

Dundela Infants' School and Nursery Unit



Visitors' Policy

Visitors' Policy and Access to Staff/Pupils

1.0 Introduction

We believe staff, parents/carers and children are entitled to a safe and protective environment in which to work. Behaviour that will cause harassment, alarm or distress to users of the premises is contrary to the aims of the school and unacceptable.

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.

2.0 The Aims of this Policy

The aims of this policy and its associated procedures are to:

- protect the pupils and staff from harm both during and outside of school hours when they are on our site; and
- to promote effective and meaningful liaison between school staff and the wider school community.

We have a statutory duty under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and a common law duty to ensure that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the school premises are safe and that visitors to school come to no harm.

We also have a duty of care to our staff and pupils to ensure that they are safe from harm and therefore we expect visitors to adhere to this policy and child protection procedures.

We work closely with the School Council to hear their views and opinions as we acknowledge and support Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child that children should be encouraged to form and to express their views and opinions.

3.0 The Objectives of this Policy

The key objectives of this policy are to have in place a clear protocol and procedure for the admittance of external visitors to the school which is understood by all staff, governors, visitors and parents/carers. The protocol and procedures should conform to child protection guidelines and prevent unsuitable people from working with or accessing children and young persons in the school setting.

We have responsibility for the safety and well-being of all of our pupils and staff anywhere on the school site, during normal school hours, during after school activities and on school organised (and supervised) off-site activities.

This policy applies to:

- All teaching and non-teaching staff employed by the school;
- All external visitors entering the school site during the school day or for after school activities (including peripatetic tutors, sports coaches etc);
- Governors;
- Parents/carers;
- Volunteers;
- Children;
- Education Authority (EA) staff;
- Building & Maintenance Contractors.

We encourage parents/carers and other citizens to visit our school and believe that there are many potential benefits which can result from increased interaction with the public. At the same time, the school must ensure pupils and staff are protected from harm, that the delivery of the curriculum is not disrupted and to protect the school's facilities and equipment from misuse or vandalism.

A balance must be achieved between the potential benefits and risks associated with the presence of visitors in our school buildings. Achieving the desired balance will lead to increased parent/carer involvement, a better understanding of how the school operates and the challenges facing the school, and an increased sense of collaboration and cooperation between the community and the school.

Access to the school's premises/particular classrooms or the school may be restricted upon recommendation by the Principal. The Principal, acting on behalf of the Board of Governors, has the authority to determine which visits are to be permitted as well as the discretion to set any appropriate conditions on the nature and extent of such visits.

The Principal will consider the purpose of any visit, the impact of the visitor's presence and the relationship of any visitor to the pupils.

School staff shall seek to ensure that parents/carers and other visitors are courteously received and that sincere efforts are made to provide them with information as may be needed to foster a co-operative relationship between home, school and community.

4.0 Procedures

The school has many visitors during the course of any single day. In order to make them feel welcome and to maintain the security of pupils and staff, the following procedures must be followed:

1. all visitors should report to reception on arrival;
2. for pre-arranged visits, the office staff should be informed the date of any visit, their name, their host and the purpose of the visit;
3. a visitors' book is available to record who is on the premises at any particular time;
4. identification lanyards are available from the school office and should be worn by visitors;

5. visitors should sign out when leaving the premises;
6. a member of staff will escort all visitors to the appropriate location within the school;
7. visitors should ensure they do not use any photographic devices or video/recording devices whilst in the building without consent.

5.0 Parent/Carer – Staff Liaison

The importance of meaningful, regular and positive liaison between parents/carers and staff cannot be overstated - this principle forms the foundation of the school's policy on liaison with parents/carers.

The means of expressing this working relationship are diverse but parents/carers will appreciate that some guidelines are necessary to ensure communication is as effective as possible.

All exchanges between parents/carers and staff should be conducted in a respectful and tolerant manner.

Parents/carers are asked to adhere to the school's guidelines and Communication Policy when seeking contact with their child's teacher. The Board of Governors endorses the school's arrangements for effective parent/carer - teacher communication as set out below.

The contact between parent/carer and teacher will take the form of:

- Meetings to discuss the pupil's academic progress;
(There are two formal opportunities each year for parents/carers to discuss their child's progress).
- Casual or informal exchanges of information made for routine housekeeping purposes e.g. dental appointments, illness, lost property, etc.
To minimise disruption when possible this information should be sent in advance to the class teacher through the Seesaw App.
- In the cases of more sensitive matters that are causing concern, an appointment should be made and the issues clarified in advance to enable the parent/carer and the member of staff to make appropriate preparation. If a parent/carer requires a meeting with a member of staff, this should be arranged in advance. This means the member of staff will be able to allocate quality time for the meeting.
- Please read our Communication Policy for further information. This is available on our school website and from the office.

6.0 Visitors' Code of Conduct

In order to support a peaceful and safe school environment the school cannot tolerate parents/carers and visitors exhibiting the following:

- disruptive behaviour which interferes or threatens to interfere with the operation of a classroom, an employee's office, office area or any other area of the school grounds including team matches or training sessions;
- using loud/or offensive language, swearing or displaying temper;
- threatening to do actual bodily harm to a member of school staff, school governor, visitor, fellow parent/ carer or pupil, regardless of whether or not the behaviour constitutes a criminal offence;
- damaging or destroying school property;
- abusive or threatening emails or text/voicemail/phone messages or other written communication;
- defamatory, offensive or derogatory comments regarding the school or any of the pupils/parents/carers/ staff, at the school on social sites (Refer to point 9.0). Any concerns you may have about the school must be made through the appropriate channels by speaking to the class teacher, Vice Principal, Principal or the Chair of the Governors, so they can be dealt with fairly, appropriately and effectively for all concerned;
- the use of physical aggression towards another adult or child. This includes physical punishment against your own child on school premises;
- approaching someone else's child in order to discuss 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);
- smoking (including e-cigarettes) and consumption of alcohol or other drugs whilst on school property;
- dogs being brought on to school premises;

7.0 Contractors on the School Premises

When working on the school premises contractors have a duty to ensure the health and safety of everyone in the school who may be affected by their work activities. Also, they have to cooperate with our health and safety policies and procedures. We have a legal responsibility under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 to ensure that all contractors when working on the premises act in a responsible and proper manner.

8.0 Serious Breaches of Acceptable Conduct

In line with the Education Authority recommendations, the Board of Governors reserves the right to put in place arrangements for addressing the most serious situations where the approach of a visitor might amount to harassment of staff, pupils or other members of the public.

These arrangements include the Board of Governors seeking to put in place an injunction to restrain any such person from coming onto the school premises.

Any individual causing disruption to the operation of the school or harassing pupils, staff or members of the public, shall be directed to leave the school premises immediately and the police called if necessary. Thankfully, such situations are rare in the school system, and we trust unlikely to ever occur in the context of this school.

Further information is available in our Communication Policy which can be accessed on the school website.

9.0 Conclusion

We would expect that parents/carers would make all persons responsible for collecting children on their behalf aware of this policy.

The Board of Governors, Principal and staff would like to thank parents/carers for their co-operation and support in this matter and look forward to working together to further strengthen the home/school partnership.

This policy will be reviewed as appropriate based on new legislation, and recommendations as deemed necessary after an incident.