



Parent, Carer and Visitor Communication and Behaviour Policy

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Author/owner: Board of Trustees

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NB. 'Trustees' means the Directors referred to in the Trust's Articles of Association

History of most recent policy changes

Version	Date	Page	Change	Origin of Change e.g. TU request, Change in legislation
V1.0	May 2023			New Policy

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1. Aims

Tarka Learning Partnership and its schools recognise the important part that parents/carers and wide range of visitors play in supporting the development of our children. Our aim is always to build strong partnerships with all those involved with our children to enable them to flourish within the positive relationships that surround them.

This Policy aims to provide a positive framework of expectations in which these relationships should be set and maintained.

On the rare occasions where these expectations are not maintained we believe staff, parents and children are entitled to a safe and protective environment in which to work. Behaviour that will cause harassment, alarm or distress to users of the premises is contrary to the aims of the school and this policy sets out clear processes to ensure this behaviour desists.

2. Communication

Communication between home and school is vital for the well-being of pupils, parents, carers and staff. Our aim is to ensure that all communications and discussions about pupils and their families are positive and move matters forward in a mutually respectful manner

In addition to parents' evenings, school events, etc., there may be occasions when parents or carers wish to communicate with the school directly with questions or information related to their child.

To make sure that this is effective these principles will be applied.

If an emergency situation arises, it is important that you contact us as soon as possible and explain what has or is happening.

Our commitment as a school

We will:

- ensure that there is regular, proactive communication about your child's achievement and wellbeing
- respond to emails, phone calls or requests for meetings promptly, usually within three working days
- if there is an urgent matter, the school receptionist will ask an appropriate member of staff to deal with the issue as soon as possible
- display polite, respectful and professional conduct at all times.

Our expectations of parents, carers and visitors

You will:

- ensure that any communication with the school, whether by email or telephone, is polite and respectful
- make use of information channels in place, such as the school website, for keeping up to date with routine information
- give an outline of what the issue is, to make sure the query is directed to the right person
- use the school mailbox or main reception telephone number as first point of contact (the school will forward your request to the appropriate staff member)
- ensure your emails are brief and clear
- refrain from sending multiple emails regarding the same query
- limit the number of people you send an email about a query
- understand that a teacher or member of staff may be unable to respond on the same day on which a query is made unless it is an emergency

- understand that teachers or other school staff will not respond outside of school hours, i.e., evenings or weekends.
- Not record, through any device, meetings, discussions or phone conversations with school staff as consent to this has not and will not be given.

If there is an in person meeting, everyone must show mutual respect. The meeting will focus on resolving the issues that are relevant to that family or pupil and be kept confidential.

No offensive language, insults or personal attacks on school staff will be tolerated. If any such incidents occur, the meeting or call can be terminated with immediate effect.

The constraints on school resources make it essential that parents and carers use authorised school procedures in order to avoid diverting time and attention that must be invested directly in pupils' learning and wellbeing.

3. Behaviour

We recognise that parents and carers are the single biggest influence on their children and their achievements. We also recognise that visitors from other agencies and communities have an important part to play in children's lives. Therefore, we are committed to building positive and responsive relationships with parents, carers and visitors so that together we can ensure that our young people get the most out of their time with us.

We believe that modelling positive behaviours within those relationships provides a safe and supportive example for children to follow.

We are committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with our school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

We encourage partnerships with our parents and carers, and work hard to maintain mutual respect and recognition of shared responsibility for the children. However, in a very small minority of cases, the behaviour of a few parents or carers can cause disruption, resulting in abusive or aggressive behaviour towards staff and this will not be tolerated. All members of the school community have a right to expect that their school is a safe place.

Tarka defines unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders the calm running of the school or consideration of any complaint because of the frequency or nature of the parent/carer/visitor's contact with the school :

General Behaviours (This is not an exhaustive list but seeks to provide illustrations of such behaviour):

- Shouting, either in person or over the telephone
- Inappropriate posting on Social Networking sites deemed as bullying or libellous
- Speaking or e-mailing in an aggressive/threatening tone
- Physically intimidating, e.g. standing very close
- The use of aggressive hand gestures/exaggerated movements
- Physical threats
- Shaking or holding a fist towards another person
- Swearing
- Pushing
- Hitting e.g. slapping, punching or kicking

- Spitting
- Racist or sexist comments

Within a Complaints Process

- refuse to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
- refuse to co-operate with the complaints investigation process
- refuse to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure
- insist on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice
- introduce trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on
- raise large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales
- make unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced
- change the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds
- repeatedly make the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed)
- refuse to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education
- seek an unrealistic outcome
- make excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with
- use threats to intimidate
- use abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence
- knowingly provide falsified information
- publish unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school that relates to their complaint, while the complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text), as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the headteacher or relevant committee chair will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking.

If the behaviour continues, the headteachers or committee Chairs will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact Tarka or its schools causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will be reviewed after six months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from Academy premises. Schools are not public places and although parents and carers have rights to attend and enter school premises for legitimate proper purposes, The Education Act of 1996 states that it is an offence for a trespasser on school premises to cause a nuisance or disturbance. The school is entitled to withdraw the implied right a parent or carer has to enter the school, if that parent or carer is violent or aggressive. If the parent or carer then enters the premises, they are in breach of the law, and they can be prosecuted in the criminal courts.

This policy applies to all those that engage with the school and not just to parents.

4. Behaviours which can lead to a ban

These include but are not limited to:

1. Physical or verbal threats towards staff, pupils, or other parents
2. actual violence,
3. damage to property
4. refusal to leave when asked
5. disruption of the running of the school or meeting/hearing
6. general abusiveness

The headteachers or relevant committee Chair will decide whether the situation has been reached for proposing an actual ban. In extreme circumstances, i.e. if the incident is considered to be very serious, then s/he can issue a short-term temporary ban immediately, if required.

If the issue presents a less immediate threat then the headteacher/committee Chair will consider issuing a warning letter which says that repeats of such behaviour will likely result in a ban. Events may occur in a number of stages and it may be that upon consideration by the headteacher/committee Chair that a warning letter needs to be issued.

The school will write to the parent/carer setting out:

- what has happened and why it is unacceptable
- that the school will consider banning the parent/carer from the school premises
- give a clear explanation of why the ban is proposed
- give the parent/carer 5 working days to respond in writing giving their own version of events
- state the length of the proposed ban and give a review date.

Following receipt of the written response:

- The headteacher/committee Chair will decide whether or not to ban the parent/carer/visitor
- The parent/carer/visitor will be informed in writing within 3 days of the decision taken
- The terms of any ban will be clear, with explicit paths of communication between the school and the parent
- Pick up and drop off of children will be taken into consideration
- A date for the review will be given, which will take account of what has happened in the interim period.
- If no further concerns have arisen regarding the parent's behaviour, a meeting date will be set which will seek to re-establish a productive working relationship between the school and the parent/carer

If a parent/carer wishes to appeal against a ban, they may do so in writing (following the complaints procedure). The first stage of this appeal will be undertaken by an appointed representative who would invite the co-headteachers to review the matter with a view to lifting the ban. If the outcome to this stage is that the ban is still in place, then the parent may appeal further to a panel of representatives according to the usual complaints process.

In some cases where the unacceptable behaviour is so extreme (for example, an assault on a member of staff) the headteachers may feel that there is no alternative but to impose a lengthy or permanent ban. In criminal cases the headteacher should inform the police and their legal advisors.