



Denefield School

Model policy for managing serial and unreasonable complaints

Approved by Trust Board on:	31 March 2021
Date of next review	March 2024
Review cycle	Biennial
Policy control sheet updated	Yes
Type of policy	Statutory
Policy owner	Chair of Trustees/Headteacher
Location of policy	Website

Model policy for managing serial and unreasonable complaints

Denefield 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.

Denefield 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 complaint's investigation process
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaint's procedure
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaint's procedure or with good practice introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions
- insists queries are responded to often immediately and/or to their own timescales
- makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, including seeking to have them replaced
- changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds and/or seeks to introduce new issues in the complaint
- repeatedly makes the same or similar complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed)
- makes trivial and/or unnecessary points on the findings including even in circumstances when a complaint has been upheld
- 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
- seeks an unrealistic outcome
- makes excessive demands on school time including by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person or otherwise while the complaint is being dealt with
- makes complaints which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific or repetitious
- makes complaints which are designed to cause disruption or annoyance.

A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if the complainant:

- Acts maliciously;
- Aggressively, using threats, intimidation or violence;
- Uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language;
- Makes defamatory statements;
- Makes statements known to be false; or

- Publishes information or threatens to publish information on social media such as on websites and in newspapers.

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.

Where complainants' behaviour is unacceptable, a formal written record will be kept by all staff of all contacts made by the complainant, making careful record of any inappropriate or unreasonable behaviour including abusive behaviour or threats (preferably recording actual words used where possible). These will be kept on file as evidence of the complainant's behaviour as this may be required for legal purposes at a later date.

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

If the behaviour continues, the school may write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it.

Where, at any stage, a complaint is deemed by both the Headteacher and Chair of Trustees to be unreasonable, the school may take any of the following actions:

- Implement a limited communications strategy (this may include limiting the method of communication and frequency of contact);
- Advise that a third-party act on the complainant's behalf; and/or
- Notify the complainant and the trust board that the complaints procedure will not be implemented and that there will be no further response to their complaint.

Where aggression or abusive behaviour has been used, the school may:

- Ask the person to leave the school premises;
- Inform the police; and/or
- Bar them from being on the school premises.