



Vexatious, Malicious and Unreasonable Complaints Policy

Policy Date	February 2026
Author	Mike Marshall – Principal
Review Date	January 2027

Vexatious, Malicious and Unreasonable Complaints Policy

1. Policy Statement

We recognise that the vast majority of complaints are raised in good faith. However, in rare cases, a complainant's behaviour may become unreasonable, vexatious, persistent or abusive. This policy outlines how the school will manage such situations fairly, proportionately and lawfully.

2. Legal and Regulatory Framework

This policy is written in accordance with:

- Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 – Part 7
- DfE Guidance: Best Practice Advice for School Complaints Procedures
- Equality Act 2010
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Public Order Act 1986

3. Scope

This policy applies to:

- Parents and carers
- Former parents
- Members of the public
- External agencies
- Representatives acting on behalf of complainants
- It applies where behaviour — not the complaint itself — becomes unreasonable.

4. Definitions

4.1 ***A complaint is NOT vexatious simply because:***

- It is persistent
- It is critical
- The complainant is upset
- The complaint has not been upheld

4.2 A complaint may be considered vexatious or unreasonable where the complainant:

- Refuses to accept the outcome of the complaints procedure
- Repeatedly raises the same issue without new evidence
- Makes excessive, repeated or overlapping complaints
- Uses abusive, threatening or discriminatory language
- Makes unfounded allegations against staff
- Demands unrealistic or disproportionate outcomes
- Records meetings without consent (where prohibited)
- Contacts multiple staff members repeatedly about the same issue
- Pursues a complaint after the process has been fully exhausted
- Harasses staff or damages the wellbeing of staff through conduct
- The school will distinguish between:
 - Legitimate escalation
 - Distress-driven persistence
 - Unreasonable behaviour

5. Principles

When managing potentially vexatious complaints, the school will:

- Act proportionately
- Ensure decisions are evidence-based
- Consider disability, mental health or safeguarding factors
- Make reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010
- Protect staff wellbeing
- Maintain clear written records

6. Procedure

Stage 1 – Warning

Where behaviour becomes unreasonable, the Principal will:

- Write to the complainant
- Explain the behaviour causing concern
- Set clear expectations moving forward
- Outline possible restrictions if behaviour continues

Stage 2 – Managing Contact

If behaviour continues, the school may implement one or more of the following:

- Limit contact to a single named point of contact
- Require communication in writing only
- Limit frequency of contact (e.g., one email per week)
- Refuse to respond to repeated issues already addressed
- End meetings if behaviour becomes aggressive
- In extreme cases, issue a formal letter restricting access to site

All restrictions will:

- Be proportionate
- Be time-limited (typically 3–6 months)
- Be reviewed periodically

Stage 3 – Formal Vexatious Declaration

In exceptional cases, the Principal (with Proprietor oversight) may formally designate a complainant as vexatious.

The complainant will receive:

- Written explanation
- Evidence relied upon
- Duration of restrictions
- Right to review after a set period
- A record will be maintained confidentially.

7. Safeguarding Considerations

If a complainant raises safeguarding concerns:

- These will always be assessed under safeguarding procedures
- The complaint will not be dismissed solely because the complainant is considered vexatious
- The DSL will review any safeguarding elements

8. Equality Considerations

The school recognises that behaviour may be influenced by:

- Disability
- Neurodivergence
- Mental health conditions
- Trauma

Reasonable adjustments will be considered before restrictions are applied.

9. Staff Protection

Turning Point Academy has a duty of care to staff. The school will not tolerate:

- Harassment
- Intimidation
- Defamation
- Threats

In extreme cases the school may:

- Seek legal advice
- Issue a cease-and-desist letter
- Report harassment to the police

10. Recording and Monitoring

The school will maintain:

- A log of complaints
- Records of correspondence
- Copies of warning letters
- Review dates
- This will be kept in accordance with data protection legislation.

11. Withdrawal of Vexatious Status

Restrictions will be lifted:

- At the end of the specified period
- If behaviour improves
- Following a formal review

Appendix A – Example Warning Letter (Template)

Dear [Name],

We value constructive dialogue with parents and carers. However, we are concerned that the volume and tone of recent communications do not align with our expectations of respectful partnership.

We therefore ask that:

- Communication is respectful
- Matters already addressed are not re-opened without new evidence
- Contact is limited to [named person]

If this behaviour continues, we may implement formal restrictions under our Vexatious Complaints Policy.

We remain committed to supporting your child and working positively with you.

Yours sincerely,

Principal

Appendix B

Managing Unreasonable or Vexatious Complaints – Flowchart

● STEP 1 – Complaint Received

Is the complaint within scope of the school complaints policy?

✓ YES → Proceed through normal complaints procedure

✗ NO → Respond and signpost appropriately



● STEP 2 – Behaviour Review

Is the complainant's behaviour reasonable?

Examples of reasonable behaviour:

- Respectful tone
- Following procedure
- Accepting outcomes
- Raising new evidence

✓ YES → Continue through complaints process

✗ NO → Move to Stage 1 Warning



● STEP 3 – Stage 1 Warning

Principal writes to complainant outlining:

- Behaviour causing concern
- Expectations moving forward
- Potential consequences



Has behaviour improved?

✓ YES → Continue engagement

✗ NO → Move to Stage 2 Restrictions



● STEP 4 – Stage 2 Managing Contact

Possible actions:

- Single point of contact
- Written communication only
- Contact frequency limits
- Refusal to revisit closed matters
- Meeting termination if aggressive

↓

Has behaviour improved within review period?

✓ YES → Remove restrictions

✗ NO → Move to Stage 3

↓

● STEP 5 – Formal Vexatious Declaration

Principal (with Proprietor oversight):

- Issues formal designation
- Sets time-limited restrictions
- Provides right to review

↓

● STEP 6 – Review Period

After 3–6 months:

- Behaviour improved → Restrictions lifted
- No improvement → Continue / escalate proportionately
- Safeguarding & Equality Check (Side Box Throughout Process)

At every stage:

- Does complaint include safeguarding concerns?
- Has DSL reviewed if required?
- Are reasonable adjustments required under Equality Act?
- Is behaviour linked to disability or trauma?