



Managing Serial and Unreasonable Complaints Policy

Date	Revision & Amendment Details	By Whom
July 2021	Approved	Trust Board
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Managing serial and unreasonable complaints and for managing unreasonable or persistent contact not directly associated with, or resulting from, formal complaints

We, Peterborough Diocese Education Trust (the Trust) are a multi academy trust made up of many different academies and this policy and procedure applies to the Trust as a whole and all the academies within our Trust (the academy).

We are committed to dealing with all complaints and contact with us fairly and impartially, and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain or contact us. (*For details of our complaints procedure – [see our Complaints Policy and Procedure](#)*). We will not normally limit the contact complainants / individuals have with our Trust or academies. 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.

In addition to serial and unreasonable complaints, we will use this policy and procedure to deal with situations where there is unreasonable or persistent contact but which is not directly associated with, or resulting from, formal complaints.

The Trust defines unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders our consideration of complaints / matters because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's / individual's contact with the Trust and / or academy, such as, if the complainant / individual:

- refuses to articulate their complaint/matter or specify the grounds of a complaint / matter or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint / matter, 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 / matter 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 / comments 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 / raises the same matter (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint / matter is groundless or has been addressed)
- refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the Trust'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 Trust and / or academy time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint / matter in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint / matter 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.

Complainants / individuals should try to limit their communication with the Trust and/or academy that relates to their complaint / matter, while the complaint / matter 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.

Action that will be taken

- Whenever possible, the headteacher, or Chair of Governors, or CEO, as appropriate, will discuss any concerns with the complainant / individual informally and explain that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it.
- If an informal discussion is not possible, the Chair of Governors, or CEO, as appropriate, will write to the complainant / individual and explain that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it.

- If a complainant / individual fails to change their behaviour following the above, an *'unreasonable'* marking will be applied to the matter.
- If a complaint / matter is marked as unreasonable, the headteacher, or CEO, as appropriate, will write to inform the complainant / individual and will also inform them that they will not enter into any further discussion / correspondence in relation to this matter without a communication plan (see below).
- If a complainant / individual:
 - persists in contact regarding the matter once it has been marked as unreasonable and / or
 - at any time excessively contacts the Trust or any of its academies causing a significant level of disruption

we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. 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 the Trust / an academy - see DfE guidance on [Controlling access to school premises - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/controlling-access-to-school-premises)