

# Serial and Unreasonable Complaints Policy

## Document Control

Date	Revision amendment details	By whom
July 2019	Reviewed and proposed for adoption	Ops Group
July 2019	Adopted by TEFAT Board	Trustees
July 2021	Reviewed with no statutory updates required	Ops Group
July 2024	Reviewed with no statutory updates required	Ops Group
July 2027	Next date for review subject to any required earlier statutory updates	
Aug 2025	Update to reflect new Head of Legal and Governance, Katie Stobbart.	Katie Stobbart

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## **Related policies and documents**

Concerns and Complaints Policy

[DfE Best Practice Guidance for School Complaints Procedures 2020](#)

## **Definitions**

Where the word 'Trust' is used in this document it refers to The Elliot Foundation Academies Trust.

## **Elliot Foundation Academies Trust Values**

### **1. Put children first**

- a. We trust and value your professionalism
- b. We share the responsibility for the learning and welfare of all of our children
- c. Our purpose is to improve the lives of children

### **2. Be safe**

- a. Don't assume that someone else will do it
- b. Look after yourself, your colleagues and all children
- c. We are all responsible for each other's safety and well being
- d. Discuss any concerns with an appropriate member of staff

### **3. Be kind & respect all**

- a. People are allowed to be different as are you
- b. Kindness creates the positive environment we all need to flourish
- c. This kindness should extend to ourselves as well as to others

### **4. Be open**

- a. If you can see a better way, suggest it
- b. If someone else suggests a better way to you, consider it
- c. We exist to nurture innovators and support those who take informed risks in the interests of children

### **5. Forgive**

- a. We all make mistakes
- b. Admit them, learn from them and move on

### **6. Make a difference**

- a. Making the world a better place starts with you
- b. Model the behaviour that you would like to see from others

## **1. Policy statement and objectives**

- 1.1. This policy and the procedures for its implementation aim to clarify the way in which serial and unreasonable complaints are managed. It aims to do so in a way which is clear and concise. The policy also seeks to promote a consistent and transparent approach to dealing with such matters.

## **2. Introduction**

- 2.1. The Trust is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially and seeks to swiftly resolve all such matters in line with the Concerns and Complaints Policy. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with our schools. 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.

## **3. Implementation**

- 3.1. The 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 school', such as, if the complainant:
- 3.1.1. Refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
  - 3.1.2. Refuses to cooperate with the complaints process
  - 3.1.3. Refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints process
  - 3.1.4. Insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints process or with good practice
  - 3.1.5. Introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on
  - 3.1.6. Raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales
  - 3.1.7. Makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced
  - 3.1.8. Changes the basis of the complaint as the process proceeds

- 3.1.9. Repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous actions to investigate or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed)
  - 3.1.10. Refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the Concerns and Complaints Policy has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education
  - 3.1.11. Seeks an unrealistic outcome
  - 3.1.12. Makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and/or by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with
  - 3.1.13. Uses threats to intimidate
  - 3.1.14. Uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence
  - 3.1.15. Knowingly provides falsified information
  - 3.1.16. Publishes information on social media or other public forums
- 3.2. Complainants should try to limit their communication with the 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, email or text), as it could delay the outcome being reached.
- 3.3. Whenever possible the Principal will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before determining that the complaint has met the threshold for application of this policy.
- 3.4. If the behaviour continues the Principal will discuss the matter with the Trust Head of Legal and Governance ahead of writing to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is not acceptable and asking them to change it.
- 3.5. For complainants who continue to excessively contact either a school or the Trust thereby 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.
- 3.6. In response to any serious incident of aggression, violence or repetitive behaviour or actions that could be deemed as harassment we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from an academy site or Head Office premises.