

Impington Village College

**Persistent Complaints
and Harassment Policy**

1. Aims of the policy

- To uphold the standards of courtesy and reasonableness that should characterise all communication between the College and persons who wish to express a concern or pursue a complaint.
- To support the well-being of students, staff and everyone else who has legitimate interest in the work of the College, including governors and parents.
- To deal fairly, honestly and properly with persistent complainants and those who harass members of staff in College while ensuring that other stakeholders suffer no detriment.

2. Human Rights

- 2.1 In implementing this policy the College will seek to ensure that its actions are in accordance with its obligations under the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Convention Rights embodied within it in order to protect the Human Rights of both persistent complainants and all other stakeholders.

3. Who is a persistent complainant?

- 3.1 For the purpose of this policy, a persistent complainant is a parent/carer or member of the public who complains about issues, either formally or informally, or frequently raises issues that the complainant considers to be within the remit of the College and whose behaviour is unreasonable. Such behaviour may be characterised by:
- a) actions which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious and/or
 - b) prolific correspondence or excessive e-mail or telephone contact about a concern or complaint
 - c) an insistence upon pursuing unmeritorious complaints and/or unrealistic or unreasonable outcomes
 - d) an insistence upon pursuing meritorious complaints in an unreasonable manner
- 3.2 For the purpose of this policy, harassment is the unreasonable pursuit of such actions as in (a) to (d) above in such a way that they:
- a) appear to be targeted over a significant period of time on one or more members of College staff and/or
 - b) cause ongoing distress to individual member(s) of College staff and/or
 - c) have a significant adverse effect on the whole/parts of the College community and/or
 - d) are pursued aggressively
- 3.3 Actions or behaviour that fall into any of the categories described in 3.1 and 3.2 above, or any other harassing or persistently unreasonable behaviour, may render an individual liable to become subject to this policy.

4. Parents' expectations of the College

- 4.1 Parents/carers/members of the public who raise either informal or formal issues or complaints with the College can expect the College to:
- a) regularly communicate to parents/carers in writing (i) how and when problems can be raised with the College, (ii) the existence of the College's complaints procedure and (iii) the existence of the Persistent Complaints and Harassment Policy
 - b) respond within a reasonable time
 - c) be available for consultation within reasonable time limits bearing in mind the needs of the students within the College and the nature of the complaint
 - d) respond with courtesy and respect
 - e) attempt to resolve problems using reasonable means in line with the College's complaints procedure, other policies and practice and in line with guidance and advice from Cambridgeshire County Council
 - f) keep complainants informed of progress towards a resolution of the issues raised

5. The College's expectations of parents/carers/members of the public

- 5.1 The College can expect parents/carers/members of the public who wish to raise problems with the College to:
- a) treat all College staff with courtesy and respect
 - b) respect the needs and well-being of students and staff within the College
 - c) avoid any use, or threatened use, of violence to people or property
 - d) avoid any aggression or verbal abuse
 - e) recognise the time constraints under which members of staff in schools work and allow the College a reasonable time to respond
 - f) recognise that resolving a specific problem can sometimes take some time
 - g) (in the case of a complaint) follow the College's complaints procedure

6. The College's actions in cases of persistent complaint or harassment

- 6.1 The College will take the following consecutive steps as necessary if the complainant's behaviour is not modified:
- a) inform the complainant orally or in writing that his/her behaviour is considered to have become unreasonable/unacceptable and may be considered to fall under the terms of this.
 - b) inform the complainant in writing that his/her behaviour is now considered by the College to have become unreasonable/unacceptable and warn of further sanctions under the policy.
 - c) inform the complainant in writing that his/her behaviour is now considered by the College to fall under the terms of this policy and that the complaint will not be investigated further until it is pursued in a manner the College considers to be reasonable.

As appropriate this may additionally result in the College:

- a) informing the complainant that all meetings with a member of staff will be conducted with a second person present and that notes of meetings may be taken in the interests of all parties.
- b) informing the complainant that, except in emergencies, all communication from the complainant to the College should be carried out in writing.
- c) (in the case of physical or verbal aggression) referring to Schools Briefing Paper 15 and considering warning the complainant about being banned from the College site; or proceeding straight to a temporary ban.
- d) considering taking advice from Cambridgeshire County Council on pursuing a case under Anti-Harassment legislation.

6.2 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 the Persistent Complaints and Harassment Policy. In these circumstances advice may be sought from the Local Authority.

6.3 If a complainant may normally have recourse to the Local Government Ombudsman after the College's Complaints Procedure has been exhausted, in the event that the College considers that there are exceptional circumstances it may recommend that the complainant refer the matter to the Ombudsman at an earlier time.

6.4 If a complainant's harassing/persistent complaining behaviour is modified and is then resumed at a later date within a reasonable period of time, the College may resume the process identified above as appropriate. In these circumstances advice may be sought from the Local Authority.

6.5 If a complainant's harassing/persistent complaining behaviour is modified and the complaint still lies within the time limit specified in the College's Complaints Procedure, the College will use its discretion and may resume investigation of the complaint.

7. Review

7.1 The College will review as appropriate, and at a minimum once in a school year, any sanctions applied in the context of this policy.