

UNACCEPTABLE COMMUNICATION

Disrespectful, unreasonable or abusive behaviour or communication

We are very proud of our communication with parents, colleagues from other agencies and visitors are exceptionally positive. Unfortunately, and extremely rarely, our staff have to deal with disrespectful, unreasonable or abusive behaviour/communication.

Disrespectful, unreasonable or abusive behaviour/communication towards a member of staff is not tolerated at any of the schools in Maiden Erlegh Trust.

Possible actions to deal with behaviour or communication which is disrespectful, unreasonable or abusive

1. Any member of staff who directly experiences any of the above behaviour from any stakeholder (including parents or members of the public), has the authority to deal immediately with that behaviour in a *reasonable* and *proportionate* manner appropriate to the situation, and is in line with this guidance.
2. The threat or use of physical violence, verbal abuse or harassment towards our staff may result in a termination of all direct contact with the stakeholder.
3. Such incidents may also be reported to the police (eg: if physical violence or the language of hate is used or threatened).
4. Where written correspondence is abusive or contains allegations that lack substantive evidence, it will be passed to a senior member of staff. They will inform the sender that we consider their communication to be offensive, unnecessary and/or unhelpful and ask them to stop communicating in such a way.
5. We may ask that the sender to edit their correspondence and remove any offensive text and resend it, otherwise it will not receive a response.
6. Our staff have the right to make the decision that the language, tone or tenor of a telephone call or meeting is disrespectful, unreasonable or abusive. Where this is the case:
Response 1: "I am sorry but what you are saying is *unreasonable/unacceptable/offensive* please will you moderate your language"
Response 2 (if the behaviour persists: they will say): "I am sorry you are still being *unreasonable/unacceptable/offensive* and I am ending this conversation/meeting".
Response 3 (if the individual persists in calling or refuses to leave the site): the member of staff will call on patrol.
7. In both cases, this will then be reported to the Headteacher.
8. If appropriate, the Heateacher may will arrange for the call/meeting to take place again in a safe and appropriate manner (this may mean with another member of staff and/or with an observer).

Unreasonable demands on individual members of staff

It is also not acceptable to make unreasonable demands on individual members of staff. Unreasonable demands are ones which impact excessively on the work or wellbeing of our staff, such that it puts in jeopardy the efficient running of the school or the efficient education of students or the health of our staff. Examples are:

- repeatedly telephoning, emailing, writing
- telephoning and emailing in the evenings and at weekends with complaints or accusations and/or expecting next day responses
- frequently arriving at reception and asking to see members of staff
- repeated requests for meetings with no clear agenda
- raising repeatedly the same issues
- sending large numbers of documents about which the relevance is not clear
- making accusations of a personal nature against members of staff or students

Where a stakeholder's demands are deemed to unreasonable, the matter is reported initially to the colleague's Standards/Line Manager and/or the Headteacher.

We reserve the right to take action to protect our staff, students and visitors from unreasonable/unacceptable/offensive communication. We therefore reserve the right to respond to such behaviour as appropriate. Possible outcomes include:

1. Limit contact to telephone calls from a named person at set times on set days.
2. Limit contact to email only, and to a designated email address.
3. Limit our responses to agreed days and times.
4. Restrict contact to a named member of staff who will deal with future calls or correspondence
5. See the person by appointment only and with other members of staff present.
6. Restrict contact to "hard" copy written correspondence only.
7. Refuse to deal with further correspondence and return any documents or, in extreme cases.
8. Advise the person that further irrelevant documentation will be destroyed.
9. Where we consider continued correspondence on a wide range of issues to be excessive, we may tell the person that only a certain number of issues will be considered in a given period and ask them to limit or focus their requests accordingly.
10. Where someone repeatedly demands a response on an issue on which they have already been given a clear answer, we may refuse to respond to further enquiries from the person.

11. Contacting the stakeholder's line manager (eg: where they work for another agency) or another named contact for the child.
12. Escorting them off site and/or contacting the police.

Taking any action of this kind is hugely regrettable and will only be necessary in extreme circumstances. Where we take a decision to restrict a stakeholder's contact with the school, we will inform them in writing what action we are taking and why.

Maiden Erlegh Trust staff

Maiden Erlegh Trust staff will remain professional, respectful and calm at all times, whether the contact with the stakeholder is in person, on the telephone or in writing.

Any stakeholder who does not feel a member of our staff has behaved appropriately is entitled to make a complaint in line with our Complaints Policy.