’s headed paper**

Dear

**Re: Withdrawal of Permission to Enter the School Site**

I have been informed that on [**• Date(s)**] you [**• insert full details of the incident(s), emphasising the parent’s behaviour and any aggravating features, who was present/could see what happened and what impact it had on them (e.g. upset, distressed, risk of harm, etc.)**].

The site of [**• Name of School**] is private property. Parents of pupils have implied permission to enter and be on the school site, however this permission can be withdrawn by me on behalf of the school where, following an incident, this action is necessary in order to protect the school’s pupils, staff and other members of the school community from harm, upset and/or distress. I should warn you that I will always take this action where I deem it necessary to protect others.

I am therefore formally warning you that, if there is a repeat of this type of behaviour by you, I will withdraw your permission to enter the school site with immediate effect. Once -permission is withdrawn, you will not be able to enter or be on the school’s site, and all necessary communications between yourself and the school would need be made in a reasonable manner by email or telephone.

I would also warn you that, if you are not permitted to enter the school site and choose to enter it, you will be removed by a member of staff or a police officer and, if you cause or permit a nuisance or disturbance, you will be at risk of prosecution under Section 547 Education Act 1996 in the criminal courts.

**[• If you are unhappy with something the school has done or not done, or with the conduct of a staff member, the correct way of raising your concerns is under the school’s published Complaints Policy, a copy of which is attached.]**

Yours sincerely

## **APPENDIX C – to be completed using school's headed paper**

Dear

### **Re: Withdrawal of Permission to Enter the School Site**

I have been informed that on [**• Date(s)**] you [**• insert full details of the incident(s), emphasising the parent's behaviour and any aggravating features, who was present/could see what happened and what impact it had on them (e.g. upset, distressed, risk of harm, etc.)**].

The site of [**• Name of School**] is private property. Parents of pupils have implied permission to enter and be on the school site, however this permission can be withdrawn by me on behalf of the school where, following an incident, this action is necessary to protect the school's pupils, staff and other members of the school community from harm, upset and/or distress. I will always take this action where I deem it necessary to protect others.

In view of your behaviour, I have decided to withdraw your permission to enter the school site with immediate effect. This means that you must not enter or be on the school's site, and all necessary communications between yourself and the school must be made in a reasonable manner by email or telephone. [**• You are able to bring your child[•ren]** to and collect them from the school gate, but you must not go beyond it.]

I should warn you that, if you do enter the school site while you are not permitted to do so, you will be removed by a member of staff or a police officer. If you cause or permit a nuisance or disturbance on the school site, you will have committed a criminal offence under Section 547 Education Act 1996 and will be reported to the police for prosecution in the criminal courts.

My decision will now be reviewed by the Chair of our Local Governing Body [**• Name**], within 10 school days of the date of this letter, namely by [**• Date**]. If you would like to make any representations for the Chair of Governors to consider when [**he/she**] carries out this review, please send them by email to the Clerk to the Governors, [**• Name**], whose email address is [**• Email address**] within the next 5 school days. Alternatively, you can write a letter addressed to the Clerk of the Local Governing Body and send it to the school's address to arrive within the next 5 school days.

You will be notified in writing of the Chair's decision, following [**•his**][**•her**] review. If the Chair confirms my decision, you will be informed of the next date on which my decision will be reviewed again.

**[• If you are unhappy with something the school has done or not done, or with the conduct of a staff member, the correct way of raising your concerns is under the school's published Complaints Policy, a copy of which is attached.]**

Yours sincerely