Schools' responses to persistent complaints or harassment

This policy is intended to be used in conjunction with the school's Complaints Procedure. Taken together, these documents set out how our school will always seek to work with parents, carers and others with a legitimate complaint to resolve a difficulty.

However, in cases of persistent complaints or harassment, the school may take the following steps in sequence, as necessary:

- inform the complainant informally that her/ his behaviour is now considered by the school to be unreasonable or unacceptable, and request a changed approach;
- inform the complainant in writing that the school considers her / his behaviour to fall under the terms of the Persistent Complaints / Harassment Policy;
- require all future meetings with a member of staff to be conducted with a second person present. In the interests of all parties, notes of these meetings may be taken;
- inform the complainant that, except in emergencies, the school will respond only to written communication.

Physical or verbal aggression

Neither the Local Authority nor the Governors of Sir Francis Drake School will tolerate **any** form of physical or verbal aggression against school staff.

If staff are subject to this type of aggression the school may:

- ban the individual from entering the school site, with immediate effect,
- request an Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO);
- prosecute under Anti-Harassment legislation.

Legitimate new complaints will always be considered, even if the person making them is (or has been) subject to the Persistent Complaints / Harassment Policy.

Persistent complaints/ harassment Policy

Information and Advice for Parents/Carers

Introduction

The school welcomes feedback from parents/ carers and will always try to resolve any complaints as quickly as possible. Sometimes, however, parents/carers pursuing complaints or other issues treat staff in a way that is unacceptable. Whilst we recognise that some complaints may relate to serious and distressing incidents, the Headteacher and governing body will not accept threatening or harassing behaviour.

What do we mean by a 'persistent complainant'?
A persistent complainant may be anyone who engages in unreasonable behaviour when making a complaint. This will include parents and carerswho pursue complaints in an unreasonable manner.

Unreasonable behaviour may include:

- actions which are out of proportion to the nature of the complaint, are persistent even when the Complaints Procedure has been exhausted, are personally harassing or unjustifiably repetitious

and/or

- insistence on pursuing unjustified complaints and/or unrealistic outcomes to justified complaints

and/or

- insistence on pursuing justifiable complaints in an unreasonable manner (e.g. using abusive or threatening language; making complaints in public; refusing to attend appointments to discuss the complaint).

What is 'harassment'?
We regard harassment as the unreasonable pursuit of issues or complaints, particularly if the matter appears to be pursued in a way intended to cause personal distress rather than seek a resolution.

Behaviour will fall within the scope of this policy if:

- it appears to be deliberately targeted over a significant period of time at one or more
members of school staff, without good cause;
- the way in which a complaint or other issue is pursued (as opposed to the complaint itself) causes ongoing distress to school staff;
- it has a significant and disproportionate adverse effect on the school community.

What can you expect of the school?
Anyone who raises informal or formal issues and complaints with the school can expect the school to:

- keep in touch regularly in writing over

i. how and when problems can be raised with the school
ii. details of the school's Complaints Procedure
iii. details of the school's Persistent Complaints / Harassment Policy

- respond within a reasonable time;
- be available for consultation within a reasonable time limit, bearing in mind the needs of pupils at the school;
- respond with courtesy and respect;
- attempt to resolve problems using reasonable means in line with the school's Complaints Procedure;
- keep those involved informed of progress.

Full details relating to how the school will respond to complaints are set out in the Complaints Procedure.

What the school expects of you
The Governors of Sir Francis Drake School expect
anyone who wishes to raise problems with the school to:

- treat all school staff with courtesy and respect;
- respect the needs of pupils and staff within the school;
- avoid the use of violence (including threats of violence) towards people or property;
- recognise the time constraints under which members of staff in schools work and allow the school a reasonable time to respond to a complaint;
- recognise that resolving a specific problem can sometimes take some time;
- follow the school's complaints procedure, including this Persistent Complaints/ Harassment Policy procedure where circumstances justify this.