Ashwicken CE VA Primary School

Vexatious Complaints Policy

Formally adopted by the Governing Board:-	**Ashwicken CE VA Primary School**
On:-	**Spring 25**
Chair of Governors:-	**Murree Groom**
Last updated:-	**Autumn 23**

Ashwicken Primary School

Vexatious Complaints and Harassment in School Policy

1. Introduction The Headteacher and staff at Ashwicken Primary School manage complaints as part of their day-to-day duties in accordance with the school's Complaints Procedure (see Compliments & Complaints Policy). Most complaints are resolved quickly, informally, and to the satisfaction of the complainant. However, there are occasions when complainants act unreasonably in raising or pursuing concerns. This behaviour may disrupt the smooth operation of the school and negatively affect the well-being of staff and pupils. In such exceptional cases, the school may take action under this policy.

Raising legitimate concerns or criticisms of a complaints procedure as it progresses does not make a complainant vexatious, nor does challenging the outcome of a complaint if done reasonably. Most complaints, even if not upheld, will not be defined as vexatious.

2. Aims of the Policy The aims of this policy are to:

- Uphold the standards of courtesy and reasonableness that should characterise all communication between the school and those who wish to express a concern or pursue a complaint.
- Support the well-being of children, staff, and other stakeholders, including parents and governors.
- Address persistent or vexatious complaints and harassment fairly, honestly, and transparently, while protecting the interests of the wider school community.

3. Expectations of Parents, Carers, and Members of the Public Ashwicken Primary School expects individuals raising concerns or complaints to:

- Treat all school staff with courtesy and respect.
- Respect the needs and well-being of children and staff.
- Avoid any use, or threatened use, of violence towards people or property.
- Avoid aggression, verbal abuse, or harassment.
- Recognise the time constraints under which school staff work and allow reasonable time for responses.
- Follow the School's Complaints Procedure in the case of complaints.

4. Definition of a Persistent Complainant A persistent complainant is someone whose behaviour is unreasonable and who:

- Frequently raises complaints about various issues or the same issue in a repetitive, harassing, or obsessive manner.
- Seeks unrealistic outcomes and states their intention to persist until those outcomes are achieved.
- Refuses to accept decisions made following investigations into their complaints.
- Continuously raises complaints with minor differences or refuses to engage with the complaints process.
- Behaves in an aggressive, provocative, or intimidating manner towards staff.
- Makes unreasonable demands on staff time and resources through excessive communication or detailed questioning.

- Uses obscene, racist, or offensive language in communications.
- Records meetings or conversations without prior knowledge or consent.

5. Definition of Harassment Harassment is the unreasonable pursuit of actions in such a way that they:

- Are targeted over time at one or more members of staff.
- Cause ongoing distress to staff.
- Have a significant adverse effect on the school community.
- Are pursued in a manner perceived as intimidating or oppressive.

6. Managing Persistent or Vexatious Complaints

6.1 Initial Steps In the first instance, the complainant will be informed verbally and in writing that their behaviour is considered unreasonable. They will be asked to modify their behaviour. This communication will explain the potential consequences if the behaviour continues.

6.2 Further Action If behaviour does not improve, the Headteacher and Chair of Governors (or Vice Chair, if unavailable) will decide on appropriate action, which may include:

- Restricting contact to a single form of communication or designated member of staff.
- Advising the complainant that the school has fully addressed their concerns and will not respond to further correspondence unless new information is provided.
- Temporarily suspending all contact with the complainant.
- Declining to investigate further complaints that are repetitive or lack merit.

6.3 Communication of Decisions The complainant will be notified in writing of the actions taken and the reasons for those actions. A record of this decision will be kept for future reference.

7. Reviewing Decisions The categorisation of a complainant as persistent or vexatious will be reviewed every six months by a panel of three governors. If the complainant demonstrates a more reasonable approach, the status may be withdrawn. The complainant will be informed of this decision in writing.

8. Role of the Governing Body The Governing Body is responsible for:

- Ensuring the school complies with all legislation related to this policy.
- Reviewing and approving this policy.
- Monitoring the effectiveness of actions taken under this policy.
- Supporting the Headteacher and staff in implementing the policy.

9. Raising Awareness This policy will be publicised via:

- The school's website.
- Staff induction.
- Meetings with parents and stakeholders as appropriate.

10. Monitoring and Review The effectiveness of this policy will be monitored by the Headteacher and Governing Body. It will be reviewed every three years or sooner if necessary.