



Trust wide Dealing with Persistent/Vexatious Communications Policy

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This policy applies to:

All Trust settings and any school converting into the trust since the last review and approval of this policy. Where this policy states ‘school’ this means any of our educational establishments and the wider Trust. Where this policy states ‘Headteacher’ this also includes ‘Head of School’ and ‘Centre Manager’. Mowbray Education Trust (MET).

1. Aims

The Headteacher and staff deal with any issues that arise as part of their day-to-day management of the school in accordance with the MET Respect Charter and the MET Complaints Procedure.

The majority of issues, concerns and communications are handled in an informal manner and are resolved quickly, sensitively and to the satisfaction of all parties.

However, there are occasions when stakeholders behave in an unreasonable manner when raising and/or pursuing issues, concerns or communications. The consequences are that these actions begin to impact negatively on the day-to-day running of the school and directly or indirectly on the overall well-being of the children or staff in the school. In these exceptional circumstances the school may take action in accordance with this 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 raise an issue;
- Support the well-being of children, staff and everyone else who has legitimate interest in the

work of the school, including trustees, governors and parents;

- Deal fairly, honestly, openly and transparently with those who make persistent or vexatious communications and those who harass members of staff in school while ensuring that other stakeholders suffer no detriment.

2. Relevant legislation and guidance

Section 29(1) of the Education Act 2002

Equality Act 2010

Protection from Harassment Act 1997 and

Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.

3. Definitions

For the purpose of this policy, persistent and/or vexatious communications is where parents/carers or members of the public who raise issues or complaints, either formally or informally, or frequently raise issues that the complainant considers to be within the remit of the school, and whose behaviour is unreasonable. Such behaviour may be characterised by:

- a) actions which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious;
- b) prolific correspondence or excessive e-mail or telephone contact about an issue, concern or complaint;
- c) uses Freedom of Information and Subject Access requests excessively and unreasonably
- d) an insistence upon pursuing unsubstantial complaints and/or unrealistic or unreasonable outcomes;
- e) an insistence upon pursuing issues, concerns or complaints in an unreasonable manner;
- f) an insistence on only dealing with the senior leaders on all occasions irrespective of the issue and the level of delegation in the school to deal with such matters;
- g) an insistence upon repeatedly pursuing an issue, concern or complaint when the outcome is not satisfactory to the complainant but cannot be changed, for example, if the desired outcome is beyond the remit of the school because it is unlawful.

For the purpose of this policy, harassment is the unreasonable pursuit of such actions as in (a) to (g) above in such a way that they:

- a) appear to be targeted over a significant period of time on one or more members of school staff and/or
- b) cause ongoing distress to individual member(s) of school staff and/or
- c) have a significant adverse effect on the whole/parts of the school community and/or

d) are pursued in a manner which can be perceived as intimidating and oppressive by the recipient. This could include situations where persistent demands and criticisms, whilst not particularly taxing or serious when viewed in isolation, have a cumulative effect over time of undermining confidence, well-being and health.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

Parents' Expectations of the School

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

- a) regularly communicate to parents/carers in writing:
 - i. how and when problems can be raised with the school;
 - ii. the existence of the Trust Respect Charter
 - iii. the existence of the school's complaints procedure, and
 - iv. the existence of the Policy for Dealing with Persistent or Vexatious Communication/Harassment in Schools
- b) respond within a reasonable time;
- c) be available for consultation within reasonable time limits bearing in mind the needs of the pupils within the school and the nature of the issue, concern or complaint;
- d) respond with courtesy and respect;
- e) attempt to resolve problems using reasonable means in line with the school's complaints procedure, other policies and practice and in line with advice from the Department for Education keep complainants informed of progress towards a resolution of the issues raised.

The Schools' 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:

- a) treat all school staff with courtesy and respect;
- b) respect the needs and well-being of pupils and staff in the school;
- c) avoid any use, or threatened use, of violence to people or property;
- d) avoid any aggression or verbal abuse;
- e) recognise the time constraints under which members of staff in schools work and allow the school a reasonable time to respond;
- f) recognise that resolving a specific problem can sometimes take some time;

g) (in the case of a complaint) follow the School's Complaints Procedure.

5. Actions by schools

The Schools' Actions in Cases of Persistent or Vexatious Communications or Harassment

Stakeholders can reasonably expect schools in the Trust to

- a) inform them in writing that his/her behaviour is now considered by the school to be unreasonable/unacceptable and, therefore, to fall under the terms of this policy
- b) inform them that all meetings with a member of staff will be conducted with a second person present and that notes of meetings may be taken in the interests of all parties
- c) inform them how routine communication between the school and the complainant should be conducted at this time.
- d) (in the case of physical, or verbal aggression) take advice from Trust HR and Legal Services and consider warning the complainant about being banned from the school site; or proceed straight to a temporary ban;
- e) consider taking advice on pursuing a case under Anti-Harassment legislation;

If a complainant's persistent complaining/harassing behaviour is modified and is then resumed at a later date within a reasonable period of time, the school holds the right to resume the process identified above at an appropriate level. In these circumstances advice may be sought from the Trust HR and Legal Services if appropriate.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

The Trust carries out Equality Impact Assessments to ensure that policies, procedures, and practices cater for individuals who share protected characteristics in relation to the Equality Act 2010. The purpose of these assessments is to ensure that policies, procedures, and practices within the organisation are fair to all. If unfairness is highlighted, the assessment will also seek to show how this can be changed and, where it can't be changed, how it can be improved.

7. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years by the Executive Lead for Governance and Compliance. At every review, the policy will be shared with the Trust Board.

8. Links with other policies

MET Complaints Policy

MET Respect Charter

MET Safeguarding policy

MET Equality and Diversity Policy

Log of Changes to Policy				
Version	Page	Change		date
1.0		New policy		June 2023
1.1		No changes to policy	SB	May 2025