

**ST MARY MAGDALENE CATHOLIC  
PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**PARENT CODE OF CONDUCT POLICY**



*'Growing Together in Faith & Love'*

**January 2023**

## **Vision & Aims:**

At St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School we are very fortunate to have a supportive and friendly parent body. We believe that educating children is a process that involves partnership between parents, class teachers and the school community. As a partnership, our parents will understand the importance of a good working relationship to equip children with the necessary skills for adulthood. For these reasons we continue to welcome and encourage parents/carers to participate fully in the life of our school.

The purpose of this policy is to provide a reminder to all parents, carers and visitors to our school about expected conduct. This is so we can continue to flourish, progress and achieve in an atmosphere of mutual understanding.

## **Section 1: Guidance**

As well as following the guidance set out in our Home-School Agreement, we expect parents, carers and visitors to:

- 1.1 Respect and follow our School rules
- 1.2 Approach the school to help resolve any issues of concern. Parents' first point of contact will usually be with their child's teacher
- 1.3 Understand that both teachers and parents need to work together for the benefit of their children
- 1.4 Demonstrate that all members of the school community should be treated with respect and therefore set a good example in their own speech and behaviour
- 1.5 Seek to clarify a child's version of events with the school's view in order to bring about a peaceful solution to any issue
- 1.6 Correct own child's behaviour especially in public where it could otherwise lead to conflict, aggressive behaviour or unsafe behaviour
- 1.7 Avoid using staff as threats to admonish children's behaviour

## **Section 2: General principles**

In order to support a peaceful and safe school environment, the school cannot tolerate parents, carers and visitors exhibiting the following:

- 2.1 Using offensive language, swearing, cursing, using profane language or displaying temper anywhere on the school premises
- 2.2 Making disparaging or libellous comments about any member of the school's staff
- 2.3 Defamatory, offensive or derogatory comments regarding the school or any member of school staff/pupils or parents at the school on Facebook or other social sites. (See Appendix 1). Any concerns you may have about the school must be made through the appropriate channels by speaking to the class teacher, the Headteacher or the Chair of Governors, so they can be dealt with fairly, appropriately and effectively for all concerned. Please see our complaints policy (available on the school website) for

further details on making a complaint. Further to this no mention of staff names should be used on social media sites

- 2.4 Disruptive behaviour which interferes or threatens to interfere with the operation of a classroom, an employee's office, office area or any other area of the school grounds including team matches
- 2.5 Threatening to do actual bodily harm to a member of school staff, Governor, visitor, fellow parent/carer or pupil regardless of whether or not the behaviour constitutes a criminal offence
- 2.6 Damaging or destroying school property
- 2.7 Abusive or threatening e-mails or text/voicemail/phone messages or other written communication
- 2.8 The use of physical aggression towards another adult or child. This includes physical punishment against your own child on school premises
- 2.9 Approaching someone else's child in order to discuss or chastise them because of the actions of this child towards their own child. (Such an approach to a child may be seen to be an assault on that child and may have legal consequences)
- 2.10 Should any of the above behaviour occur on school premises the school may feel it is necessary to contact the appropriate authorities and if necessary, even ban the offending adult from entering the school grounds

### **Section 3: Persistent and vexatious complaints**

- 3.1 For the purpose of this policy, a persistent complainant is a parent/carer or member of the public who complains about issues, either formally or informally, or frequently raises issues that the complainant considers to be within the remit of the school, and whose behaviour is unreasonable. Such behaviour may be characterised by:
  - 3.1.1 Actions which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious
  - 3.1.2 Prolific correspondence or excessive e-mail or telephone contact about a concern or complaint
  - 3.1.3 Use of Freedom of Information requests excessively and unreasonably
  - 3.1.4 An insistence upon pursuing unsubstantial complaints and/or unrealistic or unreasonable outcomes
  - 3.1.5 An insistence upon pursuing complaints in an unreasonable manner
  - 3.1.6 An insistence on only dealing with the Headteacher on all occasions irrespective of the issue and the level of delegation in the school to deal with such matters
  - 3.1.7 An insistence upon repeatedly pursuing a complaint when the outcome is not satisfactory to the complainant but cannot be changed, for example, if the desired outcome is beyond the remit of the school because it is unlawful

- 3.2 For the purpose of this policy, harassment is the unreasonable pursuit of such actions as in 3.1.1 to 3.1.7 in such a way that they:
- 3.2.1 appear to be targeted over a significant period of time on one or more members of school staff and/or
  - 3.2.2 cause ongoing distress to individual member(s) of school staff and/or
  - 3.2.3 have a significant adverse effect on the whole/parts of the school community and/or
  - 3.2.4 are pursued in a manner which can be perceived as intimidating and oppressive by the recipient. This could include situations where persistent demands and criticisms, whilst not particularly taxing or serious when viewed in isolation, have a cumulative effect over time of undermining confidence, well-being and health.

#### **Section 4: The school's actions in cases of vexatious or persistent complaints or harassment**

In the first instance the school will verbally inform the complainant that his/her behaviour is considered to be becoming unreasonable/unacceptable and, if it is not modified, action may be taken in accordance with this policy.

- 4.1 This will be confirmed in writing (Model Letter 1).
- 4.2 If the behaviour is not modified the school will take some or all of the following actions as necessary, having regard to the nature of the complainant's behaviour and the effect of this on the school community:
  - 4.2.1 Inform the complainant in writing that his/her behaviour is now considered by the school to be unreasonable/unacceptable and, therefore, to fall under the terms of this policy (see Model Letter 2).
  - 4.2.2 Inform the complainant that all meetings with a member of staff will be conducted with a second person present and that notes of meetings may be taken in the interests of all parties (see Model Letter 2).
  - 4.2.3 Inform the complainant that, except in emergencies, all routine communication with the complainant to the school should be by letter only (see Model Letter 2).
  - 4.2.4 In the case of physical or verbal aggression, take advice from HR/Legal Services (services purchased by the Governing Body) and consider warning the complainant about being banned from the school site; or proceed straight to a temporary ban.
  - 4.2.5 Consider taking professional advice on pursuing a case under Anti-Harassment legislation.
  - 4.2.6 Consider taking advice from HR/Legal Services about putting in place a specific procedure for dealing with complaints from the complainant, i.e. the complainant will not be able to deal directly with the Headteacher but only

with a third person to be identified by the Governing Body of the school, who will investigate, determine whether or not the concern/complaint is reasonable or vexatious and then advise the Headteacher accordingly.

- 4.3 Thus, based on point 4.2.6, legitimate new complaints may still be considered even if the person making them is, or has been, subject to the Policy for Dealing with Persistent or Vexatious Complaints and/or Harassment in Schools. However, the school will be advised by its HR/Legal Services.
- 4.4 If a complainant's persistent complaining/harassing behaviour is modified and is then resumed at a later date within a reasonable period of time, the school may resume the process identified above at an appropriate level. In these circumstances advice may be sought from the school's HR/Legal Services.

### **Section 5: Review**

- 5.1 The School will review as appropriate, and at a minimum once in a school year, any sanctions applied in the context of this policy.

### **Section 6: Other Related Policies**

- Home School Agreement
- Complaints Policy

**We trust that parents and carers will assist our school with the implementation of this policy and we thank you for your continuing support of the school.**

## **Appendix 1**

### **Inappropriate use of Social Network Site**

Social media websites are being used increasingly to fuel campaigns and complaints against schools, Headteachers, school staff, and in some cases, other parents/pupils. The Governors of St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School consider the use of social media websites in this way as unacceptable and not in the best interests of the children or the whole school community. Any concerns you may have must be made through the appropriate channels by speaking to the class teacher, the Headteacher or the Chair of Governors, so they can be dealt with fairly, appropriately and effectively for all concerned.

In the event that any pupil or parent/carer of a child/ren being educated at St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School is found to be posting libellous or defamatory comments on Facebook or other social network sites, they will be reported to the appropriate 'report abuse' section of the network site. All social network sites have clear rules about the content which can be posted on the site and they provide robust mechanisms to report contact or activity which breaches this. The school will also expect that any parent/carer or pupil removes such comments immediately.

In serious cases the school will also consider its legal options to deal with any such misuse of social networking and other sites. Additionally, and perhaps more importantly is the issue of cyber bullying and the use by one child or a parent to publicly humiliate another by inappropriate social network entry. We will take and deal with this as a serious incident of school bullying.

We would expect that parents would make all persons responsible for collecting children aware of this policy.

## **MODEL LETTER 1:**

### **INITIAL LETTER INFORMING A COMPLAINANT THAT HIS/HER BEHAVIOUR IS CONSIDERED TO FALL BELOW A REASONABLE/ACCEPTABLE STANDARD RECORDED DELIVERY**

Dear

This letter is to inform you that the school considers your actions in [describe actions, dates, behaviour] on ..... when you ..... to be unreasonable/unacceptable [delete as appropriate].

We would ask you to bear in mind the fact that such behaviour on a school site can be disruptive and distressing to pupils, staff and parents/carers [delete if behaviour complained of did not occur on school site e.g. persistent use of e-mail, verbally abusive telephone calls].

We are aware that you have raised some concerns, and would advise you that these are usually dealt with most effectively through the School's Complaints Procedure. At the moment we are dealing with these issues by [describe actions being taken to resolve concern].

Please note that the school's Parental Code of Conduct Policy under Dealing with Persistent or Vexatious Complaints/Harassment sets out standards of behaviour expected of all people in their dealings with the school. These include:

- behaving reasonably;
- treating others with courtesy and respect;
- resolving complaints using the School's Complaints Procedure;
- avoiding physical and verbal aggression at all times.

The Policy also indicates the steps that we may take if these standards are breached. These include:

- making special arrangements for meetings and communication with the school;
- considering a ban from the school premises;
- considering legal action.

I would ask that you allow school time to resolve the issues according to the correct procedures, and would assure you that we shall take every step to move this process forward as quickly as possible.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

## MODEL LETTER 2:

### INFORMING A COMPLAINANT THAT HIS/HER BEHAVIOUR IS NOW CONSIDERED TO FALL UNDER THE TERMS OF THE POLICY FOR DEALING WITH PERSISTENT OR VEXATIOUS COMPLAINTS/ HARASSMENT RECORDED DELIVERY

Dear

You will recall that I wrote to you on [insert date] telling you that I felt your behaviour was unreasonable.

I am now writing to inform you that in view of your behaviour on [date], when you [describe actions/behaviour] it has been decided that the school's Parental Code of Conduct Policy under Dealing with Persistent or Vexatious Complaints/Harassment will apply from the date of this letter.

In the circumstances I have made the following arrangements for your future contact with the school:  
[\*Delete A or B as applicable]

\*A For the foreseeable future, should you wish to meet with any member of staff, I would ask you to note:

- (a) all routine communication, including any request for a meeting between you and the school, will be by letter only. Letters from you need to be addressed to ..... at the school address; email correspondence will not be responded to;
- (b) an appointment will be arranged and confirmed in writing as soon as possible;
- (c) a third party from the school will be present;
- (d) in the interests of all parties, formal notes of this meeting may be made.

\*B For the foreseeable future, all meetings arising from any written communication with the school will not be conducted by a member of staff, but will be conducted by ..... representing the school. I would ask you to note:

- (a) all routine communication, including any request for a meeting between you and the school, will be by letter only. Letters from you need to be addressed to ..... at the school address; email correspondence will not be responded to;
- (b) an appointment will be arranged and confirmed in writing as soon as possible;
- (c) a third party will be present;
- (d) in the interests of all parties, formal notes of this meeting may be made. Exceptionally, these arrangements do not apply to any emergency involving [insert name of pupil] in which case you should contact the school in the usual way. While these arrangements are in place, with respect to normal access to information available on parents' evenings, this will be provided in a summary written report. These arrangements take effect straightaway. If you wish to make a representation about the contents of this letter, which may include any expressions of regret on your part and any assurances that you are prepared to give about your future good conduct, you can do so by writing to me at the school by [state ten working days from the date of the letter]. If on receipt of your comments I consider that the arrangements outlined above should continue, you will be supplied with details of how to review a circumstance of your case. I do hope that the difficulties we are currently experiencing can soon be resolved.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher