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Approved and Authorised By	FGB
Statutory	No
On school website	Yes
Rationale	
Main updates since last policy	Revision of policy to be in line with Department for Education guidance

Managing serial and unreasonable complaints



Policy for managing serial and unreasonable complaints

Wessex Primary School 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.

Wessex Primary School 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.

Vexatious or frivolous Complaints

The school views the following types of complaints as “vexatious “or “frivolous”:

- 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

Where correspondence meets this criteria, a marking of “serial or persistent” will be made against the complaint.

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 headteacher or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an ‘*unreasonable*’ marking.

If the behaviour continues, the headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact Wessex Primary School 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 Wessex Primary School.

Decision to stop responding

A decision to stop responding will not be taken lightly by the school. However, such a decision may be reached where the following criteria are met:

- all reasonable steps have been taken to address the complainant’s concerns

- the complainant has been given a clear statement of the school's position and options available
- the complainant contacts the school repeatedly making substantially the same points each time.

A decision to stop responding is more likely to be taken if:

- letters, e-mails or telephone calls are often or always abusive or aggressive
- the complainant makes insulting personal comments about or threats towards staff
- the school has reason to believe that the complainant is contacting it with the intention of causing disruption or inconvenience.

Where a decision to stop responding is taken on a particular complaint, complainants will continue to have a right to raise a new complaint at any time where the complaint is raised in an appropriate and reasonable fashion. All new complaints will be responded to insofar as they do not contravene this policy.