

Policy for Managing Serial and Unreasonable Complaints



Pendragon Community Primary School

Lead person: Personnel Committee

Reviewed: June 2022

Ratified by Governors: 20 June 2022

Next Review Due: As required by EPM

Pendragon Primary School is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with our school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

Pendragon Primary School defines unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the school, such as, if the complainant:

- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
- refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on;
- raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales
- makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced
- changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds
- repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed)
- refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education
- seeks an unrealistic outcome
- makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with
- uses threats to intimidate
- uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence
- harasses the school's staff
- knowingly provides falsified information
- publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

This list is not exhaustive but is illustrative of the type of complaint which the school considers unreasonable.

For the purpose of this policy unreasonable behaviour, intimidation and harassment are behaviours which:-

- targets one or more members of the School's staff and/or;
- causes distress or alarm to the School's staff and/or;
- has an adverse effect on the whole/parts of the School community and/or;

is pursued in a manner which can be perceived as intimidating and oppressive by the recipient. This could include situations where unreasonable complaints, whilst not particularly taxing or serious when viewed in isolation, have a cumulative effect over time

- of undermining confidence, well-being and health.

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school that relates to their complaint, while the complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text), as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the headteacher or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an '*unreasonable*' marking.

If the behaviour continues, the headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact Pendragon Primary School causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will be reviewed after six months.

If the School's staff find it difficult to deal direct with a Complainant because of their unreasonable behaviour and other strategies are not working, the School will seek assistance from the LA. Complainants may be advised not to contact the School, but to communicate instead with the LA who will co-ordinate any response.

In cases where a complaint which raises no new points and has been dealt with under the School's Complaints Procedure, is raised again (or repeatedly), the School is entitled to write to the Complainant stating that it will not deal with the complaint again or in extreme cases will stop responding.

If a Complainant's behaviour is modified but then reverts at a later date within a reasonable period of time, the school may resume the action identified above at an appropriate level.

If a Complainant persists to the point that the School considers it to constitute harassment, legal advice will be sought as to the next steps. In some cases, injunctions and other court orders will be sought.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from Pendragon Primary School.