



POLICY ON MANAGING SERIAL & UNREASONABLE COMPLAINTS

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Change Log

Date	Changes to Policy
Spring 2020	General Review
Spring 2023	Frivolous or vexatious section added
Spring 2023	Managing unreasonable or persistent contact not directly associated with, or resulting from formal complaints
Autumn 2023	No Change

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Policy on Managing Serial and Unreasonable Complaints

The Learning Academy Partnership (hereinafter 'The Trust') is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality service to those who complain. Our academies will not normally limit the contact complainants may have. However, our staff should not tolerate unacceptable behaviour and action will be taken to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

The 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 Trust/academies, 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 cooperate with the complaints 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 complaint's procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the department for education
- Seeks an unrealistic outcome
- Makes excessive demands on academy 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 Trust/academy 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 Head of Academy will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking.

If the behaviour continues, the Head of Academy will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact the Trust/Academies 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 Trust premises.

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 Managing Serial and Unreasonable Complaints
- 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

The procedures in the policy may also be used to manage unreasonable or persistent contact not directly associated with, or resulting from, formal complaints.

Copies of this policy are available upon request and free of charge from the Academy Office.

This policy will be reviewed every three years.

Approved Autumn 2023