



Unreasonable or Serial Complainants Policy

Oct 2024

Herne Junior 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 the 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, threatening or harassing.

Herne Junior School defines unreasonable complainants as ‘those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with the school, hinder our consideration of their or other people’s complaints’.

A complaint may be regarded as unreasonable when the person making the complaint:

- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of Herne’s complaints procedure, which is based on the accepted practice of Hampshire County Council and the Department for Education;
- 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 while still wishing their complaint to be resolved;
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints policy or with good practice;
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant expects to be taken into account and commented on, or 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, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with.

A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if the person making the complaint does so either face-to-face, by telephone, in writing or electronically and this is done:

- maliciously;
- aggressively;
 - using threats to intimidate (including the threat to accelerate the complaint to the local authority, to Ofsted or the Department for Education, without due regard to the school's complaints procedure),
- using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence.
- knowingly provides falsified information.
- publishing unacceptable information in a variety of media such as on social media platforms, websites and newspapers.

Complainants should limit the numbers of communications with a school while a 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 Headteacher or Chair of Governors will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and asking them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact Herne Junior School causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will usually be reviewed after 6 months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the concerns and actions taken will be put in writing immediately and the police informed. This may include banning an individual from the site or premises of Herne Junior School.

Department for Education Guidance – Best Practice for School Complaints 2020 (updated January 2021) is available at the following link

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-complaints-procedures/best-practice-advice-for-school-complaints-procedures-2019#managing-serial-and-persistent-complaints>

This document provides guidance on:

- Managing serial and persistent complaints
- When to stop responding

- Communication strategy for persistent correspondents
- Barring from school premises

Date of Review	October 2024
Approved by FGB	November 2024
Next review	October 2025

(Non-Statutory Policy but should be read in conjunction with Complaints Policy which is Statutory)