



Communications Protocol for Parents and Visitors

1. Introduction

At Tranby, pupils, parents and staff are expected to work within Tranby's ethos, school code of conduct and community rules. This protocol sets down the school's expectations of parents and visitors in sharing our ambition, which is for the pupils to achieve their own personal best as they move through the school.

We recognise that in our community, as in life, there will be times when frustration about what may have been said or done can occur. School staff understand the pressure that pupils and parents feel at times and are committed to helping resolve difficulties when they arise in a sensitive and helpful manner. Just as we demand the very highest standards of courtesy and professionalism from our staff, we also expect pupils, parents and visitors to follow the general principles set out in this document with regard to the tone and content of communications, be they in person, on the telephone, or in writing.

In addition, this protocol seeks to put in some protection for school staff from any behaviour from any non-employee which might cause distress.

This protocol should be read in line with Tranby's Exclusion, Expulsion and Removal Policy, and Section 7 of the Terms and Conditions document. For ease of reference, the latter is repeated below:

"The Head may in his or her discretion require Parents to remove the pupil from the School if the Head considers that: The Parents' behaviour or conduct (or the behaviour or conduct of one of you): is unreasonable; and/or adversely affects (or is likely to adversely affect) the pupil's or other children's progress at the School, or the wellbeing of School staff; and/or brings (or is likely to bring) the School into disrepute; and/or is not in accordance with the Parents' obligations under this contract or because we have the legal right to end the contract because of something you have done wrong".

2. Rationale

Tranby has a legal responsibility to take reasonable steps to protect its employees from all forms of abuse and behaviour causing concern whilst carrying out their day-to-day duties.

3. Context

Regrettably, although this is not the norm, Tranby is experiencing a rise in verbal and written discourtesy towards its employees in a range of contexts.

4. Aims of this protocol

This protocol aims to achieve the following goals:

- To improve understanding between parents, visitors and staff by providing parameters and guidelines for all.
- To protect all employees from behaviour which causes distress.
- To outline the procedures for how the school will handle examples of such behaviour.

5. Definition of behaviour which causes distress:

Behaviour may take the form of:

- verbal or physical abuse of an employee of Tranby
- behaviour causing concern to an employee of Tranby

Abuse or behaviour causing concern may take place in various contexts:

- In person - both one-to-one or in public
- On the telephone.
- In writing including emails, texts and instant messaging
- Online - including posting malicious comments on websites and social media sites and other acts of 'internet trolling'

6. General Principles on the Tone and Content of Communication

All communications between parents and school and vice versa should be:

- Polite and courteous - in tone and content.
- Illustrative of our common purpose.
- Respectful of professional integrity.
- Assume the best of intentions of the school and its staff - we are all working in the best interests of the pupils.
- Mindful of the time pressures under which teachers and parents operate.

7. Response Times

When a parent contacts the school, they should expect an acknowledgement from the member of staff within 24 working hours and a fuller response within 48 working hours. If the school member of staff needs longer to address a parent or visitors query then they will update them as appropriate.

8. Meetings with Staff

Unless it is an emergency then we ask that parents request an appointment so that the school can give thought and consideration as to how to best support the pupil and parent/s with resolving the issue. When meetings occur with school staff outside of the usual run of meetings such as parent teacher consultations the following will take place:

- The School will decide on which staff are most suited to resolving the issue and at which level of authority within the school structure.
- Two appropriate staff members will be present.
- Meetings will take place during staff working hours.
- A time frame will be established at the outset of the meeting so that all parties know how long they have together.
- Short notes will be taken to capture the main points of the meeting and not minutes verbatim.

9. Verbal Abuse

In the most extreme of events, which are rare, all incidents of verbal abuse on staff must be reported in writing. The report must be sent to the relevant member of the Senior Leadership Team at the earliest possible opportunity.

Staff should:

- terminate the conversation if they deem it to have become abusive.
- record the nature of the conversation and examples of the alleged abuse.

The relevant member of the Senior Leadership Team will contact the parent and will initiate the Senior Leadership procedure set out below in section 12.

10. Correspondence

All correspondence that is unacceptable in tone or content must be passed immediately to the relevant member of the Senior Leadership Team at the earliest possible opportunity, the staff member will acknowledge the correspondence but will not reply in full to the parent.

The relevant member of the Senior Leadership Team will reply to the parent and will initiate the Senior Leadership procedure set out below in section 12.

11. Vexatious, Malicious or Defamatory Behaviour

The school takes very seriously any action, by a parent and/or visitor, which, after full and fair consideration, is deemed vexatious, malicious, defamatory, or which sets out to undermine the reputation of the individual and/or of the School.

All behaviour deemed vexatious, malicious or defamatory must be reported immediately to the relevant member of the Senior Leadership Team at the earliest possible opportunity without discussion with the parent or visitor.

The employee or teacher concerned should provide the relevant member of the Senior Leadership Team with the evidence e.g. screenshots from social media/networking sites, notes from the relevant conversation or the email concerned etc.

The relevant member of the Senior Leadership Team will reply to the parent and will initiate the Senior Leadership Team procedure set out below in section 12.

The school may seek appropriate legal advice if these matters arise.

12. Senior Leadership Team Procedure

The Senior Leadership Team Four Step Procedure for following up on alleged abusive behaviour towards staff is as follows:

- Step One – Phone call/meeting with relevant member of SLT.
- Step Two – Phone call/meeting with the Head, followed by a formal warning letter.
- Step Three – Phone call/meeting with the Chair of Governors.
- Step Four - Required removal of pupil, under section 7 of the School's terms and conditions.

Serious abusive behaviour, such as physical abuse or making career- threatening malicious and defamatory comments will be dealt with at Stage Two, Three or Four of the procedure, without going through the prior stages and may involve external agencies.

13. Outcomes

The following sanctions may be applied to parents and visitors:

- Warning letters to parents or visitors.
- Permission to attend school functions may be withdrawn, including, but not limited to:
 - Performances
 - Sports fixtures
 - Open Days
 - Parents' evenings
- Restrict all communication with the school through a member of the Senior Leadership Team.
- Permission to be on school premises may be withdrawn.
- Required removal of the pupil from the school under section 7 of the School's terms and conditions