

# Working together for good behaviour in schools

Information for parents  
and carers



department for  
children, schools and families



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## Information for parents and carers

We all want children to go to schools where there is good behaviour, effective discipline and a safe and orderly environment where they can learn and thrive.

Thankfully, schools usually do a very good job in keeping pupils safe and serious misbehaviour remains rare; most young people are well-behaved, respectful and want to learn; and most parents support the school if their child misbehaves.

To make sure everyone knows where they stand, this leaflet sets out the legal powers that schools have in relation to children's behaviour; every parent's responsibility for ensuring the good behaviour of their children; and what you as a parent can expect from the school, in return.



## Schools' powers to maintain discipline

Schools help to develop and encourage good behaviour. They also have strong legal powers to use, where necessary, in order to deal with poor behaviour.

### Preventing and tackling misbehaviour

Schools help pupils learn how to behave. They have legal power to apply a wide range of penalties to pupils who break school rules, fail to follow instructions or who behave in a way that is unacceptable.

Penalties can include:

- Withdrawing the pupil from a lesson or from a peer group
- Withdrawing participation in a school trip or sports event
- Taking away break or lunchtime privileges
- Detention – including at weekends<sup>1</sup>
- Confiscation of property
- Exclusion from school – either for a fixed period (“suspension”) or permanently.

Teachers and other members of staff can impose these penalties at any time a pupil is in school. They can also impose penalties on pupils who have misbehaved at any other time when the pupil is under their charge – such as on a school visit. And they can impose penalties on pupils who have misbehaved on the way to and from school, or outside the school gates; or when a child has used the internet or a mobile phone to harass another pupil or staff member outside school.

These penalties are not there simply to punish pupils but to help them learn to behave better.

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<sup>1</sup> Schools have to give parents 24 hours written notice if the detention is outside normal school hours, for safety reasons. Parents can then let schools know if this will cause the family a particular problem, but cannot over-rule the school's decision. Lunchtime detentions do not need advance notice, unless the child normally goes home for lunch.

## Searching pupils and their possessions

If teachers feel this to be necessary, they can instruct pupils to turn out their pockets or their bags, and impose penalties if pupils refuse to do so.

Pupils and their possessions can be searched where the pupil consents.

A head teacher can also authorise a search of a pupil or their possessions (including bags and lockers) without their consent, for weapons. The law is being changed to allow searches without consent for alcohol, controlled drugs and stolen property.

## Physical intervention and restraint

School staff can use reasonable force to control or restrain a pupil in specific circumstances<sup>2</sup> – though in most schools the need for such action will be rare. Reasonable force may be used, where necessary, to stop pupils committing a criminal offence or causing damage to property or harm to themselves or others. It can also be used to help teachers maintain good order and discipline. For example, if a child refuses to leave a classroom, it may be reasonable to lead them by the arm – or it may be reasonable to carry a distressed young child out of the classroom to a place where they can calm down.

Schools normally report to the parent any significant incident where a member of staff has used force on a pupil.



## Every parent's responsibility in relation to their children's behaviour at school

Good behaviour and strong discipline go hand in hand with effective teaching and learning. Teachers cannot teach effectively and pupils cannot learn effectively in classes disrupted by poor behaviour.

The most important thing you can do to support the school is to send your child to school each day on time, equipped and ready to learn.

As a parent, you are asked to respect the school's behaviour policy and the disciplinary authority of school staff. You should help ensure that your child follows school rules and be prepared to work with the school, if need be, to improve your child's behaviour.

You should treat school staff with the same respect you would expect to receive from them. Parents can be barred from school premises if their behaviour is unreasonable, and they can be prosecuted if they break the ban.

If parents refuse unreasonably to sign up and support the school's behaviour policy, this can be used by schools to support applications to the Courts for Parenting Orders. These orders usually require parents to attend parenting classes to help them manage their child's behaviour.



## What you can expect from the school

### Setting out clear expectations of behaviour and agreeing these with you

Every school has to set out in writing its policy to promote good behaviour and to deter all forms of bullying. This policy will normally cover:

- the values it expects all staff and pupils to share;
- specific rules making it clear what behaviour is expected of pupils;
- how the rules will be enforced – rewards for good behaviour and penalties for poor behaviour.

Governing bodies have to review the school behaviour policy regularly and you can expect to be consulted about this. You can also expect the school to inform you about the behaviour policy, for example, when you apply for a school and when you are asked to sign the school's Home School Agreement. The school website should provide you with key information about the school, including discipline related matters.

### Supporting your child

School staff want your child to do well and to be happy and feel safe while at school.

You can help the school by keeping them informed about anything that might affect your child's behaviour, such as a Special Need or something upsetting that has happened at home.

If your child's behaviour becomes a cause for serious concern, the school may provide extra support to find out why that is happening and to look for ways of helping your child to improve their behaviour. You can expect the school to take steps to work with you on this, to be kept updated about progress and to be involved in discussions about the best way of supporting your child.

If your child is being bullied at school, you can expect the school to take your concerns seriously and act to make sure the bullying stops. A phone call to the school can help ensure that staff are fully aware of the problem and the impact on your child.

If your child is excluded from school, either permanently or for a fixed period, you can expect them to receive full-time education away from the school from the sixth day of the exclusion. During the first five days of exclusion, you are responsible for ensuring your child is not in a public place during school hours and you can be fined up to £100 if you fail to do that.

## Links with the police and other services

You can expect your child's school to have good links with a range of local authority services to provide extra support for children in the school who need it, including health and social services.

Links with the police – called Safer School Partnerships – are increasingly being used to support good behaviour in schools. Safer School Partnerships are voluntary but, if you want to see one in your child's school, you can suggest this either directly or through a parent governor.

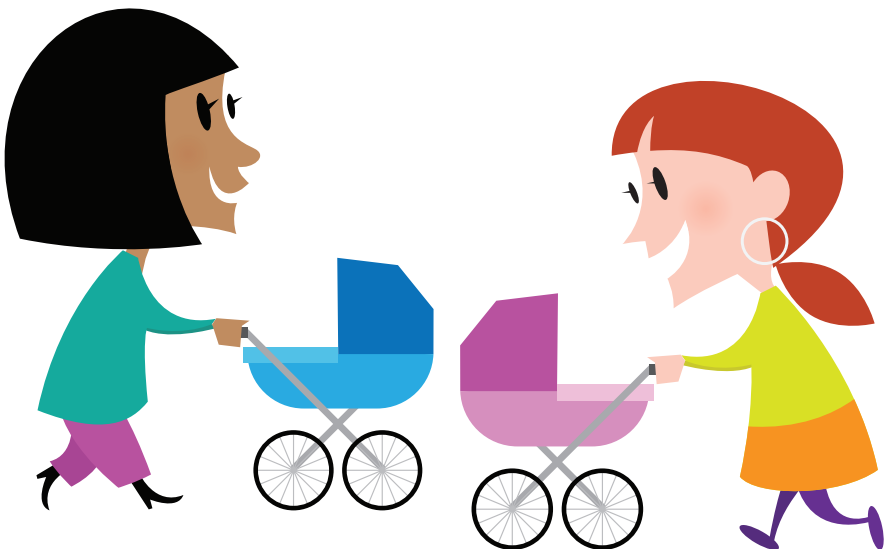


## What to do if you feel the school is not managing behaviour effectively

Every child should be safe at school and be able to learn without disruption. If you don't think that's happening at your child's school there are a number of things you can do to help make sure this changes. A good first step is to speak to the teacher or class teacher. You can also talk or write to the Head, or raise this when you are consulted on the school's behaviour policy. Another option is to discuss any worries at a parents' evening or with the parent-governors. Most concerns relating to behaviour will be resolved at school or local level. However if you are unable to do so you can make a complaint to the Secretary of State, if you think the governing body has acted unreasonably or failed to do what the law requires.

If you are unsure who your parent governors are, please contact your school.

Full details about the school's complaints processes should be on the school's website or in its prospectus.



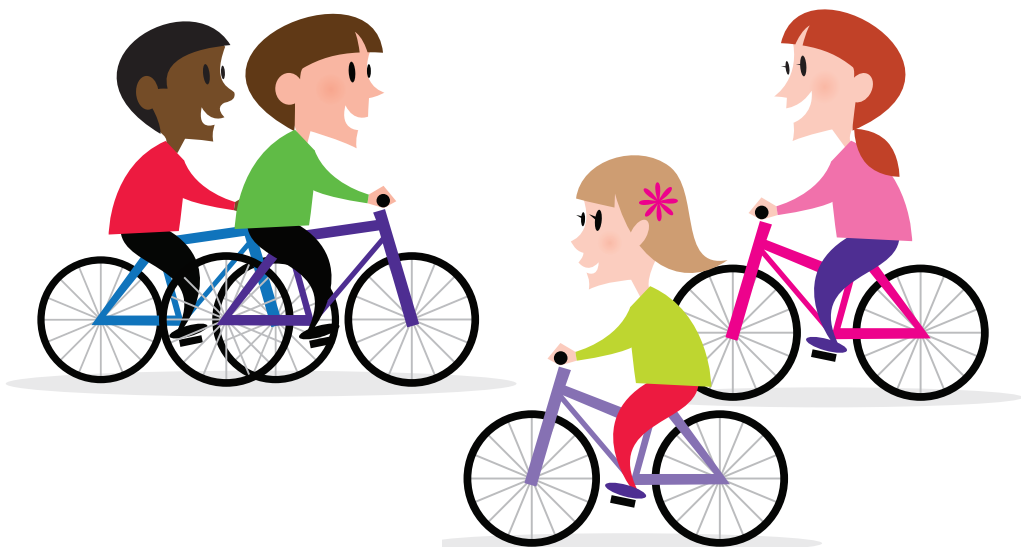
## Further information and support

Further information on issues related to behaviour in schools, including schools' powers and responsibilities, is available on <http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/behaviour>.

Free advice is available to parents about exclusions or other educational issues through the Advisory Centre for Education (ACE) on 0808 800 0327 or at <http://www.ace-ed.org.uk/>.

If you are worried about the emotional problems or behaviour of your child (or young person up to the age of 25) you can contact the **YoungMinds Parents Helpline** for free and confidential support. Tel: 0808 802 5544 Lines open Monday – Friday: 10am – 4pm and Wednesday evenings 6pm – 8pm.

There are a number of other national parenting support organisations which can provide you with support, advice and information on a range of parenting issues – please log on to [www.dcsf.gov.uk/parentknowhow](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/parentknowhow) for further details.







You can download this publication online at [www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications)

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