



PERSISTENT & UNREASONABLE COMPLAINTS POLICY

Mrs R Beckett (Principal)

Review date: September 2024

Unreasonable Complainants

Sandon Primary Academy 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 the 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.

Sandon Primary Academy defines unreasonable complainants as *'those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with the school, hinder our consideration of their or other people's complaints'*.

A complaint may be regarded as unreasonable when the person making the complaint;

- *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 cooperate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved*
- *Refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaints procedure*
- *Insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice*
- *Introduces trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant expects to be taken into account and commented on, or 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 issues and seeks to have them replaced*
- *Changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds*
- *Repeatedly makes the same complaint*
- *Refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented*
- *Seeks an unrealistic outcome*
- *Makes excessive demands on school time*

A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if the person making the complaint does so either face to face, by telephone, in writing or via email;

- *Maliciously*
- *Aggressively*
- *Using threats, intimidation or violence*
- *Using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language*
- *Knowing it to be false*
- *Using falsified information*
- *Publishing unacceptable information in a variety of media such as in social media, websites and newspapers*

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the concerns and actions will be put in writing immediately and the police informed. This may include banning an individual from the premises.

Barring from the premises

Although fulfilling a public function, schools are private places. The public has no automatic right of entry. Schools will therefore act to ensure they remain a safe place for pupils, staff and other members of their community.

If a parent's behaviour is a cause for concern, the school can ask them to leave the premises. In serious cases, the Principal can notify them in writing that their implied license to be on the premises has been temporarily revoked subject to any representations that the parent may wish to make. Schools should always give the parent the opportunity to formally express their views on the decision to bar in writing.

The decision to bar should then be reviewed, taking into account any representations made by the parent, and either confirmed or lifted. If the decision is confirmed the parent should be notified in writing, explaining how long the bar will be in place.

Anyone wishing to complain about the bar can do so, by letter or email to the Principal or Chair of Trustees.

Handling Serial Persistent Complaints from Parents

When the school follows its complaints procedure fully, it should remove the opportunity for parents to raise the same complaint repeatedly, as both the school and the parent are aware that there is a clear path of escalation where a parent feels their complaint remains unresolved.

If a parent refuses to follow the complaints procedure, or contacts the school repeatedly about their complaint, the school may advise parents that they will only respond via a set communication method e.g. email. Communications outside of this method can be ignored and if the parent persists, the school can stop responding. It is a poor use of the schools' time and resources to reply to repeated letters, emails or telephone calls making substantially the same points.

The decision to stop responding should never be taken lightly. As a school we should ensure that the answer is yes to the following;

- The school has taken every reasonable step to address the complainant's needs
- The complaint has been given a clear statement of the school's position and their options (if any) and;
- They are contacting the school repeatedly but making substantially the same points each time

If the Complainant is unhappy with the decision not to investigate a vexatious and/or repeated complaint, they may write to the Chair of Trustees to ask or this decision to be reviewed. The Chair of Trustees will be provided with all documentation relating to the current complaint and any previous complaints which were relevant to the decision, together with the letter from the School to the Complainant, and will review the decision not to investigate the complaint. The Chair of Trustees will not investigate the complaint itself during this review. The Chair of Trustees will write to the Complainant with the outcome of the review within fifteen school days of the date that the letter from the Complainant seeking the review was received. If the Chair of Trustees quashes the decision not to investigate the concern or complaint, it will be referred to the School to be dealt with under the procedure in this Complaints Policy in the usual way.

If a complainant persists to the point that the school considers it to constitute harassment, legal advice should be sought as to the next steps.