



Guidance for dealing with unacceptable behaviour by stakeholders¹

1. Introduction

At Ysgol Frongoch, our stakeholders have a right to be heard, understood and respected. Our staff and governors have the right to work in a safe environment, free from any abuse or harm caused by others.

The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 places a duty on employers to take reasonably practicable steps to protect the safety and health of their employees whilst at work, and that of others who may be affected by their operations and activities.

In a small number of cases the actions of some individual stakeholders become unacceptable because they involve abuse of our staff, governors and/or our processes. As an employer, the school has a duty to protect its staff and governors. This document outlines the school's procedure for dealing with unacceptable stakeholder actions and should be read in conjunction with the policy for dealing with unacceptable behaviour by stakeholders.

2. Aims

The main aims of this procedure are:

- To ensure that all stakeholders, including those whose actions are considered unacceptable, are dealt with fairly, honestly, consistently and appropriately.
- To ensure that other stakeholders, school staff and governors do not suffer any disadvantage from stakeholders who act in an unacceptable manner.
- To make it clear how the school will support staff and governors who experience unacceptable stakeholder behaviour.

3. Unacceptable stakeholder behaviour

There are a range of stakeholder behaviours we consider to be unacceptable, which can be best grouped as follows:

- Aggressive or abusive behaviour.

¹ Stakeholder definition: anyone who has contact with the school except for staff [where unreasonable behaviour will be dealt with under the disciplinary procedure] and students [where unreasonable behaviour will be dealt with under the school's behaviour policy] and governors [where issues are governed by the governor's code of conduct].

- Unacceptable and unreasonable demands and/or unacceptable and unreasonable levels of contact.

The school appreciates that there may be circumstances which sometimes prevent stakeholders communicating in a rational and coherent manner, such as mental health issues, learning difficulties, or other disabilities or conditions; therefore to help resolve any related communication issues the school may seek further advice from relevant services and professionals.

If required, advice should be sought from social services via the Single Point of Access Team (0300 456 1000) regarding what, if any, action should be taken. In such cases, it may not be appropriate to apply this policy.

4. Aggressive or abusive behaviour

Aggressive or abusive behaviour includes language (whether verbal or written) and action that may cause staff/governors to feel afraid, threatened or abused and may include threats, personal verbal abuse, derogatory remarks and rudeness.

Inflammatory statements, remarks of a discriminatory nature and unsubstantiated allegations, are also considered to be abusive behaviour.

5. Managing aggressive or abusive behaviour

Wherever possible, we will give the stakeholder the opportunity to change their behaviour before we take any action. If the behaviour does not change, we will contact the local authority by email Education.Audit@denbighshire.gov.uk or by phone 01824 708064 for advice on invoking this policy.

The stakeholder will be contacted in writing and advised that their behaviour has reached the threshold required to invoke our policy for dealing with unacceptable stakeholder behaviour. The stakeholder will be asked to modify their behaviour, for example not using abusive language ([Appendix 1](#), [Appendix 2](#) & [Appendix 3](#) contain template letters).

If the behaviour continues, then the policy should be applied and restrictions implemented ([Appendix 4](#) contain template letters).

- **Appointments/visits/meetings**

Staff/governors will terminate appointments/visits/meetings if they consider the stakeholder's behaviour to be aggressive, abusive or offensive. Staff/governors have the right to make this decision, to tell the stakeholder that their behaviour is unacceptable and to terminate the appointment/visit/meeting if the behaviour then persists ([Appendix 5](#) contains a template letter).

- **Correspondence**

Where correspondence that is abusive or offensive is received, we will inform the sender that we consider their language offensive, unnecessary and unhelpful and ask them to stop using such language. We will ask that the

sender edit their correspondence to remove any offensive text and resend it, otherwise it will not be responded to ([Appendix 6](#) contains a template letter).

- **Telephone calls**

Staff/governors will end telephone calls if they consider the caller aggressive, abusive or offensive. Staff/governors have the right to make this decision, to tell the caller that their behaviour is unacceptable and to end the call if the behaviour then persists ([Appendix 7](#)

Dear <insert name here>

I am writing to you following your recent <phone call, letter etc. delete as appropriate>with my colleague, <insert officer name and job title here> in relation to the <insert subject here>.

I have been advised by <insert officer name here> that during the telephone call you were verbally aggressive towards him/her and at times s/he felt that the language you used was offensive, unnecessary and unhelpful.

I would like to take this opportunity to advise you that this behaviour towards staff at the school is unacceptable. I also consider unsubstantiated allegations made against staff to be equally unacceptable.

Staff undertake a difficult and challenging job to work with pupils, parents and members of the public and should be able to do this without fear of such unacceptable behaviour.

If I am notified of this type of incident again, staff will be advised to end the telephone call. If it persists I may consider limiting contact with you.

I look forward to your co-operation in this matter and please contact me if you need to discuss the issues raised.

Yours faithfully

<insert name here>
<insert job title here>

Appendix contains a template follow-up letter).

- **Social media**

We reserve the right to remove any offensive or abusive posts or comments left on our Facebook pages or twitter account. Any repeated misuse will lead to reporting the abusive post or comment to Facebook or twitter and the user being blocked from the page.

Where a stakeholder has made derogatory, abusive or offensive comments about the staff, governors or school on social media, they will be asked to remove the comments and invited to a meeting with the school to discuss their concerns ([Appendix 8](#) contains a template letter).

Should the post cause harassment to staff or governors then the matter will be referred to the police ([Appendix 9](#) contains a template letter).

Further advice and support can be obtained from Denbighshire Corporate communications department on public.relations@denbighshire.gov.uk

- **Allegations**

If a stakeholder makes allegations against staff that lack substantive evidence they will be asked to provide that evidence to begin the complaints process or to withdraw the allegation

6. Reporting aggressive or abusive behaviour

Any incident involving violence, threatened violence, unacceptable language or behaviour towards staff should be reported to line managers and recorded using the [online] incident reporting system, to be determined by each school. This will enable the school to identify risk and protect staff where applicable.

Consideration should be given by the Head teacher to referral to the Staff Protection Register on the Denbighshire intranet page <http://intranet-ad/sorce/>. The register provides staff with access to warnings about individuals or environments that potentially put them at risk.

Head teachers must report all incidents including those which resulted in the policy being invoked to healthandsafetyteam@denbighshire.gov.uk

Where physical violence is used or threatened, the incident must be reported to the police. All direct physical contact will be ended with the stakeholder until the matter is resolved.

7. Unacceptable and unreasonable demands and / or unacceptable and unreasonable levels of contact

A demand becomes unacceptable and unreasonable when it starts to impact excessively on the work of our staff/governors, or when dealing with the matter takes up an excessive amount of time and in so doing, disadvantages other stakeholders, staff and pupils.

Examples of actions grouped under this heading include but are not limited to; demanding responses within an unacceptable and unreasonable timescale, insisting on seeing or speaking to a particular member of staff, continual phone calls or letters, repeatedly changing the substance of the enquiry or raising unrelated concerns, excessive challenging and querying of actions taken and decisions made by the school and refusal to accept a decision etc. can be dealt with in line with this guidance.

8. Managing unacceptable and unreasonable demands and / or unacceptable and unreasonable levels of contact

Wherever possible, we will give the individual the opportunity to change their behaviour before we take any action. The stakeholder will be contacted in writing and advised that their behaviour has reached the threshold required to invoke our policy for dealing with unacceptable stakeholder behaviour. The stakeholder will be asked to modify their behaviour, for example asked not to contact staff/governors on a daily basis. If the behaviour continues, then the policy should be applied and restrictions implemented.

Where we consider contact to be excessive, we may decide (but are not limited) to:

- only take telephone calls from the stakeholder at set times on set days;
- require the stakeholder to correspond in writing only;
- advise the stakeholder that correspondence will only be considered at set times on set days, for example once a week;
- tell the stakeholder that only a certain number of issues will be considered in a given period and ask them to ²limit or focus their requests accordingly;
- allocate a single point of contact for all future contact;
- require the stakeholder to make an appointment before visiting the school;
- return any irrelevant documents to the stakeholder or, if appropriate, advise the stakeholder that further documents will be destroyed;
- refuse to respond to further enquiries from that person;
- refer to the Staff Protection Register;
- take other action we consider appropriate.

Where we decide to impose restrictions as set out above, stakeholder will be notified in writing. Template letters are contained within the appendices, attached to this guidance.

9. Notifying the stakeholder of our action

² All requests for information have the potential of being subject to the requirements of FOI / EIR legislation. Section 14 of the FOI Act provides for dealing with vexatious or repeated requests – please refer to relevant guidance.

When a stakeholder's actions have been deemed unacceptable, the head teacher will decide what action to take and inform the chair of governors.

The stakeholders will be notified in writing outlining:

- why a decision has been made to restrict future contact;
- the restricted contact arrangements;
- the length of time the restrictions will be in place;
- what the stakeholder can do to have the decision reviewed.

Consideration should be given as to whether other departments and agencies should be informed about the unreasonable behaviour, on a 'need to know' basis. Details about the person who behaved unacceptably should be kept confidential and not shared with third parties, unless in accordance with the Data Protection Act³.

10. Termination of direct contact

Continued unacceptable behaviour towards staff/governors is likely to result in a termination of all direct contact with the stakeholder save as to information which must be provided by law e.g. ALN information, complaints information, child protection issues etc.

This decision will be made by the head teacher, following reference to this policy. The head teacher will notify the chair of governors.

We will continue to communicate with the stakeholder by way of a professional 3rd party e.g. SNAP; solicitor etc. should the stakeholder wish to do this, but not via a personal 3rd party e.g. partner or family member.

11. Right of appeal

There will be a right of appeal against the decision of the head teacher to the Governing Body Committee comprising of 3 independent governors, who have no previous knowledge of the detail of the unacceptable behaviour.

An appeal must be made in writing within 10 calendar days of the decision to invoke the policy being made, setting out the reasons for the appeal.

It should be sent to The Chair of Governors at **Ysgol Frongoch**.

The Governing Body committee will aim to determine the appeal within 28 days of receiving the appeal letter. The Governing Body committee will inform the appellant of its decision, in writing (see [Appendix 10](#), [Appendix 11](#) & [Appendix 12](#)).

12. Review of termination of direct contact

³ Please refer to our Data Protection Policy & Procedures.

The decision to restrict contact will be reviewed on a term by term basis, dependent on the situation, by the head teacher and chair of governors. The head teacher and chair of governors may review this decision earlier at their own discretion.

If, after review, a decision is taken to extend the contact restrictions, for example because the stakeholder has not complied with the restrictions, the stakeholder will be notified in writing outlining:

- why a decision has been made to continue to restrict future contact;
- the restricted contact arrangements;
- the length of time the restrictions will be in place.

An appeal will only be considered if new issues are raised which have not been considered as part of any previous appeal. An appeal should be lodged in the same way as described in section 11 above.

13. Recording our decision

We will record all incidents of unacceptable behaviour which has resulted in contact being restricted. We will also clearly document the rationale for imposing restrictions.

All records will be held by the school and reported to healthandsafetyteam@denbighshire.gov.uk

14. Supporting staff

Staff have a responsibility to report unacceptable stakeholder behaviour to their line manager.

The Head Teacher and leadership team has a responsibility to support staff affected by unacceptable stakeholder behaviour. Prompt intervention and action should be taken as soon as the behaviour is identified as unacceptable.

They should ensure that staff are aware and understand the policy and guidelines and be aware of what is and is not acceptable for them to do.

They should also ensure that staff who are involved in an incident should be given the opportunity (as soon as possible after the incident) to talk through what happened. In serious cases it may be appropriate to refer them to Occupational Health. Before the member of staff is put back in an environment similar to where the incident took place they should be given the opportunity to discuss with their manager how a similar incident could be avoided or what to do if something similar occurs again.

Referral to Occupational Health should always be considered where unacceptable stakeholder behaviour has been identified and a member of staff has been affected.

Dear <insert name here>

I am writing to you following your recent <phone call, letter etc. delete as appropriate> with my colleague, <insert officer name and job title here> regarding <insert subject here>.

I note that over the last few weeks there has been many email exchanges between you and various members of staff at the school. Having reviewed the correspondence, I consider the volume of correspondence, and its content at times, has reached the threshold required to invoke our policy for dealing with unacceptable behaviour by stakeholders. I enclose a copy for your information.

The policy allows the school to restrict its dealings with you. However before the policy is invoked I am obliged to provide you with the opportunity to modify how you are communicating with us.

I request that you limit the number of emails and remove any inflammatory content. I would like to avoid having to apply the policy and impose restrictions if possible and I look forward to your co-operation in this matter.

Yours sincerely

<insert name here>
<insert job title here>

Dear <insert name here>

I am writing to you following your recent <phone call, letter etc. delete as appropriate> with my colleague, <insert officer name and job title here> regarding <insert subject here>.

I have been advised by <insert officer name here> that <insert description of incident>.

I would like to take this opportunity to advise you that this behaviour towards staff at the school is unacceptable. Staff undertake a difficult and challenging job and should be able to work without fear of encountering such behaviour.

If I am notified of this type of incident again, I will be forced to take action to protect my staff.

I look forward to your co-operation in this matter.

Yours sincerely

<insert name here>
<insert job title here>

Dear <insert name here>

I write further to your letter to <insert name here>, <insert date here> regarding <insert summary here>.

The matter has been referred to me as a result of the school receiving, what is deemed to be, excessive correspondence from you directed towards various members of staff.

The school aims to deal fairly and properly with all stakeholders, ensuring other stakeholders, staff, or the school as a whole do not suffer any abuse, detriment or unacceptable and unreasonable behaviour. I have reviewed the level and nature of correspondence received from you. I consider the volume of correspondence to have reached the threshold required to invoke our policy for unacceptable behaviour by stakeholder, I enclose a copy for your information.

The policy allows the school to restrict its dealings with you. However, before the policy is invoked, I am obliged to provide you with an opportunity to change your behaviour. I will closely monitor the level of contact the school receives from you and will take action as appropriate in line with the policy.

Yours sincerely

<insert name here>
<insert job title here>

Dear <insert name here>

I am writing to formally confirm that following your unacceptable behaviour on <insert date here> at <insert location here>, in order to protect the environment for other stakeholders and members of staff, it has been necessary to instigate the following restrictions listed below;

<insert details of restriction here>

These restrictions will be valid for a period until <insert date here>.

Should you fail to comply with this instruction, we may consider restricting contact with you entirely.

Should you wish to appeal this decision, please write to Chair of Governors at <insert address of school here> within the next ten working days, setting out the reasons why you wish to appeal.

Yours sincerely

<insert name here>
<insert job title here>

Dear <insert name here>

I am writing to you following a recent visit to your home by <insert officer name and job title here>.

I have been advised by my staff that you have been verbally aggressive towards them and at times they felt threatened by your actions and that their own personal safety was at risk. This type of incident has happened before when officers have visited your home. This incident resulted in them having to terminate their appointment early due to their concern about personal safety.

I would like to take this opportunity to advise you that this is unacceptable and our staff should not have to face such aggression. Staff undertake a difficult and challenging job and should be able to do to this without fear of such behaviour.

If I am notified of this type of incident again, we will have no choice but to pass this onto the Police for further investigation and issue a warning to staff that will be working with you.

I will expect any staff from the school to be able to visit your home with your agreement and undertake their duties without any such incident in the future.

Please contact me if you need to discuss the matter further.

Yours sincerely

<insert name here>
<insert job title here>

Dear <insert name here>

I write in response to your letter dated <insert date> regarding <insert topic>.

I find both the content and tone of your letter to be offensive, unnecessary and unhelpful. Accordingly, I return the letter to you and do not intend to reply at this time.

Should you wish to modify your letter in order to remove the abusive content, I will consider the issues you wish to raise.

Yours sincerely

<insert name here>
<insert job title here>

Dear <insert name here>

I am writing to you following your recent <phone call, letter etc. delete as appropriate>with my colleague, <insert officer name and job title here> in relation to the <insert subject here>.

I have been advised by <insert officer name here> that during the telephone call you were verbally aggressive towards him/her and at times s/he felt that the language you used was offensive, unnecessary and unhelpful.

I would like to take this opportunity to advise you that this behaviour towards staff at the school is unacceptable. I also consider unsubstantiated allegations made against staff to be equally unacceptable.

Staff undertake a difficult and challenging job to work with pupils, parents and members of the public and should be able to do this without fear of such unacceptable behaviour.

If I am notified of this type of incident again, staff will be advised to end the telephone call. If it persists I may consider limiting contact with you.

I look forward to your co-operation in this matter and please contact me if you need to discuss the issues raised.

Yours faithfully

<insert name here>
<insert job title here>

Dear <insert name here>

I am writing to you following your recent posting on social media regarding<insert name of officer here>.

In view of your comments, I would like to invite you to a meeting at the school. The meeting would provide an opportunity to discuss your concerns and look at ways in which we can resolve matters.

I would like to meet on <insert date, time, location here> and would be grateful if you would telephone me on <insert number here>to confirm.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

<insert name here>
<insert job title here>

Dear <insert name here>

I am writing to you following your recent posting on social media regarding<insert name of officer here>.

I would like to take this opportunity to advise you that this behaviour towards staff at the school is unacceptable. I also consider unsubstantiated allegations made against staff to be equally unacceptable.

Staff undertake a difficult and challenging job to work with pupils, parents and members of the public and should be able to do this without fear of such unacceptable behaviour.

I request that you remove this posting immediately. If I am notified of this type of incident again, I may consider limiting contact with you and reporting the matter to the police.

I look forward to your co-operation in this matter and please contact me if you need to discuss the issues raised.

Yours sincerely

<insert name here>
<insert job title here>

Dear <insert name here>

I write to confirm receipt of your appeal against <insert name of school here>decision to invoke its unreasonable customer behaviour policy.

In accordance with the policy, I will now consider your appeal taking into account your comments. I will also request comments from the school.

I will write to you again once I have completed my review. This will be no later than <insert date here>.

Yours sincerely

<insert name here>
<insert job title here>

Dear <insert name here>

I write further to my letter dated <insert date here> regarding <insert name of school here> decision to invoke its unreasonable customer behaviour policy.

In accordance with the policy, I have now considered your appeal. By way of background I am aware that <insert summary of events>.

Given your failure to comply with the school's requests, the unreasonable customer behaviour policy was invoked and the following restrictions were placed upon you:

- <insert list of restrictions>

The school advised you that these restrictions would remain in force until <insert date here>.

Your appeal is based on the following grounds:

- <insert list here>

I have concluded that the school has correctly applied its policy and the restrictions placed against you are entirely reasonable, appropriate and proportionate. If you adhere to the restrictions, the use of the policy will be amended on the review date.

I appreciate you may remain aggrieved following receipt of my response. However, I do not intend to comment further and consider this matter closed.

Yours sincerely

<insert name here>
<insert job title here>

Dear <insert name here>

I write further to my letter dated <insert date here> regarding <insert name of school here> decision to invoke its unreasonable customer behaviour policy.

In accordance with the policy, I have now considered your appeal. By way of background I am aware that <insert summary of events>.

Given your failure to comply with the school's requests, the unreasonable customer behaviour policy was invoked and the following restrictions were placed upon you:

- <insert list of restrictions>

The school advised you that these restrictions would remain in force until <insert date here>.

Your appeal is based on the following grounds:

- <insert list here>

I have concluded that the school has incorrectly applied its policy for the following reasons:
<insert list here>

Consequently, I make the following recommendations:

- <insert list here>

I would like to apologise for any distress this situation may have caused and I will now contact the school with my decision.

Yours sincerely

<insert name here>

<insert job title here>

Additional paragraphs

Should you return to school premises you will be asked to leave, the police may be called and subsequently legal redress may be initiated to prevent further return.

Please note: any stakeholder behaving in an unlawful manner will be reported to the police and the school will seek the application of the maximum penalties available in law. The school will seek to prosecute all perpetrators of crime on or against its staff, property or assets.

Dear <insert name here>

The School has invoked its policy for dealing with unacceptable customer behaviour against you in <insert date here>.

The decision to invoke this policy was taken as a result of the school receiving, what it deemed to be, excessive and inappropriate correspondence from you directed towards numerous members of staff and governors. This was in relation to <insert summary of issues here>.

The policy allowed the school to restrict its dealings with you. I have now reviewed the level and nature of correspondence received from you. Staff have indicated that they have a good working relationship with you and would prefer to continue to liaise with you directly on matters relating to your child/ren [name of child/ren]

Accordingly the unacceptable behaviour by stakeholders policy shall be revoked with immediate effect.

The school aims to deal fairly and properly with all stakeholders, ensuring other stakeholders, staff, or the school as a whole do not suffer any abuse, detriment or unacceptable and unreasonable behaviour.

I should stress that the school does expect that correspondence be conducted in an appropriate and cordial manner, and as such will be monitoring future communications for a recurrence of any similar issue. We will not tolerate behaviour we consider inappropriate and retain the right to take action accordingly.

Yours sincerely

<insert name here>
<insert job title here>