

TRINITY NURSERY SCHOOL
PARENTAL AND VISITOR'S BEHAVIOUR POLICY



Adopted by the Board of Governors on: 31.08.2021

To be reviewed on: 31.08.2024

Signed by the Principal:

Signed by the Chairperson:

Version	Date	Revision Author	Summary of Changes
1	23.07.21	J. Murray	New policy template

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1. Introduction

Trinity Nursery School aims to work in close partnership with parents (for the purposes of this policy, the reference to 'parents' includes legal guardians, representatives of parents and carers) and visitors to ensure that all children receive quality care and learning that suits their individual needs.

A key aspect of this partnership is that we treat each other with dignity and mutual respect.

In particular, the expectations from Trinity Nursery School are:

- **That all adults set a good example to our children, showing them how to get on with all members of the school and the wider community.**
- **That no members of staff, parents, visitors' or children are the victims of abusive behaviour or open to threats from other adults on the school premises.**
- **Behaviour that will cause harassment or distress to users of the premises is contrary to the aims and ethos of the school.**

Trinity Nursery School will not tolerate physical or verbal abuse or aggressive behaviour directed towards any member of staff, pupil, visitor or volunteer originating from a parent, carer or member of the public and will take appropriate action to calm and diffuse any situation that may arise in a fair and consistent manner.

2. Aims of the Policy

Trinity Nursery School values the positive and supportive relationship that develops with the parents of children at the school. This policy aims to foster these good relationships and protect members of staff and pupils from being subjected to abuse or threat from parents, carers or other visitors to the school.

Therefore, the aims of the policy are that:

- all members of the school community must be treated inclusively and be free from any form of discrimination or prejudice – whether it be racial, ethnic, gender, sexual orientation, religious or age-based.
- the school will create and maintain an atmosphere and ethos of tolerance, equality, diversity, respect, understanding, kindness and a sense of citizenship throughout the school community in everyday practice.
- to protect all teaching and non-teaching staff and students, visitors and volunteers at Trinity Nursery School from potential physical/verbal or emotional abuse.
- all children, staff and visitors should always feel safe in our school environment through a high quality of care, support and guidance.
- all pupils have a right to fulfil their personal potential and made to feel that they are valued members of the school by both their peers and school staff and should be free from bullying and discrimination.
- any kind of violence, threatening behaviour or abuse between pupils, or by pupils/parents/carers towards the school's staff, will not be tolerated.
- any potential conflict situation is defused as quickly as possible.
- rules are to be consistently applied across the school if sanctions are exercised.
- **if a parent/visitor does not conduct himself/herself properly, the school reserves the right to ban them from the school premises and, if the parent/visitor continues to cause disturbance, he or she may be liable to prosecution.**
- where a ban from the school premises is considered, it is fair, consistent and proportionate to the incident.

3. Statement of Intent

The purpose of this policy is to provide a reminder to all parents, carers and visitors to our school about their expected conduct. We strive to make our school a place where adults model for children the behaviour we teach and expect, and where high importance is placed on good manners, positive communication and mutual respect.

The vast majority of parents, carers and other visitors to our school are keen to work with us and are supportive of the values and ethos of the school. However, on the rare occasions when a negative attitude towards the school is expressed, this can result in aggression including verbal or physical abuse towards school staff or other members of the school community.

Our school expects and requires its staff to behave professionally in these difficult situations and they will attempt to defuse the situation as quickly where possible, informing the Principal and seeking the involvement of other colleagues as appropriate.

Violence, threatening behaviour and abuse against school staff or other members of the school community will not be tolerated.

The Board of Governors has statutory obligations to provide a safe working environment and safe working practices for all their staff. All staff have the right to work without fear of violence and abuse.

4. Definition of Workplace Violence

The Health and Safety Executive of Northern Ireland's definition of work-related violence is **"any incident in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work"**.

5. Definition of Unacceptable Behaviour

Trinity Nursery School considers that aggressive, abusive or insulting behaviour or language from a parent or visitor presents a risk to staff or children. This can be through face-to-face contact, on the telephone or in written communication (including social media).

The following is not an exhaustive list but seeks to provide illustrations of such behaviour:

- Any kind of threat.
- Any kind of insult as an attempt to demean, embarrass or undermine.
- Raising of voice either in person or over the telephone as to intimidate.
- Physical intimidation (for example, by standing very close or the use of aggressive hand gestures).
- Use of foul or abusive language either in person, over the telephone or by email.
- Use of rude or aggressive hand gestures.
- Any kind of physical abuse.
- Allegations which turn out to be vexatious or malicious.
- Constant emails and or telephone calls which amount to harassment and intimidation despite the school's best efforts to address a situation.
- Inappropriate electronic activity including publishing abusive or inappropriate content with regard to Trinity Nursery School, teachers or children on social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter or in email communications.

Where the Principal is the subject of, or involved in, an incident or abusive behaviour, the Chair of the Board of Governors will assume the role of the Principal in the operation of this policy.

6. Types of Abuse

1. Abuse in person on School Premises

If a parent, visitor or member of the public begins to exhibit aggressive or abusive behaviour towards any member of staff, pupil, or volunteer whilst on the school premises the nearest member of staff shall contact the Principal and inform them of the situation who will take charge of any further actions. The complainant will NOT be allowed access to a staff member about whom they are complaining.

If it is safe to do so, the Principal shall try to get the complainant to air their grievances. If this is not possible, the Principal will ensure the area shall be cleared of unnecessary people (pupils, staff or visitors) who could be at risk from harm should the situation escalate.

If possible, the Principal shall take notes whilst the complainant is speaking and check with the complainant both during and at the end of their statement to ensure that the information they have provided has been recorded correctly.

The Principal will investigate the complaint which may take several days and will contact the complainant in writing. If the complainant is not satisfied with the reply, they are entitled to take their complaint to the Board of Governors, inline with Trinity Nursery School's Complaints Procedure Policy.

2. Abuse by telephone

If a parent, visitor or member of the public begins to exhibit aggressive or abusive behaviour (e.g. use of foul language, verbal threats or forms of intimidation) towards any member of staff during a telephone call, the member of staff shall state that the language used is unacceptable and that the call will end if it continues. Notes of the content of the call will be reported to the Principal who will try to resolve the issue.

3. Abuse in writing

If a member of staff receives written correspondence (e.g. letter or electronic correspondence) of a threatening or abusive nature from a parent, visitor or member of the public, this shall be reported immediately to the Principal and a copy retained as evidence. The receiving member of staff will agree to a response with the Principal.

Whilst the school will make every effort to resolve any issue raised by the complainant, consideration may also be given to involving the PSNI, especially where threats of violence have been made.

4. Abuse by Social Media

Any parent or other member of the public found to be posting libellous or defamatory comments on social media sites will be reported to the appropriate 'report abuse' section of the site(s).

Trinity Nursery School will also expect that any parent or other member of the public removes such comments immediately. In serious cases the school will also consider its legal options, including informing the Education Authority and the PSNI, when dealing with any such misuse of social networking and other sites.

Any concerns that parents or visitors have should be made through the appropriate channels so they can be dealt with fairly, appropriately and effectively for all concerned.

7. Reporting and Recording of Incidents

- Any allegation of abuse, aggression or insulting behaviour will be investigated by the Principal.
- The parent or visitor will be informed of the investigation and will be given the opportunity to provide an account of the incident.
- Staff subject to abuse and witnesses will make written statements about the incident(s) which will be kept in a file with any subsequent documents produced in the investigation.
- file will be kept by the Principal in accordance with the Records Management and Retention and Disposal Schedule.

8. Risk Assessment

If it is determined that a parent or visitor has behaved in an unacceptable way towards a member of the school community, the Principal will assess the situation before deciding on a future course of action. In all cases, the response will be reasonable, proportionate and commensurate with the assessed level of unacceptable behaviour.

The risk assessment will help inform the level of response and will consider the following questions:

- What form did the behaviour take?
- What evidence is there?
- What do witnesses say happened?
- Are there any previous incidents to take into consideration?
- Do members of staff/children feel intimidated by the parent's or visitor's behaviour?
- Is there any evidence of provocation or mitigating factors?

- How high is the assessed risk that this will be repeated or there will be retaliation against the school's action?

9. Possible outcomes following investigation and risk assessment

When a parent or member of the public behaves in an unacceptable way towards a member of the school staff the Principal will seek to resolve the situation through discussion and mediation in the first instance.

These actions may include some of the following:

1. Invite parent or visitor to an informal meeting to discuss events

A meeting may be held depending on the parent/visitor's response to discuss the situation and how this can be avoided in future. An informal meeting may be helpful to discuss and diffuse the situation. The safety and well-being of those attending such a meeting will be carefully considered. Members of school staff will always be accompanied by the Principal. Consideration shall be given to the seating arrangements, and care taken to ensure exits cannot be blocked by a parent who could potentially become aggressive. The main points of discussion and any agreed actions shall be noted, and a follow-up letter or e-mail sent to confirm the school's expectations and any agreed actions.

A parent/visitor may be accompanied but not represented by another person during the process e.g. spouse, friend, family member or interpreter, provided this person is not offering legal representation or acting in an official capacity. If the complainant feels unable to speak on their own behalf, they may avail of support from outside agencies as agreed with the school. (*Local MLAs/Councillors/Citizens' Advice Bureau/Parenting NI/ Children's Commissioner*).

2. Issue letter to parent or visitor

Clarify to the parent/visitor what is considered acceptable behaviour by the school. In some instances, it may be appropriate simply to ensure the parent is clear about behaviour standards expected by the school. This will be explained by letter from the Principal and **may** contain a warning about further action if there are further incidents. The parent will be invited to write to the Principal with his/her version of events within 10 working days.

3. Impose conditions on parent or visitor

Where the matter concerns the conduct of a parent or visitor, depending on the type, level or frequency of the unacceptable behaviour, the school may consider imposing conditions on his/her contact with the school. Parents of children have an 'implied licence' to come onto school premises at certain stated times and it is for the school to determine the extent of such access.

These conditions may include (but not exclusively):

- restricting contact by telephone only to the Principal.
- restricting written communications only to the Principal.
- restricting attendance at school events.
- any other restriction as deemed reasonable and proportionate by the Principal.

Where conditions are imposed, the parent will be informed by letter from the Principal the details of the conditions that are being imposed. They will be given 10 school days from the date of the letter to make representations in writing about the conditions to the Board of Governors. The Board of Governors will then decide whether to confirm or remove the conditions and will communicate its decision in writing within 10 school days of the date of the letter.

If the decision is to confirm the conditions imposed, this decision will be reviewed by the Principal and the Board of Governors after ten days (and every ten days after that, if appropriate) who will decide whether to amend, extend or remove the conditions.

4. Impose a ban on parent or visitor from the school premises

Where all other procedures have been exhausted and unacceptable behaviour continues, Trinity Nursery School reserves the right to impose a temporary or permanent ban from the school Premises on any parent/visitor or member of the public who has demonstrated aggressive or abusive behaviour towards any member of staff, pupil, visitor or volunteer at the school. This decision shall be made by the Principal in consultation with the Chair of Governors and the length of any ban shall be proportionate to the nature and circumstances of the incident.

In the case of a parent/visitor, prior to a ban being imposed (except in urgent situations), the Principal shall write to the individual indicating that a ban from the premises is being considered, stating the reasons for this and the date (usually 5 school days) by which any written representations by the individual should be received by the school before the decision is made.

In urgent situations, the Principal may impose an immediate temporary ban in writing and provide the parent/visitor the opportunity to make written representations (within 5 school days) prior to formalising any extension to the ban. Where the decision to impose a ban is made, notification of the ban shall be in writing and shall clearly state:

- The reason for the ban being imposed
- The date of commencement of the ban
- A date by which any written representations by the individual should be received by the school.
- A date for review of the ban and how this will be arranged.

- Provision to be made (if a parent or carer) for access to their child during the school day (e.g. should an emergency occur) and the process to be followed should the parent/visitor wish to contact the school or need to attend meetings at the school .
- What action will be taken to remove the individual from the premises should the ban be breached and may be removed from the premises by the PSNI.

The maximum period before a review of a ban will be 10 School Days. The banned individual will be invited to make written representations and to attend a review meeting (accompanied by a friend or relative if required) with the Principal and a panel of three Governors. This panel will review the ban and consider whether to lift it, make it permanent or continue it for a specified period. The Principal may remove the ban at any time prior to the review date if an appropriate resolution has been achieved.

Any ban imposed will not prevent or affect the outcome of the school's investigation into any complaints raised by the individual concerned. These will be handled as per the School's Complaints Policy/Procedure.

5. Notify authorities

If at any stage matters escalate and the parent/visitor will not leave the school premises in a calm manner:

1. The interview shall be terminated as politely as possible.
2. Additional help shall be summoned.
3. In extreme cases, (e.g. threatened or actual physical violence or assault, refusal to leave the premises etc.) the Principal shall summon the PSNI immediately.
4. If appropriate, the Education Authority will be notified.

10. Staff Welfare

Staff who are victims of abuse and /or violence shall be encouraged to seek advice from the Education Authority's Welfare Service and /or their confidential counselling service.

11. Review and Monitoring

This Policy will be reviewed by the Governing Body every three years.

All incidents of aggressive or abusive behaviour directed towards staff, students, visitors or volunteers by a parent/visitor or member of the public will be recorded and reported to the Board of Governors to inform the review of this policy.

12. Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO) www.nipso.org.uk

If a parent/visitor remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the situation, the matter can be dealt with in full through Trinity Nursery School's Complaints Procedure Policy or by contacting the Office of the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO).

The Ombudsman provides a free, independent and impartial service for handling complaints about schools in Northern Ireland. You have the right to complain to the Ombudsman if you feel that you have been treated unfairly or have received poor service from a school and your complaint has not been resolved to your satisfaction.

A complaint should normally be referred to NIPSO within 6 months of the final response from the school.

Contact details for NIPSO are provided below.

Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman
Progressive House
33 Wellington Place
BELFAST
BT1 6HN

Freepost: FREEPOST NIPSO
Telephone: 02890 233821
Freephone: 0800 34 34 24
Email: nipso@nipso.org.uk
Web: www.nipso.org.uk

13. SAMPLE LETTER OF DISAPPROVAL OF BEHAVIOUR

Recorded Delivery

DEAR (NAME)

Behaviour Incident

I am writing to you following an incident that took place on **(Date)** between yourself and **(Name)** in the **(Location)** of Trinity Nursery School.

I wish to advise you that **(Name type of behaviour)** is not acceptable and is contrary to the school's declared Policy on Parental and Visitor's Behaviour Policy, copy enclosed.

It was extremely distressing to **(name recipient)** and worrying for other staff/parents/children who witnessed this incident.

I am also concerned that such a deterioration in the relationship between you and the staff from the school will affect the progress of your child **(Name)**.

I invite you to write to me within 10 school days from today's date to provide me with your version of events. Depending on your response, a meeting may be arranged to discuss this situation and how it may be avoided in the future.

I must advise you that any repetition of your behaviour will force me to take further action.

This **may** involve a withdrawal of permission for you to enter school premises, referral to the Education Authority and/or the PSNI with a view to criminal and/or civil legal proceedings taken against you.

I do hope this will not be necessary.

Yours sincerely

Signed by Principal

Cc Chairperson of Board of Governors

14. SAMPLE LETTER OF REMOVAL OF PERMISSION TO ENTER TRINITY NURSERY SCHOOL

Recorded Delivery

DEAR (NAME)

Removal of permission to enter Trinity Nursery School

I refer to your recent approach to Trinity Nursery School for the purpose of **(Name)**.

I regret to note that your approach to this matter has seriously contravened to the school's declared Policy on Parental and Visitor's Behaviour, copy enclosed.

Therefore, I have no option but to give you notice of the intention to withdraw permission for you to enter school premises with immediate effect from **(Date)**. This will be effective for (Number) of days.

You are no longer permitted entry on to school grounds including the car park or any area inside the boundary fence. As this includes delivering and collecting your child from school, you must make other arrangements while this ban is in force.

Henceforth, communications with the school regarding the welfare of your child **(Name)** shall be conducted in writing, by telephone +44 **(0) 2891 270 355** or by email: info@trinitynurseryschool.co.uk.

Any abuse of these arrangements or any unauthorised approach which gives rise to concern by any member of the school staff will be reported to the PSNI.

You have the right to comment on the school's intention to revoke your licence. Any response **must be in writing** and received by the school before **(Date)**.

If you are dissatisfied with this outcome, you can refer the matter to the Office of the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO). The Ombudsman provides provides a free, independent and impartial service for handling complaints about schools in Northern Ireland. You have the right to complain to the Ombudsman if you feel that you have been treated unfairly or have received a poor service from the school and your complaint has not been resolved to your satisfaction. A complaint should normally be referred to NIPSO within 6 months of the final response from the school.

Contact details for NIPSO are provided below.

Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman
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BELFAST
BT1 6HN

Freepost: FREEPOST NIPSO
Telephone: 02890 233821
Freephone: 0800 34 34 24
Email: nipso@nipso.org.uk

Web: www.nipso.org.uk

Yours sincerely

Signed by Principal

Cc Chairperson of Board of Governors

15. SAMPLE LETTER OF REINSTATEMENT OF LICENCE

Recorded Delivery

DEAR (NAME)

Reinstate permission to enter premises of Trinity Nursery School

The above matter has now been reviewed following consideration of your reply on **(Date)**.

As you have offered assurances of future respectable behaviour while on school premises, it has been agreed that the interests of your child would be best served by the reinstatement of your normal access to school staff.

This is effective from **(Date)**.

Whilst welcoming these positive assurances, it must be noted that the school will continue to keep this situation under review.

Yours sincerely

Signed by Principal

Cc Chairperson of the Board of Governors