

Positive Communication and Community Behavior Policy

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1	September 2024	New policy

This policy will be subject to ongoing review and may be amended prior to the scheduled date of the next review in order to reflect changes in legislation, statutory guidance, or best practice (where appropriate).

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1. Introduction

At Grangewood School we strive to build strong relationships with parents, carers and visitors. This helps create a stimulating, happy and safe learning environment which continues from school to home and the wider community, providing all our pupils with the opportunity to achieve their personal best. The trust, support and co-operation of parents is fundamental to the continued success of our school.

Our staff come to work to educate and support our pupils and we believe it is important for everyone involved with school life to communicate in a respectful and productive manner, whether in person, on the phone, or online. In this way, staff, pupils, parents, carers and members of the public behave respectfully to each other at all times, which helps to promote the most constructive working and learning environment.

2. Behaviours

Members of the staff have the right to work without fear of abuse or violence at all times. This policy outlines the manner in which everyone is expected to act whilst on school premises or virtually, as well as further detailing the type of behaviour which will not be tolerated.

2.1. Expectations of staff

All the staff at Grangewood School are required to:

- Demonstrate the highest possible professional standards at all times
- Deal with all pupils, fairly and consistently
- Communicate with all parents/carers and visitors with professional courtesy
- Try to accommodate a meeting or phone call as soon as reasonably possible.
- Be aware of and conform to all safeguarding routines in the school
- Uphold the professional integrity of the school, Trust and teaching profession at all times

We therefore ask parents, carers and visitors to:

- a) Positively support the ethos of the school by setting a good example in their speech and behaviour (including online) towards all pupils, staff and other adults.
- b) Work constructively with staff members to resolve any issues of concern, including clarifying specific events in order to bring about a positive resolution.
- c) Always communicate (by telephone, email, or in meetings) in a constructive and respectful manner.
- d) Refrain from communicating in a manner which could be perceived as threatening or unreasonable.

- e) Work alongside the school to support their child's social and emotional learning (SEL), understanding and accepting that a SEL policy is fundamental and necessary to a safe and purposeful learning environment – this policy (and consequences outlined within) apply to all pupils.
- f) Make reasonable requests for meeting times, and not expect to see any member of staff without a prior appointment. (We will always try to accommodate a meeting or phone call as soon as reasonably possible, but do have many commitments, including teaching, throughout the day and we would ask that you understand and respect this).
- g) Agree to meet with the member of staff who is identified or delegated by the Headteacher, in the event of a dispute or disagreement. (N.B. The member of staff will be commensurate with the stage and scale of the concern and we will not accept demands to communicate with a particular individual).
- h) Make every effort to positively promote the school to the wider community and not publicly undermine the school or the implementation of school policies or publicly manifest complaints or criticisms online, on social media platforms (e.g. WhatsApp / Facebook) or in public forums.

Whilst we welcome feedback and regularly consult with a range of stakeholders in making key decisions, ultimately the school has to make decisions in good faith, which we deem to be in the best interests of our pupils. Whilst it is never our intention to disappoint, it is not always possible to secure agreement or consensus (and schools are not duty bound to do so).

Decisions around behaviour expectations, uniform, teaching and learning strategies or strategic direction are at the discretion of the Headteacher (or in some instances the Eden Academy Trust) and do not require consensus or parental approval.

Simply put, we expect that all parents, visitors and members of the public will treat each other, staff members, pupils and external agencies with dignity and respect.

Parents should be aware of school policies, and know that copies are available via the school's website or from the school directly. When raising a concern, we would ask parents to ensure that they act in accordance with school policies and maintain a positive approach at all times whilst on the school premises and in their communications with school.

2.2. Inappropriate behaviour

Though fortunately rare, the school takes any instances of inappropriate behaviour very seriously and will not tolerate any circumstances which may make pupils or members of staff feel threatened. A perceived threat, or any action which makes another individual feel threatened, can be sufficient to bar parents from the premises.

The use of foul and abusive language will not be tolerated on the school premises over the telephone or in any other form of communication.

Any individual at the school should not be discriminated against, whether a staff member, pupil or another adult, on the basis of their age, race, ethnicity, religion, cultural belief, attainment, disability, gender, sexuality or background.

Bullying, harassment or intimidation, including physical, sexual and verbal abuse, will not be tolerated under any circumstances and may be reported to the police.

The school holds the right to escort anyone off the premises who is displaying aggressive or disruptive behaviour.

Under [section 547 of the Education Act 1996](#), it is an offence for any person to cause a nuisance or disturbance on school premises. In such circumstances the police may be contacted to assist in the removal of individuals from the premises, where necessary.

As outlined in this policy, the persistent occurrence of unacceptable behaviour can result in individuals being permanently banned from the premises and/or restrictions on communications with the school.

The sending of abusive or threatening written or email messages will be treated in the same way as any other abusive or threatening behaviour.

The following are examples of inappropriate behaviour which may result in sanctions being issued against an individual:

- Causing intentional damage to school property
- Breaching the school's security procedures
- Verbal abuse: swearing, talking in an aggressive manner, using offensive language or raising their voice at another individual
- Making racist or sexual comments, or discriminating against any member of staff or pupil for any reason of position, gender or any other personal characteristic or behaviour
- Physical violence
- Physically intimidating an individual such as by standing in very close proximity
- The use of threatening body language such as shaking a fist or wagging a finger close to an individual's face and other forms of passive aggressive behaviour which may cause distress or harm to others
- Writing or online messaging abusive or defamatory comments regarding an individual or the school, including on social media

Any abusive, foul or insulting language, physical attacks or aggressive or threatening behaviour towards staff, Trustees/Local Advisory Board members, pupils, parents or any member of the public within our premises, on the phone or online, at face-to-face meetings or remotely will not be tolerated under any circumstances. This also extends to posting or publishing comments online that risk bringing an individual or the school or Trust's reputation into disrepute.

Anyone exhibiting these behaviours will be formally warned by the school that this will not be tolerated and any future violation of this policy could then result in all future communications with the school being restricted to writing. The school may consider taking legal action as appropriate.

If any parent/carer behaves in a manner that this policy outlines as unacceptable (such as abusive, aggressive, inappropriate or excessive contact, etc) the school may choose to take appropriate action in line with our legal position or forward a copy of this policy to appropriate individuals. This is to ensure that parents/carers are aware of expectations for future behaviour, the position of the school, our legal rights and protection, and any action that we might choose to take.

3. Communication with the school

3.1. Email

Email is a quick, effective way of communicating necessary information and is the school's preferred method of communication. Emails received will be acknowledged within 2 working days and responded to within 10 working days.

Parents/carers should contact the school via email for a general enquiry as an alternative to telephone or letter. The school email address is:

info@grangewoodschool.co.uk

Under no circumstances should staff contact pupils or parents/carers using their own personal email address.

3.2. Telephone calls

Effective telephone communication can sometimes be a problem in a school, where teachers may be teaching full-time and running clubs or working with pupils at lunchtime or after school. Parents and carers may be frustrated if they feel that a message elicits no immediate reply, when in fact there has been no available opportunity for the member of staff to reach a telephone to return a call.

In a non-emergency a return call will be aimed to be made within 2 working days, with any follow up action from the request /query/problem being dealt with within 10 working days. Staff will make a note of significant telephone conversations with a parent/carer on CPOMS as appropriate.

4. Excessive parental contact or demanding behaviour

We are committed to working positively with parents/carers to effectively deal with any issues or concerns. However, we would ask parents/carers to understand that the school does not have the capacity to engage in excessive communications or lengthy and repetitive meetings.

Once the school has given a reasonable amount of time to address an individual issue or concern, we will not engage in further communication regarding those issues to which we have already responded.

Any emergency situations will be dealt with separately.

Please remember that any time dealing with complaints, excessive communications or questioning of school procedures is time away from our primary aim of supporting our pupils.

Please note the following:

- If parents / carers are rude, abusive or speak in an inappropriate tone over the telephone, our staff will politely end the call.
- If any email is rude or inappropriate in tone we reserve the right not to reply, or we may choose to take the action outlined within this policy.
- If parents/carers are rude, abusive or speak in an inappropriate tone during a face-to-face meeting or a virtual meeting, our staff will terminate the meeting immediately.
- In either case, the school will forward a copy of this policy to reiterate our expectations and rights with regard to appropriate communication.
- In circumstances where the school has listened to the request of a parent, considered the request and shared the outcome of this with them, should they continue to repeat or labour the same request, the school reserves the right to cease communication or to limit the reply with a repeat of key messages already shared.
- When the school judges email correspondence to be excessive, the school reserves the right to cease communication or only offer a reply with a repeat of key messages already shared.
- In such circumstances, a face-to-face or virtual meeting will be offered to attempt to deal with any issues or concerns.
- Following reasonable attempts by the school to arrange a meeting at a mutually convenient time, or if a meeting is refused, then communication on this issue will cease.
- This policy does not impact on the right of parents and carers to make formal complaints via the Trust's complaints policy which can be found on the school website or by [clicking here](#).
- Once the school has received notice of a formal complaint, the issues around the complaint can no longer be discussed outside of the Complaints Procedure unless it is in a way to find an informal or early resolution that the school is in agreement with.

If any parent/carer behaves in a manner that this policy outlines as unacceptable (such as abusive, aggressive, inappropriate or excessive contact, etc.) the school may choose to take appropriate action in line with our legal position or forward a copy of this policy to appropriate individuals. This is to ensure that parents/carers are aware of expectations for future behaviour, the position of the school, our legal rights and protection, and any action that we might choose to take.

5. Recording conversations with parents and employees

5.1. Can parents/carers record conversations with school staff?

School staff, in the course of their duties, will have meetings, scheduled and unscheduled, with parents. It is not illegal for parents to record meetings with school staff, even if the recording is made without the school's knowledge or consent as long as the recording is for their own '*personal use*'. This would include recordings made for the sake of convenience or for individuals to ensure that they are clear about what was said at the meeting, even if the recording features information about third parties, such as other pupils.

However, if a parent/carer then shared recorded information with a third party, or they posted information onto social media, then the parent/carer and the person with whom the recorded information had been shared or the parent/carer who posted the recorded information onto social media would potentially be in breach of the Data Protection Act 2018.

5.2. The school and Trust's position

The school, and The Eden Academy Trust, takes the position that parents/carers should not record meetings, and that instead, the school will, if requested by the parent/carer, prepare and share a written note of the meeting. In the case of complaints panels, detailed minutes are always prepared as part of the procedure.

Additionally, the school/Trust will give consideration to the recording of meetings between staff and parents/carers in situations where there are communication difficulties (e.g. where English is not a first language). Where this is to be considered, the school will need to obtain the agreement of all those involved in the meeting.

The same consideration applies to meetings held by a complaint panel, where detailed minutes are already produced as part of the panel's procedures, and the panel would only allow a recording with the agreement of all those involved.

Appendix: Website text

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Our staff come to work to educate and support our pupils and we believe it is important for everyone involved with school life to communicate and behave in a respectful and productive manner, whether in person, on the phone, or online. In this way, staff, pupils, parents, carers and members of the public behave respectfully to each other at all times, which helps to promote the most constructive working and learning environment.

Our staff will:

- Demonstrate the highest possible professional standards at all times.
- Deal with all pupils, fairly and consistently.
- Communicate with all parents/carers and visitors with professional courtesy.
- Try to accommodate a meeting or phone call as soon as possible.
- Be aware of and conform to all safeguarding routines in the school
- Uphold the professional integrity of the school, Trust and teaching profession at all times.

We ask parents, carers and visitors to:

- Positively support the ethos of the school by setting a good example in their speech and behaviour (including online) towards all pupils, staff and other adults.
- Work constructively with staff members to resolve any issues of concern, including clarifying specific events in order to bring about a positive resolution.
- Always communicate (by telephone, email, or in meetings) in a constructive and respectful manner.
- Refrain from communicating in a manner which could be perceived as threatening or unreasonable.
- Work alongside the school to support their child's social and emotional learning (SEL).
- Make reasonable requests for meeting times, and not expect to see any member of staff without a prior appointment.

- Agree to meet with the member of staff who is identified or delegated by the Headteacher, where necessary or appropriate.
- Make every effort to positively promote the school to the wider community and not publicly undermine the school or publicly manifest complaints or criticisms on social media platforms (e.g. WhatsApp / Facebook).