Pembrokeshire County Council
Cyngor Sir Penfro

Education Directorate

MODEL COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURES FOR SCHOOLS

January 2025

Adopted by Narberth CP School on January 23rd 2025

NARBERTH
ARBERTH

Complaints Procedures
Narberth CP School

Introduction

This school has a clear policy for dealing with complaints. When a person raises a concern or complaint with us, we will look into it and deal with it in a fair and suitable way.

When the person making the complaint is a pupil, we have extra procedures to help them with the complaints process. These are shown in this policy.

A Complaint is when you are dissatisfied with:

- the services or facilities provided by the school
- the behaviour or actions of teachers and others working in the school
- the behaviour or actions of pupils
- the behaviour or actions of the governing body.

A Complaint is not a concern relating to:

- the curriculum
- sex education
- special educational needs provision
- religious worship
- school admissions or exclusions
- staff grievance, disciplinary and capability concerns
- child protection issues.

These are all covered by separate procedures. We will give you copies of these procedures if you ask for them.

We will respond to all concerns and complaints in a consistent way. We will:

- listen to your complaint and make sure we understand the problem
- investigate the complaint to find out exactly what happened
- speak to, and if necessary meet with, people involved in the complaint so that we have all the facts
- look at all the evidence and then decide on a fair and acceptable solution to the problem
- let you know how we have resolved the problem, either verbally or in writing.

Different complaints need different responses. Whenever we can, we will respond to your complaint quickly and informally and give you a verbal response. But if your complaint is more serious or complicated we will need more time to investigate it, and we will usually give you a written response. We will tell you how long we expect this process to take. If there are any delays in the process we will let you know.

We have a zero-tolerance approach to all forms of bullying and harassment and promote respectful relationships between learners, parents, staff and governors.

Retention Guidelines

We will keep a record of every complaint, our investigation and how the problem was resolved for seven years. The outcome of complaints is reported to the governing body each term.

If the complaint involves negligence, we will keep a record of the complaint, our investigation and how the problem was resolved for 16 years.

If the complaint involves child protection or safeguarding issues, we will keep a record of the complaint, our investigation and how the problem was resolved for 40 years.

The Complaints Process

Our complaints process has three stages:

Stage A - Informal
Stage B - Formal Complaint to Headteacher
Stage C - Formal Complaint to Governing Body

You should normally start at stage A – we hope to resolve the majority of concerns or complaints in this informal way. But if your complaint is more serious then you can go straight to stages B or C.

Stage A - Informal

Concerns or complaints can often be sorted out quickly by the first staff member you speak to. This might be a class, subject or form teacher, head of year or other senior person. Normally we would expect you to raise your issue within 10 school days of any incident.

1. **Raise your concern with a staff member, either verbally or in writing.**

   Parents: please follow our normal school procedures for contacting the staff member
   Pupils: you can contact your form tutor / class teacher or a member of staff chosen to deal with pupil concerns (as appropriate for the school). We will usually want to make sure you have also told your parents about your concerns.

2. **Your complaint will be investigated and quickly resolved if possible. If your complaint is covered by any existing school policies we will try to resolve it using the solutions set out in these policies. We will tell you which policy applies. If you need a copy of any policy please ask us for one.**

   Pupils: if your complaint is about something that affects many pupils we might suggest taking it to the school council. Any resolution would then benefit everyone.

3. **We will give you a response to your complaint, either verbal or written, within 10 school days. If there is a delay we will tell you.**

4. **We will keep a written record of the complaint and how it was resolved.**

If we cannot resolve your complaint, or you are not happy with our response, you can progress your complaint to the next stage.

Pupils: Your complaint will only progress with your agreement. Your form tutor / class teacher / member of staff chosen to deal with pupil concerns will explain what happens in the next stage to you. You can have help to present your complaint if you want it. We will tell you about the different types of help there are and you can choose which to use.

Stage B - Formal Complaint to Headteacher

If we fail to resolve your complaint at stage A, or your complaint is more serious, parents can make a formal complaint to the headteacher in writing, or pupils can speak to the Head about it. We would expect you to aim to do this within five school days of receiving a response to your concern under Stage A of the process, as it is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as soon as possible.

If you complain directly to the headteacher without raising your concern with a staff member first, the headteacher may decide that your complaint could be dealt with informally using the stage A process. They will refer your complaint to a suitable member of staff to deal with and tell you they have done this.

1. **Raise your complaint in writing to the headteacher.**

   Parents: Your letter should explain what your complaint is about. If we could not resolve your complaint at stage A, or you were not happy with our response, you should tell us what you are looking for as the outcome.

   Pupils: You can talk to the headteacher about your complaint instead of writing it down. You can have someone with you for support at this meeting. We will write down everything you say, and you will be asked to read, agree and sign this record to make sure it correctly sets out your complaint. We will give you a copy of the record. The headteacher will ask you what you are looking for as a solution or outcome to the problem. They will also let you know how it will be investigated.

2. **The headteacher will acknowledge receipt of your complaint in writing. They will let you know by when you should receive a response – usually within 10 school days.**

   Pupils: If you talk to the headteacher about your complaint in step 1 then we will not need to give you a written acknowledgement. The headteacher will have given you a response time at this meeting.

3. **The headteacher will investigate your complaint. This will usually include having a meeting with those involved. If you are asked to a meeting then you can bring a relative, friend, advocate or other person with you for support. However we will expect you to speak and to answer questions; it is not for your companion to do that on your behalf. The headteacher may also choose to have another person present as a witness to what is discussed.**

   Pupils: The headteacher may not need to have a meeting with you if you already met in step 1.

4. **The headteacher will keep a record of all meetings and discussions and the outcome of these.**

5. **Once the investigation is complete, the headteacher will give you a written response to your complaint, normally within 10 days of completion.**

Pupils: The headteacher will also tell you their decision verbally to make sure you fully understand it and can ask any questions if necessary.

If you feel your complaint has not been resolved at Stages A or B by the staff of the school, you may complain, in writing, to the Governing Body. The Local Authority has no role in determining the outcome of a complaint, but is available to guide the Governing Body on following the correct procedures.

If your complaint is against the Headteacher, and he/she cannot resolve it at stage A, the Chair of the Governing Body will investigate it at Stage B. If the complaint is not resolved here, Stage C will be implemented, as described below, where a committee of three governors will consider the complaint.

Your letter should be addressed to the Chair of the Governing Body and sent to the school marked 'Private and Confidential'. You should not involve any other governor as this stage.

Stage C - Formal Complaint to Governing Body

It is rare that a complaint will progress to this stage. However, if we fail to resolve your complaint at stages A and B, or you feel that your complaint has not been dealt with fairly, you can make a formal complaint to the Governing Body. You should only complain directly to the Governing Body when there are special reasons for not using stages A and B, such as a serious complaint against the headteacher.

If the Chair of Governors receives a complaint that could have been dealt with at stages A and B, and these have not been used, he or she may refer your complaint back to the headteacher for investigation. They will tell you if this is the case.

1. **Complaint made in writing to Chair of Governors, through the school's address. We would normally expect you to do this within five school days of receiving the school's response to stage B, or the Chair's response, if your complaint is against the Head.**

   Parents: Your letter should explain what your complaint is about, what the school has done to investigate and resolve it, and why you are not happy with the outcome.

   Pupils: You can talk to the Chair of Governors about your complaint instead of writing it down. We will write down everything you say, and you will be asked to read, agree and sign this record to make sure it correctly sets out your complaint. We will give you a copy of the record. The Chair will ask you what you are looking for as a solution or outcome to the problem. They will also let you know how it will be investigated.

2. **The Chair will acknowledge receipt of your complaint in writing and will let you know how your complaint will be dealt with. The Chair will pass the complaint to the Governing Body Complaints Committee. The Complaints Committee will normally have a meeting with you within 15 school days of receipt of your letter. You will be asked to agree a suitable time and venue for the meeting. The letter will also tell you when all the evidence and documentation to be considered by the complaints committee must be received. Everyone involved will see the evidence and documentation before the meeting, while ensuring that people's rights to privacy of information are protected.**

   Pupils: If you talk to the Chair about your complaint in step 1 we will not need to give you a written acknowledgement. The Chair will have given you a response time at this meeting.

3. **The Committee will have at least three members. The Governing Body may decide that one of the people appointed to this committee is an independent person instead of a governor, but the majority of committee members will always be governors.**

4. **The Complaints Committee will meet with you to consider the complaint. You can bring a relative, friend, advocate or other person with you for support. However, we will expect you to speak and to answer questions; it is not for your companion to do that on your behalf.**

Pupils: You can ask someone else to help you explain your complaint at the meeting.

The meeting will be conducted in an informal way with each party treating the other with respect and courtesy. Normally, in order to deal with the complaint as quickly as possible, the Complaints Committee will not reschedule the meeting more than once; after that, the committee may think it reasonable to make a decision on the complaint in your absence to avoid unnecessary delays.

At the meeting:

- you will be told the names and roles of the other people present;
- the purpose of the meeting will be explained;
- you will be asked to talk through your complaint. If you have witnesses they will be asked to give their evidence. The committee may ask you questions.
- the headteacher or other witnesses will explain the school's actions and response to the complaint. The committee may ask them questions.

At the end of the meeting the Chair will check:

- that you have said everything you wished to;
- that the committee has understood all the points made so that it is able to make a decision based on the facts;
- that you are clear about when you will be told the committee's decision and that you understand the decision will be final.

5. **The Complaints Committee will consider all the evidence before reaching a decision. They may ask for advice from the Local Authority (Pembrokeshire County Council)**

6. **The Committee will give you their decision in writing, usually within 10 school days of the meeting. They will tell you the reasons for their decision and any recommendation made to the school or GB as a result.**

   Pupils: The Chair of the complaints committee will also tell you their decision verbally to make sure you fully understand it and can ask any questions if necessary.

7. **We will keep a record of your complaint, including any evidence presented and minutes of any meetings or discussions, for seven years, unless your complaint involves negligence or child protection and safeguarding issues; in these cases, the record of your complaint, including any evidence presented and minutes of any meetings or discussions will be kept for a longer period of time (see page 3 for retention guidelines).**

8. **Once you have been given a decision at the end of stage C the complaints process will end. There is no appeals process.**

If you are dissatisfied with the procedures used by the Governing Body to deal with your complaint, you can ask the Local Authority to review the Governing Body's actions. It is rare for a complaint to progress to this stage. Your request must be in writing to the Director for Education. We would normally expect you to do this within five school days of receiving the school's response to stage C.

The Local Authority will investigate the complaint or arrange for investigation by a third party. If the Local Authority concludes that the Governing Body has not followed its procedure, or has acted unreasonably, or has failed to carry out its statutory duty to deal with the complaint, then the Local Authority can direct the Governing Body to reconsider the complaint or to change its process to ensure future complaints are dealt with correctly. The Local Authority cannot, however, overturn any Governing Body decision in respect of the complaint.

The Local Authority will be the owner of the investigation report and related documents. Only the findings of the report will be made available to those involved in the investigation. If requested under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and/or a subject access request (SAR), the report will be redacted according to the Data Protection Act 2018 prior to release.

Pembrokeshire County Council has its own published complaints policy and procedures. However, complaints relating to schools made directly to the county council will be referred back to the school to deal with.

Special Circumstances

Where a complaint is made about any of the following, the complaints procedure will be applied differently.

i. **Complaints about the headteacher:** The complaint will be given to the chair of governors, who may delegate it to another governor who will investigate it.

It is important to first establish whether the complaint should be dealt with under a procedure for staff capability, staff grievance, staff disciplinary or child protection. If it does, then those procedures take precedence. If not, the complaint should proceed under Stage B of the school's complaints procedure. If you are not satisfied with the outcome at Stage B, you may take your complaint to Stage C. Any governor involved at Stage B will not be a committee member at Stage C.

ii. **Complaints about the chair:** The vice-chair of governors will be informed and will investigate the complaint or may delegate it to another governor. Stage B onwards of the complaints procedure will apply. Depending on the nature of the complaint the vice-chair should inform the Local Authority (and if appropriate the diocesan authority) that a complaint has been made and what action will be taken by whom.

If the complaint is upheld then the complaints committee should consider whether it needs to recommend to the full governing body that the chair should be removed and another governor appointed to that role.

iii. **Complaints about the chair of governors and the headteacher:** The vice-chair of governors will be informed and will investigate the complaint or may delegate it to another governor. Stage B onwards of the complaints procedure will apply. Depending on the nature of the complaint the vice-chair should inform the Local Authority (and if appropriate the diocesan authority) that a complaint has been made and what action will be taken by whom.

If the complaint is upheld then the complaints committee should consider whether it needs to recommend to the full governing body that the chair should be removed and another governor appointed to that role.

Who can have access to the investigation report: *the Complaints Committee may require the investigation report in order to make an informed decision. The Local Authority may also require a copy of the report in order to provide appropriate advice.*

iv. **Complaints about the chair of governors and vice-chair of governors:** The complaint will be referred to the Clerk to the Governing Body who will inform the Chair of the Complaints Committee. Stage C of the complaints procedure will then apply.

If the chair of the complaints committee is the chair or vice chair of governors, then the complaint should be referred to another member of the complaints committee and another governor must take the place of the chair and/or vice chair on the complaints committee.

v. **Complaints about a governor or group of governors:** The complaint will be referred to the chair of governors for investigation. The chair may alternatively delegate the matter to another governor for investigation. Stage B onwards of the complaints procedure will apply.

If the chair and vice chair are part of the group of governors, the complaint should be referred to the clerk of the governing body who should proceed as described previously for complaints about the chair and vice chair of governors (see iv above).

If so many governors are the subject of a complaint that too few remain to make up a complaints committee, or to provide a quorum for any subsequent decisions that the whole governing body might need to take, then the 'whole governing body' procedure described below should be used (see vi below).

If the complaint is upheld the complaints committee should consider whether to recommend to the governing body that some or all of the governors subject to the complaint should resign or be removed from the governing body. Care should be taken to ensure that no governors implicated in the complaint take part in investigating it, are members of the complaints committee or take part in any governing body discussion and decisions about governors resigning or being removed.

vi. **Complaints against the whole governing body:** The complaint will be referred to the Clerk to the Governing Body who will inform the Headteacher, Chair of Governors and Local Authority.

The local and/or diocesan authorities will agree arrangements with the governing body for investigation of the complaint. The local authority will investigate the complaint or arrange for independent investigation by a third party. Investigation will not be undertaken by the Clerk to the Governing Body or school staff.

If investigation suggests that there are grounds for the complaints, the local authority will arrange for the complaint to be heard by a committee of independent persons set up specifically for that purpose. The independent committee will act as a complaints committee would act at Stage C of the complaints procedure.

The local authority will be the owner of the investigation report and related documents. These will only be made available to those attending the independent complaints committee hearing. If requested under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and/or a subject access request (SAR), the report will be redacted according to the Data Protection Act 2018 prior to release.

If the governing body does not cooperate with the local authority or a committee established by the local authority to consider the complaint, or acts against or fails to act on reasonable advice, then the local authority will be justified in considering using its powers of intervention. If a complaint provides evidence that a governing body is performing poorly, is acting unreasonably, or is in breach of the law, then the local authority may use its powers of intervention.

vii **Complaints about members of school staff, including any designated complaints officer:** A complaint about a member of staff will be passed to the

headteacher. The headteacher may decide to delegate investigation to another senior member of staff under Stage A of the complaints procedure, or to investigate it themselves under Stage B. If you are not happy with the outcome you may proceed through the complaints procedure until Stage C is completed. Care should be taken that if there are matters of a staff disciplinary or capability nature that procedures for those are followed and take precedence.

viii **Anonymous complaints:** anonymous complaints will be recorded and investigated where possible and appropriate, but especially if there is a suggestion of criminal conduct or concerns about child safeguarding, in which case the local authority/police, as appropriate, will be informed. Consideration will be given to whether the complainant could be afraid of being identified; this may be particularly pertinent in the case of complaints made by pupils who may fear being labelled troublemakers. Where appropriate, anonymous complaints may be considered under another suitable policy, such as Whistleblowing.

ix **Complaints that overlap with other functions of the Local Authority, e.g. social care:** The Local Authority will notify the school(s) in question without delay that a joint complaint has been received. A discussion will be held at the outset with the school for a decision to be made about who is the most appropriate body to consider the complaint; the Local Authority should duly notify the complainant of the decision.

In the event the complaint is multifaceted, and a decision is made that the complaint needs to be considered by both bodies, the complainant should be:

(i) clearly informed as to which body is responsible for the investigation of each aspect of the complaint
(ii) provided with copies of each of the bodies complaints policies and their attention drawn to the timeframe for each of the investigation processes
(iii) provided with the contact details of the relevant liaison officer within the Local Authority and the school for the purposes of the impending investigation.

Complaints that are withdrawn

A complainant may withdraw a complaint at any time. A record of the complaint will be kept and a letter sent to the complainant stating that because the complaint is withdrawn the complaints procedure will not be used. These actions are taken in order to have a record and also to manage vexatious complainants.

The next screen / page has a summary of the school's complaints procedures

Signed by chair of governors on behalf of the governing body: ……..

Date approved: ……
(by full governing body)

Date of review: …….

Summary of school's complaints procedures

Stage A	Stage B		Stage C
Complaint against a member of staff	***Complaint against a member of staff***	***Complaint against Head***	***Complaint against a member of staff or Head***
Dealt with informally by staff member or line manager	Headteacher investigates original complaint	Chair of GB investigates or delegates another governor to do so	GB Complaints Committee **OR** Joint Complaints Committee of at least three members considers the complaint
Parent informed of outcome	Parent informed of outcome	Parent informed of outcome	Parent informed of outcome
If not resolved, move to Stage B	If not resolved, move to Stage C		No appeal against outcome
			LA can be asked to consider if the GB has acted reasonably in considering the complaint

Appendix 1: Unreasonably Persistent Communications and Unreasonable Correspondent Behaviour Procedure

1. Background

1.1 The School/Governing Body is committed to serving all correspondents impartially and to providing a high quality service to those who communicate with us. As part of this commitment, the School/Governing Body does not normally limit the contact correspondents have with the School/Governing Body. Communication under this policy includes communication by face to face interviews, written correspondence (including emails and faxes) and by telephone.

1.2 However there are a small number of members of the public who act in an unreasonable or unacceptable manner when contacting staff in the School/the Governing Body. In some cases, through the frequency and nature of their contact with the School/Governing Body, they can hinder the consideration of their own or other persons' service requirements. In some instances the sheer number or nature of their contact lead them to be considered as 'persistent' or 'vexatious' in their dealings with the School/Governing Body.

1.3 In these exceptional cases, where the nature of the contact or the action of the correspondent is unreasonable or unacceptable, the School/Governing Body reserves the right to take action to manage contact in order to protect the interest of staff, the School and the wider public it serves.

1.4 In taking this action, the School/Governing Body will ensure that other members of the public or the school staff do not suffer any detriment from correspondents acting unreasonably. However, in doing so it will still enable the correspondent deemed an 'unreasonable correspondent' to have any legitimate concerns addressed.

2. Why have a procedure?

2.1 The Data Protection Act 2018, Article 12(5), The Freedom of Information Act 2000, Section 14, and the Environment Information Regulations 2004, Reg.12, have provisions which deal with the concept of excessive, persistent and/or vexatious requesters and authorise a reduced level of compliance to such requests and these statutory provisions have a separate system for appeals, which does not include the School's complaints procedure.

2.2 The Local Government Ombudsman's publication "Guidance note on 'unreasonably persistent' complainant and 'unreasonable complainant behaviour' by analogy is applicable. It states:

"Having a policy on unreasonably persistent and unreasonable complainant behaviour and corresponding guidance for staff on procedure should help authorities deal with complainants in ways which are demonstrably consistent and fair. It also helps staff to understand clearly what is expected of them, what options for action are available, and who can authorise these actions. In the absence of such guidance staff are likely to have greater problems with unreasonable and unreasonably persistent complainants. In addition, it provides a yardstick against which performance can be assessed for monitoring purposes."

2.3 It is felt that a similar consideration should apply to correspondents who are making persistent demands for services or voicing objections to policy considerations, which are unreasonable and/or persistent. There are also occasions when the correspondent's communication with staff/governors falls below the expected standard of respect that everyone is entitled to receive. Such contact does not fall within the remit of the School's Complaints Policy.

2.4 The School/Governing Body, as an employer, has to provide a safe system of working for its staff and the pressures in workload and stress that can arise from persistent contact can have consequences for the staff and ultimately the School and its correspondents.

3. Defining Unacceptable Actions by Correspondents

3.1 Some people may act out of character in times of trouble or distress. There may have been upsetting or distressing circumstances leading up to the contact. The School/Governing Body does not view behaviour as unacceptable just because a correspondent is forceful or determined. In fact, it is accepted that such conduct can be a positive advantage when pursuing local resolution of a concern or a request for service. However, the actions of people who are angry, demanding or persistent may result in unreasonable demands or unacceptable behaviour towards staff. It is these actions that are considered unacceptable and that this policy aims to manage. Staff have been trained to distinguish between assertiveness and aggression and abuse. These actions have been grouped under three broad headings listed below. However, particular care must be taken in dealing with correspondents who have a learning disability or mental health problem whose condition may impact on their behaviour or understanding of school processes or decisions. Guidance should be sought from the Governors' Support Services team.

3.2 Aggressive or Abusive Behaviour

(i) Violence is not restricted to acts of aggression that may result in physical harm. It also includes behaviour or language (whether oral or written) that may cause staff to feel afraid, threatened, offended or abused.

(ii) Examples of behaviours grouped under this heading include threats, physical violence, personal verbal abuse, unsubstantiated allegations, derogatory remarks and rudeness. It is considered that inflammatory statements and unsubstantiated allegations can be abusive behaviour.

(iii) Staff/governors are to be treated with courtesy and with respect. Violence or abuse towards any member of staff/governor is unacceptable. The anger felt by some correspondents involves the subject matter of their concerns. However, it is not acceptable when anger escalates into aggression directed towards staff/governors.

3.3 Unreasonable Demands

(i) A correspondent may make what are considered to be unreasonable demands through the amount of information they seek, the nature and scale of service they expect or the number of approaches they make. What amounts to unreasonable demands will always depend on the circumstances surrounding the behaviour and the seriousness of the issues raised by the correspondent.

(ii) Examples of actions grouped under this heading include demanding responses within an unreasonable timescale, insisting on seeing or speaking to a particular member of staff/governor, continual phone calls or correspondence, repeatedly changing the substance of the contact or raising unrelated concerns.

(iii) These demands are considered unacceptable and unreasonable if they start to impact substantially on the work of the School/Governing Body, such as taking up an excessive amount of staff/governor time to the disadvantage of other correspondents or services.

3.4 Unreasonable Persistence

(i) It is recognised that some people will not or cannot accept the outcome of decision on a complaint or other investigations into their concerns. They may submit a complaint through the adopted complaints procedures if they feel that the School/Governing Body has not dealt with them in a fair manner but if they persist in disagreeing with the action or decision taken or contact the School/Governing Body persistently about the same issue this will be deemed unreasonable persistence.

(ii) Also within this category is the refusal to accept the School/Governing Body's decision on a matter of policy or strategy. Objections may be pertinent to the consideration of the matter in the first instance but persistence in continuing such correspondence or other contact can intrude on the School's normal service delivery, especially when invalid complaints are submitted, and will be deemed to be unreasonable persistence.

(iii) Examples of actions grouped under this heading include: persistent refusal to accept a decision made in relation to a complaint; persistent refusal to accept explanations relating to what can or cannot be done; continuing to pursue the same issue without presenting any new information; seeking to prolong contact by changing the substance of their issue; continually raising new issues and questions whilst the first issue is being addressed.

(iv) The way in which these correspondents approach the School/Governing Body may be entirely reasonable, but it is their persistent behaviour in continuing to do so that is not.

(v) The actions of persistent correspondents are considered to be unacceptable when they take up what is regarded by a senior manager as being a disproportionate amount of staff time and resources.

4 Managing Unacceptable Actions by Correspondents

4.1 There are relatively few correspondents whose actions are considered to be unacceptable. How these actions are managed depends on their nature and extent. If it adversely affects the School's/Governing Body's ability to do its work and provide a service to others, the correspondents contact with the School/Governing Body may need to be restricted in order to manage the unacceptable action. The aim will be to do this in a way, wherever possible, that allows the service provided to the correspondent to continue to be delivered. Contact in person, by telephone, fax, letter or electronically or by any combination of these may be restricted.

Effort will be made to try to maintain at least one form of contact. In extreme situations, the correspondent will be told in writing that their name is on a 'no personal contact' list. This means that they must restrict contact with the School/Governing Body to either written communication or through a third party.

4.2 The threat or use of physical violence, verbal abuse or harassment towards staff/governors is likely to result in the ending of all direct contact with the correspondent. Incidents will be reported to senior managers and may be reported to the police. This will always be the case if physical violence is used or threatened.

4.3 The School/Governing Body will not deal with correspondence that is abusive to staff/governors or contains allegations that lack substantive evidence. When this happens the correspondent will be told that their correspondence is considered offensive, unnecessary and unhelpful. They will be asked to stop communicating in such a manner and the member of staff/governor will state that there will be no response to their correspondence if they do not stop. Future contact may be required to be through a third party.

4.4 School staff/governors will end telephone calls/meetings if the correspondent is considered aggressive, abusive or offensive. The staff member/governor involved has the right to make this decision, tell the correspondent that the behaviour is unacceptable and end the call/meeting if the behaviour does not stop.

4.5 Where a correspondent repeatedly phones, visits the School, sends irrelevant documents or raises the same issues, the School/Governing Body may decide to:

(i) only take telephone calls from the correspondent at set times on set days or put an arrangement in place for either a dedicated telephone number or only one member of staff/governor to deal with calls or correspondence from the correspondent in the future;

(ii) require the correspondent to make an appointment to see a named member of staff/governor before visiting the School or that the correspondent contacts the School/Governing Body in writing only;

(iii) return the documents to the correspondent or, in extreme cases, advise the correspondent that further irrelevant documents will be destroyed;

(iv) take other action considered appropriate by the School/Governing Body. However, the correspondent will always be told what action is being taken and why.

4.6 Where a correspondent continues to correspond on a wide range of issues or pursues a single issue persistently, and this action is considered excessive, then the correspondent is told that only a certain number of issues will be considered in a given period and asked to limit or focus their requests accordingly.

4.7 A correspondent's action may also be considered unreasonably persistent if after making a formal complaint, all internal review mechanisms have been exhausted and the correspondent continues to dispute the decision relating to their complaint (apart from through the recognised process of the Complaints procedure). The correspondent will be told that no future phone calls will be accepted or interviews granted concerning this matter.

Any future contact by the correspondent on this issue must be in writing. Future correspondence is read and filed, but **only acknowledged or responded to if the correspondent provides significant new information relating to the complaint.**

5. Deciding to Restrict Correspondent Contact

5.1 Staff/governors who directly experience aggressive or abusive behaviour from a correspondent have the authority to deal immediately with that behaviour in a manner they consider appropriate to the situation and in line with this policy.

5.2 With the exception of such immediate decisions taken at the time of an incident, e.g. aggressive behaviour or threats of violence or abuse, decisions to restrict contact are only taken after careful consideration of the situation by the Headteacher and/or Chair of Governors. They should consider whether further action is necessary prior to taking the decision to designate the correspondent as unreasonable or unreasonably persistent, e.g. if no meeting has taken place between the correspondent and the Headteacher and/or Chair of Governors, and provided that nothing is known about the correspondent which would make this unadvisable, an offer of a meeting with the Headteacher and/or Chair of Governors should be considered. Sometimes such meetings can dispel misunderstandings and move matters towards a resolution.

5.3 If more than one department/member of staff/governor is being contacted by an unreasonably persistent correspondent, consider:

- setting up a strategy meeting to agree a cross-departmental approach; and
- designating a key officer to co-ordinate the School/Governing Body's response(s).

5.4 If the correspondent has disabilities, an advocate might be helpful to both parties: consider offering to help the correspondent find an independent one.

5.5 Before applying any restrictions, the correspondent should be given a warning that if their actions continue the School/Governing Body may decide to treat them as unreasonably persistent.

5.6 Wherever possible, the correspondent is to be given the opportunity to modify their behaviour or action before a decision is taken. The correspondent will be informed in writing why a decision has been made to restrict future contact, the restricted contact arrangements and, if relevant, the length of time that these restrictions will be in place, as well as their right to appeal. A copy of this policy will be enclosed with the letter. If the restricted contact arrangement relate to contact by telephone, information will be passed to Mr. Jones.

6. Appealing a Decision to Restrict Contact

6.1 A correspondent can appeal a decision to restrict contact or a continuation of restricted contact following a review. The governor who was not involved in the original decision (usually the Vice-Chair of Governors) will consider the appeal. They advise the correspondent in writing that either the restricted contact arrangements still apply or a different course of action has been agreed.

7. Recording and Reviewing a Decision to Restrict Contact

7.1 Records are kept of all incidents of unacceptable actions by correspondents. Where it is decided to restrict contact, an entry noting this is made in the relevant file and on appropriate computer records.

7.2 Where a correspondent has been assessed as persistent, the restriction on contact may be reviewed if, for example, the correspondent subsequently demonstrates a more reasonable approach. Staff/governors would previously have used discretion in recommending restricted contact and discretion should similarly be used in recommending that this status be withdrawn.