Bentley CE Primary School Policy for managing serial and unreasonable Complaints or communications

Date of review	June 2026
Period of review	Annual
Review lead	V Hallett
Originally written	V Hallett using DfE template
Governor Committee	FGB

Scope

This policy is supplementary to the school's Complaints Policy, which complies with Section 29 of the Education Act 2002 and the DfE's Best Practice Guidance for School Complaints Procedures. It covers both complaint-related and non-complaint-related communications and interactions with the school.

Statement of Intent

Bentley CE Primary is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality service to those who complain. We welcome open and constructive communication with parents, carers, and members of the community. 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 — whether related to a formal complaint or to general communications with the school..

Definition

Bentley CE Primary defines unreasonable or persistent behaviour as that which hinders the school's ability to carry out its functions effectively, whether in the context of a formal complaint or in day-to-day communications, because of the frequency, volume, or nature of an individual's contact with the school.,

Examples of Unreasonable Behaviour

Examples of such behaviour include but are not limited to, where an individual or group of individuals:

- refuses to articulate their complaint, or specify the grounds of a complaint, or the outcomes sought, 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 matters being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the schools procedures 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, or irrelevant questions, and insists they are fully answered,
- insisting points raised are answered 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, without merit, or shifts their focus to an unrelated matter,

- 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 an investigation where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented, including referral to the Department for Education,
- seeks an unrealistic outcome, refuses to accept the proposed outcomes even after the complaints procedure has been fully and property implemented including referral to the DfE
- 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,
- repeatedly contacts multiple members of staff about the same issue in an attempt to gain a different response;
- uses threats to intimidate,
- uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence, or threats of violence,
- knowingly provides falsified information,
- *publishes defamatory, misleading, or confidential information about the school, its staff, pupils, families of pupils or a specific complaints process on social media or other public forums*.

Expectations on Communication

Individuals are asked to limit their communication with the school to what is reasonable and proportionate, particularly while a complaint is being progressed. Repeated correspondence (whether by letter, phone, email, or text) is unlikely to be helpful and may delay an outcome being reached. This does not refer to reasonable communications to provide further evidence, clarity, or detail to a complaint, or to routine school-related communications (e.g., notifying absence, responding to school requests).

Escalation process:

Where the school identifies that unreasonable or persistent behaviour is occurring — whether in the context of a complaint or general communications — the following escalation process will be applied:

1. **Informal discussion** — Wherever possible, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors will discuss concerns with the individual informally, explaining which behaviours are causing concern and asking them to modify their approach.

2. **Written warning** — If the behaviour continues, a written notice will be issued to the individual detailing the specific behaviours identified, explaining why they are considered unreasonable, and requesting that they cease.

3. **Communication plan** — Where an individual continues excessive or unreasonable contact or behaviour causing significant disruption to the school, the school may impose a communication plan. This may specify permitted methods of communication, limit the number or frequency of contacts, and/or designate a single point of contact. The communication plan will be reviewed after six months. *The communication plan will be*

confirmed in writing, setting out the specific restrictions, the reasons for them, the review date, and the individual's right to request a review by the Chair of Governors

4. **Final measures** — In cases where the communication plan is not adhered to, or where behaviour escalates, the school reserves the right to:

    - cease all non-essential communication with the individual;
    - restrict the individual's access to the school premises;
    - report the matter to the police or seek legal advice;
    - apply for a restraining order or injunction where appropriate.

Serious Incidents

In response to any serious incident of aggression, threatening behaviour, or violence — or other actions which threaten the safety and wellbeing of staff, pupils, or their families — whether in person, in writing, or online, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from Bentley CE Primary premises.

The Governing Body will be informed when this policy is invoked at Stage 2 or above. Records of all actions taken under this policy will be reported to the Full Governing Body, in such a way as to not compromise any further procedure through the complaints procedure.

The school will maintain a written record of all incidents, communications, and decisions made under this policy. These records will be stored securely and retained in accordance with the school's Data Retention Policy

Safeguarding the Complainant's Rights

- This policy does not prevent a complainant from raising a *new* and *distinct* complaint
- The complainant may refer matters to the DfE or the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman
- Any restrictions will be reviewed and are not permanent