

Expectations for School Visitors

Effective Date: August 4, 2023

Policy Statement and Purpose

The District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) envisions a world where every student feels loved, challenged, and prepared to positively influence society and thrive in life. Our mission is to ensure that all schools guarantee students reach their full potential through rigorous and joyful learning experiences provided in a nurturing environment. DCPS is proud to prioritize building relationships with families, community members, and strategic partners to accelerate achievement for all DCPS students as we strive to become a district of both excellence and equity – and a place where every family feels welcome, and every child is given the opportunities and support they need to thrive.

In support of this mission, DCPS works to promote safe and positive school environments for all students and staff. The purpose of this document is to establish conduct expectations for all parents, guardians, volunteers, and other visitors to DCPS schools. These expectations apply to all individuals while on school property and at DCPS events.

Authority and Related Policies¹

- DC Code § 38-174(c)(3)
- [School Visitor Policy](#)
- [School Barring Notice Procedures](#)

General Principles

DCPS expects parents/guardians and visitors to understand and commit to the following:

- DCPS staff and parents/guardians want all children to learn in a safe environment.
- DCPS staff and parents/guardians must work together for the benefit of all students.
- All parents/guardians and visitors, as well as all members of the school community, deserve to be treated with respect.
- Concerns should be addressed with the school first. If a concern cannot be resolved by the school, there are multiple procedures for filing and resolving complaints. (See Dispute Resolution section below).

School staff and administration may not always be immediately available to speak with parents/guardians. Scheduling an appointment in advance is the only way to ensure that a staff member or administrator is available. DCPS staff are expected to return all phone calls and e-mails promptly. Calls and visits will be responded to if someone is not immediately available to speak with you.

¹ Current DCPS policies are available at <https://dcps.dc.gov/page/dcps-policies>.

Best Practices and Norms for Resolving Concerns

Clearly state the issue or the problem you are experiencing. Make a list of questions you would like to ask. Identify several possible solutions you think would resolve your concern.

Stay calm. Focus on the facts, not on the person with whom you are discussing the issue. Remain respectful and assume good intent.

Clarify your understanding. If you are not sure about something or what you heard, ask for an explanation or clarification. Try to understand the other person's view of the situation and the solutions they might propose.

Be flexible. Recognize that problems can be solved in more than one way. Be open to alternative solutions.

Keep records. Make notes of meeting dates and times, who you talked to, and what was discussed. Save copies of letters, forms and other material related to your concern.

Prohibited Behaviors

To provide a safe and positive school environment, DCPS prohibits the following behaviors by parents/guardians, visitors, volunteers, and members of the general public:

- Abusive, threatening, profane or harassing communication, either in person, by e-mail, text/voicemail/phone, or other written or verbal communication
- Disruptive behavior that interferes or threatens to interfere with DCPS operations, including the effective operation of a classroom, an employee's office or duty station, a campus lobby, or school grounds, including sporting events, parking lots, and student drop-off/pick-up locations
- Threatening a DCPS employee, visitor, parent/guardian, or student
- Threatening to damage the property of a DCPS employee, visitor, parent/guardian, or student
- Approaching someone else's child to discuss an issue or reprimand them
- Damage or destruction of school property
- Recording or videotaping any students on school grounds except for athletic events and school performances
- Defamatory, offensive, or derogatory comments regarding the school or school staff made publicly to others
- Misuse of social media to bully, harass, or humiliate others or to fuel campaigns and complaints against schools, school staff, and/or other parents/students through social networking and websites²
- Intimidation, harassment, or discrimination against any person on the basis of race, color, national origin, citizenship status, marital status, religion, age, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, or age
- Entering any portion of the school premises without authorization or remaining in any building or facility after it is normally closed
- Blocking the free movement of any person on DCPS property or at a DCPS event

² This includes any social media medium including, but not limited to, websites, blogs, wikis, and social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, LinkedIn, Twitter, etc.

- Violating traffic laws, parking regulations, or other vehicle restrictions while on school property
- Disrupting school transportation or confronting transportation staff on the bus, the road, in neighborhoods, or on school grounds
- Possessing, consuming, selling, distributing, exchanging or being under the influence of alcohol or controlled substances on school property or at school functions
- Using tobacco on school property or at school functions
- Possessing or using weapons in or on school property or at any school function, except in the case of law enforcement officers
- Refusing to comply with any reasonable request of identifiable DCPS staff performing their duties
- Violating any federal or state law or policy while on school property or while at a school function
- Willfully inciting others to commit any of the prohibited acts listed above

Consequences

Depending upon the severity of the incident, parents/guardians or visitors may be asked to leave the school grounds immediately. Schools may also seek to bar individuals from DCPS campuses and events through process outlined in the [School Barring Notice Procedures](#).

In addition, under the [School Visitor Policy](#) schools can request to temporarily restrict building access for all visitors to a building after a serious incident that compromises the safety and security of students and staff or disrupts school instruction, operation, or activities.

Dispute Resolution Options

The **Office of Integrity (OI)** is a one-stop shop available to support the effective and timely resolution of parent/guardian, visitor, and student complaints, grievances, to better serve DCPS students and families. To contact and learn more about the Office of Integrity:

- Visit <https://dcps.dc.gov/page/office-integrity> (where you can also submit an Online Referral Form),
- Email dcps.cio@k12.dc.gov, or
- Call (202) 939-4913.

The **Comprehensive Alternative Resolution & Equity (CARE) Team** is responsible for receiving and investigating claims of discrimination, sexual harassment, bullying, or any unfair treatment a student, parent/guardian, or visitor encounters at a DCPS school. The CARE team collaborates with school staff to resolve issues in a timely, equitable, and comprehensive manner. To contact and learn more about the CARE Team:

- Visit <https://dcps.dc.gov/page/studentparentvisitor-grievance-process> (where you can also submit an Online Referral Form),
- Email dcps.care@k12.dc.gov
- Call (202) 442-5405.

Acknowledgement Form

For school year (SY) 2023-24 school leaders may use the following optional Acknowledgement Form with their school communities after distributing the Expectations for Visitors. For SY 2024-25 and beyond, this acknowledgement will be included in DCPS' online enrollment materials.

Acknowledgement Form
School Visitor Expectations

I acknowledge that I received a copy of the DCPS Expectations for School Visitors.

My relationship to DCPS is: *(please select all that apply)*

- Parent/Guardian
- Volunteer
- Other Visitor

Date: _____

Name (Printed): _____

Signature: _____