



# Mulgrave Primary School

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Name of Policy	Serial and Persistent Complaints Policy
Frequency of review	Biennial
Agreed Date	September 2025
Review Date	September 2027

This policy is designed to support schools when the Complaints Policy does not meet the needs of the school because the complainant that they are dealing with is unreasonable/abusive and persistent.

The policy applies to all complainants, either individually or as part of a group who might be considered to be 'habitual', unreasonably persistent or vexatious'.

The term 'complainant' in this policy includes those who make requests under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. Reference to the complaints procedure relates, where relevant, to requests under those Acts.

Mulgrave Primary School is committed to always responding positively to anyone who contacts us with a complaint/concern or a request for information.

However, there will be occasions when despite all the stages of the complaints procedure having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. This may include them trying to reissue the same complaint/concern which had been finished; the school will remind the complainant that the process was completed in line with the policy and is now closed.

If they persist, the school will view the correspondence as serial or persistent; the school may choose to not respond. The school will only take this action when Stage 2 of the complaints policy has been completed.

The school will not designate the complainant as serial or persistent for exercising their right to refer their complaint to their MP etc. regardless of which stage the complaint has reached.

The Office of the Independent Adjudicator (<http://www.oiahe.org.uk/about-us/policies/policy-on-frivolous-or-vexatious-complaints.aspx>) defines the characteristics of a frivolous or vexatious complaint as;

- Complaints which are obsessive, persistent, harrasing, 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

If the complainant presents further correspondence or complaints which are on a different matter, these should be managed through the complaints policy. The application of a serial or persistent designation is regarding the complaint, not the complainant.

## **Model Policy**

### **1. Introduction**

The Headteacher and staff deal with specific complaints as part of their day-day management of the school in accordance with the School's Complaints Procedure.

The majority of complaints are handled in an informal manner and are resolved quickly, sensitively and to the satisfaction of the complainant.

However, there are occasions when complainants behave in an unreasonable manner when raising and/or pursuing concerns . The consequences are that the actions of the complainants begin to impact negatively on the day-to-day running of the school and directly or indirectly the overall wellbeing of staff, children and parents in the school community. In these exceptional circumstances, the school may take action in accordance with this policy.

## **2. Aims of the Policy**

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 with those who make persistent or vexatious complaints and those who harass members of staff in school
- Mulgrave Primary School is committed to dealing with complaints fairly and impartially and providing a high quality and transparent process to anyone who wishes to raise a complaint or concern. However we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and take action to protect our staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

## **3. Parents Expectations of the School**

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

- Communicate to parents/carers in writing:
  - how and when problems can be raised with the school;

-the existence of the school's complaints procedure, and

-the existence of this guidance

- Respond within a reasonable time;
- 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;
- Respond with courtesy and respect;
- Attempt to resolve problems using reasonable means in line with the school's Complaints Procedure and other relevant policies
- Keep complainants informed of progress towards a resolution of the issues raised

#### **4. The School's Expectations of Parents/Carers/Members of the Public**

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

- Treat all school staff with courtesy and respect;
- Respect the needs and well-being of pupils and staff in the school;
- Avoid and use of, or threatened use, of violence to people or property;
- Avoid any aggression or verbal abuse;

- Recognise the time constraints under which members of staff in schools work and allow the school a reasonable time to respond;
- Recognise that resolving a specific problem can sometimes take some time;
- And in the case of a complaint, follow the School's Complaints Procedure

### **5. Who is a Persistent Complainant?**

A persistent complainant is a parent/carer or member of the public who complains about issues, either formally or informally, or frequently issues that the complainant considers to be within the remit of the school, and whose behaviour is unreasonable.

Such behaviour may be characterised by:

- Actions which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious;
- Prolific correspondence or excessive e-mail or telephone contact about a concern or complaint;
- An insistence upon pursuing unsubstantial complaints and/or unrealistic or unreasonable outcomes;
- An insistence upon pursuing complaints in an unreasonable manner;
- An insistence on only dealing with a specific member of staff on all occasions irrespective of the issue and the

level of delegation in the school to deal with such matters;

- An insistence upon repeatedly pursuing a complaint when the outcome is not satisfactory to the complainant but cannot be changed

**Harassment** is the unreasonable pursuit of such actions as in a way that they:

- Appear to be targeted over a significant period of time on one or more members of school staff and/or
- Cause ongoing distress to individual member(s) of school staff and/or
- Have a significant adverse effect on the whole/parts of the school

