Vexatious Complaints Policy

The staff member responsible for the Vexatious Complaints Policy is

Mrs S. Bradford

The governor responsible for Vexatious Complaints Policy is

The Governor Responsible for 'In the Public Eye'

Agreed by governors: 27th February 2026

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This policy describes how the school handles unreasonably persistent, harassing, vexatious, unreasonable or abusive complaints.

The headteacher and governing body are committed to the improvement of our school. We welcome feedback from parents and carers, and we will always try to resolve any concerns as quickly as possible. The majority of complaints are handled in an informal manner and are resolved quickly, sensitively and to the satisfaction of the complainant. There is a procedure for parents and carers to use if they wish to make a formal complaint.

Sometimes, however, parents or carers pursuing complaints or other issues treat staff and others in a way that is unacceptable or behave in an unacceptable manner. While we recognise that some complaints may relate to serious and distressing incidents, sometimes the actions of the complainants begin to have a negative impact on the day-to-day running of the school and directly or indirectly impact the overall well-being of the children or staff in the school. The aim of this policy is to clarify the process for dealing with unreasonable complainants or parents who do not act appropriately.

What do we mean by 'an unreasonable complainant'?

An unreasonable complainant may be anyone who engages in unreasonable behaviour when making a complaint. This will include parents and carers who pursue complaints in an unreasonable manner and those who do not act in an appropriate manner towards staff at the school. This could include situations where persistent demands and criticisms, while not particularly taxing or serious when viewed in isolation, have a cumulative effect over time of undermining confidence, well-being and health.

Unreasonable behaviour may include:

- out of proportion to the nature of the complaint;
- persistent, even when the complaints procedure has been exhausted;
- personally harassing;
- unjustifiably repetitious;
- obsessive, harassing, or prolific;
- prolific correspondence or excessive email or telephone contact about a concern or complaint;
- repetitious complaints where the complainant has no view about what would satisfy him or her and/or no intention to resolve the complaint;
- acting in a way not in line with the school aim of reaching a resolution and working with the school;
- an insistence on pursuing unjustified or unmeritorious complaints;
- unrealistic outcomes to unjustified complaints;
- an insistence on
  - pursuing justifiable complaints in an unreasonable manner, e.g. using abusive or threatening language;
  - making complaints in public;
  - refusing to attend appointments to discuss the complaint.

What is 'harassment'?

We regard harassment as the unreasonable pursuit of issues or complaints, particularly if the matter appears to be pursued in a way intended to cause personal distress, rather than seek a resolution. Behaviour will fall within the scope of this policy if:

- it appears to be deliberately targeted over a significant period of time at one or more members of school staff or others;

- the complaint, or other issue as opposed to the complaint itself, is pursued in such a way as to cause ongoing distress to school staff or others;
- it has a significantly and disproportionately adverse effect on the school community;
- actions are pursued aggressively or in any manner not appropriate to an effective resolution.

What you can expect from the school

Anyone who raises informal or formal issues and complaints can expect the school to:

- follow the school's complaints procedure;
- respond within a reasonable time;
- be available for consultation within a reasonable time limit, bearing in mind the needs of pupils at the school and the nature of the complaint;
- respond with courtesy and respect;
- attempt to resolve problems using reasonable means in line with the school's complaints procedure, other policies and practice and in line with guidance from the Local Authority;
- keep those involved informed of progress towards a resolution.

What the school expects of you

The school expects anyone who wishes to raise concerns with the school to:

- treat all staff with courtesy and respect;
- respect the needs of pupils and staff within the school;
- never use violence (including threats of violence) towards people or property;
- recognise the time constraints under which members of staff in schools work and allow the school a reasonable time to respond to a complaint;
- recognise that some problems may not be resolved in a short time;
- follow the school's complaints procedure;
- speak politely and respectfully using appropriate language and avoid any aggression or verbal abuse, including name-calling;
- raise concerns and complaints in an appropriate place and at an appropriate time (for example, not in front of other parents or pupils and not in an open public space);
- to be prepared to work towards a resolution and in partnership with the school.

The school's responses to unreasonably persistent or unreasonable complaints, vexatious complainants, or harassment

This policy is intended to be used in conjunction with the school's complaints procedure. Taken together, these documents set out how we will always seek to work with parents, carers and others with a legitimate complaint to resolve a difficulty and reach a resolution. However, in cases of unreasonably persistent complaints or harassment, the school may take any or all of the following steps, as appropriate:

- inform the complainant informally that his or her behaviour is now considered by the school to be unreasonable or unacceptable, and request a changed approach;
- require all future meetings with a member of staff to be conducted with a third person present. In the interests of all parties, notes of these meetings may be taken;
- inform the complainant that, except in emergencies, the school will respond only to written communication;
- inform the complainant in writing that their behaviour is now considered to fall under the terms of this policy and that any complaint will not be investigated further until it is pursued in a manner the school considers to be reasonable;
- place restrictions on the individual's access to school;

- cease all correspondence and communication with the complainant other than that necessary for the health and safety of any child or adult in school;
- involve officers from the Local Authority.

The school has a duty of care to staff and pupils and will take emergency measures should these become necessary in extreme cases.

Physical or verbal aggression

The school, governing body and Norfolk County Council will not tolerate any form of physical or verbal aggression or personal harassment against school staff. If staff are subject to this type of aggression the school may:

- prohibit the individual from entering the school site, with immediate effect;
- inform the individual that communication with them will cease other than in an emergency;
- prosecute under anti-harassment legislation.

Time frame and Review

If a complainant's harassing or persistent behaviour is modified and is then resumed at a later date, the school may resume the process identified above.

Legitimate new complaints, if not pursued in a harassing or unreasonable way, will still be considered, even if the person making them is (or has been) subject to the Vexatious Complaints Policy. The school nevertheless reserves the right not to respond to communications from individuals subject to the policy.

The school will review as appropriate, and at least annually, any sanctions applied in the context of this policy.