Persistent Complaints Procedure

Version Control

Version	Date	Author	Changes made:
0.1	01.10.2023	Mrs A.Black	Written in line with guidance from the Department for Education's best practice in managing complaints.

St. Bede C of E Primary Academy 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 the 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.

St. Bede C of E Primary Academy defines unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency of 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 cooperate with the complaint's 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 that are incompatible with the complaint's procedure or with good practice;
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information that they expect to be taken into account and commented on;

- raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions and insist they are fully answered often immediately and to their own timescales;
- makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with issues and seek 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 the 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 deal with;
- uses threats to intimidate;
- uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or ;violence
- knowingly provides falsified information;
- publicises unacceptable information on social media 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, a member of the Senior Leadership Team will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an '*unreasonable'* marking.

If the behaviour continues, a member of the Senior Leadership Team will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable, causing a significant level of disruption and ask them to change it.

For complainants who excessively contact the school, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts. In response to any serious incident of aggression and violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from the school.

Persistent correspondence

If complainants frequently contact the school, causing a significant level of disruption, the school can:

- restrict the complainant to a single point of contact via an email address;
- limit the number of times the complainant can make contact;
- put any other strategy in place as necessary.

Stopping responding

We may stop responding to the complainant when all of these factors are met:

- we believe we have taken all reasonable steps to help address their concerns;
- we have provided a clear statement of our position and their options;
- the complainant contacts us repeatedly, and we believe their intention is to cause disruption or inconvenience;

Where we stop responding, we will inform the individual that we intend to do so. We will also explain that we will still consider any new complaints they make.

Duplicate complaints

If we have resolved a complaint under our procedure and receive a duplicate complaint on the same subject from a partner, family member or other individual, we will assess whether there are aspects that we had not previously considered, or any new information we need to take into account.

If we are satisfied that there are no new aspects, we will:

- tell the new complainant that we have already investigated and responded to this issue, and the local process is complete.
- direct them to the DfE if they are dissatisfied with our original handling of the complaint.

Complaint campaigns

Where the school receives a large volume of complaints about the same topic or subject, especially if these come from complainants unconnected with the school, the school may respond to these complaints by:

- publishing a single response on the school website;
- Sending a template response to all of the complainants.

If complainants are not satisfied with the school's response, or wish to pursue the complaint further, the normal procedures will apply.

This policy and its contents are underpinned by the school vision of 'Learning, Caring and Growing Together' and the school values: love, honestly, respect, kindness, friendship, forgiveness and compassion.