



Serial, Unreasonable and Vexatious Complaints Policy

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Contents

<i>1. Purpose of Policy</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>2. Legislation and Guidance</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>3. Definitions</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>4. Equalities Assessment Impact Statement</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>5. Roles and Responsibilities</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>6. Steps taken before marking a complaint “unreasonable”</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>7. Barring from School Premises</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>8. Monitoring provisions</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>9. Links to other policies</i>	<i>5</i>

1. Purpose of Policy

Bohunt Education Trust (the Trust) is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with a member 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, threatening or harassing.

2. Legislation and Guidance

This policy ensures the Trust meets its legal duties and charitable purposes effectively.

This policy also complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

3. Definitions

Bohunt Education Trust defines unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the member School, such as, if the complainant:

- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, 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 complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure 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 questions, and insists they are fully answered, often 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
- 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 the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education
- seeks an unrealistic outcome
- 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
- uses threats to intimidate
- uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence
- knowingly provides falsified information
- publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the member School that relates to their complaint, while the complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, or email) as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the headteacher will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking.

If the behaviour continues, the headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact a member School causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will be reviewed after six months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from the member school.

4. Equalities Assessment Impact Statement

The Trust is committed to treating all people equally and with respect irrespective of their age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation. We are committed to eliminating discrimination and recognise children's diverse circumstances. We ensure that all children have the same protection, regardless of any barriers they may face.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 All Staff

All staff will work to resolve concerns and complaints in good faith and acknowledging that things can, and do, go wrong and where that happens, the principles of the Complaints Policy and commitments of Home School Agreement apply.

5.2 Trust Board

Trust Board will review this Policy and its operation annually, and all Local Governing Bodies and Board will receive annual data on the application and implementation of this policy.

5.3 CEO / Headteachers

CEO delegates operation of the policy to headteachers who are responsible for its day to day implementation within the context of their School.

6. Steps taken before marking a complaint "unreasonable"

Our School and the Trust take all complaints seriously, and follow the Complaints Policy in order to seek an agreed and amicable resolution and reconciliation. We will always treat complaints reasonably and nothing in this Policy prevents a parent/carer raising a genuine new concern or complaint.

If the behaviour continues, the Headteacher (or CEO) will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour with respect to complaints is unreasonable and asking them to change it.

For complainants who excessively contact a member School causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will be reviewed every 6 months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence or behaviour giving rise to cause for concern, the member School will put its concerns and actions in writing immediately and the police may be informed.

7. Barring from School Premises

A member school may decide to bar an individual from any school premises: however, before any decision to ban an individual is made, the individual will always have the right to express their views on any such proposal to bar an individual formally from School premises. This decision will be reviewed at regular intervals, and at least every term.

If an individual continues to make or pursue unreasonable complaints, the School reserves the right to seek further legal advice and take such steps as are appropriate.

8. Monitoring provisions

The Trust Board will review this policy annually. Data relating to incidents under this policy is reviewed annually.

9. Links to other policies

- Complaints Policy
- Home School Agreement