

Copleston Parental/Visitor Code of Conduct

At Copleston High School we value our strong relationship with parents/carers. By working together this helps us to achieve the very best for students in a mutually supportive partnership between parents/carers, teaching staff and the school community. We also strive to make our school a place where as adults we model for students the behaviour we teach and expect.

As a school we highly value Parental Engagement in children's learning and we know the quality of the home-school relationship is associated with improved academic outcomes at all ages. The evidence suggests that three areas are particularly worth focusing on:

- Supporting parents/carers to have high academic expectations for their children;
- Developing and maintaining communication with parents/carers about school activities and schoolwork; and
- Promoting the development of reading habits.

We are very fortunate as a school to have strong relationships with extremely supportive parents/carers. We value all that our parents/carers do to support the school and in turn we try to do all we can to work collaboratively with parents/carers.

Almost all parents, carers and visitors to Copleston are keen to work with us and are supportive of the school. However, on very rare occasions the behaviour of a small number of parents/carers falls short of what we expect. This sometimes manifests itself in aggression or abuse towards members of the school community. This unacceptable behaviour can be in written communication (including social media), on the telephone or in face-to-face incidents.

At Copleston High School parents/carers, carers and visitors are reminded:

- To respect the caring ethos and values of the school
- That both staff and parents/carers need to work together for the benefit of their children
- That approaching school staff for help to resolve an issue is done in an appropriate manner
- That all members of the school community are treated with respect using appropriate language and behaviour
- The school needs to work with a child in order to clarify their version of events in order to bring about an appropriate solution to an issue
- To correct their child's actions especially where it could lead to conflict, aggressive or unsafe behaviour – both on and off the school premises

In order to support a peaceful and safe school environment the school will not tolerate parents, carers or visitors exhibiting the following:

- Disruptive behaviour which interferes or threatens to interfere with any of the school's operation or activities anywhere on the school premises
- Any inappropriate behaviour on the school premises
- Any kind of physical abuse
- Using offensive language or displaying temper
- Raising of voice so as to be intimidating
- Threatening, in any way, a member of school staff, visitor, fellow parent/carer or student

- Physical intimidation (e.g. by standing very close to him/her or the use of aggressive hand gestures)
- Damaging or destroying school property
- Sending abusive or threatening/aggressive emails or text/voicemail/phone messages or other written communications to anyone within the school community
- Any kind of insult as an attempt to demean, embarrass or undermine
- Defamatory, offensive or derogatory comments regarding Copleston or any of Copleston's students/parents/carers or staff on social media
- Approaching a student in order to discuss or chastise them because of an incident involving their own child and the student

Should any of the above occur on school premises the school may feel it necessary to take action by contacting the appropriate authorities and/or consider banning the offending adult from entering the school's premises.

Guidelines when emailing members of staff

In January 2019, education secretary Damian Hinds said staff should not have to email outside of office hours.

Mr Hinds also stated that in many school's parents/carers have started to adopt what has been described as the "how dare you" culture where they can be quick to send an email accusing a teacher of making a poor decision against their child without hearing or understanding all the facts. At Copleston we would ask that parents/carers are aware of the following with regard to email correspondence.

- When emailing staff please ensure that the tone is not aggressive or accusatory. If you are unsure about an event involving your child, please ask the school for clarification as it will be the case that the school will have taken a particular stance for a reason
- When emailing into members of staff or the generic email address please be aware that response time will be within 24/48 hours – **staff will not be expected to respond between 4.30pm and 8am or at weekends.** (*staff discretion will be used if an email is responded to within these times*)

Guidelines when arranging a meeting to see a member of staff

- To make an appointment to see a member of staff please contact reception, where details will be passed onto the relevant member of staff to make contact with yourself to arrange a mutual time at their convenience – *staff are not always readily available to see parents/carers/visitors therefore please do not expect to see the relevant member of staff instantly. Staff will contact you within 24/48 hours in order to make an appointment and you can expect this appointment (unless there are unexpected circumstances) to take place within 7 working days. Parents/carers must not arrive unannounced at the school demanding to see a member of staff under any circumstances*

The school's approach to dealing with incidents

If a parent/carer/visitor behaves in an unacceptable way towards a member of the school community, the Principal or appropriate senior staff will assess the level of risk before deciding on a future course of action. The course of action will be reasonable and commensurate with the assessed level of risk.

Risk Assessment

The Principal or a designated member of senior staff will carry out a risk assessment in order to help make a decision about the level of response. In all cases the response will be reasonable and proportionate. The Principal will consider the following questions:

- What form did the abuse take?
- What evidence is there?
- What do witnesses say happened?
- Are there previous incidents to take into consideration?
- Do members of staff/students feel intimidated by the parent/carer/visitor's behaviour?
- Is there any evidence of provocation?
- How high is the assessed risk that this will be repeated or there will be retaliation at the school's action? (low, medium, high).

Recording of Incidents

Staff subject to abuse and witnesses will make written statements about incident(s) which will be kept in a file with subsequent letters. This file will be kept by the school. Depending on an assessment of the risk of retaliation to witnesses or individuals, statements made by adults may be made available to the parent, Governor or visitor if they request it.

The School's response

Following the completion of the risk assessment, the Principal will decide the level of action to be taken. Actions will include one of the following depending on the school's perception of the seriousness of the incident:

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

This could be helpful to discuss and diffuse the situation. The main points of discussion and any agreed actions should be noted, and a follow-up letter or e-mail sent to confirm the school's expectations and any agreed actions.

2. Clarify to the parent/carer or visitor what is considered acceptable behaviour by the school

In some instances, it may be appropriate simply to ensure the parent/carer or visitor is clear about behaviour standards expected by the school. This will be explained by letter from the school. This letter may contain a warning about further action if there are further incidents.

3. *Impose conditions on the parent/carer or visitor's contact with the school and its staff*

Although fulfilling a public function, schools are private places. The public has no automatic right of entry. Parents/carers of enrolled students have an 'implied licence' to come onto school premises at certain stated times. It is for schools to define and set out the extent of such access. Parents/carers exceeding this would be trespassing.

Depending of the type, level or frequency of the unacceptable behaviour, the school may consider imposing conditions on the parent's contact with the school. These conditions may include (but are not exclusively):

- Being accompanied to any meeting with a member of school staff by a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT)
- Restricting contact by telephone to named members of the senior leadership team
- Restricting written communications to named members of the senior leadership team
- Restricting attendance at school events to those where the parent/carer will be accompanied by a member of the senior leadership of the school
- Any other restriction as deemed reasonable and proportionate by the Principal

In this case the parent/carer or visitor will be informed by letter from the Principal the details of the conditions that are being imposed. The parent would then be given 10 working days from the date of that letter to make representations in writing about the conditions to the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors would then decide whether to confirm or remove the conditions. This would be communicated to the parent in writing within 10 working days of the date of the parent's letter.

If the decision is to confirm the conditions imposed, this decision will be reviewed by the governing body after approximately six months (and every six months after that, if appropriate). The parent will be invited to make written representation to the governors. This and the evidence from the Principal will be considered at a meeting of the full governing body. Governors may decide to maintain, extend or remove the conditions. The decision of the review will be communicated to the parent by the clerk to the governors within 10 days of the date of the meeting.

When deciding whether it will be necessary to maintain, extend or remove the conditions, governors will give consideration to the extent of the parent's compliance with the conditions, any appropriate expressions of regret and assurance of future good conduct received from him/her and any evidence of the parent's co-operation with the school in other respects.

4. *Imposing a ban*

Where other procedures have been exhausted and aggression or intimidation continues OR where there is an extreme act of violence then the school may consider banning the individual from school premises. This will include banning a parent from accessing school staff by written communication or telephone.

In these circumstances, the individual will be advised in writing by the Principal that a provisional ban is being imposed. The parent/carer or visitor will then be given 10 working days from the date of that letter to make representations about the ban in writing to the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors will then decide whether to confirm or remove the ban. This will be communicated to the parent/carer or visitor in writing within 10 working days of the receipt of their letter. If the Chair's decision is to confirm the ban, parent/carers in these circumstances will be offered an annual meeting about their child's progress, usually with a member of senior staff.

A decision to impose a ban will be reviewed by the governing body after approximately six months (and every six months after that, if appropriate). The parent will be invited to make written representation to the governors; this and the evidence from the Principal will be considered at a meeting of the full governing body. Governors may decide to remove the ban, extend the ban or impose conditions on parent's access to the school. The decision of the review will be communicated to the parent by the clerk to the governors within 10 days of the date of the meeting.

In deciding whether to remove or extend the ban or impose conditions, governors will give consideration to the extent of the parent/carers compliance with the ban, any appropriate expressions of regret and assurance of future good conduct received from him/her and any evidence of the parent/carers co-operation with the school in other respects.

5. Removal from school

It is important that parent/carer or visitors are aware that if they enter the School premises without prior written permission of the Principal they will be committing an offence and will be asked to leave. If they do not comply with this instruction, either The Principal or a Senior Member of Staff will arrange for them to be removed from the premises and it may lead to a prosecution under Section 547 of the Education Act 1996. If convicted under this section, a parent/carer or visitor may be liable to a fine of up to £500. Separate injunctions and protection from harassment orders may also be obtained if necessary.

6. Complaints policy

Any parental/carers complaint that arises from incidents of abusive behaviour will be dealt with under the complaints policy.

Thank you for abiding by this Code of Conduct statement for Copleston High School. Together we create a positive and uplifting environment not only for our students but also for staff and visitors.