Synergy SCHOOLS
Learn, Grow & Shine Together

Policy for managing serial and unreasonable complaints (October 2026)

Adopted by Full Governing Body	Date:	11 July 2024
Reviewed by Executive Headteacher	Date:	01 October 2026
Review Date (in line with NYC Guidance)		October 2027

Background

The Synergy Schools Federation ('The Federation') is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain. Our complaints procedure can be found at https://www.synergyschools.co.uk/policies-and-information/synergy-policies/.

In relation to communicating with the Federation regarding complaints, we ask that complainants limit any communication whilst 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 an outcome being reached.

Whilst we will not normally restrict the contact complainants have with the Federation, we do not expect our staff and/or governors to tolerate unacceptable behaviour. We will take action to protect them from such behaviour; including behaviour which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

The Federation will take action if we believe that a complainant's behaviour is unreasonable.

Definition

The Federation defines unreasonable behaviour as behaviour which hinders the consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the Federation or because of the complainant's conduct.

Examples of behaviour that could be deemed to be unreasonable include, but are not limited to, a complainant:

- refusing to articulate their complaint or specifying the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance;
- refusing to co-operate with the complaints investigation process;
- refusing to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure;

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- insisting on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice;
- introducing trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on
- raising large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insisting that they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales;
- making unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeking to have them replaced;
- changing the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds;
- repeatedly making the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed);
- refusing to accept the findings of the investigation into a complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education;
- seeking an unrealistic outcome;
- making excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff and/or governors regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and/or by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with;
- using threats to intimidate;
- using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence;
- knowingly providing falsified information;
- publishing unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

If The Federation considers a complainant's behaviour falls under the definition of 'unreasonable behaviour' the following action will be taken:

Stage 1

Under stage 1, if The Federation considers that a complainant's behaviour is unreasonable the Executive Headteacher, Headteacher, Head of School or nominated governor will contact the complainant to discuss their behaviour, if it is reasonable to do so in the circumstances. The Executive Headteacher, Headteacher, Head of School or nominated governor will discuss the school's concerns regarding the behaviour informally and request that such behaviour stops.

Stage 2

If, due to the circumstances of the individual case, the school cannot carry out stage 1, or if stage 1 does not bring a resolution and the behaviour persists, then the matter will be dealt with under stage 2 of this policy.

Under stage 2, the Executive Headteacher, Headteacher, Head of School or nominated governor will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it.

For complainants who excessively contact the Federation causing a significant level of disruption we may; specify methods of communication, specify the individual or individuals that the complainant may communicate with and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. The communication plan will be reviewed after six months, if the complaint remains ongoing after that time.

Stage 3

If stage 2 does not bring a resolution and the behaviour persists, then the matter will be dealt with under stage 3 of this policy, regardless of whether any communication plan that has been implemented has come to an end or not.

Under stage 3 The Federation will cease to engage with the complainant regarding the complaint. This decision will be made by a panel of three governors from The Federation who will be independent of the original complaint. The complainant will not be permitted to make representations to the panel.

If the decision to cease to engage is made, then this will conclude The Federation investigating the complaint. The Federation will write to the complainant, explaining their decision.

At any time, in response to any serious incident of aggression or violence (verbal, physical or in writing), we will inform the police and also consider civil action. We will cease to engage with the complainant regarding the complaint and take all necessary action to protect our staff/governors. This may include barring an individual from contacting or entering the grounds of any of the schools that are part of The Synergy Schools Federation. The complainant will be informed of this in writing.