



Hollinswood Primary School & Nursery

Managing Serial and Unreasonable Complaints Policy

September 2026

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Policy for Managing Serial and Unreasonable Complaints

Hollinswood Primary School & Nursery 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.

This policy should be read alongside the school's Complaints Procedure and has regard to:

- Education Act 2002, Section 29
- Department for Education (DfE) Best Practice Guidance for School Complaints Procedures (January 2021)
- Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998
- UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974

Equality and Accessibility

The school recognises that some complainants may have disabilities, mental health needs, communication difficulties, language barriers, or other circumstances affecting how they engage with the complaints process. Before determining that behaviour is unreasonable, the school will consider whether reasonable adjustments are required under the Equality Act 2010.

Definition of Serial and Unreasonable Complaints

The school recognises that bringing a complaint, making legitimate challenges, or expressing dissatisfaction does not in itself amount to unreasonable behaviour.

A complaint may be considered serial or unreasonable where the frequency, nature, or manner of contact hinders the school's consideration of the matter or has a disproportionate impact on staff time and resources. Examples may include, 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

Uses social media or public forums to publish abusive, defamatory, discriminatory, threatening, harassing, confidential, or knowingly inaccurate information relating to the school, pupils, parents, governors, or staff.

Communication Restrictions

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.

The school may implement proportionate measures including:

- requiring communication through one named point of contact;
- limiting communication to one method (for example email only);
- limiting the frequency of correspondence;
- requiring appointments for meetings;
- declining to respond to repeated issues that have already been fully considered and answered.

Any restrictions will:

- be confirmed in writing;
- explain the reasons for the decision;
- normally be reviewed within six months; and
- be removed when no longer necessary.

Managing Unreasonable Behaviour

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

Before applying this policy, the Headteacher (or Chair of Governors where appropriate) will:

1. Review the history of the complaint and communications.
2. Consider whether reasonable adjustments are required.
3. Consider whether all stages of the complaints procedure have been completed appropriately.
4. Seek advice from the Local Authority, governance professional, or legal adviser where necessary.

The complainant will normally be informed in writing:

- of the concerns regarding their conduct;
- the impact their behaviour is having;
- the changes required;
- any proposed restrictions;
- how long any restrictions will apply; and
- how the decision can be reviewed.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. Where behaviour involves aggression, violence, harassment, stalking, threats, hate incidents, or other potentially criminal conduct, the school may:

- report the matter to the police;
- seek advice from the Local Authority or legal advisers;
- issue warning letters;
- restrict access to school premises where lawful and proportionate.

Any restriction of access will take account of safeguarding responsibilities and the school's legal duties towards pupils and parents.

Record Keeping

The school will maintain appropriate records of:

- complaints received;

- correspondence and meetings;
- decisions made under this policy;
- reviews of restrictions;
- reasonable adjustments considered.

Records will be processed in accordance with UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.

Review and Appeal Section

The complainant may request a review of any restrictions imposed under this policy.

The review will normally be undertaken by:

- the Chair of Governors where the decision was made by the Headteacher; or
- a designated governor where the decision was made by the Chair of Governors.

The review will consider whether:

- the restrictions remain proportionate;
- the behaviour continues;
- reasonable adjustments have been appropriately considered.

