



Improving As One

Kindness, Respect, Courage, Curiosity

The Winchcombe School

***Policy for dealing with persistent/vexatious
communications, complaints and harassment***

**We are committed to the safety and wellbeing of
all our school community**

The Winchcombe School

TITLE: Policy for Dealing with Persistent/Vexatious Communications, Complaints and Harassment

STATUS: ADVISORY

This document sets out the policy for dealing with comments, grievances and complaints. The content complies with Best Practice Advice for School Complaints Procedures 2020 (Department for Education)

Purpose:

At The Winchcombe School, two of our core school values are **kindness** and **respect**, which we expect everyone in our school community to model this at all times, including during communications and when concerns and complaints are raised with the school.

The Headteacher, Senior Leadership Team and staff deal with specific concerns and complaints as part of their day-to-day management of the school in accordance with the school's Complaints Policy. The majority of concerns and complaints are handled in an informal manner and we endeavour to resolve these quickly, sensitively and to the satisfaction of the complainant.

However, there are occasions when communications or complaints are raised in an unreasonable manner when raising and/or pursuing concerns. The consequences are that the actions of the communications or complaints from a parent, carer or member of the public begin to impact negatively on the day-to-day running of the school and directly or indirectly the overall well-being of the children and/or staff in the school. In these exceptional circumstances the school may take action in accordance with this policy to ensure such behaviour is dealt with fairly, honestly and appropriately to protect members of staff in school.

What is defined as persistent or vexatious communications, complaints and harassment?

The term vexatious is recognised in law and means 'denoting an action or the bringer of an action that is brought without sufficient grounds for winning, purely to cause annoyance to the defendant'. This refers to those who seek to be disruptive or whose requests to pursue excessive communications, concerns or complaints cause disproportionate and repeated efforts on behalf of the school staff and governors by pursuing an unreasonable course of conduct.

Persistent and/or vexatious complaints or excessive communications and harassment, can be a problem for school staff and governors. The difficulty in handling such communications and complaints can place a strain on time and resources. While the school endeavours to respond with patience and sympathy to the needs of all communications and complainants, there are times when there is nothing further which can reasonably be done to assist or to rectify a real or perceived problem.

Aims of policy

- To uphold the standards of courtesy and reasonableness that should characterise all communication from the school to persons who wish to express a concern or pursue a concern or complaint.
- To support the well-being of students, staff and everyone else who has legitimate interest in the work of the school, including governors and parents/carers.

- To deal fairly, honestly and appropriately with those who make persistent or vexatious communications or complaints and those who harass members of staff in school.
- To ensure that other stakeholders suffer no detriment.

Expectations of the school

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

- Provide access to the school's Complaints Policy.
- Respond to communications and informal or formal complaints within a reasonable time (as set out in the school's Complaints Policy, if a complaint is raised) and 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.
- Respect your privacy.
- Attempt to resolve problems using reasonable means in line with the school's Complaints Policy.
- Inform complainants of the outcome of the complaint or concern raised (as set out in the school's Complaints Policy).

Expectations of parents, carers and members of the public

The school expects parents, carers and members of the public who wish to raise complaints or concerns through communications, to do so in line with our school's Complaints Policy and to:

- Avoid raising communications, concerns or complaints in a way that does not follow the school's Complaints Policy and is obsessive, persistent or harassing.
- Treat all school staff with courtesy and respect.
- Respect the needs and well-being of pupils and staff in the school when communicating with the school.
- Avoid any behaviour that is deemed as threatening or abusive when communicating with the school and raising concerns or complaints, as outlined in our school's Parent, Carer and Visitor Behaviour Expectations policy.
- Recognise the time constraints under which members of staff in school work and allow the school a reasonable time to respond to communications.
- Avoid using Freedom of Information requests excessively and unreasonably.
- Avoid pursuing a complaint where the school's Complaints Policy has been fully and properly implemented and exhausted (e.g. where several responses have been provided).
- Avoid excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the same concern or complaint, either in person, by writing, email or telephone.

Actions in cases of persistent/vexatious communications, complaints or harassment:

In the first instance, the school will communicate in writing to inform the parent, carer or member of the public that their behaviour is considered to be becoming unreasonable or unacceptable, as outlined above. If this conduct/behaviour is not modified, action may be taken in accordance with this policy, as outlined below, for the protection of the whole school community.

- The Headteacher will inform the parent, carer or member of the public in writing that their conduct/behaviour is now considered to be unreasonable and unacceptable and therefore, fall under the terms of this policy.
- The Headteacher may inform the parent, carer or member of the public that all meetings with a member of staff will be conducted with a second person present and that notes of the meetings may be taken in the interests of all parties.

- In the case that the behaviour/conduct around the concern or complaint made is deemed threatening or abusive, the Headteacher may take action as outlined in our school's Parent, Carer and Visitor Behaviour Expectations policy.
- The Headteacher may temporarily suspend or withdraw contact between the parent, carer or member of the public and the school either in person, by telephone, by email or letter or any combination of these, **provided that at least one form of contact is maintained.**
- The Headteacher may restrict contact through only a designated member of staff and specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan, which will be provided in writing.
- The Headteacher or Governing Board may consider putting in place a specific procedure for dealing with communications and complaints from the parent, carer or member of the public, i.e., they will not be able to deal directly with the Headteacher, but only with a third person, to be identified by the Governing Board, who will investigate and determine whether or not the communications, concern or complaint is reasonable or deemed persistent, vexatious or harassing, as outlined in this policy.

The school also reserves the right to:

- Cease to respond to communications and complaints of a persistent or vexatious nature as outlined in this policy.
- Bring legal action for harassment against the parent, carer or member of the public.

LINKED POLICIES:

Complaints policy

Parent, carer and visitor expectations policy

DATE: June 2026

REVIEW DATE: June 2028

SIGNED: _____



Chair of Governors: Liam Anderson

Date: June 26