

Dealing with Abusive Persons Policy

DOCUMENT CONTROL

Policy owner	Executive team
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Summary of last revision	Summer 2026 - Greater clarity on zero tolerance of abuse and staff authority to end interactions. New section 3 on working with parents and stakeholders. Introduction of phone-free environment on site so all responsible adults must leave phones at reception when visiting schools. Stronger emphasis on Responsible Adults Code of Conduct and clearer expectations, now more explicit. Enhanced social media guidance, highlighting reputational impact of online comments.
Related Policies	MAT Policies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaints Procedure • MAT Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedures • Social Media Policy
Policy control survey	Please complete this survey and provide feedback if you have had to use this policy https://forms.office.com/r/HMeZtB29Si

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 Marches Academy Trust (the Trust) is committed to providing high quality teaching and learning for all our children and young people (CYP). As a Trust we have a clear vision and strong values, which build upon collaborations and aim to ensure that every school within our Trust works in a productive and positive partnership with all adults responsible for CYP to realise 'Achievement through caring'.
- 1.2 We highly value positive relationships and encourage forging close links with the school community, responsible adults and visitors. Responsible adults are taken to mean those with parental responsibility for a child or young person (these may include parents, carers, kinship carers, corporate parents, or guardians, and other agencies).
- 1.3 Our schools also believe that CYP benefit the most when the relationship between home and school is a positive one. We recognise the shared responsibility for CYPs welfare and educational progress and believe involvement with responsible adults is an important factor in educational success, as well as in dealing with emerging problems at an early stage.
- 1.4 We also strive to make our schools places where all adults model for CYP the behaviour we teach and expect. In general, we place a high importance on good manners, positive communication and mutual respect. Responsible adults are asked to follow the Trust's Responsible Adults Code of Conduct.
- 1.5 Our schools are safe and welcoming places in which to work and learn and we believe all members of the school community have the right to work or be our schools without fear of aggression or abuse from anybody. As such there is no place for violence, threatening behaviour or abuse.
- 1.6 Almost all responsible visitors to the Trust are keen to work with us and are supportive of the school. However, on rare occasions, the behaviour of a very small number of responsible adults or visitors can cause severe disruption or worse, result in abusive or aggressive behaviour towards staff, CYP, or other members of the school community. Behaviour that causes harassment, alarm or distress in our schools is contrary to the ethos of the Trust and will not be tolerated.
- 1.7 In these situations, we expect members of staff to behave professionally, attempting to defuse the situation where possible and seeking the involvement as appropriate of other colleagues. Staff who face these situations have licence to end any conversation (face to face or on the telephone). They should then refer the incident to the Headteacher who will take appropriate action or invoke the provisions of this policy.
- 1.8 The progress and well-being of the responsible adult's child(ren) will be fully considered. Actions taken against the responsible adult or visitor will be reasonable and proportionate. They will have the opportunity to put their views forward at every stage. In the case of the imposition of conditions or a ban from school, robust review processes involving the Local Governing Body are in place to ensure fairness.
- 1.9 This policy should be read in conjunction with the Trust's:
 - [Complaints Policy](#)

- [MAT Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedures](#)
- [Social Media Policy](#)

2 Legal Framework

2.1 Persons Causing Nuisance / Disturbance on School Premises

Section 547 of the Education Act 1996

2.1.1 School premises are private property and responsible adults and visitors have been granted permission from the school to be on school premises. However, in case of unacceptable behaviour towards staff, pupils or other responsible adults, school may withdraw this permission to enter our school premises.

2.1.2 It is an offence under section 547 of the Education Act 1996 for any person (including a responsible adult) to cause a nuisance or disturbance on school premises. The police may be called to assist in removing the person concerned. The school is not responsible for organising arrangements for CYP in these circumstances. Responsible adults will need to provide alternative arrangements for bringing CYP into school.

2.2 Protection from Harassment Act 1997

2.2.1 The Act makes it a criminal and civil offence to pursue a course of conduct which causes alarm and distress, which includes the publication of words. Any member of the school community who believes they are being harassed should speak to the Headteacher and the Trust will direct them to deal with the matter.

2.3 Malicious Communications Act 1988

2.3.1 Section 1 makes it an offence to send an indecent, grossly offensive or threatening letter, electronic communication, or other article to another person with the intention that it should cause them distress or anxiety.

2.4 Employment Rights Act 1996 and the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974

2.4.1 Schools and Trusts have a legal duty to protect their staff from unacceptable behaviour from responsible adults, which is a common law duty of care.

2.4.2 These acts require schools to provide a safe working environment for their employees, including protection from harassment, bullying, and other forms of unacceptable behaviour.

2.4.3 Schools should take this duty seriously by having policies and procedures in place, providing staff with training on these policies, and taking appropriate action when incidents occur.

2.5 Data Protection Act 2018 and UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR).

2.5.1 Covert recording is generally considered a violation of an individual's privacy rights, as it involves collecting personal data without their knowledge or consent.

2.5.2 Individuals therefore making covert recordings potentially risk criminal prosecution under Section 170 of the Data Protection Act 2018.

3 Working positively with responsible adults and stakeholders

3.1 Responsible adults and stakeholders are expected to communicate with school staff in a courteous and respectful manner, recognising that staff have a duty to safeguard CYP and maintain a safe working environment.

3.2 We encourage concerns to be raised at the earliest opportunity, using the most appropriate route (for example, speaking to the class teacher or Headteacher in the first instance), so that issues can be addressed before they escalate.

3.3 Schools will take steps to ensure communication is accessible and inclusive, and will consider reasonable adjustments for responsible adults and stakeholders with a disability or other additional needs, in line with the Equality Act 2010.

3.4 It is the responsibility of the responsible adult to inform the school, at the point their child starts, of any disability, medical condition, or other additional needs, so that appropriate support and reasonable adjustments can be considered and put in place.

3.5 The Trust operates a phone-free environment across all schools. All adults are required to leave their phones at reception when they arrive on site.

4 Definition of unacceptable behaviour

4.1 Types of behaviour that are considered serious and unacceptable and will not be tolerated towards any member of the school community are as follows. Such behaviour may occur through various forms of communication, including face-to-face interactions, telephone conversations, written correspondence, emails, social media platforms, or any other digital or physical means. The following is not an exhaustive list but seeks to provide illustrations of such behaviour:

4.1.1 Physical abuse & intimidation including:

- i. Physical abuse including pushing, hitting, slapping, punching, kicking
- ii. Spitting
- iii. Standing very close
- iv. Aggressive or abusive hand gestures, or exaggerated movements including shaking or holding a fist towards another person
- v. Speeding or dangerous driving in the car park.

4.1.2 Verbal abuse including:

- i. Using disrespectful language
- ii. Swearing, use of foul or abusive language
- iii. Shouting (either in person or over the phone)
- iv. Speaking in an aggressive or threatening tone
- v. Racist or sexist comments (including innuendo)
- vi. Insults that demean, embarrass or undermine.

4.1.3 Virtual abuse including:

- vii. Posting libelous or defamatory comments on social media sites;
- viii. Inappropriate posting of content which could bring the school or individuals into disrepute or be deemed as bullying;
- ix. Downloading personal photographs from staff, Governor or Trustee social media accounts;
- x. Setting up fake social media accounts in a staff, Governor's or Trustee's name.

4.1.4 Allegations which turn out to be vexatious or malicious. The Office of the Independent Adjudicator defines the characteristics of a 'frivolous' or 'vexatious' complaint as:

- i. complaints which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific or repetitious;
- ii. insistence upon pursuing unmeritorious complaints and/or unrealistic outcomes beyond all reason;
- iii. insistence upon pursuing meritorious complaints in an unreasonable manner;
- iv. complaints which are designed to cause disruption or annoyance;
- v. demands for redress that lack any serious purpose or value.

Examples include but are not limited to:

- i. refusal to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
- ii. refusal to co-operate with the complaints investigation process
- iii. refusal to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure
- iv. insistence on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice
- v. introducing trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on
- vi. raising large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales
- vii. making unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced
- viii. changing the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds
- ix. seeking an unrealistic outcome, such as the inappropriate dismissal of staff
- x. making excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with
- xi. knowingly providing falsified information; and/or
- xii. publishing unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

5 Social media

- 5.1 The Trust and its schools urge parents to approach the school with any concerns and to refrain from expressing concerns about the school and its staff on social media sites. If we are not aware of any issues, then we cannot investigate and resolve them. Expressing concerns on social media may damage the reputation of the Trust and its schools and the integrity of its staff may be unnecessarily called into question. Negative comments posted on social media can cause upset and are often counterproductive to the overall aim of educating CYP.
- 5.2 Our schools aim to hold constructive communication with parents and is continually looking at fresh ways of school and parent engagement to serve the best interests of all those in the school community. Our Parent Code of Conduct clearly set out the kinds of behaviours from parents that we consider to be unacceptable and the actions that we may take in response to such conduct. A copy of this code of conduct can be requested from the school office.

6 Steps taken in our schools to reduce the risk of abuse

- 6.1 The types of behaviours discussed in this policy are thankfully rare. We more commonly see the lower level of this spectrum, with people shouting or swearing when annoyed.
- 6.2 To prevent or deter abuse all schools within our Trust will:
- i. have a welcoming ethos, which reinforces mutual respect.
 - ii. staff will model calm, professional courtesy when dealing with others in person or through written communication.
 - iii. staff will politely terminate a phone call or meeting if people become abusive, threatening or swear.
 - iv. staff will alert senior leaders if their dealings with a particular person are becoming unpleasant.

7 The school's approach to dealing with incidents

7.1 If a responsible adult or visitor behaves in an unacceptable way towards a member of the school community, the Headteacher or appropriate senior staff will assess the level of risk before deciding on a future course of action. The course of action will be reasonable and commensurate with the assessed level of risk.

7.1.1 Risk Assessment

The Headteacher will carry out a risk assessment in order to help make a decision about the level of response. In all cases the response will be reasonable and proportionate. The Headteacher will consider the following questions:

- i. What form did the abuse take?
- ii. What evidence is there?
- iii. What do witnesses say happened?
- iv. Are there previous incidents to take into consideration?
- v. Do members of staff/students feel intimidated by the behaviour?
- vi. Is there any evidence of provocation?
- vii. How high is the assessed risk that this will be repeated or there will be retaliation at the school's action? (low, medium, high).
- viii. How severe is the abusive action in terms of harm caused or potential for harm?
- ix. Does the behavior breach specific school policies, codes of conduct, or safeguarding protocols?
- x. Could the incident escalate into more serious violence or conflict if not addressed effectively?
- xi. Are there cultural, linguistic, or diversity-related sensitivities to consider in how the incident is assessed and resolved?
- xii. Are there existing risk assessments or action plans related to the perpetrator?

7.1.2 Recording of Incidents

7.1.3 Staff/students subject to abuse and witnesses will make written statements within appendix 1 about incident(s) which will be kept in a file with subsequent letters. This file will be kept by the Headteacher's PA. Depending on the severity of the incident and any escalation, these statements may be used as legal evidence. Depending on an assessment of the risk of retaliation to witnesses or individuals, statements made by adults these may be made available to the responsible adult or visitor if they request it.

8 The School's Response

8.1 Following the completion of the risk assessment, the Headteacher will decide the level of action to be taken. Actions will include the following:

8.2 Clarify what is considered acceptable behaviour by the school

In some instances, it may be appropriate simply to ensure the responsible adult or visitor is clear about behaviour standards expected by the school. This could be explained by letter from the Headteacher. This letter may contain a warning about further action if there are further incidents. The person(s) will be invited to write to the Headteacher with his/her version of events within 10 working days. Depending on the person(s) response a meeting may then be held to discuss the situation and how this can be avoided in future.

8.3 Invitation to an informal meeting to discuss events

We value informal meetings and discussions and encourage responsible adults to approach staff with any concerns they may have, and aim to resolve all issues with open dialogue and mutual understanding. It can often be helpful to hold an informal meeting to calmly discuss and defuse the situation.

The safety and well-being of those attending such a meeting must be carefully considered. Members of school staff will always be accompanied by at least one other colleague at any such meeting. Consideration should be given to the seating arrangements. The main points of discussion and any agreed actions should be noted, and a follow-up letter or e-mail sent to confirm the school's expectations and any agreed actions.

8.4 Impose conditions on contact with the school and its staff

8.4.1 Although fulfilling a public function, schools are private places. The public has no automatic right of entry. Responsible adults of enrolled students have an 'implied licence' to come onto school premises at certain stated times. It is for schools to define and set out the extent of such access. Responsible adults or visitors exceeding this would be trespassing.

8.4.2 Depending on the type, level or frequency of the unacceptable behaviour, the school may consider imposing conditions on the person(s) contact with the school. These conditions may include (but are not exclusively):

- i. being accompanied to any meeting with a member of school staff by a member of the senior leadership team;
- ii. restricting contact by telephone to named members of the senior leadership team;
- iii. restricting written communications to named members of the senior leadership team;
- iv. restricting attendance at school events to those where the responsible adult will be accompanied by a member of the senior leadership of the school; and
- v. any other restriction as deemed reasonable and proportionate by the Headteacher or senior leadership team.

- 8.4.3 In this case the responsible adult or visitor will be informed by letter from the Headteacher the details of the conditions that are being imposed. The person(s) would then be given 10 school days from the date of that letter to make representations in writing about the conditions to the Chair of Trustees. The Chair of Trustees would then decide whether to confirm or remove the conditions. This would be communicated in writing within 10 school days of the date of receipt of the person(s) letter.
- 8.4.4 If the decision is to confirm the conditions imposed, this decision will be reviewed by the Local Governing Body (LGB) after approximately six months (and every six months after that, if appropriate). The person(s) will be invited to make written representation to the LGB. This and the evidence from the Headteacher will be considered at a meeting of the full LGB. Governors may decide to maintain, extend or remove the conditions. The decision of the review will be communicated to the person(s) by the clerk to the LGB within 10 school days of the date of the meeting.
- 8.4.5 When deciding whether it will be necessary to maintain, extend or remove the conditions, Governors will give consideration to the extent of the person's compliance with the conditions, any appropriate expressions of regret and assurance of future good conduct received from him/her and any evidence of their co-operation with the school in other respects.
- 8.4.6 Meetings may be recorded for training and monitoring purposes.

8.5 Imposing a ban

- 8.5.1 Where other procedures have been exhausted and aggression or intimidation continues OR where there is an extreme act of violence then the school may consider banning the person(s) from school premises. This will include a ban from accessing school staff by written communication or telephone.
- 8.5.2 In these circumstances, the person(s) would be advised in writing by the Headteacher that a provisional ban is being imposed. They would then be given 10 school days from the date of that letter to make representations about the ban in writing to the Chair of Governors.
- 8.5.3 The Chair of Governors would then decide whether to confirm or remove the ban. This would be communicated to them in writing within 10 school days of the receipt of their letter.
- 8.5.4 If the Chair's decision is to confirm the ban, person(s) in these circumstances will be offered an annual meeting about the CYP's progress, usually with a member of senior staff.
- 8.5.5 A decision to impose a ban will be reviewed by the Local Governing Body (LGB) after approximately six months (and every six months after that, if appropriate). The person will be invited to make written representation to the Governors; this and the evidence from the Headteacher will be considered at a

meeting of the full LGB. Governors may decide to remove the ban, extend the ban or impose conditions on person's access to the school. The decision of the review will be communicated to the responsible adult by the Clerk to the LGB within 10 school days of the date of the meeting.

In deciding whether to remove or extend the ban or impose conditions, Governors will give consideration to the extent of the person's compliance with the ban, any appropriate expressions of regret and assurance of future good conduct received from him/her and any evidence of their co-operation with the school in other respects.

8.6 Removal from school

A person who has been banned from the school premises and continues to cause a nuisance will be deemed to have committed a section 547 offence if their behaviour disrupts the school's activities or endangers its community. They will be considered as trespassers. In these circumstances the offender may be removed from school. This may be carried out by a police officer or person authorised by the LGB. Legal proceedings may be brought against them.

9 Covert recordings

- 9.1 The school/Trust does not consent to responsible adults making audio or video recordings of any member of staff, or other individual connected to the school, including during in-person meetings, remote/virtual meetings, or telephone conversations, unless explicitly agreed in writing.
- 9.2 The recording meetings or conversations with school staff may reasonably be regarded as a breach of the relationship of mutual trust and confidence between the responsible adult and the school where:
- i. The responsible adult knew, or it was reasonable for them to have known, that the member of staff did not consent to the meeting or conversation being recorded; and/or
 - ii. The recording was deliberately taken covertly (secretly) in the knowledge that the member of staff did not, or would not, consent.
- 9.3 The school will consider making reasonable adjustments for responsible adults with a relevant disability in line with the Equality Act 2010.

10 Complaints policy

Any responsible adult complaint that arises from incidents of abusive behaviour will be dealt with under the complaints policy.

11 Monitoring and policy review

This policy is reviewed on an annual basis.

All actions taken under this policy are also monitored by the Local Governing Body. Details of incidents will also be reported to the Board of Trustees as part of the Executive team reports at Trustee meetings, which take place every term. Individual names and details are not identified to either the LGB or Board of Trustees.

12 Appendix 1 - Witness Statement

Name of witness	
Name of staff	
Subject/Activity	
Location (the incident occurred in)	
Date	
Time (approximately)	
Details of perpetrator(s) including name and relationship to school	
Details of other parties involved: staff, pupils, witnesses including name and relationship to school	
Detailed description of the incident, including what happened, who was involved, any injuries or property damage caused	
How were you feeling at the time of the incident	
Initial outcome of incident - how did it conclude? <i>Include any action taken to address the incident at the time (e.g. first aid, contacting emergency services)</i>	

13 Appendix 2 - Letters to send to abusive persons

Please refer to the template letters within the Trust's internal policy library for staff under this folder [Abusive persons standalone letters 2026](#)