



## **MANAGING SERIAL AND UNREASONABLE COMPLAINTS POLICY**

<b>Date of approval by the Trust Board</b>	<b>25 March 2026</b>
<b>Review cycle</b>	<b>3 years</b>

**NOTE: This policy can also be adapted to manage unreasonable or persistent contact not directly associated with, or resulting from, formal complaints.**

Alternative Learning Trust is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with our schools/provisions; 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.

Alternative Learning 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/provision, such as, if the complainant:

- Fails to follow this procedure
- Refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance.
- Refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process.
- Refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure.
- Insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice.
- Introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on.
- Raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions and insists that 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.
- Changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds.
- Repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed).
- Refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's/provision's complaints procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed, including referral to the Department for Education (DfE).
- Seeks an unrealistic outcome.
- Makes excessive demands on the school's/provision's time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by e-mail, and by telephone whilst the complaint is being dealt with.
- Uses threats to intimidate including references/threats to making further complaints to bodies such as Ofsted, DfE, Children's Commissioner, etc with no basis or not having followed the complaints procedure.

- Uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence.
- Knowingly provides falsified information.
- Publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums or to other public bodies such as Ofsted, DfE, Children's Commissioner, ICO, etc.

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school/provision that relates to their complaint, whilst the complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated communication is sent (either by letter, telephone, e-mail or text message) as it could delay the outcome being reached.

A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if the person making the complaint does so in any form;

- Maliciously
- Aggressively
- Using threats, intimidation or violence
- Using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language
- Knowing it to be false
- Using falsified information

Whenever possible, the Head Teacher or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an '*unreasonable*' marking.

If the behaviour continues, the Head Teacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact Alternative Learning Trust's schools/provisions, 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.

If the complainant continues to contact the school in a disruptive way, we may put communications strategies in place.

We may:

- give the complainant a single point of contact via an email address
- limit the number of times the complainant can make contact, such as a fixed number per term
- ask the complainant to engage a third party to act on their behalf, such as Citizens Advice
- put any other strategy in place, as necessary.

We may stop responding to the complainant when all of these factors are met and:

- we believe we have taken all reasonable steps to help address their concerns
- we have provided a clear statement of our position and their options
- the complainant contacts us repeatedly, and we believe their intention is to cause disruption or inconvenience and / or they are making substantially the same points each time

Where we stop responding, we will inform the individual that we intend to do so. We will also explain that we will still consider any new complaints they make.

It may be that some complainants after a period of time might be considered vexatious:

The trust and its schools will consider a complaint vexatious if:

- Complainants are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific or repetitive
- The complainant insists on unrealistic outcomes, such as staff dismissal or financial compensation
- The complaint is designed to cause disruption or annoyance, for example by introducing trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant expects to be considered and commented on, or raising a large number of detailed but unimportant questions, and insisting 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

Although every complaint will be assessed on its own merit, if the complainant has a history of making vexatious complaints, then the above-mentioned strategies can be instituted immediately or escalated faster.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from Alternative Learning Trust's schools'/provisions' sites.

Please [click here](#) for Alternative Learning Trust's Complaints Policy and timeline.

**Person responsible for updating this policy:**

**CEO/Executive Principal**