Managing Serial and Unreasonable Complaints Policy

St Michael's Easthampstead CE Primary School

At St Michael's we are a community of active learners who go above and beyond in everything we do, equipping ourselves to make a difference in our own lives and in the lives of others

Policy Name	Managing serial and unreasonable complaints
Brief Description:	Outlines the school's definition of and response to serial and unreasonable complaints.
Status: Statutory/non-statutory	Non-Statutory
Other related policies and procedures:	Complaints Policy Parent Code of Conduct Staff Code of Conduct Home School Agreement Equality Policy Behaviour Policy
Approval level: HT/Governors/FGB	FGB
Approved by the Governing Board on:	19/10/2026
Frequency to be reviewed	Every 2 years
Latest Date for Next Review:	October 2028
Version + Schedule of Amendments:	V3 – Clarifications to communications
Signed:	Shaun Riordan
Position:	Headteacher
Date of Signature:	13/10/2026

Context and Definitions

St Michael's Easthampstead Primary School is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with our school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

St Michael's Easthampstead Primary School defines unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the school, such as, if the complainant:

- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
- refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on
- raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales
- makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced
- changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds
- repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed)
- refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education
- seeks an unrealistic outcome
- makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with
- uses threats to intimidate
- uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence
- knowingly provides falsified information
- publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

Principles for Managing Serial and Unreasonable Complaints

The school recognises that complainants may feel strongly about the issues they raise and that persistence does not, in itself, constitute unreasonable behaviour.

Complainants will normally be given the opportunity to complete all stages of the school's complaints procedure, unless there is clear evidence of behaviour that meets the criteria outlined in this policy.

Where a complaint has been fully considered through the school's complaints procedure, repeated correspondence raising substantially the same issues may be considered serial, persistent or unreasonable. However, any new and distinct complaints will continue to be considered on their own merits.

The school will not classify a person as an unreasonable or serial complainant simply because they disagree with a decision, exercise their right to contact the Department for Education or their Member of Parliament, or raise legitimate concerns.

Any restrictions imposed under this policy will be fair, reasonable and proportionate, taking account of individual circumstances and the school's duties under the Equality Act 2010.

What Complainants Should Try To Do

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school that relates to their complaint, while the complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text), as it could delay the outcome being reached.

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

Whenever possible, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before classifying the behaviour as unreasonable. In the first instance the school will inform the complainant that their behaviour is considered to be becoming unreasonable / unacceptable and, if it is not modified, action may be taken in accordance with this policy. This will be confirmed in writing.

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:

a) Inform the complainant in writing that their behaviour is now considered by the school to be unreasonable/unacceptable and, therefore, to fall under the terms of this policy.

b) 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.

The School's Actions in Cases of Excessive Contact

If the behaviour continues, the Headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact St Michael's Easthampstead CE Primary School causing a significant level of disruption, we may

specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts outlined in a communication plan which will have a specified review date, usually after 6 months.

The plan may include (but is not limited to):

• Informing the complainant that, except in emergencies, all routine communication with the complainant to the school may be by letter only. The school has a duty of care to staff and pupils and will take emergency measures should these become necessary in extreme cases.

• In addition/ instead of the above, the school may require routine communication concerning the complaint to be directed to a named member of staff or designated email address, with appropriate arrangements maintained for urgent or essential communications.

• Placing restrictions on the individual's access to school and/or school staff.

• Involving officers of the local authority.

• Barring an individual from our school site in response to any serious incident of aggression or violence

Before introducing restrictions, the school will consider the individual circumstances, including whether any reasonable adjustments are required under the Equality Act 2010.

Any communication plan will be confirmed in writing and will clearly explain the reasons for the restrictions, the arrangements that will apply, their duration and when they will be reviewed.

Restrictions will not prevent parents or carers from communicating urgent safeguarding, medical or welfare concerns, reporting their child's absence, or accessing information to which they are legally entitled. A clear alternative communication route will remain available for these purposes.

The school will review restrictions at the stated review date, or earlier where there is a significant change in circumstances.

We may consider taking advice from Bracknell Forest Council on pursuing a case under Anti-Harassment legislation.

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, advice may be sought from the HR/Legal Services.

The School's Actions in Cases of Aggression, Violence or Threatening Behaviour (or Perceived Threats Thereof)

The school will not tolerate aggression, violence, threatening behaviour or abuse directed towards pupils, staff, governors or other members of the school community.

Where such behaviour occurs, the school will take appropriate and proportionate action to protect the safety and wellbeing of those involved. This may include asking an individual to leave the premises, restricting access to the school site, barring an individual from the school site or contacting the police where necessary.

In serious cases, the school may temporarily bar an individual from the premises while further consideration is given to the circumstances.

Any decision to bar an individual will be made in accordance with Department for Education guidance

on controlling access to school premises. The individual will be informed in writing of the reasons for the decision and given an opportunity to make representations.

Following consideration of those representations, any decision to continue a bar will be reviewed by the Chair of Governors or an impartial committee of governors. Where a bar is confirmed, the individual will be notified in writing of its duration and review arrangements.

Where the individual is a parent or carer, the school will ensure that appropriate arrangements remain in place for essential communication concerning their child and, where necessary, for safe collection and drop-off.

The police will always be contacted where there is (or is deemed to be) an immediate threat to safety, suspected criminal behaviour or any other circumstances where school staff require police involvement, advice or assistance.