CHRIST CHURCH C.E. FIRST SCHOOL

-Vexatious and Persistant Complaints Policy-

Headteacher: Mrs A Graham

Chair of Governors: Mr M Bird

Policy Agreed: September 2026

Review date: September 2028

Christ Church C.E. First School
Northesk Street, Stone
Staffordshire, ST15 8EP
Tel: 01785 336545
Company registration Number: 07702211
Email: office@christchurch-stone.staffs.sch.uk
Website: http://www.christchurch-stone.staffs.sch.uk

CHRIST CHURCH C.E. FIRST SCHOOL
-VEXATIOUS AND PERSISTENT COMPLAINTS POLICY-

This policy is designed to support the schools when the formal School Complaints Procedure Policy does not meet the needs of the school because; the complaint that they are dealing with is unreasonable/abusive and persistent.

This policy applies to all complainants, either individually or as part of a group who might be considered to be 'habitual, unreasonably persistent or vexatious'. The term 'complainant' in this policy includes those who make requests under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, and the Data Protection Act 1998. Reference to the complaints procedure relates, where relevant, to requests under those Acts.

Unreasonably persistent and vexatious complainants are a problem for School Staff and Governors. Managing these complaints place a strain on time and resources. The School will always try to respond sympathetically to anyone with a concern or issue regarding the school but there will be times when nothing further can be reasonably done to resolve matters.

Examples of unreasonable behaviour liable to invoke this policy are: making excessive demands on time and resources e.g. excessive telephone calls, sending excessive emails, writing complex and lengthy letters – to which a quick response is expected; threatening behaviour/conduct and physical violence; not allowing adequate time to manage an initial complaint. Demonstrating non-acceptance of a final decision by continuing to demand further responses to the same or similar issues. This policy will ensure that all complainants are dealt with fairly, honestly and consistently.

However, the governors recognise that some complaints may not be settled to the complainant's satisfaction. In such cases, the governors have a right to expect that they will not receive further discussion/written responses to complaints that have been closed.

Aggressive/abusive behaviour:
The expectation is that staff/students/visitors/volunteers feel safe whilst on our school site. The school recognises that under certain circumstances, people can become angered or upset by a decision or action taken by the school; however it is never acceptable for this to be escalated to verbal or physical abuse (this would include written threats of violence). If threats of violence/abuse/inflammatory statements/unsubstantiated allegations are made in person, the governing body can decide that any further communication between the complainant and school may only be in writing. The incidence of abuse will be reported to the Police.

Unreasonable demands:
Complaints can cause stress and strain on the school by; the amount of information sought, unreasonable detail, unachievable timescales, the number of requests made. These demands could include: continually telephoning, sending letters, emails or making subtle changes to the nature of the requests previously made in the anticipation that the outcome may be more in line with the complainant's expectation. These demands will be deemed to be unreasonable if they appear to be trivial or made without a serious purpose; they impact on the work of the school by taking up excessive amounts of staff time; impact on the effective running or the school, or cause stress and anxiety to the staff concerned in the issue.

Repetitive/persistent requests:
The governors of the school recognise that complainants can in some circumstances fail to accept that the school is unable to help them further or provide additional information/support. They might continue to pursue the complaint if they do not agree with the outcome or the action that has been taken by writing, telephoning, and sending emails without providing any new information. If the complainant continues to contact the school, repeating the same complaint that has already been responded to or are still under investigation, the school may decide to only take telephone calls on a restricted basis e.g. only one nominated member of staff will respond. If the same written material/documents are sent to the school, the Headteacher may decide to return these without response.

In a case where the school has agreed that the complainant is vexatious the governing body has agreed that contact can be restricted. The decision to restrict communication will need to be agreed by the Headteacher and Chair of Governors with advice if necessary from the Local Authority. The complainant must be notified in writing, the letter will clearly identify; the reason why the decision to apply this policy had been taken, what impact this will have on their contact with the school, the duration of the restriction and how and to whom the complainant can appeal the decision.

The restrictions can include all or some of the following; placing time limits on telephone calls/personal contact, the number of telephone/personal contacts limited, restricting the complainant to only one form of communication and with one named member of staff, refusing all communication regarding an identified subject.

The restriction would not include emergency contact regarding their child/children or information which would be essential to their child/children's learning and achievement.

Appendix 1

Examples of vexatious or unreasonable persistent complaints (this list is not exhaustive);

- Refusing to give school staff details of their complaint which would enable them to investigate and resolve the concern
- Refusing to co-operate and comply with the schools complaints process
- Continuing to pursue complaints about a member of the school community which is unsubstantiated and is, evidently, a personal vendetta
- Making constant and excessive demands from staff which impacts on time and resources. Inappropriately and subtly, changing the complaint when an outcome has not met their expectations Trying to “swamp” the procedure with copious amounts of unnecessary and irrelevant paperwork, questions or data
- Making a number of linked complaints across an extended period of time, which extends and muddles the investigation process
- Demands the school makes judgements/decisions outside of the complaints policy’s remit – e.g. overturning a court decision re. contact which a child, or a DFE legislative requirement
- Threatening or intimidation of staff/students/visitors/volunteers through written, oral or personal contact
- Continually submitting the same complaint which has been investigated, considered and concluded Overloading the school systems with emails, letters and telephone calls

Appendix 2

Model letter response to vexatious complaint

Dear

Thank you for your recent communication. After careful consideration, the Chair of Governors and I have agreed that the concerns you have raised cannot be dealt with under the Schools Complaints Policy because:

Delete as necessary:

- There is no clear indication about what your complaint is.
- The concerns you have raised have already been dealt with and you have received a full response of the findings.
- The complaint is not an issue that the school or governing body is able to provide a response to. Your letter contains inflammatory/ abusive/threatening language. [and has been referred to the police or legal department at the Local Authority]

If you wish to appeal this decision, you should write formally to the clerk to the Governing Body within 7 working days of the date of this letter explaining why you think our decision is incorrect. [Or in the case of the final point, you may wish to offer the opportunity to the complainant to re-issue the letter in an acceptable format and with and an apology]

Yours sincerely,

Appendix 3

Information leaflet which could be sent to the person who has sent a vexatious or abusive complaint.

Our school should be a safe and happy environment for our staff to work and our children to learn, the Headteacher and Governing Body are absolutely committed to this statement.

We welcome constructive comments regarding our working practices, environment or policies and procedures, which we will always try to resolve quickly and positively through our formal School Complaints Procedure Policy.

However, we have decided, reluctantly, that your approach to the school has had a negative effect on the running of the school and an unacceptable strain on the school staff time and resources. The governing body will not accept threatening or abusive behaviour towards any members of the school community.

- We would like to explain what we consider to be vexatious or abusive:
- Continuous communication despite the complaint having been considered and concluded through the schools policies
- Harassing a member of staff either in person, by telephone, constant emails or letters
- Unreasonable expectations from the school – e.g. to overturn a court decision, legislation
- Pursuing complaints in an unreasonable manner – using abusive or threatening language
- The complaint is targeted at one member of staff without good cause or evidence
- The complainant causes upset or distress to a member of staff
- It has a disproportionate effect on the running the school

The school will always try to work with parents/carers but will take the following actions if the vexatious or abusive complaint does not cease:

- We will write to the complainant to inform them formally that their behaviour is being considered to be unreasonable and acceptable and to request a change to the behaviour
- Restrict the communication with the school of the complainant
- Report the communication to the Police and/or the Local Authority
- We will inform the complainant how they can appeal this decision
- We will inform the complainant how long the restriction will be in place