



Persistent harassment and complaints policy

The Diamond Learning Partnership Trust

Date: January 2025

Management of Persistent, Aggressive, or Unreasonable Complaints and Communications Policy

1. Aims, Vision, and Values

The Diamond Learning Partnership Trust (DLPT) is committed to handling all complaints and interactions with parents, carers, students, and members of the public fairly and impartially, ensuring a high-quality service to address concerns or queries. While most complaints are managed under the remit of the Trust's Complaints Policy, exceptional circumstances may arise requiring the implementation of this policy.

DLPT staff will not tolerate unacceptable behaviour. The Trust will act to protect staff from abusive, offensive, threatening, malicious, or persistent behaviour, whether during ongoing investigations or after the complaints process has concluded. In such cases, actions will follow the procedures outlined in this policy.

Where all stages of the complaint procedure have been followed and a complainant remains dissatisfied, the Trust will inform them that the process is complete, and the matter is now closed.

2. Purpose and Intent

If a complaint meets the criteria for being unreasonable, it will be deemed outside the scope of DLPT's standard Complaints Policy. The objectives of this policy are to:

- Uphold courtesy and reasonableness in all communication with stakeholders.
- Protect the wellbeing of children, staff, Trustees, Governors, and parents.
- Address persistent or vexatious complaints fairly and transparently while minimising disruption to others.

3. Expectations of Parents/Carers and Members of the Public

We expect those raising concerns to:

- Treat staff with courtesy and respect.
- Respect the needs and wellbeing of pupils and staff.
- Avoid the use or threat of violence, aggression, or verbal abuse.
- Recognise staff time constraints and allow reasonable time for responses.
- Follow DLPT's Complaints Procedure and established communication channels.

In return, complainants can expect:

- Regular, courteous, and respectful communication from DLPT.
- Timely responses within operational constraints.
- Efforts to resolve issues in accordance with DLPT policies and practices.

4. Definition of an Unreasonable Complaint

An unreasonable complaint may include behaviour or actions that:

- Are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, or repetitious.
- Pursue unmeritorious outcomes or demand unrealistic resolutions.
- Involve aggressive, malicious, or abusive communication.
- Include false information or attempts to disrupt operations.

Such behaviour may target specific individuals, cause distress, undermine confidence, or consume disproportionate resources.

5. Actions

Stage 1: Closing the Matter

When all stages of the Complaints Procedure have been completed, the Headteacher (or CEO, or their representative, if the complaint is about the Headteacher or Chair of Trustees if the complaint involves the CEO) will inform the complainant that the matter is closed. Attempts to reopen the same issue will be treated as persistent or "serial" complaints.

Stage 2: Informal Warning

The Headteacher (CEO, or their representative, if the complaint is about the Headteacher or Chair of Trustees if the complaint involves the CEO) will meet with the complainant to address the behaviour and issue an informal warning. They will explain that continued unreasonable behaviour will result in sanctions. The Headteacher may put in place restricted access arrangements at this point.

Stage 3: Formal Sanctions - Restricted Access

If behaviour persists, DLPT will:

- Specify acceptable methods of communication.
- Limit contacts through a formal communication plan.
- Require meetings to include a second staff member, with meeting notes recorded.
- Seek legal advice if necessary under anti-harassment legislation.

Stage 4: Barring from Site

For serious cases, DLPT may revoke a complainant's access to Trust premises. The complainant will be informed in writing and allowed to present their views before a final decision is made. Bars will be reviewed after six months.

Stage 5: Cease to Respond

DLPT will cease responding to complaints if:

- All reasonable steps to address the concerns have been taken.
- The complainant has been informed of DLPT's position.
- The same points are repeatedly raised without new information.

The complainant will be informed in writing, and future contact may be restricted to a single point of contact.

6. New Complaints

New complaints unrelated to previous issues will be addressed under DLPT's Complaints Procedure. Repeated unreasonable behaviour may result in resuming the sanctions process at the appropriate stage.

7. Group Complaints

DLPT will address group concerns individually and make it clear that the right to complain pertains to individual circumstances. Group concerns can be raised through alternative channels, such as parent-teacher associations.

8. Reasonable Adjustments

DLPT may implement adjustments to facilitate communication, such as:

- Weekly instead of daily updates.
- Limiting contact to a single channel or specific times.
- Designating a single point of contact.

9. Links to Other Policies

This policy links to the following:

- Accessibility Plan
- Complaints Procedure
- Equality Information and Objectives
- Health and Safety Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Special Educational Needs Information Report and Policy

Appendix A: Examples of Unreasonable Complaints

Unreasonable complaints may involve:

- Refusal to articulate a complaint or specify outcomes.
- Failure to cooperate with investigation processes.
- Persistent pursuit of complaints outside the scope of DLPT.
- Excessive demands on staff time or resources.
- Use of aggressive, abusive, or malicious communication.
- Unreasonable use of Subject Access Requests or Freedom of Information requests.

This policy ensures DLPT maintains a safe, respectful, and efficient environment for all stakeholders while addressing concerns fairly and transparently.

[Model letter 1: Warning a complainant that his/her behaviour is considered to be in breach of the policy and of the consequences of remaining in breach of policy.](#)

Dear

This letter is to inform you that the School considers your actions in on..... when you to be in breach of the School's Harassment/Persistent Complaints Policy in relation to Section(s) 3.1 a, b, c d and 3.2 a, b c, d. [delete as appropriate].

We are aware that you have raised some concerns, and would advise you that these can be addressed by/the School is addressing these by *.....

At the moment we are dealing with these issues at stage * of the School's Complaints Procedure.

Please note that the School's Harassment/Persistent Complaints Policy sets out standards of behaviour expected of all people towards the School. These include:

- behaving reasonably

- treating others with courtesy and respect
- avoiding harassing behaviour
- reasonably resolving complaints using the School's Complaints Procedure
- avoiding physical and verbal aggression at all times

The Policy also indicates the steps that we can take if these standards are breached. Steps that we will take:

- not investigating your complaint further unless it is pursued in a manner considered by the School to be reasonable.

Additional steps that we may take if necessary:

- make special arrangements for your meetings and communication with the School
- ban you from the School premises
- take legal action against you [*delete as appropriate*]

I would ask that you allow the School time to resolve the issues according to the correct procedures, and would assure you that we shall take every possible step to move this process forward as quickly as possible.

I am confident that you will respect our need to maintain a calm and welcoming environment at all times.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

* Fill in as appropriate

Model letter 2: Informing a complainant that his/her further behaviour means that the sanctions referred to in Letter 1 will now be invoked.

Dear.....*

You will recall that I wrote to you on* telling you that we felt your behaviour in.....on.....when you* was below the standard we expect of all people toward the School and was in breach of the Harassment and Persistent Complaints Policy.

I am now writing to inform you that your behaviour in..... on.. when you* has now led us to apply for the foreseeable future the School's Harassment/Persistent Complaints Policy because it again breached that policy.

As a result, of the following actions in relation to Section(s) 3.1 3.1 a, b, c d and 3.2 a, b c, d [*delete as appropriate*] of the Policy have been taken: *

- The school will not investigate your complaint further unless it is pursued in a manner considered by the School to be reasonable
- The School will make special arrangements for meetings and/ or communication with the School. [*delete as appropriate*]
These arrangements do not, apply, of course, to any emergencies concerning #, which should be reported to the School in the usual way. I will write to you separately with details of this [send modal letter 3 and/or 4 as appropriate]
- banning you from the School premises. I will write to you separately with details of this [see banning letters 1 - 4 below.
- considering legal action against you [*delete as appropriate*]

These measures will be reviewed by the School on #.

If you wish to make a representation about the contents of this letter, please do so in writing to me at the School by .*

I do hope that the difficulties can now be quickly resolved.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

Fill in as appropriate. * Delete as appropriate

Model letter 3: Informing a complainant that special arrangements will be made for him/her to meet members of staff

Dear.....*

Following my letter to you of..... * informing you that we felt your recent behaviour in connection with the School to be unacceptable/ unreasonable * , and that we now considered you to be subject to the School's Persistent Complaints/Harassment Policy, I am now writing to outline for you the arrangements we have made regarding meetings at the School.

For the foreseeable future, should you wish to meet with a member of staff, we would ask you to note:

- a) this meeting will be arranged with a written appointment as soon as possible, and with a third-party present
- b) in the interests of all parties, formal notes of this meeting may be made

These arrangements do not, apply, of course, to any emergencies concerning *, which should be reported to the School in the usual way.

I thank you for your forbearance in this matter, and do hope that the difficulties we are currently experiencing can soon be resolved.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

* Fill in as appropriate

Model letter 4: Requesting that future communication should be by letter only

Dear*

You will recall that I wrote to you on* informing you that we felt your recent behaviour in connection with the School to be unacceptable/unreasonable * , and that we now considered you to be subject to the School's Persistent Complaints/Harassment Policy.

I am now requesting that, for the foreseeable future, all routine communication with the School should be by letter only. Please address all letters to.....* at the School. We shall respond as quickly as possible.

This request does not apply, of course, to any emergency involving *--in which case you should contact the School in the usual way--or to parents' evenings, which will continue as in the past, but with a third-party present.

I do hope that we can resolve the ongoing difficulties as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

* Fill in as appropriate

Banning letter 1: Initial letter to parent with children at the School

RECORDED DELIVERY

Dear Sir/Madam,

I have received a report from the Head teacher about your conduct on (enter date and time).

[Add summary of the incident and of its effect on staff, pupils, other parents.]

I must inform you that the Local Authority will not tolerate conduct of this nature on its premises and will act to defend its staff and pupils. I am therefore instructing that (for a temporary period) you are not to reappear on the premises of the School. If you do not comply with this instruction I shall arrange for you to be removed from the premises and prosecuted under Section 547 of the Education Act 1996. If convicted under this section, you are liable to a fine of up to £500.

[In the case of a primary school include:] For the duration of this decision you may bring your son(s)/daughter(s) (complete as appropriate) to school and collect them/him/her (delete as appropriate) at the end of the school day, but you must not go beyond the school gate.

[In the case of infant children, also insert:] Arrangements have been made for your [delete as appropriate] son(s)/daughter(s) (insert child/rens names) to be collected, and returned to you, at the school gate by a member of the School's staff.

The withdrawal of permission for you to enter the school premises takes effect straightaway. However, I still need to decide whether it is appropriate to confirm this decision. Before I do so, I wish to give you an opportunity to give me in writing any comments or observations of your own in relation to the incident described above. These comments may include any expressions of regret on your part and any assurances you are prepared to give about your future good conduct. To enable me to take a decision on this matter at an early point, you are asked to send me any written comments you wish to make by **[state date ten working days from the date of letter]**.

If on receipt of your comments I consider that my decision should be confirmed, you will be supplied with details of how to pursue a review of the circumstances of your case.

Yours faithfully,

CEO

Banning letter 2: Confirmation of ban, letter to parent with child/ren at the School

RECORDED DELIVERY

Dear Sir/Madam,

On (give date) I wrote to you informing you that on the advice of the headteacher, I had withdrawn permission for you to come onto the premises of the School. To enable the Governors to determine whether to confirm this decision for a longer period, I gave you the opportunity to give your written comments on the incident concerned by (give date).

I have not received a written response from you / I have now received a letter from you dated insert date, the contents of which I have noted. (delete either sentence as appropriate).

In the circumstances, and after further consideration of the Headteacher's report, I have determined that the decision to withdraw permission for you to come onto school premises should be confirmed. I am therefore instructing that until further notice you are not to come onto the premises of the School without the prior knowledge and approval of the headteacher. If you do not comply with this instruction

I shall arrange for you to be removed from the premises and prosecuted under Section 547 of the Education Act 1996. If convicted, you are liable to a fine of up to £500.

Regardless of this decision, the headteacher and staff at the School remain committed to the education of your child/children (delete as appropriate), who must continue to attend school as normal insert in the case of a primary school: under the arrangements set out in my previous letter.

The Governors will take steps to review the continuance of this decision on (give date). When deciding whether it is necessary to extend the withdrawal of permission to come onto the School's premises, the Authority will take into account the extent of your compliance with the decision, any appropriate expressions of regret and assurance of future good conduct received from yourself and any evidence of your co-operation with the School in other respects.

I understand that you may be disappointed with this decision. You do however, have the right to a further review by the Local Government Ombudsman.

[ONLY include where the incident has arisen within the context of a parental complaint against the School **if the school will still be considering the complaint:**]

Finally, I would advise you that I have asked the headteacher to ensure that your complaint that (give brief details) is considered under the appropriate stage of the School's parental complaints procedure. You will be contacted about this by the School in due course.

Yours faithfully,
CEO

Banning letter 3: Continuation of ban, letter to parent with child/ren at the School

RECORDED DELIVERY

Dear Sir/Madam,

I wrote to you on (give date) withdrawing permission for you to come onto the premises of (insert name) School until further notice. In that letter I also advised you that I would take steps to review this decision on (give date).

I have now completed the review. However, after consultation with the headteacher, I have determined that it is not yet appropriate for me to withdraw my decision. (Give a brief summary of reasons.)

I therefore advise that the instruction that you are not to come onto the premises of (insert name) School without the prior knowledge and approval of the headteacher remains in place until further notice.

I shall undertake a further review of this decision on (give date).

I understand that you may be disappointed with this decision. You do however, have the right to a further review by the Local Government Ombudsman.

Yours faithfully,

CEO

Banning letter 4: Removal of ban, letter to parent with child/ren at the School

RECORDED DELIVERY

Dear Sir/Madam,

On (insert date) I wrote to you informing you that, on the advice of the headteacher, I had temporarily withdrawn permission for you to come onto the premises of (insert name) School. To enable me to determine whether to confirm this decision for a longer period, I gave you the opportunity to let me have your written comments on this incident by (insert date).

I have not received a written response from you / I have now received a letter from you dated (insert date), the contents of which I have noted. (delete either sentence as appropriate).

[However] In the circumstances, and after consulting with the headteacher, I have decided that it is not necessary to confirm the decision, and I am therefore restoring to you the permission to come onto the school premises, with immediate effect.

Nevertheless, I remain very concerned at the incident which occurred on (insert date), and I must warn you that if there is any repetition of your behaviour on that occasion, I shall not hesitate to withdraw permission for you to come onto the premises again.

Yours sincerely,

CEO