

Parental engagement and expectations regarding parental behaviour

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Approved by:	Trust Board	Author:	Director of HR
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This Policy applies to schools within Lumero Educational Trust

Learning Together, Inspiring All

This policy is rooted in our Lumero Educational Trust (LET/the trust) values:

Excellence

Holding the highest of standards: we have great aspirations for our children and young people, encouraging them to seek out and take hold of opportunities

Collaboration

Stronger together: we commit to sharing expertise to empower and inspire all individuals to thrive in a global world

Inclusion

Celebrating and respecting the diversity in our communities: we have a shared expectation in everyone to achieve in an ever-changing world

LET aims to attract, retain, develop outstanding teaching, and support staff. Staff will have access to fair pay progression, high quality professional development and career pathways irrespective of age, race, religion, gender, gender reassignment, disability, marriage, and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, beliefs, sex or sexual orientation, or socio-economic background ([see LET Equality Objectives](#))

LET is committed to:

- Promoting equality and diversity in its policies, procedures, and guidelines
- Ensuring staff are protected from unlawful direct or indirect discrimination resulting from a protected characteristic (e.g., age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation).
- Delivering high quality teaching and services that meet the diverse needs of its pupil population and its workforce, ensuring that no individual or group is disadvantaged.

Contents

1	Context	4
2	Expectations	4
3	Unacceptable behaviour	6

1. Context

LET strongly encourages strong links with families and our local communities. We believe that pupils benefit when the relationship between home and school is a positive one.

Most interactions between staff, Governors and Trustees at our trust and parents (also read carers), and others are positive and constructive. On very rare occasions, interactions can involve aggression, verbal, physical abuse, unreasonable expectations, or harassment towards members of school staff or the wider school community. Whilst rare, these instances can have a significant impact on the wellbeing of our staff. The wellbeing of our staff is a priority for us at LET.

2. Expectations

This policy sets out the culture and approach that will be taken within the trust, to encourage constructive relationships between home and school and what steps we will take to protect our staff when required. The responsibilities of all parties are set out below.

Expectations on routine communication between home and school

The trust warmly welcomes direct communication with parents and carers but is also mindful that most school staff are away from their desks through most of the working day and will therefore often not have time to look at emails or respond to phone-calls during the working day. The Trust wants to support staff in managing expectations, so that we ensure positive dialogue between school and home, whilst also protecting the wellbeing and workload of our staff.

Arrangements regarding communication between home and school will vary according to the school, and whether it is a primary or secondary school. We will always seek to respond to routine queries within three school days. In cases where the query is more urgent, each school will have a procedure for communication. It should be noted that this is unlikely to be by emailing a named staff member direct.

Unless this raises a safeguarding concern, our schools and the Trust shared services will not respond to, or engage with, discussion on social media. If any parent or member of the local community wishes to raise a substantive concern then they should contact a senior member of school staff to do so, or consider using the complaints policy. The LET Complaints Procedure can be found on the LET website

The trust does not permit the recording of any meetings, conversations or phone calls held between parents and school staff to discuss a matter raised.

The Trust:

- encourages and supports a culture in all its schools and in its shared services team where feedback is welcomed and used as an opportunity to improve.
- supports the wellbeing of our staff, and ensures we do not tolerate violence, abuse, threatening behaviour, unreasonable expectations or harassment towards any of our staff, Governors or Trustees.

School leaders, with support and challenge from their governing bodies, will:

- develop home-school agreements that clearly set out expectations and responsibilities of school staff, parents and children.
- welcome and consider all constructive feedback as an opportunity to improve and will undertake parental surveys.
- communicate clearly to parents, expectations on how to communicate with school-based staff. This should include expectations on how quickly parents/carers should expect a response to emails (with the starting point being within 3 school days) and how parents/carers should contact the school if their query is more urgent. More urgent queries should not be directed to individual staff members to ensure they are answered in a timely manner.
- be clear with staff and with parents/carers that there is no expectation that staff will look at, or respond to, emails during the evenings or weekends, unless they are responsible for monitoring a dedicated safeguarding mailbox.
- encourage staff to notify the senior leadership team if they are experiencing any communication and/or behaviour that they feel is unacceptable, or which they find upsetting and take prompt action to support staff in these circumstances.
- listen to parents' concerns by encouraging a restorative approach, whilst also prioritising the wellbeing and safety of staff.
- communicate this policy and the school's complaints policy to parents/carers and to staff, so that all the school community are aware of expectations and what action will be taken in the event of any unacceptable behaviour/communication.

All staff, governors and Trustees will:

- commit to positive and constructive engagement with parents/carers and the wider school community, welcoming constructive feedback as an opportunity for continuous improvement.
- respond to parent queries within three working days, letting them know if this will take longer or if their query needs to be directed elsewhere.
- behave professionally in difficult situations and attempt to defuse the situation where possible, seeking the involvement as appropriate of other colleagues.

- inform a member of the senior leadership team (for school-based staff), or the Trust Executive Team (for shared services staff, Governors, or Trustees) if they experience any unacceptable or upsetting communication or engagement that they deem to be so, as outlined in this policy.

Parents are asked to:

- be mindful of their child's home-school agreement.
- always approach staff, whether in person or via email, in an enquiring rather than a critical manner.
- recognise the need for staff to have a reasonable workload and work-life balance and not be expected to respond to emails outside of their working day.
- ensure any feedback is directed at the right level. If a concern relates to something specific relating to your child in a particular classroom, then it may be best to resolve directly with the teacher concerned in the first instance and only escalate if needed. If a concern relates to a school or Trust approach, or if you have ideas about how we could make improvements, then these should be directed to a member of the school leadership team (or the Trust Executive team if it relates to the wider trust). Parents and carers are encouraged to use the complaints procedure if required. We expect most complaints to be resolved informally.
- not demonstrate any of the behaviours outlined in section 3 of this policy.

3. Unacceptable behaviour

The types of behaviours that our Trust considers unacceptable and will *not* tolerate towards its staff, Governors or Trustees include:

- shouting at members of staff, either in person or over the telephone
- physically intimidation of a member of staff, e.g. standing very close to them
- the use of aggressive hand gestures, stamping, or hitting furniture or walls in a school or Trust building
- threatening behaviour, in person, on the phone or via email or social media
- shaking or holding a fist or finger towards another person
- swearing
- any physical contact, including pushing or hitting
- any derogatory or discriminatory comments made in relation to a person's protected characteristics¹ as set out in the Equality Act 2010
- written communications that are accusatory in tone, aggressive or abusive; or overwhelmingly recurrent emails, amounting to a volume that is unreasonable for

¹ Age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion, sex or sexual orientation.

school or Trust staff to respond to, whilst meeting the needs of all children in the school or the wider needs of the Trust.

Any of the above behaviours *may* result in the police being summoned, and physical abuse will *always* result in us calling the police. A display of such behaviours may also result in the person concerned being subject to temporary or permanent ban from school or Trust premises.

Any parent unacceptable behaviour towards the school community may result in the Headteacher or senior leadership resolving the situation through discussion and mediation, and in accordance with the school's complaints policy.

Where all procedures have been exhausted, and aggression or intimidation continue, or where there is an extreme act of unacceptable behaviour, a parent or carer may be banned by the Headteacher from the school premises for a period, subject to review.

In the case of written communications, we may deem written communications to be upsetting and/or unreasonable, if they meet the criteria outlined earlier in this policy. In these circumstances, the Headteacher or Trust CEO will make the decision as to whether communications meet these criteria. This may be after just one communication if the written communication is aggressive or abusive or may be after several communications if the communications are deemed to be unreasonably frequent. For parents, we will propose an approach to future engagement that promotes constructive engagement but in a way that protects our staff wellbeing. That may include stipulating how frequently we will provide responses to issues that are raised. In some circumstances we may say that we will no longer be engaging in email/written contact. In all cases, we will always continue to respond swiftly to any safeguarding concerns that are raised. Parents and other members of the community also have the option of using our complaints policy if they are unhappy with any decision made in this regard, or if they wish to raise a complaint in any circumstances.

If a ban is imposed either from communications or from the premises the following steps will be taken:

- The parent/carers will be informed in writing about the decision, about when it will be reviewed, and what will happen if the ban is breached.
- Where an assault has led to a ban from school premises, a statement indicating that the matter has been reported to the Trust's CEO and the police will be sent to the parent
- The Chair of Governors and the CEO will be informed of the ban in all circumstances. In cases of bans from school premises, arrangements for pupils being delivered to and collected from the school gate will be clarified where this is relevant.

The length of a ban:

- The ban should almost always be finite in length, as only the most serious misconduct would justify an indefinite ban. The aim should always be to restore “normal” relations as soon as is reasonably practicable.
- Even if a ban is permanent, it should be reviewed periodically, taking account of subsequently demonstrated behaviour.

Parents banned from the school premises are still entitled to engage with parents’ evenings and may also be invited to other meetings at the school. However, the format and approach to this will be determined by the school, as the safety and wellbeing of our staff is paramount.