



# VEXATIOUS COMMUNICATION PROCEDURE

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<b>LAST REVIEW/UPDATE:</b>	February 2023
<b>LEVEL OF CHANGE:</b>	Minor
<b>NEXT REVIEW:</b>	February 2025

The Tapton Communication Principles clearly state that all members of Tapton School will communicate appropriately, professionally and in a timely way with parents, carers and members of the community. Equally, we expect that parents, carers and members of the local community should always communicate with Tapton staff in a respectful and appropriate way. This includes conversations when visiting the school, telephone calls, letters and emails.

Please be aware that we aim to respond to all emails and letters in two working days. In the first instance this may be simply to acknowledge the email and outline the next steps. We cannot put phone calls through to teachers during school hours but they will receive a message and someone from the school will respond in two working days. NB some colleagues work part time and if the matter can only be dealt with by a specific colleague who does not work part of the week then the response will be within two of their working days.

This document includes the following:

- A definition of vexatious communication
- School procedure for dealing with vexatious communication

### Vexatious Communication

Communication between home and school (or indeed the school and its local community) is extremely important. We work in partnership to ensure young people achieve all that they can. If parents, carers or members of the community are dissatisfied with the school then there is a clear complaints procedure.

Vexatious communication includes conversations (face to face or on the phone), letters or emails that are:

- **Overly persistent** – i.e. continuing to communicate with a colleague even when it has been made clear that they have responded to a complaint and dealt with it. If a complainant is still dissatisfied they have recourse to the next step in the complaints procedure. As a school we have an additional step in our approach to dealing with complaints – we take additional advice. This might mean the complaint is discussed by a wider group of professionals in school, with the school governors, with colleagues in another school or with professionals working for another organisation (e.g. an anti-bullying charity or legal advisor). This ensures we have done all we can and if the complainant is still dissatisfied, they must take the next step in the complaints procedure. A final point is that our communications principles state that we will aim to set up a meeting in most circumstances if more than three emails are exchanged. If this meeting is offered but the complainant does not wish to meet then colleagues in school will politely end the communication.
- **Inappropriate in manner** – i.e. when pejorative, mean spirited, personal or inappropriate comments are made.
- **Threatening** – i.e. direct or indirect threats about what might be done or they would like to do. This may be threats of a physical nature or to do with what they will say to or about a colleague or the school (this may involve threats of contact with external agencies). It may also include speaking to colleagues in an unpleasant or bullying manner or using abusive or threatening language.
- **Prolific** – prolific correspondence or excessive email or telephone contact about a concern or complaint.

### School procedure for dealing with vexatious communication

Firstly colleagues in school will politely but clearly indicate that the communication is becoming vexatious. If it is a phone call or face to face meeting then they will politely end their side of the conversation. The parent, carer or member of the public will be sent a copy of this policy and asked to refer to it in future communications with school. A record will be made of this. At this stage it may be appropriate to insist that all future communications should be with a school leader (i.e. Subject or Team Leader or a member of the School Leadership Team).

If vexatious communications continue then a letter of warning will be sent outlining our expectations for positive communications. A meeting with a member of the Senior Leadership Team will be arranged to clarify the importance of positive communication. It may be that future communications are restricted to a single point of contact via an email address and/or that a limit is placed on the number of times contact can be made within a week or a term.

Any future reoccurrences will most probably indicate a break down in relationship between the school and the parent, carer or member of the local community. At this point the school may seek legal advice or discuss a school transfer for the benefit of all.

### Appendix 1

Sign displayed in reception, offices and meeting rooms.

#### Effective Communication

Inappropriate language, threats or acts of aggression towards staff or students will not be tolerated on our premises.

Anyone behaving in such a way will be asked to leave. They may receive a ban from the premises and their behaviour may be reported to the police.

We hope that all your encounters with Tapton staff are courteous and positive. If you ever have cause for concern we urge you to contact the Headteacher.

Equally, we ask that all those contacting us in school treat all members of staff with respect and courtesy.

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### Appendix 2

Message displayed on all email footers:

We aim to respond to all emails within two working days.

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