



Binfield C.E. Primary School (V.A.)

Policy for managing serial and unreasonable complaints

(including persons seeking persistent contact, causing harassment or making vexatious complaints).

Date: February 2026

Review date: February 2027

Introduction

The Head teacher and staff of Binfield C.E. Primary School (V.A.) deal with specific concerns and complaints as part of their day-to-day management of the school in accordance with the School's Complaints Procedures (adopted from Bracknell Forest LA). Governors also play their role as part of these procedures.

The vast majority of concerns and complaints are handled in an informal manner and are resolved quickly, sensitively and to the satisfaction of the complainant. However, there are occasions when complainants behave in an unreasonable manner when raising and/or pursuing concerns. The consequences are that the actions of the complainants begin to impact negatively on the day-to-day running of the school and directly or indirectly the overall well-being of staff, children and parents in the school community. This policy has been produced to assist the headteacher and governors when dealing with such behaviour.

Binfield C.E. Primary School (V.A) 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 we will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening or is persistent in nature such that it becomes harassment, vexatious in nature and is detrimental to the smooth running of the school.

Who is considered to be a serial complainant and what is unreasonable behaviour?

For the purpose of this policy, a serial complainant is a parent/carer or member of the public who complains about issues, either formally or informally, or frequently raises issues that the complainant considers to be within the remit of the school, and whose behaviour is unreasonable. Binfield C.E. Primary School (V.A.) defines unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or 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 co-operate with the complaint's investigation process
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaint's procedure
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaint's procedure or with good practice
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on

- Repeatedly makes minor complaints that appear to be targeted to a member of staff
- raises large numbers of 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, or makes unkind, personal comments about staff
- 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 (either in person, in writing or by email/telephone) while the complaint is being dealt with
- uses threats to intimidate
- uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence
- knowingly provides falsified information
- publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums
- pursues actions which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious
- insists on only dealing with a specific member of staff on all occasions irrespective of the issue and the level of delegation in the school to deal with such matters

For the purpose of this policy, persistent contact (harassment) is the unreasonable pursuit of such actions as listed above, in such a way that they:

- a) appear to be targeted over a significant period of time on one or more members of school staff and/or
- b) cause ongoing distress to individual member(s) of school staff and/or
- c) have a significant adverse effect on the whole/parts of the school community including individuals.

- d) are pursued in a manner which can be perceived as intimidating and oppressive by the recipient. This could include situations where persistent demands and criticisms, whilst not particularly taxing or serious when viewed in isolation, have a cumulative effect over time of undermining confidence, well-being and health.

The School's procedure for dealing with cases of serial or vexatious complaints or harassment.

1. In the first instance the school will inform the complainant in writing that his / her behaviour is considered to be becoming unreasonable / unacceptable and, if it is not modified, action may be taken.

2. If the behaviour is not modified the school may take some or all of the following actions as necessary, having regard to the nature of the complainant's behaviour and the effect of this on the school community:

- a) inform the complainant in writing that his/her behaviour is now considered by the school to be unreasonable/unacceptable and, therefore, to fall under the terms of this policy;
- b) inform the complainant that all meetings with a member of staff will be conducted with a second person present and that notes of meetings may be taken in the interests of all parties;
- c) inform the complainant that, except in emergencies, all routine communication with the complainant to the school should be by letter only;
- d) (in the case of physical, or verbal aggression) take advice from LA HR / Legal Services (services purchased by the Governing Body) and consider warning the complainant about being banned from the school site*; or proceed straight to a temporary ban;
- e) consider taking advice from the LA on pursuing a case under Anti-Harassment legislation;
- f) consider taking advice from the HR / Legal Services of the LA about putting in place a specific procedure for dealing with complaints from the complainant, i.e. the complainant will not be able to deal directly with the Head teacher but only with a third person to be identified by the governing body of the school, who will investigate, determine whether or not the concern / complaint is reasonable or vexatious and then advise the Head teacher accordingly.

If a complainant's persistent complaining/harassing behaviour is modified and is then resumed at a later date within a reasonable period of time, the school may resume the process identified above at

an appropriate level. In these circumstances advice may be sought from the HR/Legal Services of the Diocese / LA.

LEGAL POSITION

The headteacher should be aware that parents who have been banned from the school premises have a general right to seek an appointment to speak to school staff in relation to their child's welfare or educational progress. This may be arranged virtually or via telephone.

Banning a parent from the school premises should not put their child / children at risk. The headteacher will ensure that safe and effective arrangements are in place for delivery and collection of children to and from school. This could be an arranged collection/delivery by school staff at the school's gates.

The school will if necessary contact the LA legal departments to receive further guidance.

REVIEW

The School will review as appropriate, and at a minimum once in a school year, any sanctions applied in the context of this policy.