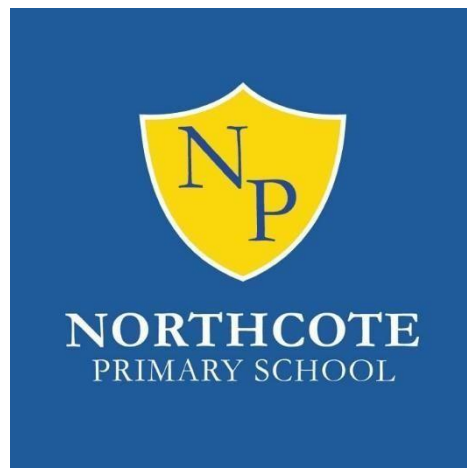


Northcote Primary School



Managing Serial and Unreasonable Complaints and Complainant Behaviour Policy

Date: October 2026

Review Date: September 2027



Northcote Primary School

INTRODUCTION

At Northcote Primary School, our vision that, “**Great Things Happen Every Day**” and our values of **Caring, Learning and Growing** extend to the relationships between school, families and the wider community. We are committed to listening to concerns, communicating respectfully and working constructively with parents and carers. In return, we ask that communication with staff, governors and other members of our school community is respectful and reasonable.

Northcote Primary School is committed to dealing with all concerns and complaints fairly, impartially and in accordance with its Complaints Procedure.

On rare occasions, the behaviour of a complainant, or the nature and frequency of their contact with the school, may become unreasonable or disproportionate. This policy explains how the school may manage such behaviour while ensuring that legitimate concerns continue to be considered appropriately

Raising a concern or making a complaint does not in itself constitute unreasonable behaviour, regardless of whether the complaint is upheld. The school will not restrict contact simply because an individual is persistent in seeking an appropriate resolution to a legitimate concern.

1. AIMS OF POLICY

1.1 The aims of this policy are to:

- uphold the standards of courtesy and reasonableness that should characterise all communication between the school and persons who wish to express a concern or pursue a complaint;
- support the well-being of children, staff and everyone else who has legitimate interest in the work of the school, including governors and parents;
- deal fairly, honestly, openly and transparently with those who make serial or unreasonable complaints and unreasonable complainant behaviour and those who harass members of staff in school while ensuring that other stakeholders suffer no detriment
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2. PARENTS' EXPECTATIONS OF THE SCHOOL

2.1 Parents/carers/members of the public who raise either informal concerns or formal complaints with the school can expect the school to:

- a) regularly communicate to parents/carers in writing:
 - (i) how and when problems can be raised with the school;
 - (ii) the existence of the school's complaints procedure, and
 - (iii) the existence of the Policy for Dealing with serial or unreasonable complaints and unreasonable complainant behaviour
- b) respond within a reasonable time;

- c) be available for consultation within reasonable time limits bearing in mind the needs of the pupils within the school and the nature of the complaint;
- d) respond with courtesy and respect;
- e) attempt to resolve problems using reasonable means in line with the school's complaints procedure, other policies and practice and in line with advice from the Local Authority (LA) keep complainants informed of progress towards a resolution of the issues raised.

3. THE SCHOOL'S EXPECTATIONS OF PARENTS/CARERS/MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

3.1 The school can expect parents/carers/members of the public who wish to raise problems with the school to:

- a) treat all school staff with courtesy and respect;
- b) respect the needs and well-being of pupils and staff in the school;
- c) avoid any use, or threatened use, of violence to people or property;
- d) avoid any aggression or verbal abuse;
- e) recognise the time constraints under which members of staff in schools work and allow the school a reasonable time to respond;
- f) recognise that resolving a specific problem can sometimes take some time;
- g) (in the case of a complaint) follow the School's Complaints Procedure.

4. What May Constitute Unreasonable Behaviour?

4.1 The school will consider the behaviour and circumstances of each case individually. A complainant will not be regarded as unreasonable simply because they raise a complaint, disagree with the school's response or seek appropriate review of a decision. However, contact or behaviour may become unreasonable where its nature, frequency, content or manner places disproportionate demands on the school or causes unreasonable disruption:

Examples included:

4.2 For the purpose of this policy, harassment is the unreasonable pursuit of such actions as in (a) to (g) above in such a way that they:

- a) appear to be targeted over a significant period of time on one or more members of school staff and/or
- b) cause ongoing distress to individual member(s) of school staff and/or
- c) have a significant adverse effect on the whole/parts of the school community and/or
- d) 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.

Examples may include but are not limited to:

- repeatedly contacting the school about substantially the same matter after the complaints process has been exhausted;
- making excessive demands on school time through frequent, lengthy or repetitive communications;
- refusing to specify the grounds of a complaint despite reasonable assistance;
- seeking outcomes that the school cannot lawfully or reasonably provide;

- refusing to follow the school's published complaints process;
- repeatedly changing the basis of a complaint as the process progresses;
- using abusive, offensive, threatening or intimidating language;
- making unjustified demands for immediate responses;
- submitting repeated complaints about matters already considered and concluded, without significant new information;
- contacting multiple members of staff about the same matter in a way that creates unreasonable duplication

5. Records and decision-making

In order to understand the nature and type of behaviours the school will retain appropriate records

Record Keeping

The school will maintain an appropriate record of:

- unreasonable behaviour or contact;
- warnings issued;
- relevant correspondence;
- decisions to impose restrictions;
- the reasons for those decisions;
- the duration and review date of restrictions;
- representations received;
- the outcome of reviews.

6. The schools actions in cases serial or unreasonable complaints and unreasonable complainant behaviour

Any restrictions will be reasonable and proportionate to the behaviour concerned, will normally be imposed for a defined period and will be reviewed regularly. The school will consider whether a less restrictive measure could reasonably address the concern before imposing restrictions.

Restrictions on routine communication will not prevent a parent/carer from communicating urgent information concerning their child's immediate safety, medical needs or safeguarding. Appropriate arrangements for urgent contact will be clearly explained when restrictions are imposed

6.1 In the first instance the school will verbally 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.

6.2 This will be confirmed in writing (Model Letter 1).

6.3 Where behaviour presents a risk to pupils, staff or others, or involves threats, violence, intimidation or serious disruption, the school may seek advice from the Local Authority, HR and/or Legal Services and consider appropriate measures to protect the school community. Any restriction on access to the school site will be considered separately from the merits of the complaint.

a) The school will have due regard to its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. Where appropriate, reasonable adjustments will be considered to ensure that a complainant is not placed at a substantial disadvantage because of disability.

- b) Communication restrictions will therefore be considered on an individual basis and an appropriate means of communication will be maintained.
- c) Where the school considers formal restrictions to be necessary and proportionate, the complainant will be informed in writing of the reasons for the decision, the arrangements that will apply, the period for which they will operate and the date on which they will be reviewed.
- d) 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 (see Model Letter 2);
- e) inform the complainant that, except in emergencies, all routine communication with the complainant to the school should be by an appropriate method in most case by letter (see Model Letter 2);
- f) (in the case of physical, or verbal aggression) take advice from LA HR / Legal Services (services purchased by the Governing Body) and consider warning the complainant about where behaviour presents a risk to pupils, staff or others, or involves threats, violence, intimidation or serious disruption, the school may consider additional measures to protect the school community. Appropriate advice will be sought where necessary. Any restriction on access to the school site will be considered separately from the merits of any complaint.
- g) consider taking advice from the LA on pursuing a case under Anti-Harassment legislation;
- h) 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 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 serial or unreasonable complaints and unreasonable complainant behaviour and then advise the Headteacher accordingly

6.4 Any restrictions imposed under this policy relate to the method, frequency or manner of contact. They do not prevent legitimate new complaints from being considered in accordance with the school's Complaints Procedure. New concerns will be considered on their individual merits.

6.5 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 Service

7. REVIEW

- 7.1 The School will review as appropriate, any communication or contact restriction imposed under this policy will be for a defined period and will include a specified review date. At the review, the school will determine whether the arrangements remain necessary and proportionate and whether they should be removed, amended or continued. Where restrictions are continued, the reasons will be recorded and a further review date will be set and communicated in writing

MODEL LETTER 1:

INITIAL LETTER INFORMING A COMPLAINANT THAT HIS/HER BEHAVIOUR IS CONSIDERED TO FALL BELOW A REASONABLE/ ACCEPTABLE STANDARD

RECORDED DELIVERY

Dear

This letter is to inform you that the school considers your actions in *[describe actions, dates, behaviour]* on when you to be unreasonable/ unacceptable *[delete as appropriate]*.

We would ask you to bear in mind the fact that such behaviour on a school site can be disruptive and distressing to pupils, staff and parents/carers *[delete if behaviour complained of did not occur on school site e.g. persistent use of e-mail, verbally abusive telephone calls]*.

We are aware that you have raised some concerns, and would advise you that these are usually dealt with most effectively through the School's Complaints Procedure. At the moment we are dealing with these issues by *[describe actions being taken to resolve concern]*.

Please note that the School's Policy for Dealing with serial or unreasonable complaints and unreasonable complainant behaviour sets out standards of behaviour expected of all people in their dealings with the School. These include:

- behaving reasonably;
- treating others with courtesy and respect;
- resolving complaints using the School's Complaints Procedure;
- avoiding physical and verbal aggression at all times.

The Policy also indicates the steps that we may take if these standards are breached. These include:

- making special arrangements for meetings and communication with the school; • considering a ban from the school premises;
- considering legal action.

I would ask that you allow school time to resolve the issues according to the correct procedures, and would assure you that we shall take every step to move this process forward as quickly as possible.

Yours sincerely

MODEL LETTER 2:

INFORMING A COMPLAINANT THAT HIS/HER BEHAVIOUR IS NOW CONSIDERED TO FALL UNDER THE TERMS OF THE POLICY FOR DEALING WITH serial or unreasonable complaints and unreasonable complainant behaviour

RECORDED DELIVERY

Dear

You will recall that I wrote to you on *[insert date]* telling you that I felt your behaviour was unreasonable.

I am now writing to inform you that in view of your behaviour on *[date]*, when you *[describe actions/behaviour]* it has been decided that the School's Policy for Dealing with serial or unreasonable complaints and unreasonable complainant behaviour Policy will apply from the date of this letter.

In the circumstances I have made the following arrangements for your future contact with the school:

*[*Delete A or B as applicable]*

*Any communication or contact restriction imposed under this policy will be for a defined period and will include a specified review date. At review, the school will determine whether the arrangements remain necessary and proportionate and whether they should be removed, amended or continued. Where restrictions are continued, a further review date will be set and communicated in writing:

*B For the foreseeable future, all meetings arising from any written communication with the school will not be conducted by a member of staff, but will be conducted by representing the school. I would ask you to note:

Exceptionally, these arrangements do not apply to any emergency involving *[insert name of pupil]* – in which case you should contact the school in the usual way.

While these arrangements are in place, with respect to normal access to information available on parents' evenings, this will be provided in a summary written report.

These arrangements take effect straightaway. If you wish to make a representation about the contents of this letter, which may include any expressions of regret on your part and any assurances that you are prepared to give about your future good conduct, you can do so by writing to me at the school by *[state ten working days from the date of the letter]*. If on receipt of your comments I consider that the arrangements outlined above should continue, a complainant who believes that restrictions have been imposed unfairly may make written representations to the Chair of Governors. Where the Chair has previously been directly involved in the decision, the representation will be considered by another governor who has not been involved. I do hope that the difficulties we are currently experiencing can soon be resolved.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher