



Managing Serial and Unreasonable Complaints



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Introduction

This policy has been written in line with the guidance from DfE and the Model Policy for managing serial and unreasonable complaints:

[Best practice guidance for school complaints procedures 2020 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/431221/Best-practice-guidance-for-school-complaints-procedures-2020.pdf)

[School complaints procedures: guidance for maintained schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/431221/School-complaints-procedures-guidance-for-maintained-schools-2020.pdf)

This policy and practice document aims to make clear the specific response to complaints in relation to the two-stage process for making complaints and, the procedures the school and its Governing Body will take.

Procedural response

Titus Salt 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 members of staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive, or threatening.

Application of the school's Complaint's Procedure will limit the number of complaints that become protracted. However, there will be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedure having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied, this may lead to consideration of the complainant as being unreasonable.

Titus Salt 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 complaint's investigation process
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaint's procedure
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaint's procedure or with good practice
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be considered 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

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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 Headteacher or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking.

If the complainant subsequently contacts the school again about the same issue, the school can choose not to respond. The normal circumstance in which we will not respond is if:

- The school has taken every reasonable step to address the complainant's need
- The complainant has been given a clear statement of the school's position and their options (if any)
- The complainant is contacting the school repeatedly but making substantially the same points each time.
- However, this list is not intended to be exhaustive. The school will be most likely to choose not to respond if:
- We have reason to believe the individual is contacting the school with the intention of causing disruption or inconvenience
- The individual's letters/emails/telephone calls are often or always abusive or aggressive,
- The individual makes insulting personal comments about, or threats towards, school members of staff

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 Titus Salt 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.

Where a complainant tries to re-open the issue with the school after the complaint's procedure has been fully exhausted and the school has done everything it reasonably can in response to the complaint, the chair of governors (or other appropriate person in the case of a complaint about the chair) will inform the complainant that the matter is closed.

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 Titus Salt School.