

Florence Melly Community Primary School Parent/Carer Code of Conduct

IF YOU CAN DREAM IT, YOU CAN DO IT!



Policy Approval

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Written by:	Aaron Leach (Headteacher)					New or revised policy:	Revised			
Stakeholders consulted in policy production: (✓ or x)	Governors	SLT	Teaching Staff	Support Staff	Admin Staff	Parent/Carers	Pupils	Local Community	External Agencies	
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Florence Melly Community Primary School

Parent/Carer Code of Conduct - March 2024

This parent/carers code of conduct is an unsigned agreement between the parent/carers and/or visitor and Florence Melly Community Primary School. It reflects guidance set out by the Local Authority in their document: Disruptive or aggressive behaviour by parents and carers whilst on school premises: Guidance to school personnel and governing bodies.

1. Aims

Florence Melly Community Primary School is committed to safeguarding children and promoting children's welfare and expects all staff, governors, volunteers and visitors to share this commitment and maintain a vigilant and safe environment. Everyone has a responsibility to act, without delay, to protect children by reporting anything that might suggest a child is being abused or neglected. It is our willingness to work safely and challenge inappropriate behaviours that underpins this commitment. The school seeks to work in partnership with families and other agencies to improve the outcomes for children who are vulnerable or in need.

At Florence Melly Community Primary School, we are very proud and fortunate to have such a dedicated and supportive school community. We pride ourselves on the fact that we are an extended family - the Flo Melly family! This means a lot to us and we recognise that, working together, we are far more likely to achieve the best possible education and outcomes for the children who attend our school. This partnership is strong at Florence Melly and we continue to welcome and encourage parents/carers to participate fully in the life of our school.

The purpose of this code of conduct is to set out our expectations around the conduct of all parents/carers and visitors connected to our school. We are committed to resolving difficulties in a constructive manner, through open and positive dialogue. However we understand that everyday misunderstandings can cause frustrations and have a negative impact on our relationships. Where issues arise or misconceptions take place, please contact your child's teacher or a member of our Senior Leadership Team, who will be available to meet with you and go through the issue and hopefully resolve it. Where issues remain unresolved, please follow the school's complaints procedure. This is available on the school website or a copy can be requested from the school office.

Although rare, we do sometimes experience disruptive or aggressive behaviour by parents/carers whilst on school premises, via telephone or on social media. Such issues are increasingly challenging for school, requiring a disproportionate amount of time being spent by teaching personnel in an effort to resolve and this often negatively impacts upon the available time spent with pupils.

We trust that parents/carers will assist our school with the implementation of this policy and we thank them for their support with its implementation.

This code of conduct aims to clarify the types of behaviour that will not be tolerated and seeks parental agreement to these expectations. It also sets out the actions the school can take should this code be ignored or where breaches occur.

2. Behaviour that will not be tolerated:

- Disruptive behaviour which interferes or threatens to interfere with any of the schools normal operation or activities anywhere on the school premises.
- Any inappropriate behaviour on the school premises.
- Using loud or offensive language or displaying temper.

- Threatening in any way, a member of staff, visitor, fellow parent/carer or child.
- Damaging or destroying school property.
- Sending abusive or threatening emails or text/voicemail/phone messages or other written communications (including social media) to anyone within the school community.
- Defamatory, offensive or derogatory comments regarding the school or any of the pupils/parents/staff/governors at the school on social media platforms.
- The use of physical, verbal or written aggression towards another adult or child. This includes physical punishment of your own child on school premises.
- 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.
- Smoking, vaping taking illegal drugs or the consumption of alcohol on school premises (alcohol may only be consumed during authorised events).
- Dogs being brought on to the school premises (other than guide dogs).

Should any of the above occur on or around the school premises, or in connection with school, the school may feel it is necessary to take action by contacting the appropriate authorities or consider banning the offending adult from entering the school premises.

This is not an exhaustive list and we recognise that it is impossible to list all potential breaches to this code of conduct.

3. Dealing with aggressive, abusive or threatening behaviour on school premises by parents/carers

There can be occasions where parents/carers behave in a manner which is wholly unacceptable and display behaviour which is aggressive or threatening. On such occasions the Headteacher (or designated member of staff) will fully risk assess the situation before deciding on the appropriate course of action. Relevant factors to be considered include;

- Whether the parent/carer has been verbally or physically aggressive, threatening or have they intimidated any other person on the premises?
- Evidence of the incident. Are there any witnesses and if so what do they say happened?
- Does the parent or carer have any previous known history of aggression or violence and/or have they persistently been abusive to school staff, pupils or visitors?
- Is there a risk (low/medium/high) that such behaviour may be repeated?
- Does the conduct have the ability or potential to cause harm or distress to pupils, school staff or other parents?

Once such factors have been considered, there are a number of options that the Headteacher may wish to take. These include;

- Inviting the parent/carer to a meeting to discuss the incident;
- Confirming in writing to the parent/carer the considered acceptable behaviour by the school and the consequences of repeat behaviour (warning letter);
- Withdrawing permission for the parent or carer to enter the school site and/or buildings;
- Informing the police.

4. Inviting the parent or carer to a meeting to discuss an incident

In some circumstances it may be appropriate to invite the parent/carer to a meeting to discuss the incident. However, the safety of participants in the meeting should be fully considered and it is recommended that members of school staff should be accompanied by at least one other colleague at any such meeting. Seating arrangements, room access and exits together with the

points to be discussed should be fully considered ahead of the meeting. Any agreed actions within the meeting should be noted and it is advised that a follow up letter should be sent after the meeting stating the school's expectations and any agreed actions confirming in writing to the parent/carer the considered acceptable behaviour by the school and the consequences of repeat behaviour (being issued with a warning letter).

On occasions it may be appropriate to simply write to the parent/carer setting out the expectations of the school in respect of behaviour and what advising of the consequences of repeat behaviour (usually the withdrawal of permission to enter the school site). This could be explained in a meeting too, however any verbal explanation will always be followed up in writing.

5. Withdrawing permission for the parent or carer to enter the school site and/or buildings

In more serious circumstances involving actual or threatened aggression or violence, or persistent abuse and/or intimidation, consideration should be given as to whether it is safe for the parent/carer to continue to come onto the school site or enter school buildings. School premises are not open venues for access by any member of the public. Visitors must have an explicit or implied licence to enter the school site/building and anyone who enters without the school's permission is a trespasser. Accordingly, if appropriate, it is possible to withdraw permission for the parent/carer to enter the school premises however any decision to do so must be fair, necessary, and for an appropriate length of time having considered all the circumstances following a fair and proper procedure.

The decision to withdraw permission (i.e. ban the parent from school premises) can be challenged by means of judicial review and therefore it is imperative that the ban is necessary and the length of ban is appropriate. Any decision to ban a parent/carer will be made after a fair and proper procedure has been followed by a committee of governors taking into account all the circumstances. Any decision to ban will be confirmed in writing to the parent/carer stating the reasons why it is necessary to withdraw permission allowing entry to school premises and an opportunity to make representations should also be provided.

The period of any ban will be reasonable and appropriate having regard to the individual circumstances. A consistent approach as to the duration of the ban will be maintained and a review undertaken before confirmation is provided that the ban has been lifted.

If a parent/carer has been banned from entering school premises, then it may be appropriate to make alternative arrangements in respect of their attendance at school activities i.e. plays/assemblies/parents evening and subject to the age of the pupil then it may be necessary to make alternative arrangements in respect of dropping off and picking up the pupil from school. A clear direction will also be provided to the parent/carer as to how they should communicate any practical issues they may have for discussion with the class teacher and/or any other staff member.

6. Informing the police

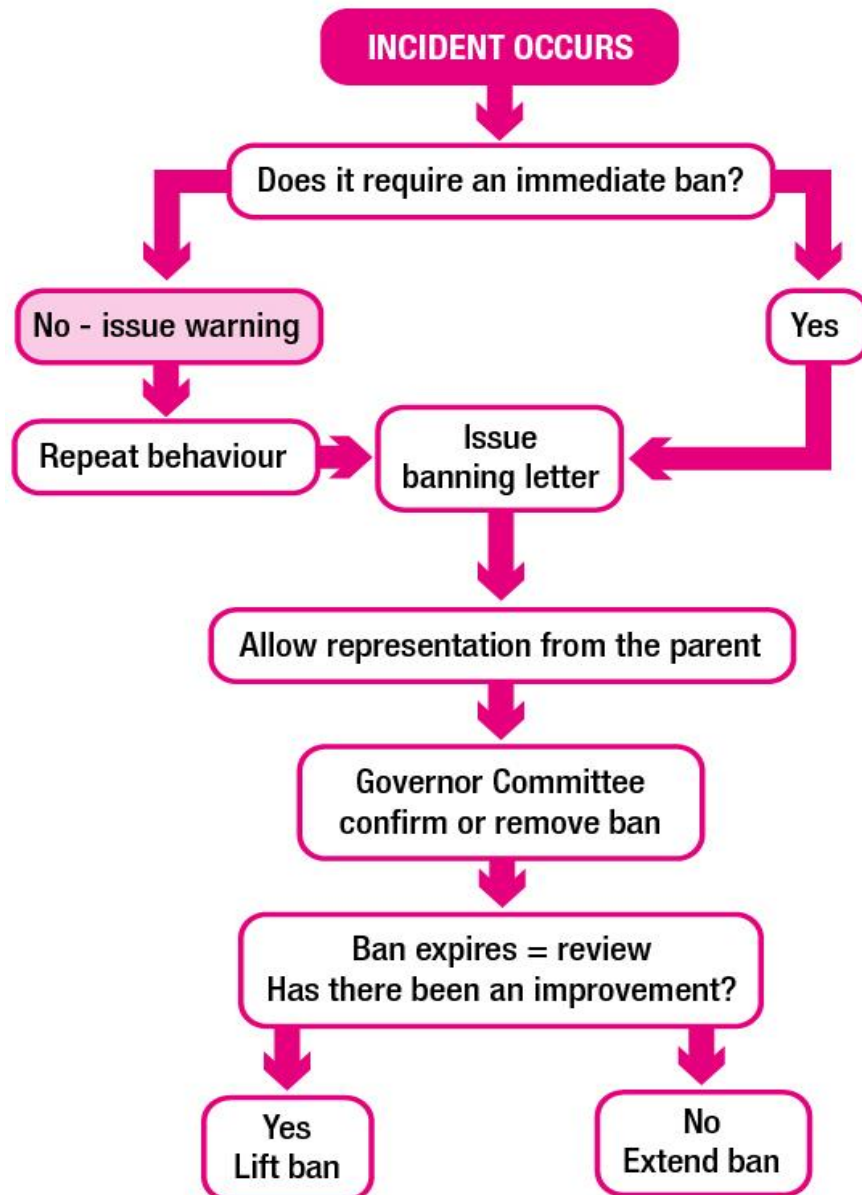
In an emergency or serious situation, the police will be informed immediately. If the parent/carer has previously been banned from the school premises yet have still entered the site, then the police will be notified as the police have the power to remove such person from the school premises.

In respect of situations where there is no immediate threat to staff, pupils or other members of the school community or property, our Headteacher may wish to inform their local community police officer of the situation.

Where appropriate, the police may consider warning the parent/carer of formal action which can include legal proceedings.

7. Process for Implementing a Ban

The flowchart below summarises the procedure of withdrawing permission for a parent or carer to enter school premises.



8. Dealing with parents and carers comments via social media relating to school and individual teaching personnel

The use of social media by parents/carers or pupils to complain or inappropriately comment about a school or a teacher is on the increase. Some comments posted may amount to cyber bullying and consist of threats, harassment and defamation which can lead to low staff morale, loss of staff, a reduction in the recruitment to the teaching profession or damage to the individual's or school's reputation.

Whilst it is appreciated that we will never be in a position to actively “police” all social media platforms for comments about the school or our staff, should a post be brought to a member of school personnel’s attention and it is inaccurate or abusive, action will be taken to protect the individual employee and the school's reputation; to avoid the subject matter escalating; and, to discourage future posts of the same nature.

We will endeavour to keep all staff safe from abuse, threats and violence and this includes cyberbullying. Once aware of the post, consideration will be given by the school as to the contents of the comments and whether they are serious enough to constitute a criminal offence, harassment and/or defamation. It is a criminal offence to “send by means of a public electronic communications network a message or other matter that is grossly offensive or of an indecent, obscene or menacing character” (The Communications Act 2003). If guilty then this offence is punishable by imprisonment (up to 6 months) and a fine (up to £5,000).

This code of conduct sets out the school’s expectations of parents/carers which include;

- Parents/carers are expected to refrain from discussing the business of school or children attending school in any public forum, including social media sites.
- The use of social media websites to fuel campaigns and complaints against schools is unacceptable and not in the best interests of the children or the whole school community.
- If a pupil or parent/carer is found to have posted defamatory comments on social networking sites, the school will report them to the website host and the school expects the person who posted the comments to remove the comments immediately. The police may also be informed.
- Parents/carers are not expected to post pictures of pupils other than their own children on social networking sites;
- Parents/carers should make complaints through official school channels as opposed to posting them on social networking sites; and
- Parents/carers should not post malicious or fictitious comments on social networking sites about any member of the school community.

When such postings occur, an appropriate response is required. When dealing with online abuse or inaccurate comments, it is recommended that school personnel;

- Never retaliate or personally engage with the incident;
- Immediately inform the appropriate personnel, i.e. Headteacher and the police in the event that the law has been broken;
- Ensure that records of the comments/abuse are kept via screen shots, log the time, date and website address for future reference.
- Attempt to get the comments removed by contacting the host (the social networking site) to request the content is removed and stating why/how the comments contravene the host site’s term and conditions.

Depending on the circumstances, it may be appropriate to meet the parents/carers who have been involved in posting the inaccurate/abusive comments. This should be via a meeting with the Headteacher who will address the matter of social networking and explain how such behaviour detrimentally impacts on the school and thus on their children’s education.

It is advisable that printouts of the comments are available in the meeting and that the parents/carers are made aware that comments posted online, even when made 'privately', can on occasions be misinterpreted and shared without their knowledge or consent.

If necessary, the Headteacher will inform the parents/carers that they may have to take further action which could include civil proceedings under the Defamation Act 2013 or alternatively criminal proceedings in some circumstances.

The Headteacher should refer to the content of the school's code of conduct, social media policy and/or complaints policy directing the parent/carer's compliance with same and confirming that any complaints should be channelled through the school's complaints policy.

9. What happens if someone ignores or breaks the code of conduct?

In the event of any parent/carer or visitor of the school breaking this code of conduct, then proportionate actions will be taken as follows.

In cases where the unacceptable behaviour is considered to be a serious and potentially criminal matter, the concerns will in the first instance be referred to the Police. This will include any or all cases of threats or violence and actual violence to any child, staff or governor in the school. This will also include anything that could be seen as a sign of harassment of any member of the school community, such as any form of insulting social media post or any form of social media cyber bullying.

In cases where evidence suggests that behaviour would be tantamount to libel or slander, then the school will refer the matter to the County Council's Legal Team for further action.

In cases where the code of conduct has been broken but the breach was not libellous, slanderous or criminal matter, then the school will send out a formal letter to the parent/carer with an invite to a meeting.

If the parent/carer refuses to attend the meeting then the school will write to the parent/carer and ask them to stop the behaviour causing the concern and warn that if they do not they may be banned from the school premises. If after this behaviour continues, the parent/carer will again be written to and informed that a ban is now in place.

A ban will prohibit an adult from entering the school grounds to safeguard our school community. The duration of ban will be dependent on the situation.

In the event of non-compliance with a banning order, the school would work with the police or other relevant authorities to enforce any orders or take such further action as appropriate (this may include the enforcement of a restraining order to restrict access to the school site).

Note:

(1) A ban from the school can be introduced without having to go through all the steps offered above in more serious cases. (2) Site bans will normally be limited in the first instance.