

Policy for Managing Serial and Unreasonable Complaints from Parents



THE **LEARNING** PARTNERSHIP

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Revisions Log

Date	Pages/Whole Document	Description of Change	Origin of Change (e.g. Routine Update, request for Review)

Policy for Managing Serial and Unreasonable Complaints from Parents

Introduction

At The Learning Partnership Academies Trust (TLP or the “Trust”) we are committed to providing a transparent and effective complaints procedure. While we strive to address all complaints promptly and fairly, there will be occasions where the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome and tries to re-open the same issue. Complaints may also be received which the Trust considers to be frivolous or vexatious. This policy outlines how serial and unreasonable complaints (including persistent and vexatious complaints) will be managed to ensure the well-being of our staff and the efficient operation of our schools.

Objectives

- To ensure all complaints are handled in a consistent, fair, and timely manner.
- To protect staff from unreasonable demands and harassment by identifying and managing serial and unreasonable complaints (including persistent and vexatious complaints).
- To outline the procedures for addressing complaints that meet the criteria for being serial or unreasonable.

Definition of a Serial Complaint

A serial or persistent complaint is where the complainant tries to re-open the same issue, despite all stages of the complaint procedure being followed. A complaint can also be deemed persistent where a complainant refuses to accept a decision despite a comprehensive investigation and explanation.

Definition of an Unreasonable Complaint

An unreasonable complaint can include complaints that are frivolous or vexatious. These include complaints that are brought forward without sufficient grounds and primarily aims to cause disruption, annoyance, or distress rather than a genuine pursuit of resolution. Characteristics of an unreasonable complaints (which include frivolous or vexatious complaints) may include:

- complaints which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious;
- insistence upon pursuing unmeritorious complaints and/or unrealistic outcomes beyond all reason;
- insistence upon pursuing meritorious complaints in an unreasonable manner;
- complaints which are designed to cause disruption or annoyance;
- demands for redress that lack any serious purpose or value;
- making excessive demands on school time and resources with unreasonable persistence;
- Refusing to accept a decision despite a comprehensive investigation and explanation.

Identification of serial or unreasonable (including persistent and vexatious) complaints

A complaint may be deemed serial or unreasonable if it meets one or more of the following criteria:

- i. The complainant refuses to specify the grounds of a complaint, despite offers of assistance.
- ii. The complainant refuses to cooperate with the complaints process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved.
- iii. The complainant changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds.
- iv. The complainant makes frequent, lengthy, complicated, and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint.

Procedures for managing serial and unreasonable complaints

1. **Initial Assessment:** The headteacher, in consultation with the senior governance professional and a senior officer of the Trust designated by Chief Executive Officer will assess whether a complaint meets the threshold for being designated as serial or unreasonable based on the criteria outlined above.
2. **Communication:** The complainant will be informed in writing that their complaint has been identified as serial or unreasonable. The letter will outline the reasons for this decision and any restrictions on further communication.
3. **Restrictions:** Depending on the nature of the complaint, restrictions may include:
 - Limiting the complainant to a single point of contact.
 - Specifying the method of communication (e.g., email communication only to a designated contact).
 - Setting a fixed number of communications per term.
 - Restrictions to access school or trust sites.
 - Other restrictions deemed appropriate by the headteacher that ensure the safety and wellbeing of staff and pupils.
4. **Review:** The decision to classify a complaint as serial or unreasonable maybe reviewed by the Chief Executive Officer. Any review will be at the discretion of the CEO.
 - i. In the case of a serial or unreasonable complaint the CEO's decision will be final.
 - ii. Where a complaint is deemed serial or unreasonable and restrictions are placed on complainant, then the CEO may determine whether a review period should be included. This review period is to determine whether any adjustments should be made to the restrictions put in place. This could take the form of removal, addition or amendments to some or all of the conditions imposed.
 - iii. The CEO will determine the length of review period. However, as a minimum, restrictions should be reviewed at least annually.

Responsibilities

- **The Headteacher:** Responsible for implementing this policy and ensuring all staff are aware of its content and purpose.
- **The Chief Executive Officer:** Responsible for reviewing any decisions to classify the complaint as serial or unreasonable and to also consider the timing of any review period set for managing the restrictions imposed.

- **The Trust Governance Committee:** Responsible for monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of this policy and approving any subsequent changes.

Where a complaint is made against the Trust CEO, then the Chair of Trustees will assume the responsibilities assigned to the CEO above. The Chair of Trustees may delegate this to another Trustee where appropriate.

Review

This policy will be reviewed every four years or sooner if required by changes in legislation or statutory guidance.

END