



Zero Tolerance Staff Abuse

At The Northern Lights Preschool we have a Zero Tolerance Staff abuse Policy towards both verbal and physical abuse. We believe that all children, staff and volunteers within the preschool have the right to be protected from verbal abuse (including swearing) and physical abuse or assault, whether directed at or by witnessing it being directed towards another person in or around the preschool. We therefore intend to create an environment in which children, staff and volunteers are free from abuse and treated with respect and in which any suspicion of abuse is promptly and appropriately responded to. We believe we have a strong partnership with our parents and an open-door policy to discuss any matters arising.

Procedure

In the event that a parent is seen in an aggressive or abusive manner at the preschool, our procedure is to:

- Direct the parent away from the children and into a private area such as the office or a vacant room.
- Ensure that a second Senior member of staff be in attendance, where possible whilst ensuring the safe supervision of the children.
- Maintain a calm professional manner, ask the parents to calm down and make it clear that we do not tolerate aggressive or abusive language or behaviour.
- Contact the police if the behaviour does not diffuse
- Once the parent has calmed down, the member of staff will then listen to their concerns and respond appropriately
- The incident will be recorded in the child’s chronological records: detailing the date, time, reason and action taken and we may also notify Ofsted.
- Staff /Children/Parents may require support and reassurance following the experience; management will provide this and seek further support where necessary.
- The Northern Lights Preschool reserves the right, in line with Safeguarding procedures to ban the abuser from the preschool premises until further notice. Alternative suitable arrangements may therefore need to be made in relation to the drop-off and collection of the child.
- In extreme circumstances a child may be excluded from the nursery.

1.Expectations of parents, carers and visitors to the preschool

The preschool actively encourages close links with parents/carers and the community. We know that children benefit when the relationship between home and preschool is a positive one and we welcome visitors to our preschool and encourage parents to communicate with us by phone or via email. If a parent or carer has concerns we will always listen to them and seek to address them as quickly and positively as possible. We will always act to ensure the preschool remains a safe place for children, staff and all other members of our community and therefore abusive, threatening or aggressive behaviour will not be tolerated. If such behaviour occurs we will follow the procedures outlined in this policy.

Types of behaviour that are considered serious and unacceptable and which will not be tolerated in relation to members of staff, and other members of the community are:

- shouting, either in person or over the telephone
- swearing, either in person or over the telephone
- emails which are sarcastic, combative or aggressive in tone and language

- constant emails and/or phone calls which amount to harassment and intimidation, despite the preschool's best efforts to address a situation
- inappropriate electronic activity including publishing abusive or inappropriate content with regards to the preschool, teachers or children on social networking websites such as Facebook and Twitter or in email communication
- any form of physical violence, such as pushing or hitting
- physically intimidation, e.g. standing unnecessarily close to her/him
- the use of rude or aggressive hand gestures, including shaking or holding a fist towards another person

2. Procedure to be followed when behaviour is inappropriate

a) Informal complaint

If a parent, carer or visitor behaves in an unacceptable way towards a member of the preschool, the Manager and/or appropriate senior staff will seek to resolve the situation through discussion and mediation. Such discussion will highlight how the behaviour of the parent/carers did not meet the preschool's expectations and a request will be made that future communications with the preschool are modified in the light of this.

b) Formal complaint

Following any interaction with a parent/carers or visitor, a member of staff reserves the right to submit a formal complaint about the incident to the Manager or Chair of the Committee. Should such a formal complaint be made then the Manager or designated member of the Leadership team will investigate the complaint, by speaking with the parent/carers and the member of staff. During the investigation, any contact with the preschool will be through a designated member of staff and by prior appointment only. The parent/carers will be informed of this by letter. The Manager or the Chair of the Committee will determine any action to be taken in response to the findings of the investigation.

3. Actions which could follow such an investigation

- A request to meet with the Manager or the Chair of the Committee to discuss events
- A letter clarifying to the parent/carers what is considered acceptable behaviour by the preschool
- The designation of one member of staff to act as the conduit for communication between the parent/carers and the preschool
- As a last resort, withdrawing permission for the parent/carers to enter the preschool site and/or buildings without prior appointment

4. Acceptable communication by telephone

a) Dealing with abusive telephone calls

Sometimes staff may have to deal with challenging, abusive, aggressive or threatening telephone calls. It is unacceptable for any member of staff to be subjected to such abuse and this guidance has been produced to assist parents to understand conduct which the preschool expects parents to follow during phone calls and to staff if they are faced with a difficult situation.

Guidance for parents/carers

At any time when speaking to a member of staff at The Northern Lights Preschool, please do not raise your voice or use aggressive or threatening language.

Guidance to staff

To reduce the likelihood of callers becoming abusive, staff should conduct themselves in a courteous and professional manner and make every attempt to meet the needs of the caller. Staff should also have the confidence that it is acceptable to end an abusive telephone call.

Always:

- remain calm and polite
- stay in control of the situation
- actively listen – repeat information back to the caller to test understanding of the issue and gain their agreement
- inform the caller they are trying to help them
- be positive and say what you can do
- be clear and avoid using jargon
- if necessary, apologise for an error and take action to put it right
- make notes of the conversation
- follow the procedure below and if appropriate refer the caller to the Manager or to the Chair of the Committee

Never:

- respond in the same manner as an abusive caller
- take it personally
- allow yourself to be bullied
- slam the phone down.

b) Acceptable communication by email

Sometimes staff may have to deal with challenging, abusive, aggressive or threatening emails. It is unacceptable for any member of staff to be subjected to such abuse and this guidance has been produced to assist parents to understand conduct which the school expects parents to follow when emailing the preschool and to staff if they receive such messages.

Guidance for parents/carers

- Always address the member of staff formally (eg Dear Ms Allen...)
- Always use formal and courteous language in the message
- Do not use bold text or capitalisation to emphasise concerns
- Do not expect an instant response.

Guidance for staff

- Always address the parent formally (eg Dear Ms Allen...)
- Always use formal and courteous language in the message
- Do not use bold text or capitalisation to emphasise concerns
- If you receive an email which you believe does not follow the preschool's expectations of the use of email, forward the message to your Manager or to the Chair of the Committee

5. Abuse/bullying using cyber technology

Staff may become targets of cyber abuse or bullying which can have a significant impact on health, well-being and self-confidence.

Protecting staff from abuse is best done within a prevention framework, including whole preschool policies and appropriate practices.

Cyber abuse/bullying may consist of threats, harassment, embarrassment, humiliation, defamation or impersonation. It may take the form of general insults, or prejudice based abuse, e.g. sexist, racist, or other forms of discrimination. It may involve email, virtual learning environments, chat rooms, websites, social networking sites, mobile and fixed-point phones, digital cameras, games and virtual world sites. Abuse using cyber technology can occur at any time and incidents can intrude into the victim's private life. The audience for such messages can be very large and can be reached rapidly. The content of electronically forwarded messages is hard to control and the worry of content resurfacing can make it difficult for the victim to move on.

a) Cyberbullying and the law

While there is not a specific criminal offence called cyberbullying, activities can be criminal offences under a range of different laws, including:

- The Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- The Malicious Communications Act 1988
- Section 127 of the Communications Act 2003
- Public Order Act 1986
- The Defamation Acts 1952 and 1996

It is the duty of the preschool to ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all employees. Incidents that are related to employment, even those taking place outside the hours or place of work may fall under the responsibility of the employer.

b) Effectively tackling abuse using cyber technology

Responding to incidents

- Staff should never retaliate i.e. personally engage with cyber bullying incidents.
- Keep any records of abuse – texts, emails, voice mails, or instant messages. Take screen prints of messages or web pages. Record the time, date and address of the site.
- Inform the Manager or the Chair of the Committee as soon as possible
- Where the perpetrator is known to be a current student or co-worker, this should be dealt with through the preschool's disciplinary procedures.
- A designated member of the leadership team should contact the police where it appears that a law has been broken – for example, where death threats, assault, or racially motivated criminal offences are involved. Where a potential criminal offence has been identified, the preschool should ensure that any internal investigation does not interfere with police inquiries. Preschool staff are of course able to report incidents directly to the police.
- If a potential criminal offence has been committed and the school is not able to identify the perpetrator, the police may issue a Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) request to a service provider, enabling them to disclose the data about a message or the person sending it.

Abuse/bullying using cyber technology

Where online content is upsetting / inappropriate and the person(s) responsible for posting is known, the quickest way to get material taken down is likely to be to ensure that the person who posted it understands why the material is unacceptable and to request that they remove it. If the person responsible has not been identified, or will not take the material down, the preschool will contact the host (i.e. the social networking site) to make a request to get the content taken down. The material posted may breach the service provider's terms and conditions of use and can then be removed. It is important to be clear about where the content is – for example by taking a screen capture of the

material that includes the URL or web address. If the preschool requests they take down material that is not illegal, it will be clear how it contravenes the site's terms and conditions. In cases of actual/suspected illegal content, the school will contact the police.