

Review Date: Annual review

Review Officer: SMT



Unacceptable customer behaviour policy

Rationale

Qatar International School is committed to providing a quality service to all our parents, stakeholders and “customers.” In return, we expect everyone who comes into contact with our staff to treat them with respect. “Treat others how you want to be treated.”

We understand that, in times of trouble or distress, people may act out of character, and, in a very small number of cases, may behave in an unacceptable way despite our best efforts to help.

This makes it difficult for us to deal with questions or complaints effectively. We also have a duty to protect the welfare and safety of our staff. They should be able to come to work without fear of violence, abuse, harassment, or discrimination.

This policy means we can manage unacceptable customer behaviour consistently and fairly. It sets out clearly what we consider to be unacceptable and the steps we may take to deal with such behaviour. It applies to everyone who accesses our services to help us protect staff from abuse and harm.

Aims

- To provide clear guidance on what constitutes unacceptable behaviour and treatment of staff
- To protect staff from potential violence, abuse, harassment or discrimination
- To better support and serve stakeholders
- To improve relations between school staff and all those they serve
- To ensure QIS is a safe, happy and secure place to work

Role of Staff

As a QIS staff member colleagues are appointed on merit on the basis of fair and open competition and are expected to carry out their role with dedication and a commitment to the school. In this regard our service has 4 core values: integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality.

- ‘integrity’ is putting the obligations of stakeholder service above our own personal interests
- ‘honesty’ is being truthful and open
- ‘objectivity’ is basing our advice and decisions on rigorous analysis of the evidence
- ‘impartiality’ is acting solely according to the merits of the case and serving equally well all stakeholders regardless of who they might be.

These core values support good customer service and ensure the achievement of the highest possible standards. This in turn helps the school to enhance its reputation and respect amongst the community, parents and stakeholders.

Integrity

You must:

- fulfil your duties and obligations responsibly
- always act in a way that is professional and that deserves and retains the confidence of all those with whom you have dealings
- deal with parents and stakeholders fairly, efficiently, promptly, effectively and sensitively, to the best of your ability

- comply with the law and uphold the school's professional standards, policies and code of conduct.
- **You must not:**
- misuse your position, for example by using information acquired in the course of your official duties to further your private interests or those of others
- accept gifts or hospitality or receive other benefits from anyone which might reasonably be seen to compromise your personal judgement or integrity
- disclose information without authority (this continues to apply after you leave QIS)

Honesty

You must:

- set out the facts and relevant issues truthfully, and correct any errors or mistakes as soon as possible
- use resources only for the approved school purposes for which they are provided
- **You must not:**
- deceive or knowingly mislead ministers, colleagues, customers or others
- be influenced by improper pressures from others or the prospect of personal gain

Objectivity

You must:

- provide information and advice, on the basis of the evidence, and accurately present the options and facts
- take decisions on the merits of the case

You must not:

- ignore inconvenient facts or relevant considerations when providing advice or making decisions
- frustrate the implementation of policies once decisions are taken by declining to take, or abstaining from, action which flows from those decisions

Impartiality

You must:

- carry out your responsibilities in a way that is fair, just and equitable and reflects the school's commitment to equality and diversity

You must not:

- act in a way that unjustifiably favours or discriminates against particular individuals or interests

Role of Parents

Principles

You can expect that our employees will always:

- provide a fair, open, proportionate, and accessible service
- listen and understand
- treat everyone who contacts us with respect, empathy, and dignity
- behave in line with this policy

We expect people accessing our services to:

- be courteous
- engage with us in a way that does not hamper our ability to carry out our work effectively and efficiently for the benefit of all

Safeguarding and disclosures

If, in the course of our work, an individual threatens to harm themselves or others, we will consider disclosing this to a relevant professional. We may also contact the police if others are threatened with harm.

Definition of unacceptable behaviour

Unacceptable behaviour means acting in a way that is unreasonable, regardless of the level of someone's stress, frustration or anger. It may involve acts, words or physical gestures that could cause another person distress or discomfort.

Aggressive or abusive behaviour

This is behaviour or language (written or spoken) that could cause our staff to feel afraid, threatened or abused. This includes threatening emails, telephone calls, meetings, and comments on social media or elsewhere.

For example:

- insulting or degrading language, including inappropriate banter, innuendo or malicious allegations
- any form of physical violence or threats of physical violence
- derogatory racist, sexist, or ageist.
- comments relating to disability, religion, belief, or any other personal characteristic

Unreasonable demands and vexatious complaints

Customers might make requests that we cannot reasonably accommodate. This may include but is not limited to:

- the amount of information they seek
- the nature and scale of service they expect
- a remedy or outcome that cannot be achieved

We accept that someone who is persistent is not necessarily guilty of unacceptable behaviour. What is seen as an unreasonable demand will depend on the circumstances of each case. We will always consider each complaint on its own merits.

However, the behaviour of someone who persistently contacts us about the same issue, when that issue has been dealt with in line with the School's usual processes, can, in some circumstances, amount to unreasonable demand. Such behaviour takes up a disproportionate amount of our time and resources and can affect our ability to provide a service to others.

Examples of behaviour which we consider as unreasonable demands and vexatious complaints include but are not limited to:

- refusing to follow our complaints procedure
- persistently pursuing a complaint where the School's complaints procedure has been fully and properly implemented and exhausted.
- contacting us repeatedly and frequently without giving us enough time to respond to previous correspondence
- insisting on seeing or speaking to a particular member of staff when a suitable alternative has been offered
- visiting school and demanding to see staff without an appointment
- focusing disproportionately on a matter in relation to its significance and continuing to focus on this point despite receiving proportionate responses addressing the matter
- adopting a 'scatter gun' approach: pursuing parallel complaints about the same issue with different members of staff
- threatening or using actual physical violence towards staff or their associates
- being personally abusive or verbally aggressive towards staff dealing with their issue or their associates
- recording meetings or conversations (whether face-to-face or on the telephone) without the prior knowledge or consent of other people involved

How we will respond to incidents of unacceptable behaviour

We do not expect our employees to tolerate unacceptable behaviour when communicating with our customers. When this happens, our employees have the right to:

- place callers on hold
- end the call
- not reply to an abusive email or letter - we will only review these communications to ensure no new issues have been raised

Before taking such action, we will always warn customers that they are behaving in an unacceptable way to give them the chance to change their behaviour. However, a warning will not be given in extreme cases to protect our staff, for example, when a physical threat is made.

Where these circumstances arise, we will take the following steps:

- we'll ask customers to modify their behaviour and explain why
- if the behaviour continues to be unacceptable, our employees will remove themselves from the situation. If the communication is by telephone, the caller will be told that the call will be ended
- the employee will inform their manager who will keep a record of the incident. In all cases a manager will investigate the situation and decide what action to take. This could include limiting a customer's contact with us
- we'll refer the matter to the police where a criminal offence has been threatened or committed

Communication restrictions

If customers continue to behave unacceptably, a senior member of staff (SMT) can put in place a temporary or permanent communication restriction on a customer. If we decide to do this, we will tell the customer that we are doing, so setting out:

- why we consider their behaviour unacceptable
- what action we are taking and if there is a time limit on the restrictions

If we decide to limit communication, we will make a note of the limitation in our records.

In addition, we reserve the right to:

- limit telephone contact to set times on set days
- restrict contact to a nominated employee who will deal with all future calls or correspondence
- restrict the issues on which we will correspond
- block emails or telephone numbers if the number and length of communications sent is excessive
- refuse to consider a complaint or any further contact in exceptional circumstances
- take any other action which we consider necessary or appropriate to make this policy effective.

Where circumstances are serious enough to warrant further restrictions, we may take legal action to prevent further contact/poor behaviour.

Review

We will regularly review any decision to restrict communications and when appropriate we may lift some or all restrictions.

Appendix