

Unreasonable Complaints Policy Statement

1. Introduction

At Derrymount we are dedicated to providing a specialist, quality service that cares for and upholds the needs, rights and entitlements of those individuals with special needs and their families.

We recognise that there will be times when we will receive concerns or complaints about our practices, actions or lack of action and believe that it is in everyone's interest to ensure that these are resolved as quickly as possible.

Many issues will be able to be resolved informally, without the need for formal procedures, however at Derrymount all concerns and complaints are taken seriously and we will respond professionally to any concerns raised by any person, including members of the general public about any provision or services that we as a school provide.

We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with the 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 or threatening.

2. Definition of Unreasonable Complaints

We define unreasonable complainants as 'those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with the school, hinder our consideration of their or other people's complaints'.

3. What is considered unreasonable?

A complaint may be regarded as unreasonable when the person making the complaint:-

- 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 while still wishing their complaint to be resolved;
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaints procedure;
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice;
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant expects to be taken into account and commented on, or 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, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with.

A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if the person making the complaint does so either face-to-face, by telephone or in writing or electronically:-

- maliciously;
- aggressively;
- using threats, intimidation or violence;
- using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language;
- knowing it to be false;
- using falsified information;
- publishing unacceptable information in a variety of media such as in social media websites and newspapers.

Complainants should limit the numbers of communications with a school while a 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.

Whenever possible, the head teacher or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an ‘unreasonable’ marking.

If the behaviour continues the head teacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and asking them to change it.

For complainants who excessively contact Derrymount 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 usually be reviewed after 6 months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the concerns and actions taken will be put in writing immediately and the police informed. This may include banning an individual from our school.

4. Policy Links

- Complaints Procedure
- Harassment Procedure
- Complaints Policy Statement
- Best Practice Advice for School Complaints Procedures 2016 -DfE

5. Review of Policy

This policy will be reviewed annually by both the senior Leadership team and the Governing body.

