KALEIDOSCOPE
Multi Academy Trust

POLICY FOR HANDLING UNREASONABLY PERSISTENT, HARASSING, VEXATIOUS, UNREASONABLE OR ABUSIVE COMPLAINTS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Approved by: **Next Review:**	Kaleidoscope Trust Board July 2027	**Date:** July 2025

Introduction

Kaleidoscope Multi-Academy Trust is committed to the improvement of our schools. We welcome feedback from parents/carers and will always try to resolve any concerns as quickly as possible. There is a procedure for parents/carers to use if they wish to make a formal complaint.

Sometimes, however, parents or carers pursuing complaints or other issues treat staff and others in a way that is unacceptable and or behave in an unacceptable manner. Whilst we recognise that some complaints may relate to serious and distressing incidents, we will not accept threatening, inappropriate or harassing behaviour.

The aim of this policy is to clarify the process for dealing with unreasonable complainants or parents who do not act appropriately.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Kaleidoscope Complaints Procedure and Adult Conduct Towards Staff and Pupils policies.

What do we mean by 'an unreasonable complainant'?
An unreasonable complainant may be anyone who engages in unreasonable behaviour when making a complaint or communication. This will include parents and carers who pursue complaints in an unreasonable manner and those who do not act in an appropriate manner towards staff at the school.

Unreasonable behaviour may include:

- Out of proportion to the nature of the complaint, or
- Persistent – even when the complaints procedure has been exhausted, or
- Personally harassing, or
- Unjustifiably repetitious or
- Obsessive, harassing, or prolific
- Focuses on a trivial matter to an extent which is out of proportion to its significance and continue to focus on this point.
- Refusal to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
- Refusal to co-operate with the complaints investigation process
- Refusal to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure
- Insisting on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice
- Introduce trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on
- Prolific correspondence or excessive email or telephone contact about a concern or complaint.

- Are known to have recorded meetings or telephone conversations and circulated such recordings to third parties without the prior knowledge and consent of other parties involved.
- Repetitious complaints where the complainant has no view about what would satisfy him/her and/or no intention to resolve the complaint.
- Acting in a way not in line with the school aim of reaching a resolution and working with the school
- An insistence on pursuing unjustified or unmeritorious complaints and/or
- Unrealistic outcomes to unjustified complaints
- 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
- Change the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds
- Repeatedly make the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed)
- Refusal 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 whilst the complaint is being dealt with.

An insistence on:

- Pursuing justifiable complaints in an unreasonable manner e.g. using abusive or threatening language;
- Making untrue/slanderous comments or statements; - about the school or staff
- Making complaints in public (this includes the use of Social Media or online forums); or
- Refusing to attend appointments to discuss the complaint.

What is 'harassment'?

We regard harassment as the unreasonable pursuit of issues or complaints, particularly if the matter appears to be pursued in a way intended to cause personal distress rather than seek a resolution.

Behaviour will fall within the scope of this policy if:

- It appears to be deliberately targeted over a significant period of time at one or more members of school staff or others.
- The way in which a complaint or other issues is pursued (as opposed to the complaint itself) causes ongoing distress to school staff or others;
- It has a significant and disproportionate adverse effect on the school community.

- Actions are pursued aggressively or in any manner not appropriate to an effective resolution.

What can you expect from the school?
Anyone who raises informal or formal issues and complaints with a Kaleidoscope school can expect the school to:

- Follow Kaleidoscope Multi-Academy Trust's Complaints Procedure
- Respond within a reasonable time;
- Be available for consultation within a reasonable time limit, bearing in mind the needs of pupils at the school and the nature of the complaint
- Respond with courtesy and respect;
- Attempt to resolve problems using reasonable means in line with the School's Complaints Procedure, other policies and practice and in line with national and local guidance.
- Keep those involved informed of progress towards a resolution.

What the school expects of you
The school expects anyone who wishes to raise concerns with the school to:

- Treat all staff with courtesy and respect
- Respect the needs of pupils and staff within the school;
- Never use violence (including threats of violence) towards people or property;
- Never threat staff - e.g. they will be sacked
- Recognise the time constraints under which members of staff in schools work and allow the school a reasonable time to respond to a complaint;
- Recognise that some problems may not be resolved in a short time;
- Follow Kaleidoscope's Complaints Procedure.
- Follow Kaleidoscope's Unacceptable Behaviour Policy.
- Speak politely and respectfully using appropriate language and avoid any aggression, threatening or verbal abuse, including name-calling
- Raise concerns/complaints in an appropriate place and at an appropriate time (for example not in front of other parents or pupils and not in an open public space)
- To be prepared to work towards a resolution and in partnership with the school

School's responses to unreasonably persistent complaints, vexatious complainants, unreasonable complaints or harassment
This policy is intended to be used in conjunction with the School's Complaints Procedure and Unacceptable Behaviour Policy. Taken together, these documents set out how we will always seek to work with parents, carers and others with a legitimate complaint to resolve a difficulty and reach a resolution.

Kaleidoscope schools may take any or all of the following steps, as appropriate:

- Inform the complainant informally that his/her behaviour is now considered by the school to be unreasonable or unacceptable, and request a changed approach;
- Inform the complainant in writing that the school considers his/her behaviour to fall under the terms of the 'Unreasonably Persistent'.

Complaints/Harassment Policy:

- Require all future meetings with a member of staff to be conducted with a third person present. In the interests of all parties, notes of these meetings may be taken;
- Inform the complainant that, except in emergencies, the school will respond only to written communication.
- Inform the complainant in writing that his/her behaviour is now considered to fall under the terms of this policy and that any complaint will not be investigated further until it is pursued in a manner the School considers to be reasonable
- Place restrictions on the individual's access to school and/or school staff - the complainant may be directed to communicate with one senior staff member only.
- Cease all correspondence and communication with the complainant other than that necessary for the health and safety of any child/adult in school.
- Involve officers of the local authority.

The school has a duty of care to staff and pupils and will take emergency measures should these become necessary in extreme cases.

Physical or verbal aggression

The school, governing body and Board of Trustees will not tolerate **any** form of physical or verbal aggression or personal harassment (including any online behaviour) against school staff. If staff are subject to this type of aggression the school may:

- Prohibit the individual from entering the school site, with immediate effect;
- Inform the individual that communication with them will cease other than in an emergency
- Prosecute under Anti-Harassment legislation.

Time frame and Review

If a complainant's harassing/persistent behaviour is modified and is then resumed at a later date within a reasonable period of time, the school may resume the process identified above.

If a complainant's harassing/persistent complaining behaviour is modified and the complaint still lies within the time limit specified within the Kaleidoscope Complaints Procedure, the School will use its discretion and may resume the investigation of the complaint. The School will review as appropriate, and at a minimum of once a year, any sanctions applied in the context of this policy legitimate new complaints, if not pursued in a harassing or unreasonable way, will still be considered, even if the person making

them is (or has been) subject to this policy. The school nevertheless reserves the right not to respond to communications from individuals subject to this policy.

Associated Policies:
Adult Conduct Towards Staff and Pupil's Policy
Kaleidoscope Complaints Procedure
Kaleidoscope Unacceptable Behaviour Policy
School's E Safety Policy