

# Staff Protection Policy

**Berkhamsted Prep and Pre-Prep**  
**Berkhamsted Senior Schools & Sixth**  
**Heatherton**  
**Berkhamsted Day Nursery Ltd.**  
**Berkhamsted School Enterprises Ltd**  
**Charlotte House**

Revision and Terminology: Please refer to the School's Policies Policy.

|                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
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| Linked Policies:                    | Expulsion and Required Removal                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

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## Scope of this policy

- 1.1 This policy outlines the School's approach to protecting its staff from all behaviour from any non-employee which causes distress.

## 2 Definition of behaviour which causes distress

### 2.1 Behaviour may take the form of:

- 2.1.1 verbal or physical abuse of an employee of Berkhamsted Schools Group (BSG).
  - 2.1.2 behaviour causing concern to an employee of Berkhamsted Schools Group (BSG). Behaviour causing distress is conduct which a reasonable person would consider intimidating, abusive, threatening, harassing, discriminatory, malicious, defamatory, or likely to undermine the wellbeing, dignity, safety, or professional reputation of a member of staff.
  - 2.1.3 harassment: for the purposes of this policy, harassment may be defined as unwanted conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. Harassment may arise from a single serious incident or from a pattern of repeated behaviour. Harassment may include, but is not limited to:
    - 2.1.3.1 Repeated unwanted contact with a member of staff.
    - 2.1.3.2 Persistent communications after a matter has been addressed or closed.
    - 2.1.3.3 Intimidating, threatening or coercive behaviour.
    - 2.1.3.4 Attempts to undermine a member of staff's professional standing or reputation.
    - 2.1.3.5 The publication or circulation of malicious allegations.
    - 2.1.3.6 Offensive, insulting or discriminatory remarks.
    - 2.1.3.7 Behaviour related to a protected characteristic, including race, sex, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy or age.
    - 2.1.3.8 Monitoring, photographing, filming or recording staff without consent where this is intended to cause distress or intimidation.
    - 2.1.3.9 Sharing, publishing or threatening to publish personal information relating to staff members.
    - 2.1.3.10 Encouraging or coordinating others to target a member of staff through social media, messaging groups, petitions, complaints campaigns or other means.
  - 2.1.4 The creation, publication or distribution of false, manipulated or AI-generated content intended to damage the reputation of a member of staff or the School.
  - 2.1.5
- 2.2 Abuse, harassment, or behaviour causing concern may take place in various contexts:
- 2.2.1 In person (both one-to-one or in public)
  - 2.2.2 On the telephone or a video call
  - 2.2.3 In writing (including emails, texts and Instant Messaging)

- 2.2.4 Online (including posting malicious comments on websites and social media sites or messaging apps and other acts of “internet trolling”.)
- 2.2.5 Through third parties acting on behalf of a parent or visitor.
- 2.2.6

### **3 Rationale**

- 3.1 Berkhamsted Schools Group has a legal responsibility to take reasonable steps to protect its employees from all forms of abuse, harassment, and behaviour causing concern whilst carrying out their day-to-day duties. The School is opposed to such behaviour, and takes a stance against bullying, harassment, or inappropriate behaviour in all its forms.

### **4 Context**

- 4.1 Regrettably, Berkhamsted Schools Group on occasion experiences verbal and written abuse of its employees in a range of contexts.

### **5 Aims of this policy**

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

### **6 General Principles on the Tone and Content of Communication**

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

- 6.1 Polite and courteous (in tone and content)
- 6.2 Respectful of professional integrity
- 6.3 Illustrative of our common purpose
- 6.4 Mindful of the time pressures under which school staff and parents operate.

### **7 Recording of Meetings and Communications**

- 7.1 The covert or unauthorised recording of meetings, conversations or communications involving School staff is not permitted. This includes, but is not limited to, audio recordings, video recordings, photographs, screenshots, screen captures and recordings made using mobile phones, computers, tablets, wearable technology (for example, meta glasses) or any other digital device.
- 7.2 Any request to record a meeting must be made to the School in advance and will only be agreed in exceptional circumstances. Consent must be obtained from the School and all participants before any recording takes place.

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- 7.3 Where an unauthorised recording is identified, the School may end the meeting immediately and take such steps as it considers appropriate to protect its staff, pupils and confidential information.
  - 7.4 Publishing recordings of staff on social media or sharing them with third parties without consent may be treated as unacceptable behaviour and may lead to restrictions on parental access to staff or school premises.
  - 7.5 The School reserves the right to take to follow the five-step procedure below and/or take any appropriate action involving outside agencies if necessary where unauthorised recordings are made, shared or published.

## **8 Procedure for Berkhamsted Schools Group Employees dealing with behaviour by parents and/or visitors which causes distress**

### **8.1 Introduction**

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 listed above with regard to the tone and content of communications, be they in person, on the telephone, or in writing.

### **8.2 Physical Abuse and Threatening Behaviour**

- 8.2.1 All incidents of assault on staff must be reported as soon as practically possible in writing to the Principal who will discuss the incident with the member of staff. The police will be contacted if it is deemed necessary.
- 8.2.2 Staff should be aware that no physical attack or injury needs to have occurred for a common assault to have taken place. It is sufficient for a person to have been threatened with immediate violence and put in fear of a physical attack for an offence to have been committed.
- 8.2.3 The Police expect to be involved where there is clear evidence of an injury (whether physical or emotional) and will take account of previous behaviour of the offender and the likelihood of a repetition if action is not taken.
- 8.2.4 The Principal will write to the parent and will initiate the Senior Management procedure set out in paragraph 8 below. If the alleged offender is a visitor to the School, a member of staff should ask them to leave the premises immediately.

### **8.3 Verbal Abuse may be defined as “the repeated improper and excessive use of language or tone of voice to humiliate someone, or to undermine someone’s dignity.” Verbal abuse which is related to a protected characteristic, such as race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, faith, or age, may constitute hate speech. The School will normally involve the Police where this is considered to have been the case.**

#### **8.3.1 Verbal Abuse in a one-to-one situation:**

- 8.3.1.1 All incidents of alleged verbal abuse of staff must be reported in writing to the

relevant member of the Senior Management Team (Headteacher, Line Manager). This should also be undertaken if a parent/visitor is abusive of another member of the School community. The Senior Management procedure set out in paragraph 8 below will be implemented.

8.3.1.2 Staff should terminate the conversation if they deem it to have become abusive. This includes, after a polite notification of the reason for doing so, a telephone call or Teams call.

8.3.1.3 Staff should make a record in writing regarding the nature of the conversation and examples of the alleged abuse.

8.3.1.4 The relevant member of the Senior Management Team will reply to the parent and will initiate the Senior Management procedure set out in paragraph 8 below.

**8.3.2 Verbal Abuse in a public situation:**

8.3.2.1 All incidents of alleged verbal abuse against staff must be reported in writing to the relevant member of the Senior Management Team (Headteacher, Line Manager) at the earliest possible opportunity. The Senior Management procedure set out in paragraph 8 below will be implemented.

8.3.2.2 If a teacher is subject to verbal abuse by parents or visitors when refereeing or coaching a sports fixture, the teacher should:

8.3.2.2.1 Stop the game

8.3.2.2.2 Warn the parent/visitor

8.3.2.2.3 (Where possible) send for a member of the Senior Management Team (or another colleague) to observe the rest of the match.

8.3.2.3 Staff should record the nature of the incident and examples of the alleged abuse.

8.3.2.4 The relevant member of the Senior Management Team will initiate the Senior Management procedure set out in paragraph 8 below.

8.3.2.5 In the case of visitors from other schools, the Principal (or Prep Headteacher) will write to the Headteacher of the visiting school to inform them of the incident and any action that the School is taking (see paragraph 9 below).

**8.4 Correspondence**

8.4.1 All correspondence that is unacceptable in tone or content must be passed to the relevant member of the Senior Management Team (Headteacher, Line Manager) at the earliest possible opportunity without reply to the parent.

8.4.2 The relevant member of the Senior Management Team will reply to the parent and will initiate the Senior Management procedure set out in paragraph 8 below.

**8.5 Vexatious, malicious or defamatory behaviour**

8.5.1 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, or which, on the balance of probability, may be found to have been intended to cause upset or distress to a member of staff.

- 8.5.2 All behaviour deemed vexatious, malicious or defamatory must be reported to the relevant member of the Senior Management Team (Headteacher, Line Manager) at the earliest possible opportunity without discussion with the parent or visitor.
- 8.5.3 The employee or teacher concerned should provide the relevant member of the Senior Management Team with the evidence (e.g. screenshots from Social Networking sites, notes from the relevant conversation or the email concerned etc.)
- 8.5.4 The relevant member of the Senior Management Team will reply to the parent and will initiate the Senior Management procedure set out in paragraph 8 below.

## 9 Senior Management Procedure

The Senior Management **Five Step Procedure** for following up on alleged abusive behaviour towards staff is as follows:

- 9.1 Step One - Phone call/Meeting with Relevant Headteacher.
- 9.2 Step Two - Phone call/Meeting with Vice Principal, followed by a formal warning letter.
- 9.3 Step Three - Meeting with Principal, followed by a formal warning letter.
- 9.4 Step Four - Phone call/Meeting with the Chair of Governors.
- 9.5 Step Five - Required Removal of pupil (under the terms of our Expulsion and Required Removal Policy).
- 9.6 While the steps above may be applied to successive minor incidents, serious abusive behaviour (such as Physical Abuse, career-threatening malicious and defamatory comments about staff or pupils, or egregious cases of verbal abuse) may result in a process which starts at Stage Three, Four or Five of the procedure as appropriate, without going through the prior stages.
- 9.7 If the abuse is directed at a Headteacher, the process above will start at Step Two; if it is directed at the Vice Principal, it will start at Step Three; where it is directed at the Principal, it will start at Step Four.

## 10 Sanctions

The following sanctions may be applied to parents and visitors.

- 10.1 Warning letters to parents or visitors.
- 10.2 Permission to attend School functions may be withdrawn (either for a fixed period of time or indefinitely), including (but not limited to):
  - 10.2.1 Sports matches.
  - 10.2.2 Cultural activities.
  - 10.2.3 Permission to attend parent-teacher meetings.
- 10.3 Restrict all communication with the School through a member of the Senior Management Team.
- 10.4 Permission to be on School premises, or to access online presentations or events, may be withdrawn.

10.5 Required removal of the pupil from the School.

## **11 Support for Staff**

11.1 The School recognises that abusive, harassing or distressing behaviour can have a significant impact on the wellbeing of staff. Where a member of staff has been affected by an incident covered by this policy, the School will take appropriate steps to provide support.

11.2 Support may include:

- Guidance and ongoing support from the member of staff's Line Manager.
- Meetings with an appropriate member of the Senior Management Team.
- Access to counselling services or other wellbeing support available through the School.
- Practical assistance in managing communications with the individual concerned.

11.3 Staff are encouraged to seek support at an early stage and to raise any concerns about their wellbeing with their Line Manager or another appropriate senior colleague.