

# Hele's School



Hele's School adopted this policy in January 2021.

Reviewed annually. Latest review: May 2023

# Safeguarding Staff from Abuse

**A POLICY FOR DEALING WITH  
ABUSIVE PARENTS/CARERS/VISITORS**



**WESTCOUNTRY**  
SCHOOLS TRUST

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### Policy updates

Jan. '21:	Policy adopted.
Mar. '22:	No changes to policy.
May '23:	Updates to reflect change in WeST governance structure from Jan. 1 '23. DfE guidance references updated from 'Controlling access to school premises' (Nov. '18).

# Safeguarding Staff from Abuse

## 1. Statement of principles

This policy has been written taking into account the DfE Guidance 'Controlling access to school premises' (Nov. '18). The term 'Parents' is used throughout this policy to denote Parents/Carers and visitors to Hele's School.

At Hele's School, we value the positive relationships forged with Parents. We encourage close links with Parents and the community and believe that students benefit when the relationship between home and Hele's School is a positive one. We also strive to make School a place where adults model for students the behaviour we teach and expect. In general, we place a high importance on good manners, positive communication, and mutual respect.

If anyone has concerns, we always listen to them and seek to address them. We know that young people benefit from positive relationships between home and school. Any Parental complaint that arises from incidents of abusive behaviour will be dealt with under the Complaints Policy, a copy of which can be found on the Hele's School website in the 'School Information' section on the Hele's School website, <https://www.heles.plymouth.sch.uk/>.

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

In these situations, we expect members of staff to behave professionally, attempting to defuse the situation where possible and seeking the involvement as appropriate of other colleagues. Staff who face these situations have licence to end any conversation (face-to-face or on the telephone). They should then refer the incident to their immediate Line Manager or a member of the Senior Leadership Team and the Principal. The Principal will take appropriate action or invoke the provisions of this policy.

The overriding principle is, however, that all members of the School community have the right to work or be in School without fear of aggression or abuse from Parents. The Hub Advisory Board has a requirement to protect staff and students from such aggression.

## 2. Definition of unacceptable behaviour

We consider that aggressive, abusive or insulting behaviour or language from a Parent presents a risk to staff or students. Unacceptable behaviour is such that makes a member of staff or student feel threatened. 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 insult as an attempt to demean, embarrass or undermine
- any kind of threat
- raising of voice so as to be intimidating
- physical intimidation, e.g. by standing very close or the use of aggressive hand gestures
- use of foul or abusive language
- any kind of physical abuse

If a Parent behaves in an unacceptable way towards a member of the Hele's School community, the Principal 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.

### **3. Risk Assessment**

In all cases, the response will be reasonable and proportionate. The Principal will consider:

- 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'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).
- Has the individual been verbally aggressive/threatening/intimidating?
- Has the individual been physically aggressive/threatening/intimidating?
- Does the individual have a known previous history of aggression/violence? (*Information can only be sought from the Police when an official complaint has been made*).
- Have Students witnessed aggressive/threatening/intimidating behaviour from the individual?
- Have Students been approached inappropriately by the individual?
- Has the individual been abusive to school staff, Students or other visitors?
- Is there a risk (low, medium or high) that the behaviour may be repeated?

### **4. Recording of Incidents**

All incidents must be reported to the Principal.

Staff/students 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 Principal's PA. Depending on an assessment of the risk of retaliation to witnesses or individuals, redacted statements made by adults may be made available to the Parent if requested.

### **5. School's response**

The progress and wellbeing of the Parent's child(ren) will be fully considered. Actions taken against the Parent will be reasonable and proportionate. The Parent will have the opportunity to put their views forward at every stage. In the case of the imposition of conditions or a ban from School, robust review processes involving the Hub Advisory Board Chair and then the Hub Advisory Board are in place to ensure fairness.

Following the completion of the risk assessment, the Principal will decide the level of action to be taken. Model letters are attached in the appendix to this document for the Principal and Chair of the Hub Advisory Board to use, adapted as necessary. These include warning letters and letters withdrawing permission for the Parent to enter the school site.

Actions will include the following:

**a. Clarify to the Parent 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 could be explained by letter from the Principal. This letter 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. Depending on the Parent's response a meeting may then be held to discuss the situation and how this can be avoided in future.

**b. Invite the Parent to an informal meeting to discuss events**

This could be helpful to discuss and defuse the situation.

The safety and well-being of those attending such a meeting must be carefully considered. Members of School staff will always be accompanied by at least one other colleague at any such meeting. Consideration should 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 should be noted, and a follow-up letter or e-mail sent to confirm the School's expectations and any agreed actions.

**c. Impose conditions on the Parent'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 of enrolled students have an 'implied licence' to come onto Hele's School premises at certain stated times. It is for schools to define and set out the extent of such access. Parents exceeding this would be trespassing.

Depending of the type, level or frequency of the unacceptable behaviour, the Principal may consider imposing conditions on the Parent's contact with School. These conditions may include (but this is not an exhaustive list):

- being accompanied to any meeting with a member of School staff by a member of the Senior Leadership Team
- 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 will be accompanied by a member of the Senior Leadership Team
- any other restriction as deemed reasonable and proportionate by the Principal.

In this case, the Parent 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 Hub Advisory Board Chair. The Hub Advisory Board Chair 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 Hub Advisory Board after approximately six months (and every six months after that, if appropriate). The Parent will be invited to make written representation to the Hub Advisory Board. This, and the evidence from the Principal, will be considered at a meeting of the Hub Advisory Board. The Hub Advisory Board 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 Hub Advisory Board within 10 days of the date of the meeting.

When deciding whether it will be necessary to maintain, extend or remove the conditions, The Hub Advisory Board 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 School in other respects.

**d. *Imposing a ban***

Where other procedures have been exhausted and aggression or intimidation continues OR where there is an extreme act of violence, aggression or intimidation then School may consider barring the individual from the premises. This will include banning a Parent from accessing Hele's School staff by written communication, telephone or face-to-face.

In these circumstances, the individual would be advised in writing by the Principal that a provisional ban is being imposed. The Parent would then be given 10 working days from the date of that letter to make representations about the ban in writing to the Hub Advisory Board Chair. The Hub Advisory Board Chair would then decide whether to confirm or remove the ban. This would be communicated to the Parent in writing within 10 working days of the receipt of their letter.

If the Chair's decision is to confirm the ban, Parents in these circumstances will be offered an annual meeting about their child's progress, usually with the Principal or a nominated member of Senior Leadership Team.

A decision to impose a ban will be reviewed by the Hub Advisory Board after approximately six months (and every six months after that, if appropriate). The Parent will be invited to make written representation to the Hub Advisory Board; this, and the evidence from the Principal, will be considered at a meeting of the Hub Advisory Board. The Hub Advisory Board may decide to remove the ban, extend the ban or impose conditions on Parent's access to School. The decision of the review will be communicated to the Parent by the Clerk to the Hub Advisory Board within 10 days of the date of the meeting.

In deciding whether to remove or extend the ban or impose conditions, the Hub Advisory Board will give consideration to the extent of the Parent's 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's co-operation with School in other respects.

**e. *Removal from School***

Parents who have been banned from School premises and continue to cause a nuisance will be deemed to have committed a section 547 offence under the Education Act 1996<sup>1</sup>. In these circumstances, the offender may be removed from School. This may be carried out by a Police Officer or appropriate authority, such as the Principal, delegated member of the senior. Legal proceedings may be brought against the Parent.

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<sup>1</sup> *It is a criminal offence for a person who is on school premises without legal permission to cause or permit a nuisance or a 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 up to £500.*

## **6. Support for Staff**

If a member of staff is unfortunate enough to be subject to serious physical and/or verbal abuse, there are a variety of sources of support available to them:

- The staff member's line manager.
- The Principal or any member of the School's Senior Leadership Team who should be informed immediately so they can provide appropriate support.
- Care First. Phone 0800 174319 for practical support and wellbeing services, with 24/7 access to counsellors.
- A Trade Union.

## **7. Support for Students**

Students who are affected by any incident should be made aware that they can speak to a member of staff. This could be their Tutor, their Head of Year or Pastoral Support Manager, a member of the pastoral team, or any member of the senior team, who will ensure appropriate support is provided.

## **8. Monitoring and Review**

School will keep an electronic log of any unacceptable behaviour along with the actions taken to address it. The Principal will also report any incidents and how they have been dealt with to the Westcountry Schools Trust Director of Inclusion on a termly basis.

## **9. Related Policies and Other Documents**

- Child protection and safeguarding policy (WeST)
- Health and safety policy
- Complaints policy and procedure
- Hele's School Home School Agreement

## 10. Appendices

### *Warning*

Model letter 1: This is an initial letter from the Principal to ensure the Parent is clear about behaviour standards expected by School. This letter contains a warning about further action if there are other incidents. The letter invites a written response and suggests a meeting.

### *Imposing conditions on the Parent's attendance at School events*

Model letter 2: This is a letter from the Principal informing Parents of the School's decision to impose conditions on the Parent's attendance at School events, pending review by the Hub Advisory Board Chair.

Model letter 3: Letter from the Hub Advisory Board Chair informing Parent of the decision to confirm or remove the conditions.

### *Imposing a ban*

Model letter 4: Letter from Principal Informing Parents of School's intention to impose a ban on their attendance at School premises, pending review by the Hub Advisory Board Chair.

Model letter 5: Letter from the Hub Advisory Board Chair informing Parents of the decision to confirm or remove ban.

### *Reviewing the decision to impose conditions or impose a ban*

Model Letter 6: Letter from the Clerk to the Hub Advisory Board requesting a statement from Parents to the Hub Advisory Board for review a of decision.

Model letter 7: Letter from the Clerk to the Hub Advisory Board to confirm the outcome of further reviews of decisions where the imposition of conditions/ban has been extended or removed.



*Model Letter 1 Warning (sent by the Principal)*

Recorded delivery

Dear

I have received a report about your conduct at Hele's School on (enter date and time or details). This appears to fall far short of that we would expect of a Parent of a student at Hele's School.

(Add factual summary of the incident and of its effect on staff, students, and other Parents.)

I must inform you that the Hub Advisory Board will not tolerate aggression towards members of the School community and will act to protect its staff and students from any form of abuse or intimidation. I should warn you that any future conduct of this nature could result in School imposing conditions restricting your access to the premises or banning you from contacting or attending Hele's School altogether.

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. Please do so within 10 working days of the date of this letter. These comments may include any assurances you are prepared to give about your future good conduct. There is then an option for us to meet to discuss the situation and how it can be avoided in the future.

Details of our policy on Safeguarding Staff from Abuse can be found in the 'School Information' section on the Hele's School website, <https://www.heles.plymouth.sch.uk/>.

Yours sincerely

**Principal**

cc: Hub Advisory Board Chair

*Model Letter: 2 Imposing conditions on the Parent's attendance at School events, pending review (sent by the Principal)*

Recorded delivery

Dear

I have received a report from the (name of staff) about your conduct on ..... at Hele's School on .....

(add summary of incident and its effect on staff and students)

(You will recollect that I have already written to you about a previous incident on (date) warning you of the consequence of any further insulting or aggressive behaviour on your part)

I must inform you that the Hub Advisory Board, in line with our policy, will not tolerate conduct of this nature on School premises and will act to defend School staff and students.

I am therefore writing to inform you that I am imposing conditions on the contact you may have with School. These are as follows: (delete as appropriate)

- You must be accompanied to any meeting by a member of the Senior Leadership Team
- You may not contact - by telephone, in writing or face-to-face - any member of staff, other than myself
- You may not attend any events for Parents except those agreed by the Principal, where you will be accompanied by a member of School's Senior Leadership Team
- *(Others as are reasonable and proportionate).*

The restrictions above are provisional until they have been reviewed by the Chair of the Hub Advisory Board. Please consider them to be in force until you receive formal confirmation from the Chair.

The Hub Advisory Board Chair will need to decide whether it is appropriate to confirm or overturn this decision. You may, if you wish, send the Chair a letter in writing any comments or observations of your own within 10 working days of the date of this letter. These comments may be to challenge or explain the facts of the incident, or to express regret and give assurances about your future good conduct. The Chair will then write to you with the outcome of the decision.

If, on receipt of your comments, the Hub Advisory Board Chair considers that my decision should be confirmed, you will be supplied with details of how the conditions will be reviewed by the Hub Advisory Board.

Yours sincerely,

**Principal**

cc: Hub Advisory Board Chair

*Model Letter 3: Letter to confirm or overturn Principal's decision to impose conditions (sent by the Hub Advisory Board Chair)*

Recorded delivery

Dear

Mrs Mason wrote to you on (date) to detail concerns about an incident when your behaviour towards (name) fell short of what we would expect at Hele's School. You will be aware that she has written to you previously about your behaviour towards staff.

I have not received a written response from you/I have received a letter from you dated ....., the contents of which I have considered carefully. (delete as appropriate)

In the circumstances, and after further consideration of the Principal's report and your letter, I have determined that the decision to impose conditions on your contact with School should be confirmed. The conditions are as follows:

- (Copy conditions from the Principal's letter)

This decision will be reviewed by the Hub Advisory Board in approximately six months' time. The Clerk to the Hub Advisory Board will write to you in advance of the meeting to ask you to provide a written statement for their consideration. When deciding whether it will be necessary to extend the application of conditions to attend School premises, consideration will be given to: the extent of your compliance with the decision; any appropriate expressions of regret and assurance of future good conduct received from you; and any evidence of your co-operation with School in other respects.

OR

In the circumstances, and after further consideration of the Principal's report and your letter, I have determined that the decision to impose conditions on you should be overturned. You may therefore attend School events as normal. However, should there be a repeat of inappropriate behaviour towards staff, all of the above sanctions may be applied.

Yours sincerely,

**Hub Advisory Board Chair**

cc: Principal

*Model Letter 4: Imposition of a ban on contacting or attending the School, pending review (sent by Principal)*

Recorded delivery

Dear

I have received a report from the (name of staff) about your conduct on ..... at  
.....

(add summary of incident and its effect on staff, students and other Parents)

You will recollect that I have already written to you about a previous incident on (date), warning you of the consequence of any further insulting or aggressive behaviour on your part.

I must inform you that the Hub Advisory Board, in line with our policy, will not tolerate conduct of this nature on School premises and will act to defend School staff and students.

I am therefore writing to inform you that I am recommending imposing a ban on you attending or contacting School. This means you may not attend School for any reason whatsoever. You must not make contact - by telephone, email or face-to-face - with any member of staff. You do, however, have the right to attend one meeting per year to discuss your child's progress. This meeting will be with me. I will contact you to arrange this at the time of the next Parents' Evening.

The restrictions above are provisional until they have been reviewed by the Hub Advisory Board Chair. Please consider them to be in force until you receive formal confirmation from the Chair.

The Hub Advisory Board Chair will need to decide whether it is appropriate to confirm or overturn this decision. Please send the Chair, in writing, any comments or observations of your own within 10 working days of the date of this letter. These comments may be to challenge or explain the facts of the incident, or to express regret and give assurances about your future good conduct.

If, on receipt of your comments, the Hub Advisory Board Chair considers that my decision should be confirmed, you will be supplied with details of how this ban will be reviewed by the Hub Advisory Board.

Yours sincerely,

**Principal**

cc: Chair of Hub Advisory Board

*Model Letter 5: Letter to confirm or overturn Principal's decision to impose a ban (sent by the Hub Advisory Board Chair)*

Recorded delivery

Dear

Mrs Mason wrote to you on (date) to detail concerns about an incident when your behaviour towards (name) fell far short of what we would expect at Hele's School. You will be aware that she has written to you previously about your behaviour towards staff.

I have (not received a written response from you/I have received a letter from you dated .....), the contents of which I have considered carefully. (delete as appropriate).

In the circumstances, and after further consideration of the Principal's report and your letter, I have determined that the decision to impose a ban on you should be confirmed. This means you may not attend School for any reason whatsoever. You must not make contact - by telephone, email or face-to-face - with any member of staff. You do, however, have the right to attend one meeting per year to discuss your child's progress. This meeting will be with Mrs Mason or a member of the Senior Leadership Team assigned by her.

This decision will be reviewed in six months' time by the

Hub Advisory Board. The Clerk to the Hub Advisory Board will write to you in advance of the meeting of the Hub Advisory Board to ask you to provide a written statement for their consideration. When deciding whether it will be necessary to extend the application of conditions to attend School premises, consideration will be given to: the extent of your compliance with the decision; any appropriate expressions of regret and assurance of future good conduct received from you; and any evidence of your co-operation with School in other respects.

OR

In the circumstances, and after further consideration of the Principal's report and your letter, I have determined that the decision to impose a ban should be overturned. You may hence attend School events as normal. However, should there be a repeat of inappropriate behaviour towards staff, all of the above sanctions may be applied.

Yours sincerely,

**Chair of Hub Advisory Board**

cc: Principal

*Model Letter 6: Letter from the Clerk to the Hub Advisory Board requesting Parents' statement for review by the Hub Advisory Board (sent by the Clerk to Hub Advisory Board)*

Recorded delivery

Dear

Mrs Mason wrote to you on (date) to detail concerns about your behaviour towards school staff/students fell short of what we would expect at Hele's School. As a result of this incident, conditions were imposed on you/a ban was imposed.

This decision will be reviewed by the Hub Advisory Board at their next meeting on (date).

I am writing to ask whether you would like to make a written statement to Hub Advisory Board for their consideration in making the decision whether to remove the restriction or extend it.

If you should wish to make a written statement, please can you email it to me at (address) by (date – Parents should be given 10 days to respond).

Yours sincerely,

**Clerk to the Hub Advisory Board**

cc: Principal

*Model Letter 7: Letter detailing outcome of Hub Advisory Board's review (sent by the Clerk to the Hub Advisory Board)*

Dear

I wrote to you on (date) to request a statement to enable the Hub Advisory Board to review Hele's School's decision to impose conditions/ban you from attending School premises.

I have not received a written response from you/I have received a letter from you dated ....., the contents of which were considered carefully by the Hub Advisory Board at their meeting on (date). (delete as appropriate).

In the circumstances, and after further consideration of the Principal's report (and your letter) the Hub Advisory Board, have determined that the decision to impose conditions/ban you from attending or contacting School attend should be confirmed. The conditions of your attendance on site are as follows:

- You must be accompanied to any meeting by a member of School's Senior Leadership Team
- You may not contact - by telephone, in writing or face-to-face - any member of staff, except for Mrs Mason
- You may not attend any events for Parents, except those where you will be accompanied by a member of School's Senior Leadership Team
- (Any other condition imposed).

OR

- You must not attend any event in School, except for an annual meeting about your child's progress. This meeting will be conducted by Mrs Mason
- You may not contact - by telephone, in writing or face-to-face - any member of staff, except for Miss Mason.

This decision will be reviewed again in six months' time. When deciding whether it will be necessary to extend the application of conditions to attend School premises, consideration will be given to: the extent of your compliance with the decision; any appropriate expressions of regret and assurance of future good conduct received from you; and any evidence of your co-operation with School in other respects.

OR

In the circumstances, and after further consideration of the Principal's report and your letter, Hub Advisory Board have determined that you should once again be allowed to attend Parents' events as usual. All conditions have been removed. However, should there be a repeat of inappropriate behaviour towards staff, this decision may be revoked.

Yours sincerely,

**Clerk to the Hub Advisory Board**

cc: Principal