

Persistent and Vexatious Complaints Policy



Vexatious complaints
Stretton St Matthew's
CE Primary

Written by:	R Hazeldine	Date: April 2026
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Introduction

The Headteacher and staff manage concerns and complaints as part of the school's day-to-day practice in accordance with the school's published complaints procedure. The majority of concerns are resolved informally, quickly, and to the satisfaction of all parties.

Stretton St Matthew's CE Primary School is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly, impartially, and in line with Department for Education (DfE) guidance. We aim to provide a high-quality service to everyone who raises a concern and to ensure complaints are handled in a timely, proportionate, and transparent way.

The DfE expects schools to adopt a **reasonable and proportionate approach when managing complainants whose behaviour is persistent or unreasonable**, while ensuring that genuine concerns can still be heard.

In a small number of cases, the behaviour of a complainant may become unreasonable. This may impact the school's ability to deal with concerns effectively and may cause undue stress for staff or affect the wellbeing of pupils.

As a Church of England school, we are committed to upholding our Christian values of respect, dignity, and kindness in all interactions.

We do not normally restrict contact. However, in line with DfE guidance, the school will take proportionate action where behaviour is deemed unacceptable, so that staff are protected and the efficient operation of the school is maintained.

Definition of Unreasonable Behaviour

In line with DfE guidance, unreasonable behaviour is defined as behaviour that places a disproportionate burden on the school or impedes the investigation of complaints.

This may include (but is not limited to) when a complainant:

- Refuses to articulate the complaint or specify the desired outcome, despite reasonable support
- Does not engage with or comply with the school's complaints procedure
- Repeatedly raises substantially similar issues that have already been addressed
- Seeks to prolong contact by introducing excessive or irrelevant information
- Changes the basis of the complaint during its investigation
- Makes unjustified complaints about staff handling the matter
- Refuses to accept that certain issues are outside the scope of the complaints procedure
- Insists on outcomes that are unrealistic or disproportionate
- Places excessive demands on staff through frequent or lengthy communication
- Uses abusive, offensive, threatening, or discriminatory language or behaviour
- Knowingly provides false or misleading information
- Publishes defamatory or inappropriate material about the school

The school recognises that **persistence alone does not constitute unreasonable behaviour**. However, persistence that becomes excessive, obsessive, or harassing may be considered unreasonable.

Complainants may be advised to limit contact while a complaint is being considered, as excessive communication can delay the process.

Where possible, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors will seek to resolve concerns informally before applying this policy.

Serious incidents involving aggression, threats, or violence will be treated in line with safeguarding duties and may involve external agencies, including the police.

1. Aims of the Policy

This policy aims to:

- Ensure complaints are handled fairly, consistently, and in line with DfE expectations
 - Support the wellbeing and safety of pupils, staff, and governors
 - Enable the school to manage unreasonable behaviour in a proportionate and lawful manner
 - Maintain the efficient operation of the school
 - Ensure that other stakeholders are not adversely affected
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2. Expectations of the School

In accordance with DfE guidance, the school will:

- Publish and make accessible its complaints procedure
 - Provide clear information about how concerns can be raised
 - Respond to complaints within reasonable and stated timescales
 - Keep complainants informed of progress
 - Treat all individuals with courtesy, respect, and fairness
 - Consider reasonable adjustments where appropriate (e.g. disabilities or additional needs)
 - Ensure decisions are evidence-based and clearly communicated
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3. Expectations of Parents, Carers, and the Public

The school expects that all individuals will:

- Treat staff with courtesy and respect at all times
- Recognise that staff have professional duties and respond within reasonable timescales
- Follow the published complaints procedure
- Avoid aggressive, abusive, or threatening behaviour
- Respect the wellbeing and safety of pupils and staff
- Refrain from excessive or repetitive contact
- Arrange meetings in advance and respect staff availability

The school recognises that raising a concern can be stressful and will always seek to respond sensitively and constructively. However, all communication must remain respectful.

4. Managing Unreasonable Behaviour

In line with DfE guidance, the school will always seek to act **proportionately and reasonably** when managing behaviour.

Initial Response

Where behaviour is of concern, the school will:

- Raise concerns informally with the individual
- Explain why the behaviour is problematic
- Provide an opportunity for behaviour to change

This may be followed by written confirmation where necessary.

Formal Actions

If behaviour continues, the school may implement one or more of the following measures:

- Inform the individual in writing that their behaviour is considered unreasonable
- Set clear expectations for future communication
- Limit communication to a single point of contact
- Restrict communication to a particular format (e.g. email or letter only)
- Arrange that meetings are attended by more than one member of staff and formally recorded
- Decline to respond to repeated issues that have already been addressed
- Restrict access to the school site where there are concerns about safety (following appropriate advice)
- Seek legal advice or intervention where appropriate

These actions will be:

- Clearly explained
- Proportionate to the behaviour
- Kept under regular review

Ongoing Complaints

The school will continue to consider **new and relevant complaints**, even where restrictions are in place, although arrangements may differ.

If behaviour improves, restrictions may be lifted. If behaviour worsens or reoccurs, measures may be reinstated.

5. Review

In line with best practice, this policy will be reviewed:

- At least annually
 - In response to changes in DfE guidance
 - Following any significant case where it has been applied
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