



Diocese of Salisbury
Academy Trust
'Beyond expectations for all of God's children'

POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS POLICY

HOME: SCHOOL

Policy Date: April 2024

Review Date: April 2026

This policy applies to all DSAT schools

General Principles

1 Aims of the Policy

- 1.1 The Diocese of Salisbury Academy Trust (“the Trust”) has a vision for the growth of thriving Christian learning communities, providing everyone with the opportunity to achieve more than they ever thought possible. Christian service is at the heart of all we do, as we help young people to develop excitement in learning and to live life to the full. We value everyone equally and demonstrate this through our words, actions, community life and the quality of the opportunities we provide. Collaboration and partnership are clear guiding principles for the way we work.
- 1.2 As a Trust it is always our desire to work in partnership with parents/carers and other stakeholders to achieve our vision. Getting this right in all our schools is key to our success in so many ways. We recognise that for our Christian learning communities to thrive, the Trust must uphold its duty of care to both staff and pupils, to ensure their safety and wellbeing. We value our relationships with parents and carers highly and recognise that the majority of these relationships are very positive.
- 1.3 Stakeholder engagement is really important to us. Our schools will aim to keep you informed of important news and events, as well as the progress of your child, on a regular basis. This will normally be through email or our communication app. Our websites also host a significant amount of information.
- 1.4 Our school offices and all our staff, will always seek to support our community as best as they can and will respond as promptly as possible wherever this is appropriate. We will always want to be polite, courteous and respectful, communicating effectively and efficiently at all times. We will always seek to listen and to understand when people are sharing concerns.
- 1.5 We are also keen to engage with the wider community as we look to build the reputation of our schools and the relationship with those communities.
- 1.6 On the rare occasions where relationships with parents are not so positive, we will take steps to rectify the situation. This will always be with a view to re-establishing relationships and maintaining a calm and respectful exchange. We are not able to tolerate behaviour that is improper and/or has a detrimental effect on the good order and safety of any of our schools or staff. This policy outlines below what is considered improper and the steps we may need to take to deal with such.
- 1.7 In this policy, ‘parent’ means a parent, carer, or anyone with legal responsibility for a child. The principles in this policy also apply to any other family members of pupils and other visitors to a school.
- 1.8 If a parent is acting in a voluntary capacity, for example as a local governor or as part of a school’s parent/teacher/friends association, they are still subject to the scope of this policy as a parent and are also bound by the Staff Code of Conduct.
- 1.9 Staff behaviour is governed by the Code of Conduct and the Trust’s Employment Manual.
- 1.10 The Trust Complaints Policy addresses how we deal with improper, repetitious, vexatious or unreasonable complaints.

2 Key principles

- The parent/school partnership is fundamental to securing the success and wellbeing of all our pupils.
- The education and wellbeing of the child of the parent involved will not be compromised in any way by this policy.
- Any concerns or decisions will be fully communicated to the parent with clear reasons for the decision taken.
- Parents have the right to make representations in relation to any actions taken.
- Any restrictions will be time limited and subject to a review.

3 The Scope and Application of this Policy

3.1 This policy covers unacceptable behaviour by a parent:

- in any Trust or school building or on a Trust or school site
- by telephone to the Trust or a school
- by email to the Trust or a school
- on social media and any other public electronic media platforms (e.g. websites) referring to the Trust or a school or a member of staff of the Trust or school
- in any other setting which, in the reasonable opinion of the CEO or Chair of Trustees (or any person authorised by them), should be regulated by this policy.

3.2 The following behaviours are considered unacceptable by the Trust:

Unacceptable conduct

3.2.1 Unacceptable conduct includes:

- verbal or written threats of violence or harm
- swearing or the use of other abusive, offensive or threatening language
- intimidation, coercion or humiliation
- aggressive or disruptive behaviour
- harassment, bullying or causing distress
- physical violence, including damage to property or injury to individuals
- discriminatory conduct or use of discriminatory language (sexist, racist, other)
- frequent, unwarranted and/or unnecessary correspondence which is hindering the proper running of the Trust or its schools
- recording conversations covertly or without consent
- inappropriate use of social media (see below)
- making deliberately false, malicious or vexatious accusations

- consumption of alcohol (unless alcohol has been allowed at a specific event) or use of illegal drugs on the Trust or a school's premises, or accessing the Trust or a school's premises whilst intoxicated
- any behaviour that violates the law or school policies
- incitement of others to do any of the above

This is not an exhaustive list but seeks to provide illustrations of such conduct. It will ultimately be for the Trust to determine whether conduct is deemed to be unacceptable.

3.2.2 Any form of communication that threatens the safety or well-being of staff or pupils will be taken seriously and addressed immediately, with the goal of protecting the safety and well-being of all members of our Trust and school communities.

Covert recordings

3.2.3 Unless explicitly agreed in writing, the Trust does not consent to parents making audio or video recordings of any member of staff, trustee/local governor or school volunteer, including during in-person meetings, remote/virtual meetings or telephone conversations. Making covert recordings without the consent of members of staff is regarded as a breach of the relationship of mutual trust and confidence between the parent and the school.

3.2.4 If a parent is found to be recording a discussion, all members of staff have the right to terminate the meeting or telephone call on discovery.

3.2.5 A parent that records a member of staff, trustee/local governor or school volunteer, without consent may be issued with a restricted communication plan (see below).

3.2.6 If a parent is found to have recorded any audio or video footage on the school site without consent of any individual, this may result in the parent being immediately banned from a school's premises (see below) and the involvement of external agencies.

Inappropriate use of social media

3.2.7 The Trust encourages parents to approach staff with concerns and to make use of the Trust's Complaints Procedure to escalate matters where necessary. We urge parents to refrain from expressing concerns about the Trust, its schools or its staff on social media sites. Expressing concerns on social media may damage the reputation of the Trust and/or its schools and the integrity of its staff may be unnecessarily called into question. Negative comments posted on social media can cause upset and is often counter-productive to the overall aim of educating pupils. Furthermore, comments made about individual members of staff may be considered defamatory or amount to cyber-bullying.

3.2.8 It is a criminal offence to publish information which would likely lead to the identification of a teacher who is subject to an allegation of misconduct until such time as they are charged with an offence, or the Secretary of State for Education publishes information about the teacher in connection with a disciplinary case (Education Act 2011). All members of the community need to be aware of the

importance of not publishing named allegations against teachers online as this can lead to prosecution and a fine.

3.2.9 Should the Trust become aware that a parent is using social media to target the Trust, any school or its staff, it may (or it may authorise a school to):

- report the post(s) to the relevant social networking site
- contact the parent or social media page owner to require the post to be edited or removed
- issue the parent with a restricted communication plan (see below)
- where appropriate, inform the police or other relevant agencies

4 Procedures

The Trust has a range of strategies to employ with any parent who engages in unacceptable behaviour. Whilst these sanctions are set out in the policy by way of a sequential process, they can be initiated at any stage if, in the reasonable judgement of the CEO or Chair of Trustees (or any person authorised by them), the severity of the behaviour warrants such a level of intervention.

Where the behaviour is so extreme that it threatens the immediate safety and welfare of staff or others, the matter will be referred immediately to the police and/or the Trust's legal team for action.

4.1 Verbal warning

A parent who displays any of the behaviour as described above will be asked to desist and offered the opportunity to discuss the matter in person.

4.2 Mediation meeting

Where appropriate, the parent may be asked to meet with the CEO or the Headteacher of a school (or a person authorised by them) to discuss the matter in person.

4.3 Formal written warning(s)

A formal written warning will be sent to the parent by letter to their home address. This letter will be signed by the CEO, the Headteacher of a school, or the Chair of Trustees (or any person authorised by one or more of them) and circulated to relevant internal parties to ensure that an informed and consistent approach can be adopted. This letter will be retained for a period of twelve months and then in line with the Trust's Data Retention Policy. Where appropriate, more than one formal written warning letter may be issued. This letter will outline what is unacceptable and steps that may be taken now or in the future to rectify the behaviour.

4.4 Legal sanctions

If a parent commits serious or repeated breaches of the expected standard of behaviour as set out in this policy, then the Trust may consider implementing one or more of the sanctions listed below (or may authorise a school to do so):

A Restricted communication plan

The parent may be issued with a communication plan. This will restrict the manner in which the parent can communicate with the Trust and/or a school. This may include:

- Requiring contact in a particular form (e.g. in writing only)
- Limiting contact to one member of staff or a specific email address
- Restricting telephone calls to specified days and times
- Restricting communication to in writing only

B Ban from a school's premises

A parent's common licence to access a school's premises can be removed or restricted for a specified period. In such circumstances, parents may need to make alternative arrangements for bringing their child into school. Any entry onto the site in contravention of such a ban and where a nuisance is caused would be a criminal offence under section 547 of the Education Act 1996. Any parent in breach of the ban will be removed from the premises by the police or an authorised member of staff.

C An injunction under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997

The Trust may seek an injunction requiring the parent to desist from behaving in the manner in question.

5 Monitoring and Review

The CEO and Headteachers of schools will report to staff from time to time and to the Board (and the Academy Standards and Ethos Committee, as appropriate) annually, or earlier if the Chair of Trustees so determines, on the number and type of incidents involving unacceptable behaviour displayed by parents, how these matters were handled and their outcomes.

6 Records

A record will be kept of any correspondence, action or decisions for a period of at least twelve months and then in line with the Trust's Data Retention Policy. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual matters will be kept confidential except where:

- access is requested by the Secretary of State
- disclosure is required in the course of a school inspection
- an individual has a legal right to access their own personal data contained within such documentation
- under other legal authority