Managing Serial, Unreasonable and Vexatious Complaints and Correspondence Policy

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Monitoring & Review	HR – Every 3 years	

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1. Introduction

1.1 CORE Education Trust is dedicated to addressing all complaints and correspondence fairly and impartially. The Trust will normally allow complainants unrestricted contact with its schools and staff, except where behaviour and/or expressed sentiments become abusive, offensive, threatening, or otherwise unreasonable. This policy applies to all forms of correspondence (including emails, letters, telephone calls, and social media communication), ensuring that unreasonable, abusive, or persistent contact is managed appropriately to protect staff and students.

1.2 This policy defines what constitutes serial, unreasonable and vexatious complaints and correspondence and outlines the process the Trust will follow to manage them. This ensures the well-being of our staff and allows for the effective resolution of legitimate concerns.

2. Definitions

2.1 Unreasonable: Behaviour and expressed sentiments that hinders an investigation or resolution of a complaint or issue due to its nature/frequency or correspondence that is targeted and harassing towards specific members of staff.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

a) Procedural obstruction

- Refusing to articulate the complaint/issue or specify grounds and outcomes, despite offers of assistance.
- Refusing to co-operate with an investigation process.
- Refusing to accept that certain issues are outside scope.
- Insisting on procedures incompatible with policy or good practice.

b) Excessive or repetitive demands

- Continually introducing trivial or irrelevant information to an existing matter.
- Raising numerous detailed but trivial questions and insisting on immediate answers.
- Repeatedly raising the same complaint/issue despite previous investigations concluding the matter is closed *(including referrals to the Department for Education where appropriate)*.
- Seeking unrealistic outcomes.

- Making excessive demands on staff time through frequent, lengthy, or complicated contact.

c) Abusive or intimidating behaviour

- Making unjustified complaints about staff and seeking their removal.
- Changing the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds.
- Refusing to accept the findings of a properly concluded investigation.
- Using threats, abusive, offensive, or discriminatory language or violence.
- Knowingly providing falsified information.
- Publishing unacceptable information on social media or public forums.

2.2 Serial: Repeated submission of the same complaint or issue after the Trust has fully and properly investigated/reviewed it and reached a conclusion. Once all stages of the procedure are complete, any attempt to reopen the same issue may be classified as serial or persistent.

2.3 Vexatious: Deliberately burdensome, disruptive, or intended to harass or undermine.

Examples include, but not limited to:

- Repeatedly raising issues already addressed.
- Using multiple channels to bypass limits.
- Making baseless accusations.
- Attempting to provoke staff into inappropriate responses.

3. Procedure for Managing Unreasonable and/or Serial Complaints or Correspondence

3.1 Informal Resolution: Whenever possible, the School/Trust will first discuss concerns informally to resolve issues without escalation. However, in cases where communication between parties has been protracted over a significant period of time and/or any aspect of this has already been escalated with third party agencies (e.g. the police, funders and regulators), this stage of resolution will not be applicable.

3.2 Formal Notification: If unreasonable and/or serial complaints or correspondence continues after informal resolution attempts or if the informal stage is not invoked, the Chair of the Board of Trustees will issue a formal letter which will:

- Explain why behaviour/expressed sentiments are considered unreasonable and/or serial.

- Reference specific examples.

- Explain how future corresponding will be managed.

3.3 Communication Plan: In some cases, where contact causes significant disruption, the Trust may also issue a written plan at either the formal or informal stage, which may:

- Specify a single point of contact.

- Limit contact to a set time frame.

- Restrict communication method (e.g. email only).

- Set response timeframes.

- Explain how a periodic review of the plan may be managed

4. Procedure for Managing Vexatious Complaints or Correspondence

Steps to Address:

- **Identification & Documentation** – staff log and report behaviour; HR/senior leadership assess.

- **Formal Notification** – letter issued from Chair of Board of Trustees to identify behaviour/expressed sentiments, request it cease and outline consequences. The letter may set out the restricting of communication – single channel, contact schedule, point of contact, or suspension of responses except where safeguarding concerns are raised.

- **Escalation** – cease responses (unless new substantive issues arise), seek legal advice, inform police if harassment or threats occur.

- **Review & Monitoring** – restrictions reviewed annually.

5. Response to Serious Incidents

5.1 Immediate Action: For aggression, violence, harassment, or intimidation, the Trust will immediately inform the police.

5.2 Barring from Premises/Staff Contact: The Trust may bar individuals from premises or staff contact. Letters will state:

- Reason for the bar.
- Duration.
- Details of how the decision may be reviewed.