Buckingham Primary School & Nursery

Policy for Dealing with Persistent or Vexatious Complaints and/or Harassment

Approved by: **Governor Resources Committee**	June 23	**Date:**	Summer 2026
Last reviewed on:	Summer 2026		
Next review due by:	Summer 2028		

Reviewed Summer 2026: **No Changes**

Buckingham Primary School and Nursery is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality service to those who complain. 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 and carers to resolve a difficulty and reach a resolution. 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, harassing or threatening.

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
- 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

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

Buckingham Primary School and Nursery 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 and or harass
- Uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence
- Knowingly provides falsified information
- Publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums

Buckingham Primary School 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
- It is 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, well-being and health

In the first instance the school will communicate either in writing or verbally (confirmed with a letter) to inform the complainant that his/her behaviour is considered to be becoming unreasonable/unacceptable and, if it is not modified, action may be taken in accordance with this policy.

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 only or email to the office address only
- In the case of physical, or verbal aggression or other forms of intimidating behaviour, take appropriate advice and consider warning the complainant about being banned from the school site or proceed straight to a temporary ban
- Consider taking appropriate advice on pursuing a case under Anti-Harassment legislation
- Consider taking advice from the HR/Legal Services 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 governing body of the school, who will investigate, determine whether or not the concern / complaint is reasonable or vexatious and then advise the head teacher accordingly

In the event of extreme situations or events, the school may take the decision to implement one of the above steps immediately. In this situation the complainant will be informed in writing.

The head and SLT will keep the Chair of Governors informed at all times.

Legitimate new complaints will still be considered, even if the person making them is, or has been, subject to the Policy for Dealing with Persistent or Vexatious Complaints and/or Harassment. However, the school will be advised by the HR / Legal Services.

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.