



Managing Unacceptable Behaviour Of The School Community Policy

Date of Approval: 14th May 2024
Review frequency: Bi-annual
Next review date: Summer 2026
Reviewed by: Mrs Laura White, Headteacher

This policy was presented to the FGB on 14th May 2024 and will be reviewed in Spring 2026, or sooner if required

Mission Statement

St Anselm's is a community of faith, serving local families and providing a Catholic education.

We strive to work in partnership with parents and carers to:

- Inspire children to be ambassadors of Jesus through meaningful prayer, thoughtful reflection and exploration of the Gospel;
- Ignite a love for life-long learning by encouraging and challenging children through purposeful learning opportunities;
- Include and value everyone, recognise and celebrate uniqueness and promote self-appreciation;
- Empower children to be ambitious, confident and aspirational now and in their vision for the future;
- Provide an environment where positive wellbeing and mental health ensures everyone feels safe, happy and loved as children of God.

Context

The governing body of St Anselm's Catholic Primary School encourages close links with parents and the community and believes that all pupils benefit and make the best progress when there are positive relationships between home and school.

The vast majority of parents, carers and others visiting our school are keen to work with us and are supportive of the school. However, on the rare occasions when a negative attitude towards the school is expressed, this can result in aggression, verbal and or physical abuse towards members of school staff or the wider school community.

This policy has been produced to create a joint understanding of what is considered acceptable and unacceptable behaviour when working with staff and governors at St Anselm's School. It includes dealing with abusive, persistent or unreasonable behaviour and vexatious complaints from parents and visitors.

The school is keen to work positively and proactively work with parents, visitors and members of the local community to resolve issues, using its resources to achieve the best outcomes for everyone within the school community.

This policy has four main sections:

- Section 1: Unreasonable behaviour when contacting the school
Section 2: Vexatious/persistent complainants

- Section 3: Options to restrict and manage contact
- Section 4: Record keeping and monitoring of those who are subject to the unreasonable behaviour policy

The purpose of this policy

- To define the behaviours that are not acceptable to the school, including behaviour exhibited by people making formal complaints.
- To ensure that teaching and learning and any school business is not adversely affected by individuals who behave in an unreasonable manner.
- To ensure our staff have a safe working environment and are not exposed to unnecessary stress, harassment or violence due to the unacceptable behaviour of others, and that they are supported as appropriate.
- To ensure that staff and governors are able to deal confidently and effectively with unreasonable behaviour.

Who does this policy apply to?

This policy applies to all parents and carers and all those who have contact with the school.

Section 1:

Unreasonable behaviour when contacting St Anselm's School

The governing body has a duty of care to its employees to protect them from avoidable stress and upset at work and to use policies and procedures to protect them from what we consider to be unacceptable levels or types of contact. We recognise that, when you contact the school, you may have reason to feel aggrieved, upset or distressed. However it is not considered acceptable when these feelings become aggressive and or personal and are directed towards individual members of staff.

1.1. What behaviour is unreasonable?

- 1.1.1. Unreasonable behaviour is behaviour or language, in whatever form whether face to face, by telephone, social media, SMS (text message) or written that may cause staff to feel intimidated, threatened or abused. Examples may include:

- threats of violence
- verbal abuse
- racist or sexist language
- derogatory remarks
- offensive language
- rudeness
- making inflammatory statements
- raising unsubstantiated allegations
- any form of physical abuse

- 1.1.2. We do not view assertive behaviour (for example, putting forward your case in a persuasive manner) as unreasonable.

- 1.1.3. However, we will manage behaviour that is aggressive, violent, threatening rude or abusive, or which places unreasonable demands on our staff under this policy.

1.2. Unreasonable requests and communication

- 1.2.1. Requests may be considered unreasonable either by the nature and/or scale of service

expected. Examples may include:

- requesting a response within unreasonable timescales
- insisting on speaking with certain staff members
- making unreasonable demands of how situations should be managed
- adopting a "capture-all" approach by contacting staff and third parties about the same issue

1.2.2. Communication may be considered unreasonable if, for example, individuals:

- continually contact us while we are in the process of looking at a matter
- make a number of approaches about the same matter without raising new issues
- refuse to accept a decision made where explanations for the decision have been given
- continue to pursue complaints/issues which have no substance
- continue to pursue complaints/issues which have already been investigated and determined
- continue to raise unfounded or new complaints arising from the same set of facts

1.2.3. We recognise that our resources, including employee time, have to be used where they can be most effective. This might mean that we cannot respond to every issue in the way a person would like if, in doing so, it would take up what the school regards as being a disproportionate amount of time and resources that could be used elsewhere to teach our children or support the most vulnerable in our community.

1.2.4. Sometimes, due to the volume and nature of our work, we may not be able to respond immediately to parental requests. This does not mean that those concerns are any less important to us. If we have asked for a parent's patience but that parent continues to pursue their concerns, we may consider such behaviour to be unreasonable.

1.3. Unreasonable communication through social media

1.3.1. Social media is a rapidly changing area of technology that we, as a school, are using to build relationships with all parents, carers and the wider community. However this form of communication can sometimes be used to bully and harass employees. Many social media users have got into trouble simply by failing to observe basic good manners online. All social media users should adopt the same level of courtesy used when communicating via email, telephone or face to face.

1.3.2. If a parent posts a message that may cause offence - or is otherwise unsuitable - about the school or a member of staff, the school will do its best to have that post removed from the social media site.

1.3.3. Inappropriate content includes anything that will cause harm and offence to an individual or damage the reputation of the school.

1.4. How we will manage unreasonable behaviour

1.4.1. The school has a zero-tolerance position on physical violence, verbal abuse, threats or harassment against our staff. Any personal assault against its employees will be reported to

the police, who may decide to prosecute.

1.4.2. The decision to invoke this policy and place restrictions on an individual will be taken by the Headteacher or SLT.

1.4.3. For individuals whose behaviour has been found to be unreasonable, the school has developed a list of possible ways in which their contact with us can be managed or restricted. These options can be found in section 3. Any one of the options, or a combination of these, may be applied to an individual.

1.4.4. In all cases, the school will only place restrictions on an individual if we have informed them that their behaviour is unreasonable and have asked them to modify their behaviour. We will explain what action will be taken if the warning is ignored. If they do not modify their behaviour, we will take steps to restrict their communications/contact with us.

1.4.5. If we decide a restriction is appropriate, we will consider which of the options best fits the circumstances. The level of restriction that we apply will be proportionate, taking into account the nature, extent and impact of the unreasonable behaviour.

1.4.6. We will be transparent, and will write to the individual to explain what restriction we are putting in place, our reasons for doing so, and how long the restriction will apply.

1.4.7. The restrictions will be in place for a minimum period of 3 months and the review period can be on a 3, 6 or 12 month basis. The individual will be informed of the review date in the original explanatory letter.

1.4.8. We will inform the individual of the result of the review and if the decision to apply this policy and the restriction that we have put in place has been changed or extended.

1.4.9. If the school has already made a reasonable adjustment for the individual, this will be taken into account when deciding upon the appropriate course of action.

Section 2:

Vexatious/persistent complainants

2.1. Clarification

2.1.1. An individual can only be described as “vexatious or persistent” if they demonstrate unreasonable behaviour while making (or having made) a formal complaint through Complaints Policy.

2.1.2. Dealing with a complaint is a straightforward process but, in a minority of cases, people pursue their complaints in a way which can either impede the investigation of their complaint, or can have significant resource issues for the school. This can happen either while their complaint is being investigated or once the school has finished dealing with the complaint.

2.2. How we deal with complaints

2.2.1. Please refer to the school’s complaints policy for information on how

complaints are managed at St Anselm's.

2.3. What do we mean by unreasonable behaviour

- 2.3.1. Unacceptable behaviour is defined above (section 1.1) and can be applied to complainants going through the formal complaints process.
- 2.3.2. We will not normally limit the contact which complainants have with school staff, however we do not expect employees to tolerate unacceptable behaviour by complainants or any parent.
- 2.3.3. We will take action to protect employees from unreasonable behaviour. If a complainant behaves in a way that is unreasonably persistent or vexatious, we will follow this policy, which may include invoking one or more of the options detailed in section 3.

2.4. Definitions

- 2.4.1. We define unreasonably persistent and vexatious complainants as those complainants who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with the school, hinder our consideration of their or other people's complaints. The description "unreasonably persistent" and "vexatious" may apply separately or jointly to a particular complainant.
- 2.4.2. Examples include the way or frequency that complainants raise their complaint with employees, or how complainants respond when informed of our decision about the complaint.
- 2.4.3. Features of an unreasonably persistent and/or vexatious complainant include the following (the list is not exhaustive, nor does one single feature on its own necessarily imply that the person will be considered as being in this category):
- 2.4.4. An unreasonably persistent and/or vexatious complainant may:
 - have insufficient or no grounds for their complaint and be making the complaint only to annoy (or for reasons that he or she does not admit or make obvious)
 - refuse to specify the grounds of a complaint despite offers of assistance
 - refuse to co-operate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved
 - make an unreasonable number of contacts with us, by any means, in relation to a specific complaint or complaints
 - make persistent and unreasonable demands or expectations of staff members or the complaints process after the unreasonableness has been explained to the complainant (an example of this could be a complainant who insists on immediate responses to numerous, frequent and/or complex letters, telephone calls or emails)
 - harass or verbally abuse or otherwise seek to school staff dealing with their complaint, by use of foul, inappropriate, or offensive language
 - raise subsidiary or new issues whilst a complaint is being addressed that were not part of the complaint at the start of the complaint process
 - introduce trivial or irrelevant new information whilst the complaint is being investigated and expect this to be taken into account and commented on
 - change the substance or basis of the complaint without reasonable justification whilst the complaint is being addressed
 - electronically record meetings and conversations without the prior knowledge and consent of the other person involved

- refuse to accept the outcome of the complaint process after its conclusion, repeatedly arguing the point, complaining about the outcome, and/or denying that an adequate response has been given
- make the same complaint repeatedly, perhaps with minor differences, after the procedure has been concluded, and insist that the minor differences make these new complaints which should be put through the full complaints procedure
- complain about or challenge an issue based on a historic and irreversible decision or incident
- combine some or all of these features
- insist on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice.

2.5. How we will manage vexatious or persistent complainants

- 2.5.1. The Headteacher or SLT will bring to the attention of the FGB if a complainant is becoming persistent or vexatious. When the decision has been taken to apply this policy, a warning letter will be sent from the headteacher to the complainant that unless the behaviour changes the policy will be invoked. A copy of the letter will be sent to the FGB.
- 2.5.2. If the behaviour persists, the FGB may make the decision to make the individual a vexatious complainant. The FGB will contact the complainant in writing to explain:
- why we have taken the decision
 - what action we are taking (see the list of options in section 3)
 - the duration of that action
 - the review process of this policy
- 2.5.3. The FGB will enclose a copy of this policy in the letter to the complainant.
- 2.5.4. Where a complainant continues to behave in a way which is unacceptable, the FGB, following consultation with the Headteacher, SLT and local authority may decide to refuse all contact with the complainant and stop any investigation into their complaint.
- 2.5.5. Where the behaviour is so extreme or it threatens the immediate safety and welfare of our employees, we will consider other options, for example reporting the matter to the police or taking legal action. In such cases, we may not give the complainant prior warning of that action.

2.6. New complaints from complainants who are treated as abusive, vexatious or persistent

- 2.6.1. New complaints from people who have come under this policy will be treated on their merits. The FGB will decide whether any restrictions applied previously are still appropriate and necessary in relation to the new complaint. We do not accept a “blanket approach” of ignoring complaints where they are founded.
- 2.6.2. The fact that a complainant is judged to be unreasonably persistent or vexatious, and any restrictions imposed on our contact with him or her, will be recorded and notified to those who need to know within the school.

2.7. Review

- 2.7.1. The status of a complainant judged to be unreasonably persistent or vexatious will be

reviewed by the FGB after three months and at the end of every subsequent three months within the period during which the policy is to apply.

- 2.7.2. The complainant will be informed of the result of this review if the decision to apply this policy to them has been changed or extended.

Section 3:

Options to restrict and manage contact

If individuals continue to behave unreasonably after we have asked them to modify their behaviour, the options we will consider are:

Option 1:

Requiring you to contact a named employee(s) only (single point of contact or “SPOC”).

Option 2:

Restricting contact (whether via telephone, face to face, or digital) to specified places, days and times, as agreed with you.

Option 3:

Terminating contact if you persistently raise issues to which we have already responded in full, no matter how these contacts are made (eg. phone, digital, letter).

Option 4:

Terminating contact if you are aggressive, rude, abusive or offensive.

Option 5:

Restricting the issues we will correspond on.

Option 6:

If we have already fully explained our reasons for a decision and you have exhausted the procedure to request a review of that decision, we will decline to respond to further correspondence which does not raise new issues. The correspondence will be read and filed but we will not acknowledge your correspondence unless you provide significant new information or evidence relating to the matter.

Option 7:

We may block or re-direct your emails to a single point of contact (SPOC) if the number and length of emails sent causes difficulties for us to conduct our business.

Option 8:

We will not respond to correspondence (eg. letter or e-mail) which is abusive or offensive.

Option 9:

If you post derogatory, defamatory, offensive or threatening remarks on social media we will ask the site to remove them and try to block your account.

Option 10:

If you become aggressive, threatening or uncooperative to school staff on school premises we may ask you to leave and ban you from attending/ entering for an agreed period. Similarly, if you become aggressive, threatening or uncooperative to school staff outside of school, the police will be contacted and further action may be taken as a result.

Section 4:

Record keeping and monitoring of those subject to the unreasonable behaviour policy

- 4.1. Adequate records will be retained by the school office of the details of the case and the action that has been taken where this policy has been invoked. The school will retain a central record of:
- The name and address of each parent, visitor or member of the community who is treated as abusive, vexatious or persistent and is being managed under this policy
 - The name and address of anyone that has been identified as potentially violent towards our staff
 - When the restriction came into force and ends
 - What the restrictions are
- 4.2. The FGB member with responsibility for complaints will be provided with information about parents/visitors and members of the community who have been treated as vexatious/persistent or unreasonable under this policy.

Linked policies

Complaints Policy