Cecil Gowing Infant and Nursery School

Unreasonably Persistent or Vexatious Complaints Policy 2026-2028

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1. Introduction

At Cecil Gowing Infant School, we are committed to fostering positive relationships with parents, carers, and the wider community. We believe that feedback and complaints are valuable for improving our services and the experiences of our students. However, we will not tolerate behaviour that is unreasonable, persistent, or vexatious in nature, which can affect staff well-being and disrupt the school's ability to function effectively.

2. Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Define what constitutes unreasonably persistent or vexatious complaints.
- Outline procedures for handling such complaints and communications.
- Ensure that complaints are dealt with in a fair and consistent manner while protecting staff from unreasonable behaviour.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all forms of communication with the school, including emails, letters, phone calls, meetings, and communications through platforms like Tapestry.

4. Definition of Unreasonable and Vexatious Behaviour

A complaint or communication may be considered unreasonable or vexatious when it meets one or more of the following criteria:

- **Persistent complaints:** Repeatedly raising the same issue, despite receiving a final response.
- **Aggressive or threatening behaviour:** Use of abusive, offensive, or threatening language towards staff or other members of the school community.
- **Excessive demands:** Unreasonable expectations regarding response times, detailed responses, or continuous requests for information beyond what is reasonable.
- **Unfounded allegations:** Making complaints without evidence or with malicious intent.
- **Inappropriate communication channels:** Sending inappropriate messages to teachers through Tapestry or similar platforms meant for constructive communication.
- **Failure to respect staff time:** Demanding responses outside of school hours or in a manner that disregards the working patterns of staff.

5. Procedures for Handling Unreasonably Persistent or Vexatious Complaints

5.1 Initial Warning

If a complaint or communication is deemed unreasonable or vexatious, the school will:
- Issue a written warning, highlighting the nature of the behaviour and providing clear examples.
- Request that communication is conducted respectfully and through appropriate channels.

5.2 Limited Communication

If the behaviour persists, the school may:
- Limit the individual's communication with the school to a specific contact method, such as a single point of contact (e.g., the Headteacher or designated staff member).
- Specify times and days when communication will be accepted.

5.3 Formal Response

In the event that the behaviour continues:
- The school may issue a formal written response, stating that no further correspondence will be entered into regarding the matter.
- The individual may be informed that future communications may be ignored or read but not responded to unless they provide new and relevant information.

5.4 Legal Action

If communication escalates to threats, harassment, or intimidation:
- The school may involve external agencies, such as legal advisors, the local authority, or the police.
- The school reserves the right to take legal action in response to any harassment, defamation, or threats made against staff or other members of the school community.

6. Support for Staff

Staff members who are the subject of vexatious complaints or inappropriate communication will receive support from the Senior Leadership Team (SLT). Any incidents of threatening behaviour will be treated seriously, with appropriate measures taken to ensure the safety and well-being of staff.

7. Review and Monitoring

The SLT will review the implementation of this policy regularly, ensuring it remains relevant and effective. Persistent issues may be escalated to the Governing Body for further consideration and action.

8. Communication of the Policy

This policy will be made available to all parents and carers. It will also be shared with staff, who will receive training on identifying and handling unreasonably persistent or vexatious complaints.

Appendix: Examples of Unreasonable Behaviour

Unreasonable and vexatious behaviour can include, but is not limited to:

1. **Excessive Contact:** Sending multiple emails, letters, or making phone calls per day or week, demanding immediate responses from staff and expecting responses outside of school hours.
2. **Refusing to Follow Procedure:** Making complaints directly to the Governing Body without first attempting to resolve the issue through appropriate channels (e.g., teachers, the Headteacher).
3. **Abusive or Threatening Behaviour:** Using offensive, aggressive, or threatening language towards staff in emails, letters, or in-person meetings.
4. **Misusing Communication Platforms:** Using platforms such as Tapestry to send inappropriate, irrelevant, or excessive messages to teachers, including personal complaints, instead of constructive dialogue about children's progress.
5. **Slanderous or Defamatory Behaviour:** Posting negative, misleading, or slanderous comments about the school, staff, or other members of the community on social media platforms.
6. **Intrusive Behaviour:** Researching personal information about staff online, such as their private social media accounts or personal history, and using this information to make threats or accusations.
7. **Vexatious Complaints:** Repeatedly raising the same complaint after receiving a clear and fair response, or reinterpreting previously addressed issues.
8. **Unreasonable Demands:** Demanding actions that are unrealistic, disproportionate, or outside the school's control, such as expecting a staff member to be disciplined or dismissed without a fair process.
9. **Refusal to Cooperate:** Refusing to meet with staff, provide necessary information, or follow reasonable steps to resolve a complaint through discussion, instead choosing to escalate the issue without cause.
10. **Targeting Multiple Staff Members:** Sending the same complaint to several staff members or departments, with the intent to overwhelm or harass the school, after being advised that a complaint is being handled by a specific person or process.