

Harper Bell Adventist School



Persistent Complainants Policy

Issue Date:

Version: V1

Review Date:

16/03/27 or when new legislation requires changes.

This policy will also be reviewed annually or when new legislation requires changes, whichever is the soonest. This policy is approved by *The Governing Body*.

Date approved:

Headteacher/Principal.....Susan Sidhu

Chair of Governors Richard Beamish

Date approved: 16/03/26

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Persistent Complainants Policy

1. Purpose

Harper Bell Adventist School is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly, respectfully and in a timely manner. We aim to provide a high-quality service to all members of our school community and we welcome constructive feedback.

However, in a small number of cases the behaviour of a complainant may become unreasonable because of the frequency or nature of their contact with the school. This can place a significant burden on school resources and can affect the wellbeing and effectiveness of staff.

This policy sets out how the school will manage situations where complainant behaviour becomes unreasonable while ensuring that all individuals retain the right to raise legitimate concerns.

2. Principles

The school will:

- treat all complaints seriously and investigate them appropriately
- respond to complainants with respect and professionalism
- ensure that staff are protected from abusive, aggressive or unreasonable behaviour
- maintain a fair and proportionate approach when applying this policy.

Application of this policy does not prevent a complainant from accessing the school's formal complaints procedure.

3. Definition of Unreasonable or Persistent Behaviour

A complainant may be considered unreasonable if their behaviour hinders the consideration of their complaint or places disproportionate demands on school time and resources.

Examples of unreasonable behaviour include where a complainant:

- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of the complaint or desired outcome despite support from the school
- refuses to cooperate with the complaints investigation process
- refuses to accept that certain issues fall outside the scope of the complaints procedure

- insists on the complaint being handled in ways that are incompatible with the school's procedures or established practice
- introduces large volumes of irrelevant or trivial information and expects this to be addressed in detail
- raises excessive numbers of detailed questions and expects immediate responses
- repeatedly makes the same complaint despite the complaint being fully investigated and concluded
- refuses to accept the findings of an investigation where the school's complaints procedure has been followed correctly
- changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation progresses
- seeks outcomes which are clearly unrealistic or disproportionate
- makes unjustified allegations about staff or seeks to have staff members replaced without evidence
- makes excessive demands on school staff through frequent or lengthy contact by telephone, email, social media or in person
- uses threatening, abusive, offensive or discriminatory language
- behaves aggressively or intimidates staff
- knowingly provides false or misleading information
- publishes false, defamatory or abusive statements about the school or staff on social media or public forums.

4. Expectations of Complainants

While a complaint is being considered, complainants are expected to:

- communicate respectfully with school staff
- allow the school reasonable time to investigate and respond
- avoid sending repeated correspondence relating to the same issue.

Repeated contact relating to the same matter may delay the progress of the investigation.

5. Managing Unreasonable Behaviour

Where a complainant's behaviour becomes unreasonable, the school will normally take the following steps.

Step 1 – Informal discussion

Where appropriate, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors will discuss the concerns with the complainant and explain why the behaviour is causing difficulty.

The school will seek to agree a constructive way forward.

Step 2 – Written warning

If the behaviour continues, the school will write to the complainant explaining:

- why their behaviour is considered unreasonable
- the impact it is having on the school
- what changes are required.

The school may also outline the restrictions that could be applied if the behaviour continues.

Step 3 – Communication Plan

If necessary, the school may implement a communication plan to manage contact with the complainant. This may include:

- limiting communication to one named member of staff
- requiring communication to be in writing only
- limiting the frequency of contact
- declining to respond to correspondence that repeats issues already addressed
- setting specific times for communication.

Communication plans will normally be reviewed after six months.

6. Closing Repetitive Complaints

Where a complaint has been fully investigated through the school's complaints procedure and the outcome communicated, the school may decide that the matter is closed.

If the complainant continues to pursue the same issue without presenting significant new evidence, the school may decline to reopen the complaint.

7. Aggressive or Abusive Behaviour

The school will not tolerate aggression, threats or abusive behaviour towards staff.

Where serious aggression or threats occur, the school may:

- immediately terminate communication
- report the incident to the police
- take action to restrict access to the school premises.

Access to the school site may be restricted in accordance with the school's legal powers to control access to its premises.

8. Decision Making

The decision to apply this policy will normally be made by the Headteacher in consultation with the Chair of Governors.

Where the complaint concerns the Headteacher, the decision will be made by the Chair of Governors.

9. Right to Request a Review

A complainant may request a review of a decision made under this policy by writing to the Chair of Governors within **10 school days** of receiving the decision.

The review will consider whether the policy has been applied fairly and proportionately.

10. Equality and Fairness

In applying this policy the school will have regard to its duties under the **Equality Act 2010** and will consider whether reasonable adjustments are required for individuals who may have disabilities or additional needs.

11. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed periodically by the governing body to ensure that it remains fair, lawful and effective in protecting both complainants and staff.