



## Policy for managing serial and unreasonable complaints



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## Contents

1.Introduction .....	2
2.Definitions and examples .....	2
3.Communication with the academy.....	3
4.An unreasonable marking.....	3
5.Serious incidents.....	3
6.Links with othr policies.....	3

### 1. Introduction

The Ad Meliora 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 our academies. 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 or threatening.

### 2. Definition and examples

The Ad Meliora 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 academy/Trust, 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.

### **3. Communication with the academy**

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

Complainants should not continue to communicate with the academy/Trust about the complaint when an outcome has been reached or when the complainant is appealing a decision.

### **4. An unreasonable marking**

Whenever possible, the Headteacher will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally and review the facts on paper with an independent professional (a Headteacher from another academy within the Trust), before applying an '*unreasonable*' marking.

If the behaviour continues, the Chief Executive Officer will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact the academies within the Trust 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.

### **5. Serious incidents**

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 academies within the Trust.

### **6. Links with other policies**

- Policy for Parent and Carer Code of Conduct
- Policy for Complaints