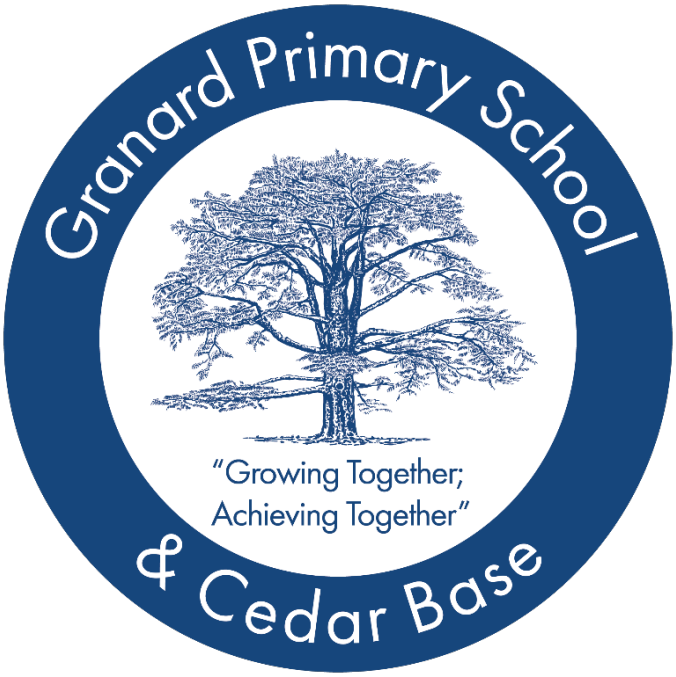
Granard Primary School



Unreasonable Complaints Policy

JUNE 2024

Review Due: June 2027

Introduction

The Headteacher and Governing Board are committed to the improvement of our school. We welcome feedback from parents/carers and will always try to resolve any concerns as quickly as possible. There is a procedure for parents/carers to use if they wish to make a formal complaint.

Sometimes, however, parents or carers pursuing complaints or other issues treat staff and others in a way that is unacceptable and/or behave in an unacceptable manner. Whilst we recognise that some complaints may relate to serious and distressing incidents, we will not accept threatening, inappropriate or harassing behaviour.

The aim of this policy is to clarify the process for dealing with unreasonable complainants or parents who do not act appropriately.

What do we mean by 'An Unreasonable Complainant'?

An unreasonable complainant may be anyone who engages in unreasonable behaviour when making a complaint. This will include parents and carers who pursue complaints in an unreasonable manner and those who do not act in an appropriate manner towards staff at the school.

Unreasonable behaviour may include:

- Actions which are
  - out of proportion to the nature of the complaint
  - persistent – even when the complaints procedure has been exhausted
  - personally harassing
  - unjustifiably repetitious
  - obsessive, harassing or prolific

- Prolific correspondence or excessive email or telephone contact about a concern or complaint

- Repetitious complaints where the complainant has no view about what would satisfy him/her and/or no intention to resolve the complaint

- Acting in a way not in line with the school aim of reaching a resolution and working with the school

- Making complaints online or via social media

- An insistence on
  - pursuing an unjustified or unmeritorious complaint and/or
  - unrealistic outcomes to any complaint

- An insistence on
  - pursuing a complaint in an unreasonable manner e.g. using abusive or threatening language
  - making complaints in public and/or
  - refusing to attend appointments to discuss a 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 or others
- the way in which a complaint or other issues are pursued (as opposed to the complaint itself) causes ongoing distress to school staff or others
- it has a significant and disproportionate adverse effect on the school community
- actions are pursued aggressively or in any manner not appropriate to an effective resolution

What can you expect from the school?

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

- Follow the School's Complaints Policy
- Respond within a reasonable timeframe/scale as outlined in the School’s Complaints Policy
- Be available for consultation within a reasonable time limit, bearing in mind the needs of pupils at the school and the nature of the complaint
- Respond with courtesy and respect
- Attempt to resolve problems using reasonable means in line with the School’s Complaints Policy, other policies and practice and in line with guidance from Wandsworth Council
- Keep those involved informed of progress towards a resolution

What the school expects of you

The school expects anyone who wishes to raise concerns with the school to:

- Treat all staff with courtesy and respect
- Respect the needs of pupils and staff within the school
- Never to use violence (including threats of violence) towards people or property
- Recognise the time constraints under which members of staff in school work and allow the school a reasonable time to respond to a complaint
- Recognise that some problems may not be resolved in a short time
- Follow the School’s Complaints Policy
- Speak politely and respectfully using appropriate language and avoid any aggression or verbal abuse, including name-calling
- Raise concerns/complaints in an appropriate place and at an appropriate time (for example, not in front of other parents or pupils and not in an open public space which includes online and social media)
- To be prepared to work towards a resolution and in partnership with the school

School's responses to Unreasonable Complaints or Harassment

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

However, in cases of unreasonable complaints (including unreasonably persistent complaints) or harassment, the school may take any or all of the following steps, as appropriate:

- Inform the complainant informally that his/her 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 his/her behaviour to fall under the terms of the Unreasonable Complaints Policy
- Require all future meetings with a member of staff to be conducted with a third person present. In the interests of all parties, notes of these meetings will be taken
- Inform the complainant that, except in emergencies, the school will respond only to written communication
- Inform the complainant in writing that his/her behaviour is now considered to fall under the terms of this policy and that any complaint will not be investigated further until it is pursued in a manner the School considers to be reasonable
- Place restrictions on the individual's access to school and/or school staff
- Cease all correspondence and communication with the complainant other than that necessary for the health and safety of any child/adult in school
- Involve the police
- Involve officers of the Local Authority

The school has a duty of care to staff and pupils and will take emergency measures should these become necessary in extreme cases.

Physical or Verbal Aggression

The school, Governing Board and Wandsworth Council will not tolerate **any** form of physical or verbal aggression or personal harassment against school staff. If staff are subject to this type of aggression the school may:

- Prohibit the individual from entering the school site, with immediate effect
- Inform the individual that communication with them will cease other than in an emergency
- Request an Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO)
- Prosecute under Anti-Harassment legislation

Timeframe and Review

If a complainant's harassing/persistent behaviour is modified and is then resumed at a later date, within a reasonable period of time, the school may resume the process identified above.

If a complainant's harassing/persistent complaining behaviour is modified and the complaint still lies within the time limit specified within the School's Complaints Policy, the school will use its discretion

and may resume the investigation of the complaint. The school will review as appropriate, and at a minimum of once a year, any sanctions applied in the context of this policy.

Legitimate new complaints, if not pursued in a harassing or unreasonable way, will still be considered, even if the person making them is (or has been) subject to the Unreasonable Complaints Policy. The school nevertheless reserves the right not to respond to communications from individuals subject to the policy.

Reviewed: June 2024

Review Due: June 2027

Approved by: Governor: ……..

Name: ……..…….. Date: ……

Headteacher: ……

Name: …….. Date: ……