



Inspiring Educational Excellence for Everyone
ARDEN *forest*
C of E Multi Academy Trust

Serial and Unreasonable Complainants Policy

Last reviewed: November 2025

Next review due by: November 2028

1. Commitment

- 1.1 Arden Forest Multi-Academy Trust (“the Trust”) is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly, impartially, and in a timely manner. We aim to provide a high-quality service to those who raise concerns or complaints about any of our schools or the Trust itself.
- 1.2 While we will not normally limit contact with complainants, we do not expect our staff, leaders, governors, or trustees to tolerate unacceptable behaviour.
- 1.3 The Trust will take proportionate action to protect staff and governors from such behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive, intimidating, or threatening.

2. Definition of unreasonable behaviour

- 2.1 Unreasonable behaviour is behaviour which hinders the consideration or resolution of a complaint because of its frequency, persistence, or nature. Examples include (but are not limited to) where a complainant:
- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the desired outcomes, despite offers of assistance;
 - refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process;
 - refuses to accept that certain issues are outside the scope of the complaints procedure;
 - insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways that are incompatible with the procedure or with good practice;
 - introduces trivial or irrelevant information and expects it to be considered;
 - raises numerous minor points and demands immediate responses to each;
 - makes unjustified complaints about, or demands replacement of, staff who are handling the complaint;
 - changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds;
 - repeatedly makes the same or substantially similar complaint despite previous investigations having concluded appropriately;
 - refuses to accept the findings of properly completed investigations, including escalation to the Department for Education;
 - seeks unrealistic or disproportionate outcomes;
 - makes excessive demands on time or resources through frequent, lengthy, or complex contact in person, by phone, or in writing;
 - uses threats, intimidation, abusive, discriminatory, or offensive language;
 - knowingly provides false information; or
 - publishes unacceptable, defamatory, or inflammatory information on social media or other public forums.

3. Managing unreasonable or serial complaints

- 3.1 Complainants are asked to limit their communications with the Trust or its schools relating to a complaint while the matter is under review. Repeated or overlapping correspondence can delay resolution.

- 3.2 Where behaviour meets the threshold for unreasonable or persistent contact, the Headteacher, Chair of Governors (for school-level complaints) or the Chief Executive Officer (for Trust-level complaints) may designate the complainant's behaviour as unreasonable without prior direct discussion, where such contact would present a risk to staff wellbeing or is unlikely to be productive. This decision will be made after reviewing the evidence and in line with the Trust's Complaints Policy.
- 3.3 If the behaviour continues, the Headteacher or CEO will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is considered unreasonable and requesting that it cease.
- 3.4 Where a complainant's contact causes a significant level of disruption, the Trust or school may implement a communication plan specifying acceptable methods or frequency of contact. Any such plan will normally be reviewed after six months.
- 3.5 In response to serious incidents of aggression, harassment, or violence, the Trust or school will immediately inform the police and confirm its actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from school or Trust premises under the appropriate legal powers.

4. Scope and application

- 4.1 This policy applies to all Trust-level and school-level complaints and should be read alongside the Arden Forest MAT Complaints Policy and each school's Complaints Policy and Complaints Procedure. It may be invoked at any stage where contact or behaviour becomes unreasonable or where a complainant seeks to bypass the normal complaints process by directing correspondence to the Trust before a school's procedure has concluded.

5. Review

- 5.1 This policy will be reviewed every three years, or earlier if national guidance changes.