



Odyssey House School, Wokingham

Parent / Carer Code of Conduct

Odyssey House School, Wokingham is part of Odyssey Education Services.

Odyssey Education Services is Registered in England and Wales, company number 1162321, registered at 224 Venture House, Arlington Square, Downshire Way, Bracknell, RG12 1WA.

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Introduction

We are very fortunate to have mainly supportive and friendly parents/carers. We want our parents to recognise that educating children is a process that involves partnership between parents, class teachers and the school community.

As a partnership, our parents/carers should understand the importance of a good working relationship to equip children with the necessary skills for adulthood. For these reasons we continue to welcome and encourage parents/carers to participate fully in the life of our school.

Parental engagement with their children's learning is important in supporting attainment and progress and parents have a legitimate right to understand what their child is learning at school.

However, contact between parents/carers and the school must be appropriate proportionate and respectful, both of the professional knowledge, experience and skill of teaching and senior staff at the school and of the entitlement of staff at the school to some work/life balance.

Scope of this Policy

The staff and students at Odyssey House School ('the School') have the right to work in a safe and comfortable environment free from harassment, abuse, hostility and other behaviour and conduct that is unwanted.

The school also recognises the rights of parents and the obvious practical and other consequences of barring parents and other third parties from School premises. This policy is intended to set out the circumstances where banning is carried out with those principles in mind.

This policy takes into account guidance from the Department of Education. The policy is regarded by the school as an extension of our safeguarding responsibility.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide a reminder to all parents, carers and visitors to our School about the expected conduct. This is so we can continue to flourish, progress and achieve in an atmosphere of mutual understanding.

The policy sets out:

- The general principles underpinning the conduct of members of the school community.

- How it is expected that communication between parents/carers and the school will take place.
- What behaviour towards the school and members of the school community are deemed unacceptable and open to challenge by the school.
- The additional steps the school can take in respect of unacceptable behaviour by a parent or carer.

To whom does this policy apply?

- This policy applies to all parents, guardians, contractors, visitors and other third parties who have a reason to visit our school or interact with our staff. However, for convenience, we shall mostly refer to these people as 'parents' in this policy.

General Principles

- Remember that the school is governed by the school rules as decided upon by the Proprietary Body of the school and the Senior Leadership Team.
- Respect the caring ethos and values of our school;
- Understand that both teachers and parents need to work together for the benefit of their children;
- Demonstrate that all members of the school community should be treated with respect and therefore set a good example in their own speech and behaviour.

Communication

There are many reasons you might want to communicate with the school or a member of staff at the school. This could be simply phoning in to report a child's absence or just informing the member of staff at the gate when you drop your child off that they are feeling a bit anxious, or have been complaining of feeling a little unwell. These short conversations to impart information are entirely necessary.

However, if you wish to speak with a particular member of staff or a school leader please remember:

- How busy members of staff are during the school day, particularly first thing in the morning and, where you need to speak with a member of staff, please make an appointment to do so at a time when they can give you their full attention.
- The school has appointed a family liaison officer whose key role is to be the first point of contact for all parents and help resolve any queries raised. If the family liaison officer is unable to provide you with the necessary information, they will help co-ordinate an appointment to meet with the form tutor in the first instance or with the teacher's line manager.
- If the matter is still not resolved, follow the procedure in the school's Complaints Policy which is available under the heading "Policies" on our website.

- If you wish to correspond by email this should be done through the school's central email address at ohswokinghamparents@odysseyeducation.org.uk. This address is monitored regularly during the school day and emails forwarded to the appropriate member of staff.
- Please ensure that all such communications are polite and that you are always mindful of the right of the recipient to be treated with respect.
- When meeting face to face with members of staff to discuss any matters concerning your child's education or wellbeing in the school, please approach the matter calmly and politely as this will also ensure progress can be made to address any issues or concerns. Remember that if you wish to speak with a member of staff, it will normally fall to you to make a mutually convenient appointment.

Behaviour Expectations

Our expectations of parents' behaviour is aligned with the ordinary expectations of behaviour that anyone can reasonably expect. This policy is concerned with 'unreasonable behaviour'. What amounts to unreasonable behaviour is determined by the school. There is no definitive list, but the following examples of behaviour are likely to be regarded as unreasonable:

- Shouting and swearing at staff and/or students.
- Verbally abusing or insulting staff including on social media/email
- Making unfair derogatory or defamatory comments about the school, staff or students including on social media/ by email
- Using violence or threats of violence including on social media/by email
- Drunkenness, intoxication or otherwise appearing to be under the influence of a substance
- Vexatious complaints
- Harassment and discrimination including on social media/by email
- Ignoring warnings to cease a particular type of behaviour including the use of social media
- Any other conduct that makes staff or students feel unsafe, upset, threatened, alarmed or distressed
- Attending site when asked not to or when subject to a site ban.

It is important to recognise that the key consideration is the perception of the behaviour and how this makes the recipient feel; a lack of intention to cause upset does not mean that the conduct cannot be regarded as unreasonable. That said, the school also recognises that misunderstandings and miscommunications do occur from time to time and will look carefully at the individual circumstances before taking action under this policy.

Whilst on site, we have rules in place from time to time covering matters such as safeguarding, health and safety etc. Parents must comply with these rules, which can be found on our website. Failure to do so may also be regarded as an example of unreasonable behaviour.

Visitors to the site should be aware that parts of the school site is under 24-hour CCTV surveillance. Calls to the school including voicemails are routinely monitored and may be recorded.

Unacceptable Behaviour:

- Contacting staff or members of the Proprietary Body out of School hours using their individual email addresses rather than the school contact email address above. Staff and senior leaders are entitled to their own personal and family time.
- Do not send any form of correspondence to members of staff or senior leaders at the school demanding an immediate response or a response within your own time frame as the matter will be addressed, where appropriate, in a time frame deemed appropriate by the recipient.
- Sending lengthy, frequent, demanding, or disrespectful emails to staff members as this will seriously undermine their ability to carry out their core role of educating the children in their care.
- When corresponding or speaking with staff in person do not use language that calls in to question their professional abilities or represents any form of personal attack or seek to direct how they carry out their professional roles or run the school. The running of the school is a matter for the Senior Leadership Team and the Proprietary Body of the School.
- It is unacceptable to record telephone conversations with staff members or to record meetings with staff and/or senior leaders at the school without making them aware you are doing it and seeking their express permission to capture what could be their personal information and breach their right to privacy which extends to their workplace.
- Resort to any other form of criticism of the school, its staff or Proprietary Body or any other matters that relate directly to the school via a medium other than the school's complaints policy. This includes being involved in social media groups or forums where the school, its staff or students are criticised, or malicious information is being spread about the school. Parents and carers are asked to be aware of the school's "social media guidance" as it appears in "Appendix 1".
- When speaking with a staff member or any other member of the school community whether in person, on the telephone or by any other means of communication it is entirely inappropriate to raise your voice, invade their personal space, use language that is disrespectful, rude, offensive, aggressive or threatening.
- Do not shout, swear or cause any form of disruption on school grounds.

- Any threats of violence or use of violence towards anyone on school premises is a criminal offence, as is damage to school premises and will be likely to result in the matter being reported to the police.
- Do not smoke or consume alcohol or other drugs on any part of the school premises.
- Do not bring dogs onto the school premises unless already agreed with the school that the dog is a guide dog or other form of assistance dog and consent has been given for the presence of the dog to assist its owner on school premises.
- Do not correct your own child's behaviour especially in public where it could otherwise lead to conflict, aggressive behaviour or unsafe behaviour;
- Avoid using staff as threats to reprimand children's behaviour;
- Approaching someone else's child to discuss any issues or chastise them because of the actions of this child towards their own child. (Such an approach to a child may be seen to be an assault on that child and may have legal consequences).
- Do not use disruptive behaviour which interferes or threatens to interfere with the operation of a classroom, an employee's office, office or school reception area or any other area of the school grounds including all offsite premises used by the school for sports or any other educational activities.

Additional Steps by the School:

- The member of staff or senior leader concerned may challenge the behaviour by asking the person concerned to respect their personal space, stop shouting or using inappropriate behaviour or may end an unacceptable phone call or ask you to leave the school.
- The school may correspond in writing with a parent or carer to challenge behaviour that the school is finding unacceptable such as, for example, being rude to a member of staff or sending too many emails making demands of the school.
- If the school decides the matter requires a more formal approach the school may instruct its legal advisers to write to the parent or carer, warning them about their behaviour and/or putting in place a communications strategy to restrict their means of corresponding with the school and/or banning them from school premises if felt to be appropriate.
- Clearly, in serious instances where the peace is breached or the criminal law broken, the school will also involve the police.

Legal Considerations

The school's premises are private land. As such, visitors do not have an automatic right of entry. Parents have an 'implied licence' to enter our site for the legitimate purposes of dropping off or picking up children or attending formal school events or appointments. However, the implied licence can be withdrawn by the school under this policy.

A person who enters our site without permission (that is, a person who does not have an implied licence to enter, or who has had their implied licence revoked under this policy) may be trespassing. Trespassing is a civil offence. A trespasser will be asked to leave. The school has the right to take civil action if a person refuses to leave.

Additionally, it is a criminal offence under section 547 of the Education Act 1996 for a person on school premises without lawful authority to cause or permit a nuisance or disturbance.

A person contravening section 547 will be referred to Wokingham Police. The school has a policy of pushing for prosecution of offenders who cause alarm or distress to staff or pupils.

Please note that School premises are not public places but private premises and you have an implied right to enter the school as a parent or carer of a child at the school but it is open to the school to remove that right of entry at any time it deems this to be necessary.

We trust that parents and carers will assist our school with the implementation of this policy and we thank you for your continuing support of the school.

Note: Could parents please ensure they make all persons responsible for collecting their children aware of this policy.

Procedure of barring parents from site

Generally, barring a parent from site is not a decision to be taken lightly, but may not necessarily be a last resort. In other words, it is not necessary to completely exhaust all possibilities before resorting to banning. It may, for instance of extreme or urgent cases, be appropriate to ban without any prior warning or dialogue.

In most instances, however, the school will engage with the person exhibiting unreasonable behaviour first and seek to establish a dialogue with a view to avoiding banning if at all possible. This may include issuing a warning and providing the parent with a copy of this policy.

The decision to ban a parent from the school's premises is taken by the Head Teacher, but may be taken by the Chair of the Proprietary Body in the Head Teacher's absence.

The ban must be put in place by way of a letter to the parent. The letter should explain the reasons for and extent of the ban and provide the parent with a contact email and postal address to raise any queries about the ban. In all cases, the parent has a right to make representations in writing on the ban but has no automatic right to a meeting or other in-person appointment.

The following types of ban are permissible:

Provisional ban – a provisional ban may be effective immediately or at a proposed future date and is for a short period of time, usually 28 days. The parent will be invited to make written representations on the ban (or proposed ban) and be given a reasonable timescale to respond. After the initial period, the school will review the ban and decide whether to lift (or revoke) the ban or implement another type of ban, taking into account any representations submitted by or on behalf of the parent.

Temporary ban – this is the most typical type of ban. The length of the ban will be determined by the Head Teacher but should be for no longer than 100 days (although a temporary ban may be succeeded by a further temporary ban if this is appropriate). The ban should be periodically reviewed by the school for as long as the parent has children on our school roll.

Permanent ban – a permanent ban should be a last resort and should only be implemented after a temporary ban has been unsuccessful. A permanent ban should be reviewed periodically for as long as the parent has children on our roll.

Reviewing bans

All bans, except provisional bans, must be reviewed at least once by the Head Teacher during the ban period and lifted if they are no longer appropriate. Bans may be lifted upon the parent agreeing to certain conditions, such as moderating their behaviour or only contacting named members of staff.

Parents subject to a ban may ask for a review. Where a parent wishes to ask for a ban to be reviewed, they should write to the Head Teacher, who will conduct the review within fourteen school days of receiving the request. The Head Teacher should write to the parent and explain the outcome of the review.

A parent may only ask for a ban to be reviewed once within a reasonable period of time. What is a reasonable period of time is for the Head Teacher to determine and will depend on the length of the ban but would not normally be less than one full school term.

A parent who disagrees with a ban must ask for a review and may not use the school's complaints policy to complain about a ban unless they believe that the ban was implemented unlawfully or for an illegitimate motive, such as discrimination.

Appendix 1: Inappropriate use of Social Network Site

Social media websites are being used increasingly to fuel campaigns and complaints against academies, Head Teachers, school staff, and in some cases other parents/pupils.

The school seeks to teach pupils the importance of appropriate and responsible use of social media, and it is therefore vital that everyone in the school community, including parents and carers, lead by example.

The Proprietary Body considers that the use of social media websites to complain about the school/individual members of staff or to make personal comments about anyone in the school community is unacceptable and not in the best interests of the children or the whole school community. Any concerns you may have must be made through the appropriate channels using the school Complaints Policy by speaking to the class teacher, the family liaison officer or a member of the Senior Leadership Team, so they can be dealt with fairly, appropriately and effectively for all concerned in line with that policy.

In the event that any student or parent/carer of a child/ren being educated in the school is found to be posting libellous or defamatory comments on Facebook or other social network sites, they will be reported to the appropriate 'report abuse' section of the network site. The school also believes that parents and carers are a vital part of the school community and should encourage positive links with the wider local community. It is therefore the school's expectation that parents or carers would also report to the school any libellous posts or defamatory comments on any social media groups, so that the school can take the necessary steps to report these to the appropriate authorities.

All social network sites have clear rules about the content, which can be posted, on the site and they provide robust mechanisms to report content or activity which breaches this. The school will also expect that any parent/carer or student removes such comments immediately.

In serious cases, the school will also consider its legal options to deal with any such misuse of social networking and other sites. Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, is the issue of cyber bullying and the use by one child or a parent to publicly humiliate another by inappropriate social network entry. We will deal with this as a serious incident of school bullying. Thankfully such incidents are extremely rare.

Please note that the inappropriate use of a communications network can give rise to offences under the Malicious Communications Act 1988 or the Communications Act 2003 and if persistent could be deemed to constitute the offence of harassment.