



Policy for Dealing with Unreasonable Complaints and Behaviour

Kettlefields Primary School

Issue 4

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INTRODUCTION

Kettlefields Primary School (the School) aims to deal with all complaints fairly and impartially. Complaints will be handled under the School's Complaints Procedure and the School will not normally limit contact with Complainants.

However, the School does not expect its staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from any abusive, offensive or threatening behaviour, including intimidation, harassment and the making of unreasonable demands.

This policy is based on the Best Practice Advice for School Complaints Procedures published by the Department of Education.

2. WHO IS AN 'UNREASONABLE COMPLAINANT'?

The School considers an 'Unreasonable Complainant' as 'anyone who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with the School, hinder our consideration of their, or other people's complaints and/or who behaves in such a way that they place unreasonable demands on or intimidates or harasses staff.'

3. WHAT IS AN UNREASONABLE COMPLAINT?

A complaint is considered unreasonable where 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 while still wishing their complaint to be resolved;
- 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.
- Introduces trivial or irrelevant information which the Complainant expects to be taken into account and commented on, or raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and within 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;
- Refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the Complaint Procedure has been fully and properly implemented;
- Seeks an unrealistic outcome;
- Makes excessive demands on the School's time by frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with;
- Shouts or is aggressive towards the School's staff;
- Harasses the School's staff;
- Uses or threatens to use intimidation or violence towards the School's staff; and/or
- Publishes unacceptable information in a variety of media, such as in social media websites, and newspapers.

This list is not an exhaustive but is illustrative of the type of complaint which the School considers unreasonable.

For the purpose of this policy unreasonable behaviour, intimidation and harassment are behaviors which :-

- targets one or more members of the School's staff and/or;
- causes distress or alarm to the School's staff and/or;
- has an adverse effect on the whole/parts of the School community and/or;
- is pursued in a manner which can be perceived as intimidating and oppressive by the recipient. This could include situations where unreasonable complaints, whilst not particularly taxing or

serious when viewed in isolation, have a cumulative effect over time of undermining confidence, well-being and health.

4. THE SCHOOL'S ACTIONS IN CASES OF UNREASONABLE COMPLAINTS

Whenever possible, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors will discuss any complaints considered unreasonable with the Complainant informally.

If the behaviour continues the Headteacher will write to the Complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and asking them to change it.

For Complainants who excessively contact the School causing a significant level of disruption, the School may specify methods of communication (such as a single point of contact) and limit the number of contacts through invoking a communication plan. Any methods adopted will be the subject of review by the School.

If the School's staff find it difficult to deal direct with a Complainant because of their unreasonable behaviour and other strategies are not working, the School will seek assistance from the LA. Complainants may be advised not to contact the School, but to communicate instead with the LA who will co-ordinate any response.

In cases where a complaint which raises no new points and has been dealt with under the School's Complaints Procedure, is raised again (or repeatedly), the School is entitled to write to the Complainant stating that it will not deal with the complaint again or in extreme cases will stop responding.

If a Complainant's behaviour is modified but then reverts at a later date within a reasonable period of time, the school may resume the action identified above at an appropriate level.

If a Complainant persists to the point that the School considers it to constitute harassment, legal advice will be sought as to the next steps. In some cases, injunctions and other court orders will be sought.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the concerns will be put in writing immediately and the Police informed. The Complainant may be banned from the School's premises.