

# Clipston Endowed VC Primary School

## Parent Engagement Policy



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Presented to Governors and adopted: May 2022

To be reviewed: Summer 2023

Signed .....

Mrs Helen Bellamy – Chair of Governors

## **Clipston Primary School's Mission, Ethos and Aims**

### **Our Mission**

Be Kind ~ Be Your Best ~ Be Happy

### **Ethos**

Recognising its historic foundation, Clipston Primary School seeks to serve its community by providing a rounded, connected and coherent education of the highest quality.

We endeavour to preserve and develop our distinct religious character in accordance with the principles of the Church of England.

The school lives out its Christian virtues – Thankfulness, Kindness, Justice, Love, Forgiveness, Responsibility and Courage – and all those essential human values, which are common to good, kind and tolerant people of all faiths and none, through the experiences it offers to all its pupils.

### **Aims**

The school's aim, through its Christian ethos, is the creation of a safe, happy learning environment, which supports all children on their journey towards becoming:

- Successful engaged learners, who enjoy learning, who are knowledgeable and skilled, and who make progress and achieve their best;
- Confident, articulate individuals who can lead safe, healthy and fulfilling lives in the communities in which they live now and in the future;
- Responsible, happy citizens of the world who have the capacity to make positive contributions to society.

**“Do to others as you would have them do unto you” Luke 6:31**

To achieve these aims, staff and governors will work in partnership with parents, carers and the local community for the benefit of all our pupils.

### **Introduction**

At Clipston Primary School we are proud and fortunate to have an enthusiastic and supportive school family, with a strong ethos of looking after each other - children, staff and parents. We recognise the importance of having a strong partnership to enable our children to learn, hence fostering good relationships is of paramount importance. We aim to provide an open and welcoming atmosphere and provide as many opportunities for discussion and dialogue as possible recognising the busy lives of both our parents and staff.

### **Purpose**

This policy serves as a reminder to all parents and visitors of Clipston Primary School of the expectations of conduct between all parties. We recognise that everyday frustrations can cause misunderstandings and have a negative impact on relationships. Our open-door policy to talk to staff, the ability to phone or email to arrange meetings or have discussions is part of our ongoing commitment to resolving any difficulties in a constructive manner through open and positive dialogue.

The policy consists of two parts:

- Part 1 – general expectations for the behaviour that Clipston Primary School encourages parents and the wider community to display.
- Part 2 – the procedure to follow alongside the Complaints Policy should a complainant be deemed vexatious or unreasonable.

## **PART 1**

Our school already has an Adult Code of Conduct for all our staff, governors and volunteers. This Parent Engagement Policy is for Parents and Visitors, so that we are able to share a common expectation and understanding of behaviour. We are fortunate that instances in which it is needed are extremely rare, but we feel it is important to **state clearly the types of behaviours that are unacceptable and what action we may take in response.**

### **Expectations**

We will work in partnership with parents/carers to help the children achieve their full academic potential.

- We expect our parents, carers and visitors to:
  - Respect the compassionate, caring and tolerant ethos of our school
  - Work together with school staff for the benefit of their children
  - Treat all members of the school with respect, using appropriate language and behaviour
  - Approach the school to help resolve any issues of concern
  - Where appropriate clarify a child's version of events with the school's view in order to bring about a resolution to any issue
  - Promote good behaviour, and respectful and tolerant attitudes of your own children at school

### **Behaviour that we will not tolerate at Clipston Primary School**

- Disruptive behaviour which interferes or threatens to interfere with any of the school's normal operation anywhere on the school premises or sports fields during events.
- Any inappropriate behaviour on the school premises.
- Using loud or offensive language.
- Threatening a member of staff, visitor, fellow parent or child.
- Damaging or destroying school property.
- Sending abusive or threatening emails, text, voicemail or phone messages or other written communications (including via social media) to anyone within the school community.
- Defamatory, offensive or derogatory comments regarding the school or any of the pupils, parents, staff or governors at the school on social media (see the separate section on social media).
- The use of physical, verbal or written aggression towards another adult or child.
- Any language or actions which breach our commitment to our Equality and Prevent Duties, for example (but not exclusive to) sexist, racist or homophobic comments or actions.
- Smoking, vaping, taking illegal drugs or consuming alcohol on school premises (except for the consumption of alcohol during authorised events).

Should any of the above occur on school premises, or in connection with the school, the school may take legal advice which may ban the offending adult from entering the school premises altogether.

### **Issues of conduct with the use of Social Media**

We request that social media, whether public or private, is not used to voice negative views about the school, school staff, parents or children. We ask that instead, you contact the school to engage in a positive and open dialogue to resolve any issues. Our staff are available every school day with a member of staff at the gate almost every morning. You can email at any time to open the dialogue and request a call back or make an appointment and you can telephone between 8:30am and 4:00pm. Occasionally, the office is unmanned, but we will always endeavour to return your call as soon as we can – usually the next working day.

We take the inappropriate use of social media by a parent to publicly humiliate or criticise another parent, child, member of staff or governor very seriously and will take action when necessary.

To summarise: if parents have any concerns about their children in relation to school, they should make contact with the school by:

- Speaking to a member of staff on the playground in the morning.
- Speaking to their child's class teacher at the end of the school day.
- E-mailing school to request a call back or an appointment.
- Telephoning / leaving a message to request an appointment for a discussion with either the head teacher or class teacher.
- If the issue is unresolved, please use the school's Complaint Procedure.

Online activity which we consider inappropriate:

- Abusive or personal comments about staff, children or other parents.
- Bringing the school into disrepute.
- Posting defamatory or libellous comments.
- Emails circulated, or sent directly, with abusive or personal comments about staff or children.
- Using social media or apps to publicly challenge school policies.
- Using social media or apps to discuss issues about individual children.
- Threatening behaviour, such as written / verbal intimidation or using bad language.
- Breaching school safeguarding and security procedures.

**At our school we take our safeguarding responsibilities extremely seriously and will deal with any reported incidents appropriately in line with our safeguarding policy.**

Think before you post!

### **Action that may be taken after a breach of this Code of Conduct**

In the event of any parent or visitor breaching this code, proportionate actions may be taken.

In cases where the unacceptable behaviour is considered to be a serious and potentially criminal matter the concerns will be referred to the Police. This will include any harassment (including social media postings or cyber bullying), threats of violence and actual violence to any child, staff or governor at the school.

In cases where evidence suggests that behaviour would be tantamount to libel or slander then the school will refer the matter to their legal advisors for further action.

## **PART 2**

### **Issues with Vexatious or Unreasonable Complainant Behaviour**

This aspect of the policy does not prevent parents from raising a legitimate complaint and to this end, the school has a separate Complaint Policy. We hope that all complaints and concerns can be resolved, as previously mentioned, through open dialogue with teachers or senior leaders. Where parents are not satisfied with any response they receive, they may then follow the Complaint Procedure as set out in our Complaint Policy. This policy is available on the school website or can be requested from the school office. We are committed to dealing with all complaints or concerns equitably, comprehensively, and in a timely manner. (In accordance with the school's Complaint Policy).

We do not expect staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour by complainants or by members of both the school and wider community. Unacceptable behaviour includes that which is abusive, offensive or threatening and may include:

- Using abusive or foul language on the telephone
- Using abusive or foul language face to face
- Sending multiple emails
- Leaving multiple voicemails

Raising legitimate queries or criticisms of a complaint as it progresses, for example if agreed timescales are not met, should not in itself lead to someone being regarded as a vexatious or an unreasonably persistent complainant.

If, after following the school's complaint procedure a complainant raises the complaint again without significant new information, this could be deemed a vexatious action.

We have adopted the Local Government Ombudsman's (LGO) definition of "unreasonable complainant behaviour" and "unreasonable persistent complaints".

We define abusive, unreasonably persistent and vexatious complainants as those complainants who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with the school, hinder our consideration of their or other people's complaints. The terms 'abusive', 'unreasonably persistent' and 'vexatious' may be applied separately or jointly to describe a particular complainant.

### **Imposing Restrictions**

- We will ensure that the concern or complaint is being, or has been, investigated properly according to the school's Complaint Policy.
- In the first instance, the Head Teacher will issue a warning to the complainant. They will contact the complainant either by phone, in writing or by email to explain why this behaviour is causing concern, and ask them to change this behaviour. The Head Teacher will explain the actions that the school may take if the behaviour does not change.
- If the disruptive behaviour continues, the Head Teacher will issue a reminder letter to the complainant advising them that the way in which they will be allowed to contact us in the future will be restricted. The Head Teacher will make this decision and inform the complainant in writing of what procedures have been put in place and for what period.

- Any restriction that is imposed on the complainant's contact with us will be appropriate and proportionate and the complainant will be advised of the period of time for which the restriction will be in place. In most cases, restrictions will apply for between 3 and 6 months but in exceptional cases may be extended. In such cases, the restrictions would be reviewed on a termly basis.
- Restrictions will be tailored to deal with the individual circumstances of the complainant and may include:
  - a) Banning the complainant from making contact by telephone except through a third party e.g. solicitor/Councillor/friend acting on their behalf
  - b) Banning the complainant from sending emails to individual and/or all school employees or Governors and insisting they only correspond by letter
  - c) Banning the complainant from using the school premises
  - d) Banning the complainant from accessing any School building except by appointment
  - e) Requiring contact to take place with one named member of staff only
  - f) Restricting telephone calls to specified days / times / duration
  - g) Requiring any personal contact to take place in the presence of an appropriate witness
  - h) Letting the complainant know that we will not reply or acknowledge any further contact from them on the specific topic of that complaint (in this case, a designated member of staff or a governor should be identified who will read future correspondence)

When the decision has been taken to apply this policy to a complainant, the Head Teacher will contact the complainant in writing to explain:

- a) Why the decision has been taken
- b) What action is being taken
- c) The duration of that action
- d) The review process of this policy

The Head Teacher will enclose a copy of this policy in the letter to the complainant.

Where a complainant continues to behave in a way that is unacceptable, the Head Teacher, in consultation with the Chair of Governors, may decide to refuse all contact with the complainant and stop any investigation into his or her complaint.

Where the behaviour is so extreme or it threatens the immediate safety and welfare of staff, we will consider other options, for example reporting the matter to the police or taking legal action. In such cases, we may not give the complainant prior warning of that action.