



Policy for managing serial and unreasonable complaints or persistent and unreasonable contact

Nova Education Trust

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Policy for managing serial and unreasonable complaints or persistent and unreasonable contact

Note:

This policy can also be adapted to manage unreasonable or persistent contact not directly associated with, or resulting from, formal complaints.

Nova Education Trust 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 contact with any of our schools or the trust. 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.

Nova Education Trust defines a complaint, or contact, to be unreasonable or vexatious as set out below, the list is not exhaustive.

- complaints or interactions which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious:
- where the complainant is insistent upon pursuing unmeritorious complaints and/or unrealistic outcomes beyond all reason;
- where the complainant is insistent upon pursuing meritorious complaints or interactions in an unreasonable manner;
- where the complaints or interactions are designed to cause disruption or annoyance to our organisation;
- where the complainant makes multiple complaints or contacts across a range of issues (and or staff) with the clear intention, or effect, of significantly disrupting the operations of the school and/or trust
- 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;
- makes excessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious demands on trust/school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff, in writing, by email and by telephone in a manner that is designed to cause disruption or annoyance
- 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 of School and/or the Trust Executive will attempt to assess whether there is an underlying cause to the vexatious complaint, and where possible address that unmet communication need of the complainant. Before applying an 'unreasonable' marking the Head of School or Trust Executive will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying that significant marking.

If the behaviour continues, the Head of School or Trust Executive will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact Nova Education Trust or any of its schools and cause a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication, limit the number of contacts in a communication plan or when correspondence is defined by us as 'serial' or 'persistent' the trust, or school, may decide to advise that they will no longer respond to contact which the trust or school considers to be unreasonable. 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 [Nova Education Trust](#) property.

Links with other policies

This policy is linked to our:

- [Complaints and Concerns Policy](#)
- [Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy](#)