



**St Julie's Catholic High School**

**Code of Expected Parental Conduct**

**1. Scope of this code of conduct**

The entirety of this document applies to all parents and carers of pupils at St Julie's Catholic High School and sets out the expectations that the school has in respect of their conduct when dealing with or commenting on the school or members of the school community.

The section on Social Media sets out the school's position in relation to all use of social media that references the school or individual members of the school community, regardless of the identity of the user in question.

This document should be read alongside other relevant policies and procedures including:

- Home School Agreement
- Acceptable Use and E-Safety Policy
- Behaviour for Learning Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Relationships Policy
- Complaints Procedure

**2. Rationale**

In the vast majority of instances, the relationship between school and parents/carers is mutually respectful. This should be acknowledged and celebrated from the outset.

However, there is also extensive research that demonstrates that at a national level, instances of aggression towards and abuse of school staff has increased in recent years. This research also demonstrates the clear detrimental impact such behaviours have on the physical and mental health of school staff and the ensuing knock-on effect that this can have on the young people in their care should this lead to stress-related absence or staff leaving the profession.

This code of conduct should be seen within that national context.

**3. Aims**

The Mission Statement of St Julie's Catholic High School is central to our expectations of parental conduct. It provides a values-based direction for decisions and activities so that the learning community continues to express the spirituality and mission of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur.

**Mission statement of St Julie's Catholic High School**

*We aim to be a Catholic learning community:*

- Which respects and embraces the diversity of all God's people

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- Where opportunities allow for all individuals to discover their potential and to develop and share their unique talents
- Where friendship and enjoyment are experienced by all and a welcome is offered to all who visit
- Which provides all with a safe and secure environment
- Where faith, prayer and reflection are visible in word and in action
- Which takes good care of God's world and all who inhabit it, especially the poor and disadvantaged
- Where fairness, care and compassion are central to life

This code of conduct also draws upon guidance issued by Liverpool City Council Legal Services and aims at ensuring that school are compliant with all relevant legislation including:

- Malicious Communications Act 1988
- The Education Act 1996
- The Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Communications Act 2003
- The Defamation Act 2013

#### 4. Working in partnership

It is inevitable that at times views of parents/carers and views of school staff will differ. In most instances, these differences can be addressed as informal concerns and swift resolution reached.

On occasion, this will not be possible and the school therefore has in place a complaints procedure that outlines the steps that should be taken by any individual, including parents/carers, who wish to raise a complaint. This procedure can be found on the school website and sets out how complaints should be raised and how they will be addressed. It also sets out how the school would identify and address serial and unreasonable complaints. School has the right in law to stop responding to complaints that are deemed to be serial or unreasonable in situations where:

- i. The school have taken every reasonable step to resolve a complaint

Informal and formal resolution has been attempted; the complaints procedure has been followed; there has been full consideration of the facts and of the complainants desired outcome

- ii. School have given a clear statement of their position

Written correspondence has outlined and explained the school's conclusions in relation to the complaint and solutions have been offered

- iii. Future contact from the complainant is making substantially the same points

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This also applies in particular (though not only) where the following 3-step test has been met:

- The School has reason to believe the complainant has an intention of causing disruption;
- The complainant's correspondence or demeanour are deemed by the school to be aggressive
- The complainant makes insulting comments or threats to staff

Since the general processes and procedures around responding to complaints and concerns are dealt with within the complaints procedure, the focus of this code conduct is to set out school's position with regard to the 3-step test above.

### **5. Dealing with instances of aggression, abuse, threats or other disruptive conduct by parents/carers**

Whilst most concerns and complaints are raised in a cordial and respectful manner, there are occasions when parent/carers behave in a manner which is wholly unacceptable, displaying behaviours that staff find to be:

- Aggressive
- Threatening
- Upsetting

or otherwise unacceptable

In determining whether behaviour meets the above the designations, the school follows the Department for Education guidance [Controlling access to school premises](#) which states that *'It's enough for a member of staff or a pupil to feel threatened'* - in other words, if a member of staff or pupil feels threatened then this is sufficient for the behaviour to be designated as such, regardless of whether or not this was the intention of the person displaying the behaviour. We also extend this to impact on other parents/carers or visitors to school.

#### **i. Warnings**

In most instances, such behaviours would result in a warning being issued by school to the parent/carer, either verbally or writing. Either way, a written record would be retained by the school of the reasons for the warning and the date that it was issued, as well as the scope of the warning (e.g. that repetition of such conduct could result in further action such as a ban from school premises) and any terms or conditions that are applied to the warning and clear expectations of future conduct.

#### **ii. Bans from school premises**

Schools are not open venues for access by any member of the public and anyone wishing to access school premises must have an explicit or implied licence to do so.

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Explicit licences imply to external workers, training providers etc  
Implied licences apply to parents/carers

Someone who enters school without permission is a trespasser and schools have the legal power to issue banning orders removing parent/carer's implied licence to enter school premises provided they have acted in accordance with the principles of public law which state that a ban must be:

- A. necessary
- B. the result of fair and proper procedure
- C. of an appropriate length of time

In determining whether a ban is necessary, school will consider whether this is repeated conduct following a prior warning or whether the conduct is of sufficient severity to warrant and immediate ban, based on its impact on staff, pupils or other parents/carers in terms of potential harm or distress We will also consider whether alternatives to a ban could be used e.g. parents/carers being able to attend to meet only with a named single point of contact, with prior arrangement.

Fair and proper procedure is for the decision to ban and the reasons for that decision to be relayed to the parent/carer in writing. Parent/carers must be given the opportunity to make representation to appeal against the ban either verbally or in writing. Where this is the case, consideration should be given by a committee of school governors to either uphold or overturn the ban. School are under no obligation to suspend the ban whilst the appeal process takes place.

In determining the length of a ban, we will seek to reflect the severity of the conduct and whether it is repeat incident. Bans should not be indefinite and would typically be for between half a term to no more than a full term. School must conduct a review before confirming that a ban is lifted.

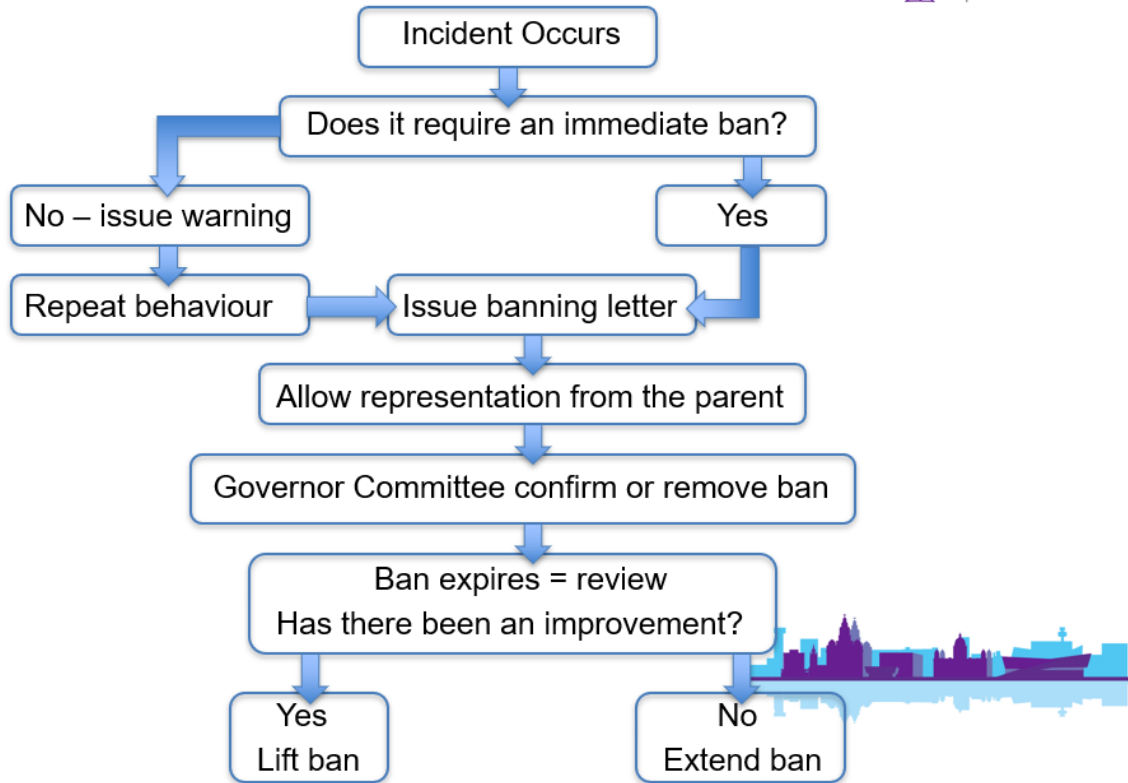
If an implied licence is removed from a parent then should the parent/carer enter the school site then they will become a 'trespasser' and action taken accordingly.

The Education Act 1996 states that a person without lawful authority who causes or permits a nuisance or disturbance to those lawfully using those premises is guilty of a criminal offence Power is given to a police constable to remove such person from school premises.

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## Process of implementing a ban



### 6. Social Media

At St Julie’s Catholic School we recognise the potential positive impact on our work of using social media, for example:

- Increased communication between parents and school;
- Promotion of events, school policies, calendar and key dates;
- Positive impact on our reputation.

However, we are also aware of research that shows that the use of social media by parents/pupils to complain or inappropriately comment about a school or a teacher is on the increase.

Evidence indicates that nationally one in five (21%) teachers have reported having derogatory comments posted about them on social media sites from both parents and children.

The impact of this on the profession as a whole is clear:

- Low staff morale
- Loss of staff
- Reduction in recruitment to the teaching profession

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- Damage to the individual's and/or school's reputation

Commonly used social media channels include but are not limited to Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), TikTok, Facebook and YouTube. Groups on WhatsApp are closed groups - however given the potential for information posted in those groups to be shared on other social media platforms (and therefore made public) then inaccurate/abusive comments are discouraged there too.

Should inaccurate and/or abusive content be brought to a member of school personnel's attention, then action will be taken in order:

- To protect the individual employee and school's reputation;
- To avoid the subject matter escalating;
- To discourage future posts of the same nature

In determining the action to be taken, consideration will be given as to the contents of the comments and whether they are serious enough to constitute:

**A. A Criminal offence**

It is a criminal offence to “send by means of a public electronic communications network a message or other matter that is grossly offensive or of an indecent, obscene or menacing character” (Malicious Communications 1988; Communications Act 2003). This is punishable by imprisonment (up to 6 months) and a fine (up to £5,000)

**B. Harassment**

The Protection from Harassment Act 1997 states that “a person must not pursue a course of conduct which amounts to harassment of another or others and which he/she knows or ought to know amounts to harassment of that or those others”. Harassment constitutes “repeated attempts to impose unwanted communications and contacts upon a victim in a manner that could be expected to cause distress or fear in any reasonable person”.

Where there are at least two incidents, directed at the same individual, consideration will be given to a report of harassment being made. Typical examples of harassment include:

- Trolling – sending menacing and distressing messages and posts about someone;
- Doxxing – where individuals find out another's personal information (bank details, address, information relating to family members) and post it online. This could lead to further crimes i.e., data issues and blackmailing;
- Cyber stalking – receiving threatening communications over multiple platforms.

School staff who feel harassed by a parent may:

- Report incident/s to police;

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- Apply for an injunction;
- Claim damages in civil court.

C. Defamation

According to the Defamation Act 2013, a defamatory statement is one that “tends to lower the claimant in the estimation of right-thinking members of society generally”. The statement must have caused (or be likely to cause) serious harm to the claimant’s reputation. It must injure the claimant’s reputation and ‘must have a substantial adverse effect on the way the individual is treated thereafter’.

Again, school and its staff would consider all available responses including possible civil proceedings.

7. School response to instances of online abuse/inaccurate comments

When dealing with online abuse or inaccurate comments, it is recommended that school personnel;

- Never retaliate or personally engage with the incident;
- Immediately inform the appropriate personnel, i.e. the Head teacher and, in the event that the law has been broken, the police

Once reported to school, a record of the comments/abuse will be kept via screen shots, logging the time, date and website address for future reference.

School will support staff in attempting to get the comments removed by contacting the host (the social networking site) to request the content is removed and stating why/how the comments contravene the host site’s term and conditions.

Depending on the circumstances, it may be appropriate to meet the parents/carer who have been involved in posting the inaccurate/abusive comments.

This should be via a meeting with the Head teacher who should address the matter of social networking and explain how such behaviour detrimentally impacts on the school and thus on their children’s education. Printouts of the comments should be made available and parents made aware that comments posted online, even when made 'privately', can on occasions be misinterpreted and shared without their knowledge or consent. If necessary, the Head teacher should inform the parents that they may have to take further action which could include civil proceedings under the Defamation Act 2013 or alternatively criminal proceedings in some circumstances.

In summary:

- Parents/carers are expected to refrain from discussing the business of school or children attending school in any public forum, including social media sites.

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- The use of social media websites to fuel campaigns and complaints against schools is unacceptable and not in the best interests of the children or the whole school community.
- If individual is found to have posted defamatory comments on social networking sites, the school will report them to the website host, where possible notify the individual of this and request the person who posted the comments to remove the comments immediately
- Parent/carers should not post pictures of pupils, other than their own children, on social networking sites;
- Parents/carers should make complaints through official school channels as opposed to posting on such sites; and
- Nobody should post malicious or fictitious comments on social networking sites about any member of the school community

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