



# Keeping schools safe

Spring term 2024



**SURREY**  
COUNTY COUNCIL



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# Introduction

Staff and pupils have a right to expect their school/ education setting to be a safe place in which to work and learn.

This guidance aims to assist Headteachers and governing bodies in cases where parents/carers and/or visitors, are threatening, abusive or aggressive towards other members of the school community.

Headteachers are encouraged to raise awareness by sharing this guidance with all staff and also to consider the guidance when reviewing the school's emergency plan.

In cases where abusive comments or threats are made on social media regarding members of the school community, please refer to the Surrey County Council guidance document "Dealing with adverse comments and complaints against schools on social media" (Autumn term 2023).

This document should be read alongside the Department of Education guidance *Controlling access to school premises*, November 2018:

[Controlling access to school premises - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

**NB – the term “parent/carer” is used throughout this document, however it is recognised that the guidance may equally apply to other members of the school community.**

## Versions

September 2019	First issued
Spring term 2024	Revised and reissued

# Who can go onto school premises?

Schools/settings are private property and people do not have an automatic right of access. Parent/carers and other visitors have an “implied licence” to come on to school premises at certain times, for instance:

- for appointments
- to attend a school event
- to drop off or pick up children
- to support school activities and events

Schools should share and publish with the parent/carer community and visitors their procedures and arrangements for access (see Appendix A). Anyone who does not comply with the published arrangements may be considered as trespassing.

# Preventative actions

Surrey County Council's Strategic Risk Management (SRM) team has produced a risk assessment template for schools and settings to manage the risk of incidents caused by acts of physical and verbal violence and aggression.

The template assessment is available via the Surrey Education Service hub, under the 'risk assessment' section in the 'resources' area: [Health and Safety - Strategic Risk Management Resources Area | Surrey Education Services \(surreycc.gov.uk\)](https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/education-services/health-and-safety/strategic-risk-management-resources).

The template assessment can assist in identifying control measures to protect school staff from a risk of violence or aggression. These include:

## Working Environment

- Good visibility and lighting throughout the workplace to ensure workers are seen.
- Security measures eg. CCTV and alarm systems to provide deterrent effect.
- Display of warning notices or posters to remind people to respect your employees (see Appendix A)

## Work Arrangements

- Ensure good communication with staff including in relation to lone working
- Ensure sufficient staff strength to manage the risk of violence.

## Training

- Provide staff with training to develop skills in reducing and diffusing potential incidents. Training should include identifying warning signs, interpersonal skills, de-escalation techniques, etc.

## Record Keeping

- Keep records of incidents and review the risk assessments and control measures to ensure their effectiveness.

## Strategies/ arrangements to avoid future situations of potential conflict

It may be possible for leaders and staff to identify situations of potential conflict and to plan for these in a way that minimises potential risks.

For example, where a parent/carer persistently engages in inappropriate discussion with staff at the classroom door at the beginning or end of the school day, the parent/carer could be informed that any discussions with school/setting staff must be held by prior appointment, or that they are only able to have discussions with a designated member of staff (such as a senior leader). Alternatively, it may be appropriate to require the parent/carer to drop off and pick up their child from a designated area (such as the school office).

In more serious cases a further option may be to implement a communications plan between the school/setting and a parent/carer. The specific content of the plan will depend on the areas of concern but may include setting up a dedicated email account, and special arrangements for face to face meetings. School and setting leaders can access template communications plans and advice on implementation from the School Relationships Area Schools Officer. [school.relationships@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:school.relationships@surreycc.gov.uk)

In order for strategies to be effective, staff must be advised of the arrangements, and understand the importance of responding consistently.

# Immediate actions in the event of an incident

## Serious incidents

School/setting leaders must respond immediately to ensure the safety of the school community. This may include removing pupils and staff from the vicinity of the incident and calling the police.

## Reassure those affected

School/setting leaders will be mindful of their duty of care towards those involved. The deployment of appropriate support will depend on the nature of the concern and the needs of those affected. Leaders should offer assurance to the school/setting community that the matter is being responded to.

Children and young people should be provided with appropriate support and interventions which may include access to external agencies.

Staff should be signposted to sources of support, such as:

- Line manager or appropriate senior leader
- Professional association representative
- Employee Assistance
- [Education Support helpline - free and confidential emotional support for teachers and education staff](#)

## Witness statements

It is important and essential to consult with the Police if a police investigation has been initiated to prevent any interference with criminal justice processes and obligations.

If there is no Police investigation, leaders should obtain signed and dated witness statements as soon as possible after the incident.

Witness statements should include, where possible:

- The time and date of incident
- The location of incident
- Names and roles/designation of those involved
- Recollection of exact words used

Cases of assault should be recorded in line with the organisation's Health & Safety recording procedure. In the case of maintained schools, incidents should be reported to the council by completing an online health and safety event report.

Any injuries should be photographed (this must be with the victim's consent) for the purpose of evidencing the assault. The victim should be clear about the purpose of the photographs, and who these can be shared with.



# Decision making

## Assessing evidence

The Headteacher should carry out an assessment of the circumstances, evidence (including witness statements) and risk factors in order to identify the most appropriate course of action. Points to consider include:

- What were the circumstances leading up to the incident?
- Were there any mitigating factors?
- Is the evidence consistent?
- Does the parent/carer, visitor, have a known previous history of aggression/violence? If so, what is the nature and frequency of this?
- Did children witness the incident?
- Did the parent/carer express regret or remorse?

In some cases, it may be appropriate to undertake a formal risk assessment.

Having considered the evidence, the Headteacher has two courses of action available (see below). It is important that decision making is objective and is based on the context, individual circumstances, evidence and proportionality.

For advice and support contact the School Relationships Area Schools Officer [school.relationships@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:school.relationships@surreycc.gov.uk)

### 1) Issue a warning

The Headteacher may decide to discuss the incident with the parent/carer/visitor by telephone, a virtual meeting online or at an in-person meeting.

If meeting in person, the safety and well-being of those attending must be carefully considered. It is strongly recommended that the Headteacher is accompanied by a colleague(s). The School Relationships Area Schools Officers offer attendance and facilitation of meetings [school.relationships@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:school.relationships@surreycc.gov.uk)

Consideration should be given to the seating arrangements, and care taken to ensure exits cannot be blocked by a parent/carer/visitor who could potentially become aggressive.

The agenda for the meeting should be planned in advance. A suggested agenda may include:

- Welcome/ introductions
- Discussion of the issue/concern which led to the incident.
- Agreement of actions to address the issue/concern, with timescale for review and next steps.
- Headteacher to advise parent/carer that their behaviour during the incident in question was unacceptable (with reference to the school's arrangements/procedures for accessing the premises, see Appendix A).
- Headteacher to advise parent/carer that any further unacceptable behaviour may lead to a ban from the premises.

The Headteacher should write to the parent/carer following the meeting to confirm the issues discussed, the outcomes and behaviour expectations (see Appendix B).

Please note that some parents/carers/visitors may covertly record meetings, and therefore Headteachers should state explicitly that any recording of the meeting made without permission will not be admissible in any future proceedings.

## **2) Implement a ban from the school premises**

The Headteacher can ban a parent/carer/visitor from the school premises if it is deemed that their aggressive, abusive, or insulting behaviour or language is a risk to the safety and wellbeing of staff and/or pupils. The DfE guidance [Controlling access to school premises - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/controlling-access-to-school-premises) confirms that “It’s enough for a member of staff or a pupil to feel threatened”.

The ban should be communicated to the parent/carer in writing (see Appendix B). The letter will usually be sent by the Headteacher, but in some cases it may be more appropriate for it to be sent by the Chair of Governors, or Chief Executive Officer of the Multi Academy Trust. It is important to bear in mind that any person involved at this stage would not be able to investigate any subsequent complaint or associated process..

The parent/carer/visitor must have the opportunity to reply. Therefore the school/setting can either:

- Ban the individual temporarily with immediate effect (for example for a period of up to five school working days) to give him/her the opportunity to formally present their side.
- OR
- Tell the parent/carer that the school intends to ban them and invite them to present their side by a set deadline (for example five school working days).

After the parent/carer’s side has been heard, the school can decide whether to continue with the ban or remove it. This decision should be communicated in writing.

The ban should be implemented for a reasonable period. In most cases, for a first offence, a ban of up to four weeks is likely to be sufficient. In more serious cases a longer banning period of up to six months may be considered but regular reviews (half termly) should take place.

# Appendix A - Rules for accessing the school premises

The Department for Education advises that schools should set out their rules for access to the school premises and explain that anyone who breaks those rules would be trespassing [Controlling access to school premises - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/controlling-access-to-school-premises)

Schools may wish to adopt the following wording and share it with parent/carers/carers/parent/carers via the Home School Agreement, school website, newsletters etc:

**We recognise and value our partnerships with parent/carers, carers and members of the community, and we welcome parent/carers to our school for**

- **Appointments**
- **Attending a school event**
- **To drop off or pick up younger children and those with additional needs.**
- **Supporting school activities**

**We will act to ensure that our school remains a safe place for pupils, staff and all other members of our community. If a parent/carer/carer/parent/carer has concerns we will always listen to them and seek to address them.**

**Abusive, threatening or violent behaviour will not be tolerated. If such behaviour occurs the school may consider banning the person involved, in line with Department for Education guidance on Controlling Access to School Premises, November 2018. Any person who does not comply with these requirements would be trespassing and legal action may be taken.**

# **Appendix A cont'd- Poster for reception area**

Schools may wish to display the poster overleaf prominently in their reception area.

(Add school logo)

**We welcome parent/carers to our school.**

**We will act to ensure it remains a safe place for pupils, staff and all other members of our community.**

**If you have concerns we will listen to them and seek to address them.**

**Please be aware that abusive, threatening or violent behaviour will not be tolerated.**

**Parent/carers and visitors behaving in this way may be subject to a ban from the school site.**

**No meeting at the school may be electronically recorded without the express permission of all parties. Information obtained without such permission will not be admissible in any proceedings.**



# Appendix B - Model letters

## Letter 1 Warning

Dear

I understand that you have expressed concern about (**summarise issue**) and I am keen to work in partnership with you to resolve this. Therefore I would like to offer to meet with you (**details**)...

As part of our meeting I would like to discuss my concerns regarding your behaviour on the school site on (**insert date**). (**Summary of incident and its effect on staff and pupils**). I hope that we can work together to avoid any repetition of this behaviour. Should there be a repetition of such behaviour on the school site towards any member of the school community I may have to consider arrangements to limit your access to certain staff/ areas of the school, or withdrawal of permission for you to enter the school premises.

**OR**

Thank you for meeting with me on (**insert date**) to discuss your concerns regarding (**summarise issue**). As discussed the following agreed actions have been/are being implemented:

- **Action, timescale for implementation, review date**
- **Action, timescale for implementation, review date**
- **etc**

As discussed during our meeting, your behaviour on the school site on (**date**) was unacceptable. (**Summary of incident and its effect on staff and pupils**). I hope that we can work together to avoid any repetition of this behaviour. As discussed, a repetition of such behaviour on the school site towards any member of the school community may be followed by arrangements to limit your access to certain staff/ areas of the school, or withdrawal of permission for you to enter the school premises.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

## Letter 2 Banning letter

Dear

I am writing to advise you formally that your behaviour on the school site on **(date)** was unacceptable. **(Summary of incident and its effect on staff and pupils).**

I am therefore instructing you that:

### **EITHER (Immediate ban)**

***a) You are banned immediately from the school site. If you do not comply with this instruction I shall arrange for you to be removed from the premises. If you cause a nuisance or disturbance on the premises you may be prosecuted under section 547 of the Education Act 1996; if convicted under this section, you are liable to a fine of £500.***

***The ban will be in place temporarily in the first instance, to enable me to review all relevant evidence. If you wish to provide me with any information (e.g. to challenge or explain the facts of the incident, and/or to express regret and give assurances about your future good conduct) please do so by (date – 5 school working days from date of letter).***

***Immediately following my review of all relevant information I will write to inform you whether the ban has been confirmed and the length of time it will be in place, or whether I have decided to lift the ban.***

***For the duration of the ban you must continue to bring your child(ren) to school and collect them at the end of the school day, but you must not go beyond the school gate. (For infant children – arrangements have been made for your child(ren) to be collected and returned to you at the school gate by a member of the school staff). Special arrangements can be made for you to meet with a member of staff, if necessary, but this may only be with my written permission.***

**This letter should be followed up with Letter 3a (page 16)**

### **OR (considering a ban)**

***b) I am considering whether it is appropriate to ban you from the school site. In order for me to reach that decision I need to review all relevant evidence. If you wish to provide me with any information (e.g. to challenge or explain the facts of the incident, and/or to express regret and give assurances about your future good conduct) please do so by (date – 5 school working days from date of letter).***

***Immediately following my review of all relevant information I will write to inform you whether I have decided that a ban is appropriate and the length of time it will be in place, or whether I have decided not to implement a ban.***

**This letter should be followed up with Letter 3b (page 17).**

Yours sincerely  
Headteacher

## Letter 3a Outcome of the review of evidence – confirming ban (or not)

Dear

On **(date)** I wrote to inform you that I had taken the decision to ban you from the school site whilst I considered all relevant information relating to the incident which occurred on **(date)**.

You were given the opportunity to provide me with your written comments by **(date)**. ***I have not received a written response from you OR I have received a letter from you (date), the contents of which I have carefully considered.***

### **EITHER (Ban)**

***Having considered all relevant information, I have determined that the decision to ban you from the school premises should be confirmed. I am therefore instructing that you are banned for a period of (length of ban). Therefore, the first date that you are able to return to the school site is (date).***

***If you do not comply with this instruction I shall arrange for you to be removed from the premises of the school. If you cause a nuisance or disturbance on the premises, you may be prosecuted under Section 547 of the Education Act 1996; if convicted under this section, you are liable to a fine of up to £500.***

***Should significant new information become available, or there is a significant change in circumstances, you may request a review of the ban.***

***Even though I have taken this decision, myself and the staff at ..... School remain committed to the education of your child(ren), who must continue to attend school as normal (insert for primary age children) under the arrangements set out in my previous letter.***

***If you wish to pursue the matter further you have a right to complain to the Chair of Governors, who will consider the circumstances of the decision to withdraw permission for you to come on to the school site. You can make your complaint by writing to Mr/Mrs X, Chair of Governors (insert email address).***

### **OR (No ban)**

***Having considered all relevant information, I have determined that a ban is not appropriate on this occasion, however I would remind you that we expect all members of the school community to treat one another in a respectful manner.***

Yours sincerely

Headteacher



## Letter 3b Outcome of the review of evidence – imposing ban (or not)

Dear

On **(date)** I wrote to inform you that I was considering banning you from the school site following the incident which occurred on **(date)**.

You were given the opportunity to provide me with your written comments by (date). ***I have not received a written response from you OR I have received a letter from you (date), the contents of which I have carefully considered.***

### ***EITHER (Ban)***

***Having considered all relevant information, I have determined that it is appropriate to implement a ban for a period of (length of ban). Therefore, the ban will start from (date) and the first date that you are able to return to the school site is (date).***

***If you do not comply with this instruction I shall arrange for you to be removed from the premises of the school. If you cause a nuisance or disturbance on the premises, you may be prosecuted under Section 547 of the Education Act 1996; if convicted under this section, you are liable to a fine of up to £500.***

***Should significant new information become available, or there is a significant change in circumstances, you may request a review of the ban.***

***Even though I have taken this decision, myself and the staff at ..... School remain committed to the education of your child(ren). For the duration of the ban you must continue to bring your child(ren) to school and collect them at the end of the school day, but you must not go beyond the school gate. (For infant children – arrangements have been made for your child(ren) to be collected and returned to you at the school gate by a member of the school staff). Special arrangements can be made for you to meet with a member of staff, if necessary, but this may only be with my written permission.***

***If you wish to pursue the matter further you have a right to complain to the Chair of Governors, who will consider the circumstances of the decision to withdraw permission for you to come on to the school site. You can make your complaint by writing to Mr/Mrs X, Chair of Governors (insert email address).***

### ***OR (No ban)***

***Having considered all relevant information, I have determined that a ban is not appropriate on this occasion, however I would remind you that we expect all members of the school community to treat one another in a respectful manner.***

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

## Letter 4 Restore permission at end of ban period

Dear

Further to my letter **(dated)** I am writing to confirm that as of **(date)** you will be allowed to access the school site in the normal manner.

***I must warn you, however, that if it should become necessary in the future I shall not hesitate to withdraw permission for you to come onto the school premises once again.***

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

# Appendix C - Dealing with abusive telephone calls

Sometimes staff may have to deal with challenging, abusive, aggressive or threatening telephone calls. It is unacceptable for any member of staff to be subjected to abuse. This guidance has been produced to assist staff in effectively managing and responding to these situations.

To reduce the likelihood of callers becoming abusive staff should conduct themselves in a courteous and professional manner and make every attempt to meet the needs of the caller. Staff should also be confident and understand that it is acceptable to end an abusive telephone call.

## Always

- remain calm and polite
- actively listen – repeat information back to the caller to test understanding of the issue and gain their agreement
- inform the caller they are trying to help them
- be positive and say what you can do
- be clear and avoid using jargon
- if necessary, apologise for an error and take action to put it right
- if you have to go and get some information, let the caller know why you are putting them on hold and do not leave them on hold for a long time
- make notes of the conversation
- follow the procedure below if appropriate
- refer to the caller to the Headteacher or other member of SLT.

## Never

- respond in the same manner as an abusive caller
- take it personally
- allow yourself to be bullied
- slam the phone down.

## **Script for abusive telephone calls**

### **When the caller starts to raise their voice/be abusive:**

Mr/Mrs/Ms.... please don't raise your voice/swear at me, I am not raising my voice/being rude to you. If you continue to raise your voice/be rude to me then I will need to terminate the call.

### **When the caller continues to raise their voice/be abusive:**

Mr/Mrs/Ms..... I understand you are upset/frustrated however I am not prepared to continue to be shouted/sworn at so you can either call back when you have calmed down or if you prefer you can put your views in writing.

### **If, despite the two warnings above, the caller continues to raise their voice/be abusive:**

Mr/Mrs/Ms.... I advised you earlier during this call about raising your voice/swearing and you have continued to do this, so I am afraid I am going to have to terminate this call. **Hang up.**

### **Further actions:**

Make a written note (signed and dated) of the telephone call and report the incident to your line manager.

# Appendix D - Contact details

<b>West Surrey Area Schools Officers</b>	Kate Charles – 07792 587096 – <a href="mailto:kate.charles@surreycc.gov.uk">kate.charles@surreycc.gov.uk</a> Cara Harding – 07968 834131 – <a href="mailto:cara.harding@surreycc.gov.uk">cara.harding@surreycc.gov.uk</a>
<b>East Surrey Area Schools Officers</b>	Ann Panton – 07976 924186 – <a href="mailto:ann.panton@surreycc.gov.uk">ann.panton@surreycc.gov.uk</a> Adelina (Addy) Mason - 07814 804432 – <a href="mailto:adelina.mason@surreycc.gov.uk">adelina.mason@surreycc.gov.uk</a>
<b>Team Email</b>	<a href="mailto:school.relationships@surreycc.gov.uk">school.relationships@surreycc.gov.uk</a>

<b>Surrey County Council Legal Services</b>  (for those schools which buy in to this service)	<a href="mailto:education.legal@surreycc.gov.uk">education.legal@surreycc.gov.uk</a>  0208 541 9088
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<b>Health and Safety – Strategic Risk Management</b>	<a href="mailto:srm.hands@surreycc.gov.uk">srm.hands@surreycc.gov.uk</a>
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