



Policy for Handling Unreasonably Persistent, Harassing or Abusive Complaints

Policy drawn up by the Head Teacher, agreed by Staff and Governors

Version No	Date	Change/Review
V1.0	October 2015	Policy Adopted
V1.1	November 2016	Reviewed
V1.2	November 2017	Reviewed and ratified
V1.3	November 2018	Reviewed and ratified
V1.4	October 2019	Reviewed and ratified
V1.5	October 2020	Review due
V1.6	April 2021	Reviewed, Amended and ratified
V1.7	April 2021	Reviewed, Amended and ratified
V1.8	April 2022	Reviewed and ratified
V1.8	June 2023	Ratified
V1.9	November 2025	Reviewed and ratified

Policy Document Version Control Log

Policy: Handling Unreasonably Persistent, Harassing or Abusive Complaints		
Version	Date	Description of changes and person/organisation responsible
V1.9	November 2025	No substantial changes – grammatical changes H Millsop

Introduction

St Francis Church of England Primary School takes seriously its accountability to parents. Both staff and Governors endeavor to listen to what parents are saying and will always try to resolve any concerns as quickly as possible. There is a procedure for parents 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. Whilst we recognise that some complaints may relate to serious and distressing incidents, we will not accept threatening or harassing behaviour towards any members of the school community.

The aim of this policy is to provide information about our school policy on unreasonably persistent or abusive complainants or harassment of staff.

What do we mean by 'an unreasonably persistent complainant'?

An unreasonably persistent complainant may be anyone who engages in unreasonable behaviour when making a complaint. This will include people who pursue complaints in an unreasonable manner.

Unreasonable behaviour may include:

- Actions which are out of proportion to the nature of the complaint.
- Persistent – even when the complaints procedure has been exhausted, or personally harassing, or unjustifiably repetitious.
- An insistence on pursuing unjustified complaints and/or unrealistic outcomes to justified complaints.
- Making complaints in public or via a social networking site such as Facebook, WhatsApp or Twitter.
- Refusing to attend appointments to discuss the complaint.
- Refusing to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
- Refusing to co-operate with the complaint's investigation process
- Refusing to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaint's procedure

- Insisting on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaint's procedure or with good practice
- Introducing trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on
- Raising large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insisting they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales
- Making unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeking to have them replaced
- Changing the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds
- Repeatedly making the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed)
- Refusing 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
- Making 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
- Using threats to intimidate
- Using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence
- Knowingly providing falsified information

What do we mean by '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 to seek a resolution.

Behaviour may fall within the scope of this policy if:

- It appears to be deliberately targeted at one or more members of school staff or others, without good cause.
- The way in which a complaint or other issues are pursued (as opposed to the complaint itself) causes undue distress to school staff or others.
- It has a significant and disproportionate adverse effect on the school community.

What does the school expect of any person wishing to raise a concern?

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

- Treat all members of the school community with courtesy and respect.
- Respect the needs of pupils and staff within the school.
- Avoid the use of violence, or 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.
- Follow the school's complaints procedure.

How does the school respond to unreasonably persistent complaints 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.

However, in cases of unreasonably persistent complaints or harassment, the school may take some or all of the following steps, as appropriate:

- Inform the complainant informally that his/her behaviour is now considered by the school to be unreasonable or unacceptable and request a changed approach.
- 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 St Francis 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.
- Inform the complainant in writing that the school considers his/her behaviour to fall under the terms of the Policy for Handling Unreasonably Persistent, Harassing or Abusive Complaints.
- Require all future meetings with a member of staff to be conducted with a second 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 and/or that communications must be channelled through the Local Authority.
- In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the school will immediately inform the police and communicate actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from St Francis Primary School.

Physical or verbal aggression

The Governing Body will not tolerate any form of physical or verbal aggression against members of the school community. If there is evidence of any such aggression the school may:

- Ban the individual from entering the school site, with immediate effect.
- Request an Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO).
- Prosecute under Anti-Harassment legislation.
- Call the police to remove the individual from the premises, under powers provided by the Education Act 1996.

Legitimate new complaints will always be considered, even if the person making them is (or has been) subject to the Policy for Handling Unreasonably Persistent, Harassing or Abusive Complaints.

The school nevertheless reserves the right not to respond to communications from individuals who are subject to this policy.

Monitoring and review

The Governors monitor this policy, in order to ensure that it remains appropriate and up to date. Instances of persistent, harassing or abusive complaints are reported by the Head Teacher to the Governing Body.

This policy is made available to all parents, so that they can be properly informed about the schools' expectations of complainants and the treatment of persistent, harassing or abusive complaints.

This policy will be reviewed every year, or more frequently if necessary.