



Crawford Village
Primary School & Nursery

Small enough to care...big enough to inspire

*Complaints – Serial,
Unreasonable and/or
Vexatious Complaints
Policy*

Policy for managing Serial, Unreasonable or Vexatious Complaints

Crawford Village 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.

Crawford Village 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:

- carries out actions which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious
- 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 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
- 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)
- uses Freedom of Information requests excessively and unreasonably
- 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.

For the purpose of this policy, harassment is the unreasonable pursuit of such actions 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;
- 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, well-being and health.

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.

Whenever possible, the headteacher or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an '*unreasonable*' marking.

If the behaviour continues, 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:

- the headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it.
- 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
- consider taking appropriate advice on pursuing a case under Anti-Harrassment legislation
- consider taking advice from 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 headteacher, 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 headteacher accordingly. This will be reviewed after six months.

- in response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from Crawford Village Primary School

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 headteacher 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 Managing serial, Unreasonable or Vexatious Complaints. However, the school will be advised by 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 HR/Legal Services.

Reviewed: September 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023

Next Review: September 2024