



Policy & Procedure for Managing Serial and Unreasonable Complaints

Date Approved by Governing Body:	July 2024
Last Review:	December 2022
Next Review Date:	July 2025
Chair of Governors:	Teresa Cutler

***This school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people
and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment***

Policy for Managing Serial and Unreasonable Complaints

Uffculme 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, threatening or impacts on the day to day provision at Uffculme School.

Uffculme 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
- 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
- knowingly provides falsified information

- publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

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 Uffculme 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.

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 Uffculme School.

Procedure for Managing Serial and Unreasonable Complaints

Uffculme School will always take complaints raised seriously and they will be handled in accordance with DfE Guidelines and the school's Complaints Policy & Procedure. This procedure is in place for the rare occasions where complaints or the behaviour of the complainant has become unreasonable.

When is a complaint considered serial or persistent?

Once Uffculme School has followed all the stages of its complaints procedure, the chair of governors can tell the complainant that the matter is closed.

If the complainant tries to re-open the same issue, this can be classed as a persistent or 'serial' complaint.

Closing serial or persistent complaints

The school may stop responding to communications from a complaint if:

- The school has taken every reasonable step to address the complainant's needs;
- The complainant has been given a clear statement of the school's position and what the options are;
- The complainant is contacting the school repeatedly, but making the same points each time.

The school will not stop responding just because a complaint is complex or demanding.

The school may also stop responding if:

- The complainant's communications are abusive or aggressive, or involve making personal comments or threats towards staff members.
- The school has reason to believe that the complaint(s) are continuing to contact you with the intention of causing disruption.

This is based on the DfE's guidance on complaints procedures for maintained schools and academies.

If the school decides to take this course of action, it will let the complainant know in writing, either by post or by email. you must let the complainant know in writing.

Where a persistent complaint is closed, the school may also choose to limit the parent's access to the school to keep raising the issue. This could mean:

- Restrict the complainant to a single point of contact with your school via an email address
- Set a fixed number of times the complainant can contact your school per term.

If the complainant raises a new issue, the school will deal with this separately through the complaints procedure.

Management of aggressive behaviour

Where a parent is behaving aggressively or with other unacceptable conduct, the school will aim to separate the complaint from the complainant's conduct. Communication about conduct will be dealt with separately to ensure that no complaint investigation is unfairly compromised by this.

School's code of conduct and Parental Behaviour Policy

Schools have a duty of care towards their employees. This means that staff (including the headteacher) should not be:

- Placed in upsetting or dangerous situations;
- Expected to respond to abusive communications, or to attend meetings where parents or complainants are behaving aggressively.

Where this happens, meetings will be stopped or cancelled.

Removal of aggressive complainants

It is a criminal offence to cause or permit “a nuisance or disturbance” on school premises. This means that complainants can be legally removed from the site if they are acting in an abusive or threatening way at meetings.

This is set out in section 547 of the Education Act 1996.

Group complaints

The school does not accept group complaints. Complaints and complainants will be dealt with separately under the school's Complaints Policy and Procedure.

Parents and carers can only raise a complaint based on their position as a parent/carer of an individual pupil. Complaints cannot be raised on behalf of other pupils or a group of pupils.