

Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust Policy

Managing Serial and Unreasonable Complaints

Committee and Date Approved	Trust Board – March 2022
Category	Recommended
Next Review Date	Every three years unless change in legislation – Spring 2025
Policy Availability	Trust Website
Officer Responsible	HR Director of the Trust

The Trust, all Academies within the Trust and Shireland Learning Limited must comply with this policy

Managing Serial and Unreasonable Complaints

Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust 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 schools or the wider Trust. 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.

Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust 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 or Trust, 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 complaint's 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
- uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence

- knowingly provides falsified information
- publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school or Trust 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 Principal or SPC Chair will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an '*unreasonable*' marking.

If the behaviour continues, the principal will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact Trust schools 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 school.

Frivolous or Vexatious Complaints

Frivolous or vexatious complaints will be dealt with under this policy. Characteristics of frivolous or vexatious complaints are:

- complaints which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious
- insistence upon pursuing unmeritorious complaints and/or unrealistic outcomes beyond all reason
- insistence upon pursuing meritorious complaints in an unreasonable manner
- complaints which are designed to cause disruption or annoyance
- demands for redress that lack any serious purpose or value

Managing unreasonable or persistent contact not directly associated with, or resulting from, formal complaints

For complainants who excessively contact the School or wider Trust, causing a significant level of disruption, we may put communications strategies in place, such as:

- reserve the right not to engage with families unless in accordance with any communication strategy put in place

- give the complainant a single point of contact via an email address
- limit the number of times the complainant can make contact, such as a fixed number per term
- ask the complainant to engage a third party to act on their behalf, such as the Citizens Advice Bureau
- put any other strategy in place, as necessary