



Enabling individual potential through positivity and creativity

Managing Serial and Unreasonable Complaints

Version number	Purpose	Lead Person	Date produced
1.1	New policy written	Brian Gwynne	July 2022
1.2	Policy review	Brian Gwynne	July 2024

Managing serial and unreasonable complaints

Kingsthorpe Village Primary School 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.

Kingsthorpe Village Primary School 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 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
- publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

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.

If the complainant contacts the school again on the same issue, the correspondence may then be viewed as 'serial' or 'persistent' and you may choose not to respond. However, a complaint will not be marked as 'serial' before the complainant has completed the procedure, unless the published serial complaint criteria applies.

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

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 Kingsthorpe Village Primary School 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.

Ceasing responses to parents

A decision to stop responding should never be taken lightly but may need to be considered in some cases. The school need to be able to say yes to all of the following:

- the school has taken every reasonable step to address the complainant's concerns
- the complainant has been given a clear statement of the school's position and their options
- the complainant contacts the school repeatedly, making substantially the same points each time

The case to stop responding is stronger if the school agrees with one or more of these statements:

- their letters, emails, or telephone calls are often or always abusive or aggressive
- they make insulting personal comments about or threats towards staff
- you have reason to believe the individual is contacting you with the intention of causing disruption or inconvenience

The school should not stop responding just because an individual is difficult to deal with or asks complex questions.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from Kingsthorpe Village Primary School.

Barring parents from the school site

Although fulfilling a public function, schools are private places. The public has no automatic right of entry. If an individual's behaviour is a cause for concern, they can be asked to leave school premises. In some cases, individuals can be barred from entering school premises. The school should always give the individual the opportunity to formally express their views on a decision to bar.

The headteacher's decision to bar should then be reviewed by either:

- the chair of governors
- a committee of governors

They should take into account any representations made by the individual and decide whether to either confirm or lift the bar. If the decision is confirmed, the individual should be notified in writing, explaining:

- how long the bar will be in place
- when the decision will be reviewed