

BELLAGHY PRIMARY SCHOOL

VISITORS' POLICY **(INCLUDING ACCESS TO STAFF/CHILDREN)**

RATIONALE

At Bellaghy Primary School, the care, welfare and safety of our children is paramount and while visitors are most welcome in our school, we want to ensure that all visitors to our school follow these guidelines so that our children's protection is not in any way compromised.

Additionally, we believe that 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 any member of staff, governor, parent, carer or child is contrary to the aims of the school and is unacceptable.

The purpose of this policy is to provide a reminder to all parents/carers and visitors to our school about expected conduct. We can then continue to flourish, progress and achieve, in an atmosphere of mutual understanding and respect.

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 children to ensure that they are safe from harm and therefore we expect visitors to adhere to this policy and child protection procedures.

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 conform to child protection

guidelines and prevent unsuitable people from working with or accessing children in the school setting.

We have responsibility for the safety and well-being of all of our children 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 members of our community to visit our school and we believe that there are many potential benefits which can result from increased interaction with the community. At the same time, the school must ensure children 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 building. Achieving the desired balance will lead to increased parent/carer involvement, a better understanding of how the school operates and an increased sense of collaboration and co-operation between the community and the school.

Access to the school premises/particular classrooms may be restricted upon recommendation by the Principal. The Principal, acting on behalf of the Board of Governors, has the authority to determine which visitors 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 children.

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.

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 children and staff, the following procedures must be followed:

1. All visitors should report to a member of staff on arrival;
2. For pre-arranged visits, our school secretary should be informed of 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. A poster explaining 'Guidelines for Visitors' is on display beside the Visitors' Book;
5. Visitors will wear a Visitors' Lanyard
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 voice/video/recording devices whilst in the building, without consent.

PARENT / CARER STAFF LIASON

The importance of meaningful, regular and positive liaison between parents/carers and staff cannot be overstated. We believe the education of our children is a partnership between home and school, therefore, we value the excellent support we receive from our parents/carers. The positive relationship which exists between parents and staff at Bellaghy Primary School is very special and is to be celebrated.

Guidelines are necessary to ensure communication between staff and parents/carers 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 when seeking contact with their child's teacher. It is inappropriate for a parent/carer to arrive in the classroom during the school day to speak to the class teacher or to expect to speak to a teacher on the telephone while he/she is teaching. Obviously, there will be exceptional cases where a parent/carer will need to speak to a teacher urgently.

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 children's academic 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 in written form or an early morning telephone call. Seesaw can be used to contact teachers but parents/carers are advised that teachers will respond during the school day when it is convenient for him/her to do so. In some instances, teaching staff will also use Seesaw to contact individual parents/carers.
- 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. This appointment should be made through the school office.

VISITORS' CODE OF CONDUCT

In order to support a peaceful, safe school environment within an atmosphere of mutual understanding and respect, the school **will not tolerate** parents/carers or 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 child, 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 children/parents/carers/staff/governors, at the school on social media sites. Any concerns you may have about the school must be made through the appropriate channels by speaking to the class teacher, Principal or the Chair of the Governors, so they can be dealt with fairly, appropriately and effectively for all concerned – see Complaints Policy;
- 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;
- any form of voice recording, image recording on mobile phone or other mobile device.

Parents/Carers and Visitors should adhere to the following:

- Follow the school’s signing in and out procedure
- Respect school staff and support them in all they do
- Set a positive example
- Ask staff in the school about their view on an incident
- Ensure that your child knows how to behave in school and towards others

CONTRACTORS ON 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.

SERIOUS BREACH OF CODE OF CONDUCT

In line with the Education Authority – North Eastern Region’s 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, children 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 our school.

INAPPROPRIATE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Bellaghy Primary School operates two very successful and informative Facebook pages – one for school which is a private page and one for our PTA.

Unfortunately, social media websites are being used increasingly to fuel campaigns and complaints against members of the general public including; schools, Principals, school staff, governors and in some cases other parents/carers and pupils.

The Governors consider the use of social media websites being used in this way as unacceptable and not in the best interests of the children or the whole school community.

Any concerns you may have must be made through the appropriate channels by speaking to the class teacher, Principal or the Chair of the Governors, so they can be dealt with fairly, appropriately and effectively for all concerned – See Complaints Policy

In the event that any pupil or parent/carer of a child being educated in the school is found to be posting libellous or defamatory comments on social network sites, they will be reported to the appropriate ‘report abuse’ section of the network site. All social network sites have clear rules about the content, which can be posted, on the site and they provide robust mechanisms to report contact or activity which breaches this. The school will also expect that any parent/carer or child removes such comments immediately.

In serious cases, the school will consider its legal options to deal with any misuse of social networking and other sites regarding its staff and pupils.

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.

REVIEW OF POLICY

This policy will be reviewed in 2021 or in line with new legislation/recommendations.

March 2020