



Ysgol Babanod is a Voluntary Controlled School of the Church of Wales. Ysgol Pant y Rhedyn is a community school which has close links to the Church in Wales. Our policies have been created to ensure that we are reflecting the Conwy Agreed Syllabus adherence for RVE. Our Religion, Values and Ethics practice is reflected in all policies that the schools follow.

Policy for Dealing with Persistent and Vexatious Complaints

The governing bodies at Ysgol Pant y Rhedyn and Ysgol Babanod believe that all parents and guardians have the right to be heard, understood and respected. It is also considered that all school staff and governors should be afforded the same rights. Managing just a handful of persistent and vexatious complaints can take up considerable time and resources, diverting valuable resources from learners at the school.

1.2 A parent or guardian in the context of this policy relates to the relatively few individuals whose actions or behaviour is considered

unacceptable, persistent or vexatious by the governing bodies at Ysgol Pant y Rhedyn and Ysgol Babanod. The policy is aimed at anyone who contacts the schools for whatever reason.

1.3 This Policy sets out the approach to managing these individuals whilst paying full regard to their human rights.

1.4 Where it is suspected that the complainant may have a mental health problem, learning difficulties, long term disability or condition which may prevent them from communicating with the school in a coherent or rational manner, steps may, if considered appropriate by the governing body, be taken to access relevant support services as required in order to manage them appropriately. Liaison will take place with Social Services regarding what appropriate action will be taken, by whom and when.

2. Policy Aims

2.1 To make it clear and in an open manner what the schools will or will not do in relation to contact by persistent and vexatious parents and guardians, and managing their expectations.

2.2 To ensure that all parents and guardians, including those whose actions are considered unacceptable, are dealt with fairly, honestly, consistently and appropriately.

2.3 To ensure that other parents and guardians and school staff / governors do not suffer any disadvantage from complainants who act in an unacceptable manner.

3. Defining Persistent and Vexatious Customers

3.1 The actions of parents or guardians who are persistent or vexatious can result in unreasonable demands on the school or unacceptable behaviour towards staff and governors. It is these actions that are considered unacceptable and which this policy aims to manage. For this purpose these actions are grouped under three broad headings:

3.1.1 Aggressive or Abusive Behaviour

3.1.1.1 Violence is not restricted to acts of aggression that may result in physical harm. It also includes behaviour or language (whether oral or written) that may cause staff / governors to feel afraid, threatened or abused.

3.1.1.2 Examples of behaviour grouped under this heading include being under the influence of alcohol / drugs, along with threats, physical violence, personal verbal abuse, derogatory remarks and rudeness, or complaints designed to cause disruption or annoyance. It is also considered that inflammatory statements and unsubstantiated

allegations can be classed as abusive behaviour, including such statements shared online on social media.

3.1.1.3 We expect our staff and governors to be treated courteously and with respect. Violence or abuse towards staff is unacceptable. Our staff / governors will always try to recognise the difference between aggression and anger. However, it is not acceptable when anger escalates into aggression directed towards staff / governors.

3.1.2 Unreasonable Demands

3.1.2.1

Parents and guardians may make what are considered to be unreasonable demands on school staff / governors through the amount of information they seek, the nature and scale of service they expect or the number of approaches they make. What amounts to unreasonable

demands will always depend on the circumstances surrounding the behaviour and the seriousness of the issues raised by the parent or guardian which could trigger further consideration/action.

3.1.2.2 Examples of actions grouped under this heading include demanding responses within an unreasonable time-scale, persistently demanding to see or speak to a particular member of staff, continual phone calls or letters, repeatedly changing the substance of the content or raising unrelated concerns, and complaints which clearly do not have any serious purpose or value.

3.1.2.3 These demands are considered unacceptable and unreasonable if they start to impact substantially on the work of the school, such as taking up an excessive amount of staff / governor time to the disadvantage of other customers or functions, or staff / governors starting to feel the demands are bordering on harassment.

3.1.3 Unreasonable Persistence

3.1.3.1 It is recognised that some parents and guardians will not or cannot accept that the schools are unable to assist them further, will not accept a response already given or provide a level of service other than that provided already. Parents and guardians may persist in disagreeing with the action or decision taken in relation to their concern or contact the school persistently about the same issue.

3.1.3.2 Examples of actions grouped under this heading include persistent refusal to accept a decision made in relation to a contact, persistent refusal to accept explanations relating to what the school has or has not done, can or cannot do, or continuing to pursue a concern without presenting any new information. The way in which these customers approach the school may be entirely reasonable, but it is their persistent behaviour in continuing to do so that is not.

3.1.3.3 The actions of persistent customers are considered to be unacceptable when they take up what the schools regard as being a disproportionate amount of time and resources.

Page 4 of 8 4. Managing Persistent and Vexatious Parents and Guardians

4.1 There are relatively few parents and guardians whose actions are considered by the schools to be persistent and/or vexatious. How these actions are managed depends on their nature and extent. If it adversely affects our staff's / governors' ability to do his or her work and provide a service to others, or if the persistence merely results in our time having to be spent on the same issue without any foundation to the requests, customer contact with the school may need to be restricted in order to manage the situation. The aim will be to do this in a way, wherever possible, that allows any outstanding issue to be resolved.

4.2 Contact in person, by telephone, letter or electronically (eg via email) or by any combination of these will be restricted. Efforts will be made to try to maintain at least one form of contact. The customer will be told in writing by the relevant governor that their name is on a 'Parents / guardians with a single point of contact' list. This single point of contact for all services will be the Corporate Complaints Officer who has been appointed the SPOC for the Authority with the exception of Social Services who have their own Statutory Complaints Officer.

This means that all communication with the Authority will be channelled via the Single Point of contact by letter or email. Ysgol Pant y Rhedyn and Ysgol Babanod may also insist that contact should be through a third party if required. The schools, however reserve the right to contact the complainant via other methods than letter or e-mail should there be a requirement to do so.

The complainant may also be allowed by prior consent to use a designated telephone number should it be necessary to do so, for example, to contact the school about an urgent matter regarding a child at the school.

4.3 The threat or use of physical violence, verbal abuse or harassment towards school staff / governors is likely to result in the ending of all direct contact with the customer. Incidents may be reported to the police. This will always be the case if physical violence is used or threatened.

4.4 Ysgol Pant y Rhedyn and Ysgol Babanod will not deal with correspondence (letter or email) that is abusive. When this happens the parent or guardian will be told that their language is considered offensive and/or inappropriate. They will be asked to stop using such language and both schools will state that there will be no response to

their correspondence if they do not stop. Both schools may require future contact to be through a third party.

4.5 The schools will not deal with correspondence (letter or email) that contains allegations which lack substantive evidence.

4.6 School staff and governors both have the right to make a decision regarding whether a caller's behaviour is unacceptable. They will inform a caller should this be the case and say that the call will be terminated if the behaviour does not stop. If the behaviour continues, staff can terminate the call (indicating that they will put the phone down before actually doing so).

4.7 Where a parent or guardian repeatedly phones, visits the office, sends irrelevant emails/ documents or raises the same issues, Conwy may decide to:

- Record calls using the available technology
- Only take telephone calls at set times on set days or put an arrangement in place for only one member of staff to deal with calls or correspondence from the parent / guardian in the future (single point of contact)
- Return the documents to the parent / guardian or, in extreme cases, advise them that further irrelevant documents will be destroyed.
- Take other action that we consider appropriate. Both schools will, however, always tell the parent / guardian what action is being taken and why.

4.8 Where a parent / guardian continues to correspond on a wide range of issues, and this action is considered excessive, then the customer will be told that only a certain number of issues will be considered in a given period and asked to limit or focus their requests accordingly.

4.9 The actions of a parent / guardian may be considered unreasonably persistent if all internal review mechanisms have been exhausted and the complainant continues to dispute the decision made. The parent / guardian will be told that the school will not enter into any future correspondence. Future correspondence from the complainant will be read and filed, but only acknowledged or responded to if it provides significant new information relating to the contact.

5. Deciding to Restrict Contact 5

.1 School staff / governors who directly experience aggressive or abusive behaviour from a parent or guardian have the authority to deal

immediately with that behaviour in a manner they consider appropriate to the situation and in line with this policy.

5.2 With the exception of such immediate decisions taken at the time of an incident, decisions to restrict contact with the school are only taken after careful consideration of the situation by a senior member of staff. Wherever possible, we give a parent / guardian the opportunity to modify their behaviour or action before a decision is taken. Parents / guardians are told in writing why a decision has been made to restrict future contact, the restricted contact arrangements and, if relevant, the length of time the restrictions will be in place.

5.3 Where the Authority suspects a member of the complainant's family or a friend are taking up the same issues on behalf of the complainant, the Authority reserves the right to include them in the Single Point of Contact

6. Recording and Reviewing a Decision to Restrict Contact

6.1 Both schools will record incidents of unacceptable actions by customers. Where it is decided to restrict customer contact, an entry noting this should be made in the relevant file and on appropriate computer records. A file will be kept which lists all Parents / Guardians with a Single Point of Contact.

6.2 The governing panel with responsibility for handling complaints will review the file of Parents / Guardians with a Single Point of Contact on an annual basis. A decision may be taken to lift the designation if the customer has demonstrated a more acceptable approach.

6. Any complaints submitted by a parent / guardian that has been declared Persistent and Vexatious will be examined by the relevant

governing panel and only taken forward through the complaints procedure if they feel there is any merit in doing so.

Page 6 of 8 . Freedom of Information Act 2000 / Environmental

Information Regulations 2004 .1 All requests for information have the potential of being subject to the requirements of FOI / EIR legislation .2

Section 14 of the FOI Act provides for dealing with vexatious or repeated requests. It is important to bear in mind that in this context it is the “request” that is to be considered as vexatious or repeated, and not the parent / guardian.

3 There may however come a time whereby the volume and frequency of requests from a parent or guardian becomes such that this policy (Managing Persistent and Vexatious Complaints) is invoked, provided it does not affect the statutory rights of the individuals concerned (eg accessing the Statement of Accounts).

Reviewed April 2022

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several loops and strokes, positioned above the text 'Chair of Governors'.

Chair of Governors