

Violence and Aggression.

Schools Safety Guide

Document information

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1. Introduction

Employees and volunteers in the education sector may be at risk of violence from pupils and their parents/carers and from other visitors.

Dealing with violence and disruption reduces teaching time and leads to lack of morale and job satisfaction which can affect the physical and mental wellbeing of employees.

Situations when employees may be at increased risk include:

- Working with pupils with behaviour difficulties
- Dealing with angry/disgruntled parents/carers
- Supervising/disciplining pupils
- Home visits – re non-attendance at school/welfare visits etc.

Therefore, schools need to have robust processes for managing violence and aggression.

2. Definitions

The health and safety executive (HSE), define workplace violence as: *“any incident in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work.”*

3. What does the law require you to do?

The Health and Safety at Work Act requires employers (or schools) to protect the health and safety of their employees which includes the risk of violence and aggression.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations require employers (or schools) to: -

- Consider the risks to employees (including the risk of reasonably foreseeable violence)
- Decide how significant those risks are
- Decide what to do to prevent or control risks and
- Develop a clear plan to achieve this

The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 state that any work related incident involving physical assault on an employee which results in death, specified injury or the employee being unable to work for more than 7 days must be reported (please see accident & incident SSG). However, threats or verbal abuse or absence due to emotional trauma are not included.

4. How can the risk of violence be managed?

If the risk of violence and aggression is to be managed successfully there needs to be a clear commitment from senior leaders in the school. This could be expressed in the school health and safety policy, in any literature to parents/carers and by displaying a poster in the school reception that sets out expectations of how staff should be treated.

You will also need to consider the aspects of work which might result in employees and others being exposed to violence and aggression. A risk assessment needs to be completed which looks at the hazards in the work itself, the current working practices and procedures and the physical security measures in place at the school. The risk assessment process will help you decide if you need to do anything more than you are currently doing to prevent harm, and if so, what those new controls should be.

A model risk assessment can be found on the risk assessment page of the PPS website, which you could adapt and adopt.

When deciding what action to take to minimise the risk of violence and aggression from parents/carers/visitors consider:

- Ensuring all staff take a non-confrontational approach when engaging with others,
- Adopting an approach to violence and aggression which gives a clear message that it is not acceptable.
- The physical and security aspects of the building that can reduce the likelihood of violent incidents. An accessible reception area for example can allow staff to receive visitors and deal with queries in a controlled environment. The area should be secure and any doors from reception should be access controlled to stop unauthorised visitors wandering around the school.
- Ensuring all visitors are identifiable by issuing visitor badges or similar and that they are escorted within the building.
- Looking at other security issues such as perimeter fencing, external lighting, CCTV.
- If the working practices or patterns increase the risk of violence and aggression. For example, conducting welfare home visits, you will need to identify controls such as checking records to see whether the person is known to be potentially violent, employees carrying out the visits carry a personal alarm and mobile phone, school knowing the list of planned visits, and a system for the employee to make regular contact with the school etc. Another example could be parents evening where visits to a member of staff in a remote building within the school should be avoided or controlled
- Staff training – staff who may be exposed to violence need to be aware of the risks they face and can recognise the potential for danger to themselves or others within the school.

Minimising the risk of violence from pupils, you may need to consider;

- Setting clear standards for pupil behaviour and ensure consistent application of this policy across the school.
- Completing an assessment for any pupils with known behaviour issues which identifies any potential triggers for violence and aggression, and the strategies that will be used should an incident occur.
- Involving any specialists in behaviour management for the above.

- Appropriate training¹ for employees who deal with pupils who exhibit behaviours that challenge. This may include use of restrictive physical intervention² as part of a Behaviour Management Plan. Any training must be suitable for the needs of the pupils concerned (i.e. learning disability, autism etc)
- How employees summon help should an incident occur.

5. Post incident follow up and support

School staff must report all incidents if a true analysis of the nature and frequency of incidents in the school is to be built (see Appendix 1). An investigation should then take place which can review how successful the current controls are or whether new measures need to be introduced.

Providing support for employees that have been subject to violence and aggression at work is a key element of the overall management of the issue. Support might include talking about the incident with a designated member of staff who understands the likely impact or by counselling by an independent person. Support might also take the form of help in taking proceedings against an assailant or obtaining damages for injuries or damage to property.

If the incident was from a parent/carer/visitor, and the dispute cannot be resolved locally by the school, then you may wish to send written notification³ to the perpetrator outlining that the behaviour is not acceptable and warning them of their future conduct. A template letter is available for schools to adopt and adapt for sending out from the Headteacher or Chair of Governors if you so wish. If this is not successful, the school may wish to contact their provider of Legal Services to send out a letter to implement a temporary ban from the school site.

6. Monitoring

Schools should monitor the effects of their approach to controlling violence to see if it is working.

The analysis of the incidents recorded should identify;

- if there have been any changes to number of incidents,
- any trends/clusters to highlight whether controls in place are successful,
- categories of staff involved – senior management, teachers, learning support practitioners, lunchtime supervisors etc.

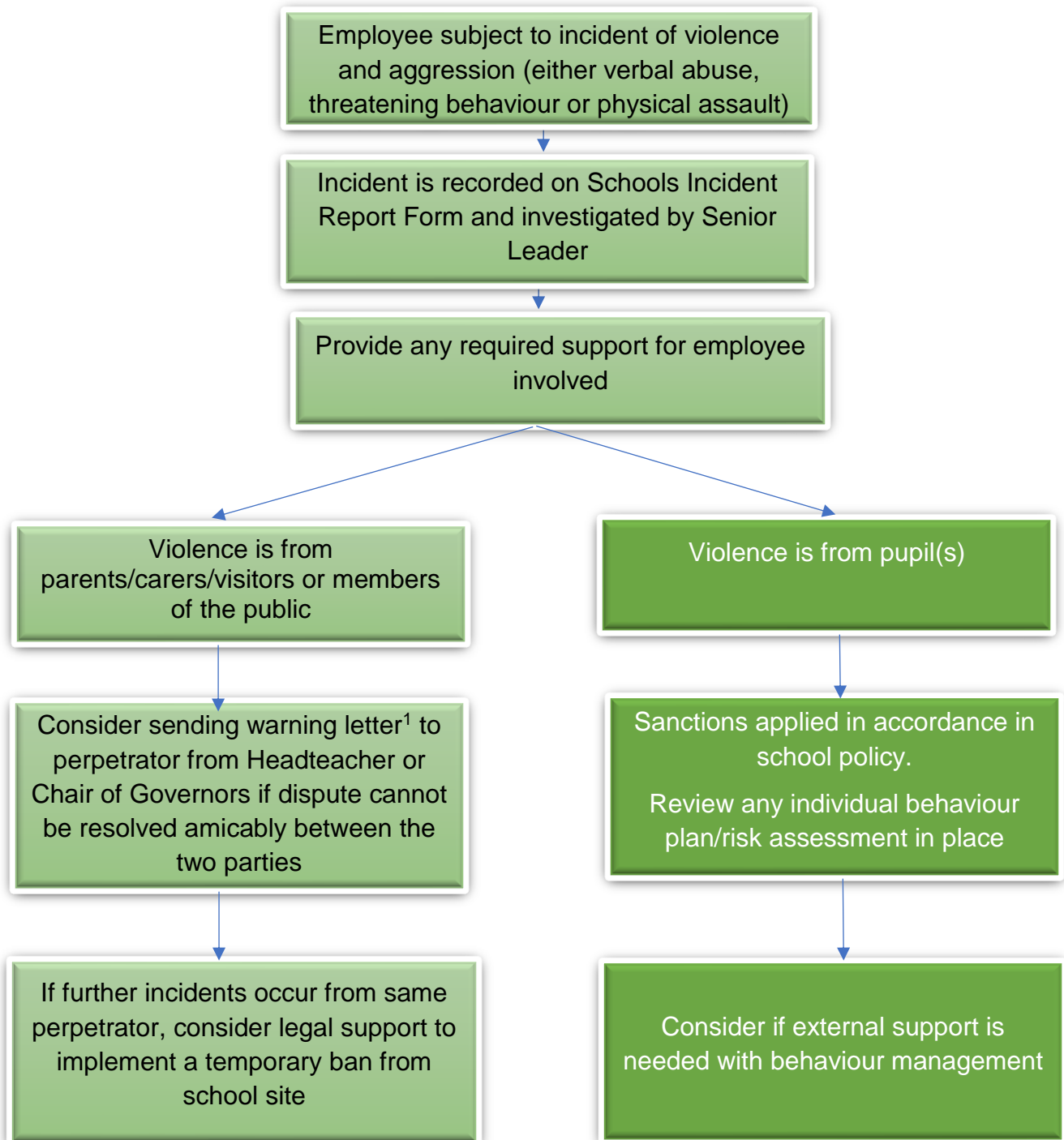
¹ Inclusion Support can provide MAPA (Management of Actual or Potential Aggression) training to schools. This training focuses on de-escalating verbal challenges and crisis behaviour, and post-crisis work, including restorative approaches. We can also provide behaviour audits, Emotion Coaching training, and bespoke training to support schools in understanding and managing challenging behaviour. To book MAPA training, schools can contact Amanda Barrie Amanda_Barrie@sandwell.gov.uk. For bespoke training enquiries or behaviour audits, schools can contact their Advisory Teacher for SEMH or Lorna Bickley (SEMH team) Lorna_Bickley@sandwell.gov.uk.

² If a Sandwell LA school, then training must be British Institute of Learning Disabilities ([BILD](#)) accredited

³ If a Sandwell LA school, then our Legal Services should be contacted prior to sending out any written notices/letters. Contact details can be found at the bottom of next page.

- seriousness of incidents – verbal abuse, threatening behaviour, physical assault etc.
- type of assailant – pupil, parent etc.

Appendix 1 - Post Incident Flowchart



¹**Sandwell Community Schools only** – if you wish to send out any kind of warning or banning letter under Sandwell’s Zero Tolerance Procedures then please contact (see below) our Legal Services team direct in the first instance.

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