The Parkside School
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Managing Serial and Unreasonable Complaints Policy

Approved by:	Mrs Carolyn Ellis-Gage Head Teacher	**Date:** July 2026
Signed:		
Next review due: **by:**	July 2027 Mrs Carolyn Ellis-Gage Head Teacher	

MANAGING SERIAL AND UNREASONABLE COMPLAINTS

Parkside 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 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 or threatening.
Parkside 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, 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 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 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 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 Teacher or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking.

If the behaviour continues, the Head Teacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact Parkside 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 Parkside.

FRIVOLOUS OR VEXATIOUS COMPLAINTS

The Office of the Independent Adjudicator defines the characteristics of a 'frivolous' or 'vexatious' complaint as:

- 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

Parkside will not refuse to accept further correspondence or complaints from an individual we have had repeat or excessive contact with. Instead, an application of a 'serial or persistent' marking will be against the subject or complaint itself rather than the complainant.

WHEN PARKSIDE WILL STOP RESPONDING

The decision to stop responding will never be taken lightly at Parkside. Before Parkside stops responding all of the below will have been put in place.

- Parkside has taken every reasonable step to address the complainant's concerns
- The complainant has been given a clear statement of Parkside's position and their options
- The complainant contacts Parkside repeatedly, making substantially the same points each time

The case to stop responding is stronger if one or more of these statements is true:

- Their letters, emails, or telephone calls are often or always abusive or aggressive
- They make insulting personal comments about or threats towards staff
- Parkside have reason to believe the individual is contacting you with the intention of causing disruption or inconvenience

- Parkside will not stop responding just because an individual is difficult to deal with or asks complex questions.

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY FOR PERSISTENT CORRESPONDENTS

If an individual's behaviour is causing a significant level of disruption, regardless of whether or not they have raised a complaint, Parkside may choose implement a tailored communication strategy. For example, they can:

- Restrict the individual to a single point of contact via an email address
- Limit the number of times they can make contact, such as a fixed number of contacts per term

If an individual persists to the point that may constitute harassment, Parkside will seek legal advice. In some cases, injunctions and other court orders have been issued to individuals preventing them from contacting schools direct.

Once Parkside has decided that it's appropriate to stop responding, the school will inform the individual.

BARRING FROM SCHOOL PREMISES

Although fulfilling a public function, schools are private places. The public has no automatic right of entry. Head Teachers and governing bodies therefore need to act to ensure they remain a safe place for pupils, staff and other members of their community.

If an individual's behaviour is a cause for concern, they can be asked to leave school premises. In some cases, individuals can be barred from entering school premises. Parkside will always give the individual the opportunity to formally express their views on a decision to bar.

The Head Teacher's decision to bar will then be reviewed by either:

- The chair of governors
- A committee of governors

They should take into account any representations made by the individual and decide whether to either confirm or lift the bar. If the decision is confirmed, the individual should be notified in writing, explaining:

- How long the bar will be in place
- When the decision will be reviewed

Once the school's appeal process has been completed, individuals who remain barred may be able to apply to the Courts for a review of the schools decision. Individuals wishing to exercise this option should seek independent legal advice.