Vexatious Complaints Policy

Date	Reviewed by	Agreed by governors	Next due for review
September 2026	**Kelly Butt**	September 2026	September 2028

Brinkworth Earl Danby's CE Primary School needs to be made aware, as soon as possible if there is any cause for dissatisfaction. Parents, carers and third parties should never feel, or be made to feel that a complaint, made in a reasonable and appropriate manner, will be taken amiss or will reflect adversely on any student or their opportunities and treatment within the school.

The school upholds a three-month time limit in which a complaint can be lodged regarding an incident. Complaints made outside of this time limit will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

The Head Teacher and staff deal with specific complaints as part of their day-to-day management of the school in accordance with the School's Complaints Procedure. The majority of complaints are handled in an informal manner and are resolved quickly, sensitively, and to the satisfaction of the complainant. However, there are occasions when complainants behave in an unreasonable manner when raising and/or pursuing concerns.

The consequences are that the actions of the complainants begin to impact negatively on the day-to-day running of the school and directly or indirectly the overall well-being of the children or staff. In these exceptional circumstances, the school may take action in accordance with this policy.

BEDS-created

Non-statutory

2-year review cycle

1. **Aims of Policy**

1.1 The aims of this policy are to:

• uphold the standards of courtesy and reasonableness that should characterise all communication between the school and persons who wish to express a concern or pursue a complaint;

• support the well-being of children, staff, and everyone else who has a legitimate interest in the work of the school, including the SLT, the school Governors, and parents;

• deal fairly, honestly, openly, and transparently with those who make persistent or vexatious complaints and those who harass members of staff in school while ensuring that other stakeholders suffer no detriment.

2. **Parents Expectations of the School**

2.1 Parents, or members of the public, who raise either informal concerns or formal complaints can expect the school to:

• regularly communicate with parents in writing: on how and when problems can be raised with the school; on the existence of the School's Complaints Procedure, and on the existence of this policy.

• respond within a reasonable time;

• be available for consultation within reasonable time limits bearing in mind the needs of the learners within 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 in line with advice from the Local Authority (LA) keep complainants informed of progress towards a resolution of the issues raised.

3. **The School's Expectations of Parents or Members of the Public**

The school can expect parents or members of the public who wish to raise problems with the school to:

• treat all school staff with courtesy and respect;

• respect the needs and well-being of learners and staff in the school;

• avoid any use, or threatened use, of violence to people or property;

• avoid any aggression or verbal abuse;

4. **The School's Expectations of Parents or Members of the Public**

The school can expect parents or members of the public who wish to raise problems with the school to:

• treat all school staff with courtesy and respect;

• respect the needs and well-being of learners and staff in the school;

• avoid any use, or threatened use, of violence to people or property;

• avoid any aggression or verbal abuse;

• recognise the time constraints under which members of staff in schools work and allow the school a reasonable time to respond;

• recognise that resolving a specific problem can sometimes take some time;

• (in the case of a complaint) follow the School's Complaints Procedure.

5. **Who is a Persistent Complainant?**

5.1 For the purpose of this policy, a persistent complainant is a parent or member of the public who complains about issues, either formally or informally, or frequently raises issues that the complainant considers to be within the remit of the school, and whose behaviour is unreasonable. Such behaviour may be characterised by:

• actions which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious;

• prolific correspondence or excessive e-mail or telephone contact about a concern or complaint;

• uses subject access requests (SAR) excessively and unreasonably;

• an insistence upon pursuing unsubstantial complaints and/or unrealistic or unreasonable outcomes;

• an insistence upon pursuing complaints in an unreasonable manner;

• an insistence on only dealing with the Head Teacher on all occasions irrespective of the issue and the level of delegation in the school to deal with such matters;

• an insistence upon repeatedly pursuing a complaint when the outcome is not satisfactory to the complainant but cannot be changed, for example, if the desired outcome is beyond the remit of the school because it is unlawful.

5.2 For the purpose of this policy, harassment is the unreasonable pursuit of such actions as in the points in 4.1 above, in such a way that they:

• appear to be targeted over a significant period of time on one or more members of school staff and/or;

• cause on-going distress to individual member(s) of school staff and/or;

• have a significant adverse effect on the whole/parts of the school community and/or;

• are pursued in a manner which can be perceived as intimidating and oppressive by the recipient. This could include situations where persistent demands and criticisms, whilst not particularly taxing or serious when viewed in isolation, have a cumulative effect over time of undermining confidence, wellbeing, and health.

6. **The School's Actions in Cases of Persistent or Vexatious Complaints or Harassment**

6.1 In the first instance the school will verbally inform the complainant that his / her behaviour is considered to be unreasonable or unacceptable and, if it is not modified, action may be taken in accordance with this policy.

6.2 This will be confirmed in writing.

6.3 If the behaviour is not modified the school will take some or all of the following actions as necessary, having regard to the nature of the complainant's behaviour and the effect of this on the school community:

• inform the complainant in writing that his/her behaviour is now considered by the school to be unreasonable/unacceptable and, therefore, to fall under the terms of this policy;

• inform the complainant that all meetings with a member of staff will be conducted with a second person present and that notes of meetings may be taken in the interests of all parties;

• inform the complainant that, except in emergencies, all routine communication with the complainant to the school should be by letter or email only;

• (in the case of physical, or verbal aggression) take legal advice, or advice from the local authority, and consider warning the complainant about being banned from the school site; or proceed straight to a temporary ban;

If, despite these restrictions, the complainant continues to behave in an unreasonable or harassing manner, the school can decide to terminate contact entirely. In such cases, any further correspondence will be read and filed without acknowledgement.

Where a complaint has been fully addressed and closed, and the complainant continues to pursue the matter without presenting new evidence, the school may decide to terminate further contact. In such cases, correspondence will be read and filed without acknowledgement.

• consider taking advice from the local authority on pursuing a case under Anti-Harassment legislation;

• consider taking legal advice, or advice from the local authority, about putting in place a specific procedure for dealing with complaints from the complainant, i.e. the complainant will not be able to deal directly with the Head Teacher but only with a third person to be identified by the Head Teacher, who will investigate, determine whether or not the concern / complaint is reasonable or vexatious and then advise the Head Teacher accordingly.

6.4 Legitimate new complaints may still be considered even if the person making them is, or has been, subject to the Dealing with Persistent or Vexatious Complaints and/or Harassment in Schools Policy. However, the school will be legally advised.

6.5 If a complainant's persistent complaining/harassing 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 at an appropriate level. In these circumstances legal advice, or advice from the local authority, may be sought