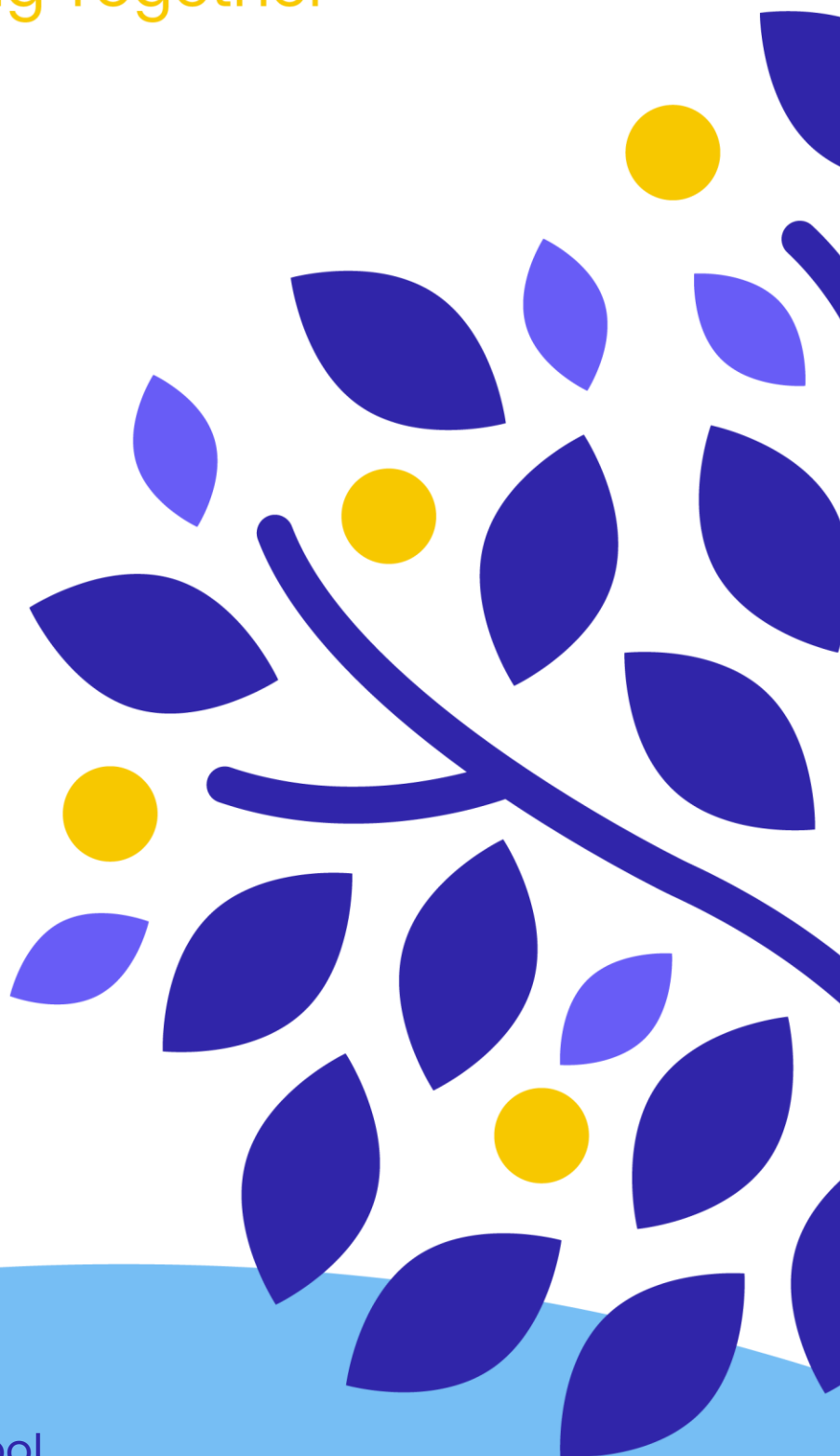




Learning Together,  
Growing Together



Bywell CE (C) Junior School

**Managing Serial or Unreasonable Complaints**

**2023**

This policy is wholly based on the information published in updated January 2021 by the Department for Education in a document titled 'Best Practice Advice for School Complaints Procedures 2020.

Bywell C.E. Junior School is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality service to those who complain. We have a number of mechanisms in place to listen to Parents/Carers/Members of the wider school community about any concerns they may have and are able to resolve matters through these mechanisms in almost all cases.

1. Members of the Senior Leadership team are present in the school playground every morning.
2. The school operates a 'Drop-In' session every Tuesday after school where Parents/Carers can meet their child's class teacher. An appointment is not necessary.
3. Parents/Carers are able to arrange a mutually convenient time to meet with teachers and/or members of the Senior Leadership team by telephoning the school office.
4. Parent/Carer surveys are undertaken twice a year and points raised are taken in to consideration when establishing school procedures.
5. Parents/Carers/Members of the wider school community are able to write to school ( or email the school office ) about their concern. The concern is then passed on to the relevant person to address it.

We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with school. 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.

We define unreasonable complainants as *'those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with the school, hinder our consideration of their or other people's complaints or place excessive demands on the running of school'*. A complaint may be regarded as unreasonable when the person making the complaint: -

- 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 while still wishing their complaint to be resolved;
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaints procedure;
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways, which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice;
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information, which the complainant expects to be taken into account, and commented on, or raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists 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 complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education;
- seeks an unrealistic outcome;
- makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with.

A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if the person making the complaint does so either face-to-face, by telephone, in writing or electronically:

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- maliciously;
- aggressively;
- using threats, intimidation or violence;
- using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language;
- knowing it to be false;

- using falsified information;
- publishing unacceptable information in a variety of media such as in social media websites and newspapers.

Complainants should limit the numbers of communications with a school while a complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text) as it could delay the outcome being reached.

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 asking them to change it.

For complainants who excessively contact our school causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will usually be reviewed after 6 months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the concerns and actions taken will be put in writing immediately and the police informed. This may include banning an individual from Bywell C.E. Junior School.

### **Barring from the School Premises**

Although fulfilling a public function, schools are private places. The public has no automatic right of entry.

Schools will therefore act to ensure they remain a safe place for pupils, staff and other members of their community.

If a Parent/Carer/Member of the wider school community's behaviour is a cause for concern, a school can ask him/her to leave school premises. In serious cases, the Head Teacher or the Local Authority can notify them in writing that their implied licence to be on school premises has been temporarily revoked subject to any representations that the Parent/Carer/Member of the wider school community may wish to make. Schools will give the Parent/Carer/Member of the wider school community the opportunity to formally express their views on the decision to bar in writing.

The decision to bar should then be reviewed, taking into account any representations made by the Parent/Carer/Member of the wider school community, and either confirmed or lifted. If the decision is confirmed the parent should be notified in writing, explaining how long the bar will be in place.

Anyone wishing to complain about being barred can do so, by letter or email, to the Head Teacher or Chair of Governors. However, complaints about barring cannot be escalated to the Department for Education.

Once the school's own complaints procedure has been completed, the only remaining avenue of appeal is through the courts; independent legal advice must therefore be sought.

*Agreed by Governors September 2021*

*To be reviewed July 2024*