



COWLEY
INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE

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**Dealing with violent or abusive visitors to
College Policy**

January 2015

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1. Summary

1.1 Day to day access to the College is within the control of the Principal.

1.2 Normally parents/carers (and those with parental responsibility) are granted “limited licence” to visit the grounds and buildings of a school.

1.3 Most schools will establish procedures which set out: the acceptable purposes for such visits; the areas of the school that may be entered at particular times; the standard of behaviour expected etc....

1.4 Where there is a breach of such procedures the College needs to respond in a measured way, depending on the seriousness of any inappropriate conduct e.g.:

- initiate a meeting/dialogue with the individual;
- write to the visitor, describing their misconduct, explaining its impact on the school and stating its unacceptability;
- vary the person’s “licence”, say, through the addition of conditions;
- warn of the possibility of a “ban” (i.e. the withdrawal of their license) if the misconduct is repeated;
- impose a ban with a review after a fixed period;
- impose a ban without review. It is possible for the Principal to initiate any of these actions on their own authority, but is less likely to lead to personal confrontation if the more serious sanctions are initiated by the governing body or local authority, as appropriate.

2. Introduction

2.1 As a general rule, schools are orderly, safe places, where relationships between staff and visitors, especially parents/carers, demonstrate mutual respect and recognition of shared responsibility for pupils’ welfare and educational progress.

2.2 Parental involvement is an important factor in educational success and in dealing with emerging problems at an early stage.

2.3 However, on occasion, the behaviour of a few parents/ carers can cause severe disruption or worse, resulting in abusive or aggressive behaviour towards staff, pupils, or other members of the school community.

2.4 Violence, threatening behaviour and abuse against school staff or other members of the school community must not be tolerated. All members of the school community have a right to expect that their school is a safe place in which to work and learn. There is no place for violence, threatening behaviour or abuse in schools.

2.5 At all times the common purpose remains clear: to achieve zero tolerance of violence, threatening behaviour or abuse in schools, and to ensure all members of the school community, and all visitors to the school, can be confident that they are operating within a safe environment.

3. Statement of principles

3.1 The governing body of Cowley International College encourages close links with parents/carers and the community. It believes that pupils benefit when the relationship between home and school is a positive one.

3.2 The vast majority of parents, carers and others visiting our school are keen to work with us and are supportive of the school. However, on the rare occasions when a negative attitude towards the school is

expressed, this can result in aggression, verbal and or physical abuse towards members of school staff or the wider school community.

3.3 The governing body expects and requires its members of staff to behave professionally in these difficult situations and attempt to defuse the situation where possible, seeking the involvement as appropriate of other colleagues. However, all members of staff have the right to work without fear of violence and abuse, and the right, in an extreme case, of appropriate self defence.

3.4 We expect parents and other visitors to behave in a reasonable way towards members of college staff. This policy outlines the steps that will be taken where behaviour is unacceptable.

3.5 Types of behaviour that are considered serious and unacceptable and will not be tolerated:

- shouting at members of the school staff, either in person or over the telephone
- physically intimidating a member of staff, e.g. standing very close to her/him
- the use of aggressive hand gestures
- shaking or holding a fist towards another person
- swearing
- pushing
- hitting, e.g. slapping, punching and kicking
- spitting
- racist or sexist comments
- breaching the school's security procedures.

This is not an exhaustive list but seeks to provide illustrations of such behaviour.

4. Procedure to be followed

4.1 If a parent/carer behaves in an unacceptable way towards a member of the school community, the Principal or appropriate senior staff will seek to resolve the situation through discussion and mediation.

4.2 If necessary, the school's complaints procedures should be followed.

4.3 Where all procedures have been exhausted, and aggression or intimidation continue, or where there is an extreme act of violence, a parent or carer may be banned by the Principal from the school premises for a period of time, subject to review.

4.4 In imposing a ban the following steps will be taken:

- The parent/carer will be informed, in writing, that she/he is banned from the premises,
- subject to review, and what will happen if the ban is breached, e.g. that police involvement
- or an injunction application may follow
- The school based policy office will visit the parent at home if deemed appropriate by the Principal
- Where an assault has led to a ban, a statement indicating that the matter has been
- reported to the Local Authority and the police will be included
- The chair of governors will be informed of the ban
- Where appropriate, arrangements for pupils being delivered to, and collected from the
- school gate will be clarified.

5 The Banning Process

5.1 The Principal will need to assemble the full facts before proceeding, making sure that all those involved in any incidents, or witnesses to those incidents, make a full written record as soon as possible.

Crucial elements:

- write to parent/carer/intruder to record in detail the incident and why it is unacceptable;
- explain that the Governing body will consider banning the parent, giving the
- parent a period in which they may respond in writing giving their version and why they should not be banned;
- tell the parent when a decision will be made.

5.2 The ban should be finite in length, as only the most serious misconduct would justify an indefinite ban.

5.3 The duration needs to be sufficient to convey a clear message about the seriousness of the associated misconduct, but not so long as to be disproportionate. The aim should always be to restore “normal” relations as soon as is reasonably practicable.

5.4 Even if a ban is permanent, it should be reviewed periodically, taking account of subsequently demonstrated patterns of behaviour.

5.5 What does a ban achieve?

- it confirms to a parent that the school will not tolerate misbehaviour;
- shows the school takes health and safety of its staff, visitors and pupils seriously;
- it provides a key element in making it easier to use legal remedies to prevent repeated misconduct, including use of S547 of the 1996 Education Act to enable Police removal and possible prosecution of those on school premises without permission;
- it may form the basis for an application for an injunction to curtail repeated instances of misbehaviour.

6. Parental Rights

6.1 Every attempt should be made to maintain normal communications with parents/carers, including giving them the opportunity to participate in elections for parent governors.

6.2 Even where a parent/carer has been banned from the College premises, they retain their right to an annual consultation in relation to the educational progress of their child/ren. However, the school may determine who will be present at the meeting (e.g. a senior member of staff might accompany the class teacher) and its location (e.g. it may well be arranged off site). The interests of the child should continue to be paramount.

7. Model incident report form

7.1 This is attached as an annex. It will assist with the recording of any incidents of abuse, threatening behaviour or violence against any members of the school community. A record of an incident will help in the collection of evidence where necessary, such as when proceedings are being brought against an alleged assailant. Available photographic evidence of any injuries or damage, or relevant CCTV footage, can also be helpful. Recording details of incidents will also help in reviewing the school’s policy, and should ideally inform future risk assessments.

7.2 If there is an injury to staff from an assault, the employer may need to report the injury to the health and safety executive (HSE) under the requirements of the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 (RIDDOR), as amended in 2012. Section 547, Education Act 1996

7.3 The model letters included suggest how use might be made of section 547 of the Education Act 1996 in the letters that are sent to parents.

7.4 Section 547 makes it an offence for a trespasser on school premises to cause or permit a nuisance or 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 of up to £500.

7.5 A parent/carer of a child attending a school normally has implied permission (limited licence) to be on the school's premises at certain times and for certain purposes but if their behaviour is unreasonable this permission may be withdrawn and they will become a trespasser. A person who nevertheless persists in entering the school premises and displaying unreasonable behaviour may be removed and prosecuted under section 547.

Parent/Carer/Visitor/Trespasser Incident report form

Relevant incidents include trespass, nuisance or disturbance on school premises, verbal abuse, sexual or racial abuse, threats, aggression, physical violence and intentional damage to property. Where possible, the form should be completed before any discussion between witnesses is possible, as this might lead to allegations of collusion.

This form should be completed as fully as possible please, using a continuation sheet, if necessary. For any incident involving or witnessed by a pupil or parent/carer/visitor, a member of staff should complete the form on their behalf. The completed form should be passed to the Principal, for appropriate action and recording.

Date of incident

Time of incident

Name of person reporting incident

Date incident reported

Member of staff recording incident

Date incident recorded

Name(s) of person(s) causing incident (where name(s) is/are unknown, provide other details of which may allow their identification)

Status(es) (parents/carers/visitors/trespassers)

Full description of incident (e.g. names of persons involved; location; nature of any injuries; attendance of emergency services)

Names of any witnesses **Statuses**

Initial action/outcome (e.g. Informal conciliation; police intervention; warning or banning letter issued)

Summary of subsequent actions taken by the school, including risk assessments

Linked incidents (if any)

Letter 1 - Warning letter, from the Principal: to parent/carer with child/ren at the school)
Recorded delivery

Dear,

I have received a report about your conduct at the College on (enter date and time).
(Add factual summary of the incident and of its effect on staff, pupils, other parents.)

I must inform you that the governing body will not tolerate conduct of this nature on its premises and will act to protect its staff and pupils. Therefore if, in the future, I receive any reports of conduct of this nature I will be forced to consider removing your licence to enter the school grounds and buildings. If you do not comply with that instruction I will be able to arrange for you to be removed from the premises and prosecuted under Section 547 of the Education Act 1996. If convicted under this section, you are liable to a fine of up to £500.

Nevertheless, I wish to give you an opportunity to give me in writing any comments or observations of your own in relation to the report which I have received about your conduct. These comments may include any expressions of regret on your part and any assurances you are prepared to give about your future good conduct.

To enable me to take a decision on this matter at an early point, you are asked to send me any written comments you wish to make by (state date ten working days from the date of letter).

Yours sincerely,

C Sheeran
Principal

Letter 2 - Banning Letter, from the governing body: to parent/carer with child/ren at the school)

Recorded delivery

Dear,

I have received a report from the Principal at Cowley International College about your conduct on (enter date and time). (Add factual summary of the incident and of its effect on staff, pupils, other parents.) I must inform you that the governing body will not tolerate conduct of this nature on its premises and will act to protect its staff and pupils.

On the advice of the Principal, I am therefore instructing that until (add date) you are not to reappear on the premises of the school. If you do not comply with this instruction I may arrange for you to be removed from the premises and prosecuted under Section 547 of the Education Act 1996. If convicted under this section, you are liable to a fine of up to £500.

The withdrawal of permission for you to enter the academy premises takes effect straightaway. However, I still need to decide whether it is appropriate to confirm this decision. Before I do so, I wish to give you an opportunity to give me in writing any comments or observations of your own in relation to the report which I have received from the Principal. These comments may include any expressions of regret on your part and any assurances you are prepared to give about your future good conduct. To enable me to take a decision on this matter at an early point, you are asked to send me any written comments you wish to make by (state date ten working days from the date of letter).

If on receipt of your comments I consider that my decision should be confirmed, or extended, you will be supplied with details of how to pursue a review of the circumstances of your case.

In any event, the decision to withdraw your licence to enter the school premises will be reviewed by (complete as appropriate). That review will take account of any representations that you may have made and of your subsequent conduct.

Yours sincerely,
M Bellis
Chair of governing body

Letter 3 - Banning Letter, from the governing body: to member of the public

Recorded delivery

Dear

I have received a report from the Principal at Cowley International College about your conduct on (enter date and time). (Add factual summary of the incident and of its effect on staff, pupils, other parents.)

I must inform you that the governing body will not tolerate conduct of this nature on its premises and will act to protect its staff and pupils.

On the advice of the Principal I am therefore instructing that you are not to reappear on the premises of the school. If you do not comply with this instruction I may arrange for you to be removed from the premises and prosecuted under Section 547 of the Education Act 1996. If convicted, you are liable to a fine of up to £500.

Yours sincerely,
M Bellis
Chair of governing body

Letter 4 - Letter updating a banning letter, from the LA or governing body, confirming ban: to parent/carer with child/ren at the school

Recorded delivery

Dear,

On (give date) I wrote to you informing you that on the advice of the Principal, I had withdrawn permission for you to come onto the premises of Cowley International College until (insert date).

To enable the governing body to determine whether to confirm this decision, or to impose it for a longer period, I gave you the opportunity to give your written comments on the incident concerned by (give date). I have not received a written response from you / I have now received a letter from you dated (insert the date), the contents of which I have noted. (delete either sentence as appropriate) In the circumstances, and after further consideration of the Principal's report, I have determined that the decision to withdraw permission for you to come onto school premises should be confirmed/extended. (delete as appropriate) I am therefore instructing that until (insert date) you are not to come onto the premises of the school without the prior knowledge and approval of the Principal.

If you do not comply with this instruction I may arrange for you to be removed from the premises and prosecuted under Section 547 of the Education Act 1996. If convicted, you are liable to a fine of up to £500.

Notwithstanding this decision the Principal and staff at Cowley International College remain committed to the education of your child/children (delete as appropriate), who must continue to attend school as normal.

The governing body will take steps to review the continuance of this decision by (give date). When deciding whether it is necessary to extend the withdrawal of permission to come onto the school's premises, governing body will take into account the extent of your compliance with the decision, any appropriate expressions of regret and assurances of future good conduct received from yourself and any evidence of your co-operation with the school in other respects.

(Include where the incident has arisen within the context of a parental complaint against the school:)

Finally I would advise you that I have asked the Principal to ensure that your complaint (give brief details) is considered under the appropriate school procedure. You will be contacted about this by the academy in due course.

If you wish to pursue the matter further, you have a right to a review of the circumstances of this case by the school's governing body.

Yours sincerely,
M Bellis
Chair of governing body

Letter 5 - Letter updating a banning letter, from the governing body, withdrawing ban: to parent/carer with child/ren at the school)

Recorded delivery

Dear,

On (insert date) I wrote to you informing you that, on the advice of the Principal, I had temporarily withdrawn permission for you to come onto the premises of Cowley International College. To enable me to determine whether to confirm this decision for a longer period, I gave you the opportunity to let me have your written comments on this incident by (insert date).

I have not received a written response from you / I have now received a letter from you dated (insert date), the contents of which I have noted. (delete either sentence as appropriate).

In the circumstances, and after consulting with the Principal, I have decided that it is not necessary to confirm the decision, and I am therefore restoring to you the permission to come onto the school premises, with immediate effect.

Nevertheless I remain very concerned at the incident which occurred on (insert date), and I must warn you that if there is any repetition of your behaviour on that occasion, I shall not hesitate to withdraw permission for you to come onto the premises.

Yours sincerely,
Mrs M Bellis
Chair of governing body

Letter 6 - from the governing body, following formal review of a banning letter, extending ban: to parent/carer with child/ren at the school)

Recorded delivery

Dear,

I wrote to you on (insert date) withdrawing permission for you to come onto the premises of Cowley International College until (insert date). In that letter I also advised you that I would take steps to review this decision by (insert date).

I have now completed the review. However, after consultation with the Principal, I have determined that it is not yet appropriate for me to withdraw my decision. (Give a brief summary of reasons) I therefore advise that the instruction that you are not to come onto the premises of Cowley International College without the prior knowledge and approval of the Principal remains in place until (insert date).

I shall undertake a further review of this decision on (insert date). If you are dissatisfied with this decision, you have a right to request a review of the decision by the governing body.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs M Bellis

Chair of governing body

**Letter 7 - governing body, following formal review of a banning letter, ending ban: to parent/
carer with child/ren at the school**
Recorded delivery

Dear,

I wrote to you on (insert date) informing you that I had withdrawn permission for you to come onto the premises of Cowley International College until (insert date). In that letter I also advised you that I would take steps to review this decision by . (insert date).

I have now completed the review. After consultation with the Principal, I have decided that it is now appropriate to change that decision and I am therefore restoring to you the permission to come onto the school premises, with immediate effect.

I trust that you can now be relied upon to act in full co-operation with the school and that there will be no further difficulties of the kind which made it necessary for me to prevent you entering the premises. I should point out that if there is any repetition of your behaviour, I shall not hesitate to withdraw permission for you to come onto the premises once more.

Yours sincerely,
Mrs M Bellis
Chair of governing body