

Charlestown Primary School



Vexatious Complaints Policy January 2026

**Approved by: Full
Governing Body**

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Vexatious Complaints Policy

POLICY FOR HANDLING UNREASONABLY PERSISTENT, HARASSING, VEXATIOUS, UNREASONABLE OR ABUSIVE COMPLAINTS

The Head teacher and governing body are committed to the improvement of our school. We welcome feedback from parents/carers and will always try to resolve any concerns as quickly as possible. There is a procedure for parents/carers to use if they wish to make a formal complaint.

Sometimes, however, parents or carers pursuing complaints or other issues treat staff and others in a way that is unacceptable and or behave in an unacceptable manner. Whilst we recognise that some complaints may relate to serious and distressing incidents, we will not accept threatening, inappropriate or harassing behaviour. The aim of this policy is to clarify the process for dealing with unreasonable complainants or parents who do not act appropriately.

What do we mean by ‘an unreasonable complainant’?

An unreasonable complainant may be anyone who engages in unreasonable behaviour when making a complaint. This will include parents and carers who pursue complaints in an unreasonable manner and those who do not act in an appropriate manner towards staff at the school.

Unreasonable behaviour may include:

Actions which are:

- Out of proportion to the nature of the complaint, or
- Persistent – even when the complaints procedure has been exhausted, or
- Personally harassing, or
- Unjustifiably repetitious or
- Obsessive, harassing, or prolific
- Prolific correspondence or excessive email or telephone contact about a concern or complaint.
- Repetitious complaints where the complainant has no view about what would satisfy him/her and/or no intention to resolve the complaint.
- Acting in a way not in line with the school aim of reaching a resolution and working with the school
- An insistence on
- Pursuing unjustified or unmeritorious complaints and/or Unrealistic outcomes to unjustified complaints

An insistence on

- Pursuing justifiable complaints in an unreasonable manner e.g. using abusive or threatening language.

- Making complaints in public; or
- Refusing to attend appointments to discuss the complaint.

What is 'harassment'?

We regard harassment as the unreasonable pursuit of issues or complaints, particularly if the matter appears to be pursued in a way intended to cause personal distress rather than seek a resolution. Behaviour will fall within the scope of this policy if:

- It appears to be deliberately targeted over a significant period of time at one or more members of school staff or others.
- The way in which a complaint or other issues is pursued (as opposed to the complaint itself) causes ongoing distress to school staff or others;
- It has a significant and disproportionate adverse effect on the school community.
- Actions are pursued aggressively or in any manner not appropriate to an effective resolution.

What can you expect from the school?

Anyone who raises informal or formal issues and complaints with the school can expect the school to:

- Follow the School's complaints procedure.
- Respond within a reasonable time as set out in the complaints policy.
- Be available for consultation within a reasonable time limit, bearing in mind the needs of pupils at the school and the nature of the complaint
- Respond with courtesy and respect.
- Attempt to resolve problems using reasonable means in line with the school's complaints procedure, other policies and practice and in line with guidance from the Local Authority.
- Keep those involved informed of progress towards a resolution.

What the school expects of you

The school expects anyone who wishes to raise concerns with the school to:

- Treat all staff with courtesy and respect.
Respect the needs of pupils and staff within the school.
- Never use violence (including threats of violence) towards people or property.
- Recognise the time constraints under which members of staff in schools work and allow the school a reasonable time to respond to a complaint.
- Recognise that some problems may not be resolved in a short time.
- Follow the school's complaints procedure.

- Speak politely and respectfully using appropriate language and avoid any aggression or verbal abuse, including name-calling
- Raise concerns/complaints in an appropriate place and at an appropriate time (for example not in front of other parents or pupils and not in an open public space)
- To be prepared to work towards a resolution and in partnership with the school

School's responses to unreasonably persistent complaints, vexatious complainants, unreasonable complaints or harassment

This policy is intended to be used in conjunction with the school's complaints procedure. Taken together, these documents set out how we will always seek to work with parents, carers and others with a legitimate complaint to resolve a difficulty and reach a resolution.

However, in cases of unreasonably persistent complaints or harassment, the school may take any or all of the following steps, as appropriate:

- Inform the complainant informally that his/her behaviour is now considered by the school to be unreasonable or unacceptable, and request a changed approach.
- Inform the complainant in writing that the school considers his/her behaviour to fall under the terms of the Unreasonably Persistent complaints/Harassment Policy.
- Require all future meetings with a member of staff to be conducted with a third person present. In the interests of all parties, notes of these meetings may be taken.
- Inform the complainant that, except in emergencies, the school will respond only to written communication.
- Inform the complainant in writing that his/her behaviour is now considered to fall under the terms of this policy and that any complaint will not be investigated further until it is pursued in a manner the school considers to be reasonable
- Place restrictions on the individual's access to school and/or school staff. Cease all correspondence and communication with the complainant other than that necessary for the health and safety of any child/adult in school.
- Involve officers of the Local Authority where deemed appropriate and necessary.

The school has a duty of care to staff and pupils and will take emergency measures should these become necessary in extreme cases.

Physical or verbal aggression

The school, governing body and Manchester City Council will not tolerate **any** form of physical or verbal aggression or personal harassment against school staff. If staff are subject to this type of aggression the school may:

- Prohibit the individual from entering the school site, with immediate effect;
- Inform the individual that communication with them will cease other than in an emergency
- Prosecute under Anti-Harassment legislation.

AI-Generated or AI-Assisted Complaints

Identifying and Managing AI-Generated or AI-Assisted Complaints

The school recognises that AI tools are increasingly being used in various contexts, and complainants may use AI to draft or structure their complaints. While we acknowledge that AI can be a helpful tool for organising thoughts and improving communication, we will take steps to ensure that all complaints are genuine, proportionate, and pursued in good faith

What we mean by AI-generated or AI-assisted complaints:

AI-generated or AI-assisted complaints may include:

- Complaints that have been wholly or partially written using generative AI tools (such as ChatGPT, Google Gemini, or similar platforms).
- Multiple complaints that follow identical or near-identical structures, wording, or phrasing, suggesting the use of AI templates.
- Complaints that contain unusually formal, generic, or impersonal language that is inconsistent with previous communications from the complainant.
- Complaints that are repetitive in nature, making the same points each time but using different AI-generated wording.
- Voluminous correspondence that appears to have been generated quickly and in excessive quantities through AI assistance.

The school's approach:

The school will assess all complaints fairly, fully, proportionately, and in a timely manner, regardless of how they have been drafted. However, where we have reason to believe that AI has been used to generate complaints in a way that:

- Creates an unreasonable burden on school staff
- Obscures the genuine nature of the concern
- Is part of a pattern of vexatious or harassing behaviour
- Results in excessive, repetitive, or disproportionate correspondence

We reserve the right to:

1. **Request clarification** - We may ask the complainant to confirm in their own words:
 - The specific nature of their complaint
 - What outcome they are seeking
 - Whether they have used AI tools to draft their complaint
2. **Consolidate communications** - Where multiple AI-generated complaints are received making similar points, we may treat these as a single complaint and provide one consolidated response
3. **Apply the vexatious complaints procedure** - If AI-assisted complaints form part of a pattern of unreasonably persistent, harassing, or vexatious behaviour, we will apply the measures set out in this policy, which may include restricting the complainant to a single point of contact or limiting the frequency of communications.

Legitimate use of AI:

The school recognises that AI tools can be legitimately used to:

- Help individuals with communication difficulties express their concerns more clearly
- Organise complex information in a structured way
- Support those with learning difficulties or disabilities as a reasonable adjustment under the Equality Act 2010
- Translate concerns for those who speak English as an additional language

We expect complainants to be transparent about their use of AI tools and to be prepared to work towards a resolution in partnership with the school.

Transparency and good faith:

We ask that anyone using AI to assist with a complaint:

- Ensures the complaint reflects their genuine concerns and is written in good faith.
- Reviews and personalises any AI-generated content to ensure it accurately represents their specific situation.
- Is prepared to discuss their complaint directly with school staff.
- Does not use AI to generate multiple variations of the same complaint.
- Speak politely and respectfully, using appropriate language and avoiding any aggression or verbal abuse.

Time frame and Review

If a complainant's harassing/persistent behaviour is modified and is then resumed at a later date within a reasonable period of time, the school may resume the process identified above.

If a complainant's harassing/persistent complaining behaviour is modified and the complaint still lies within the time limit specified within the schools complaints policy, the school will use its discretion and may resume the investigation of the complaint. The school will review as appropriate, and at a minimum of once a year, any sanctions applied in the context of this policy legitimate new complaints, if not pursued in a harassing or unreasonable way, will still be considered, even if the person making them is (or has been) subject to the vexatious or persistent complaints policy.

The school nevertheless reserves the right not to respond to communications from individuals subject to the policy.