# Ysgol Awel y Môr

CONWY
CYNGOR BWRDEISTREF SIROL
COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

## Unreasonably Persistent Communication - CCBC

| Policy owned by | Date adopted by the Governing Body | Signed on behalf of the Governing Body | Review date |
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| C Foulkes - Headteacher | Summer 2026 | | Summer 28 |
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# UNREASONABLY PERSISTENT COMMUNICATIONS AND UNREASONABLE CORRESPONDENT BEHAVIOUR POLICY/PROCEDURE

| **Unreasonably Persistent Communications and Unreasonable Correspondent Behaviour Policy/Procedure** | | | |
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**Policy Control**

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| **Policy Title:** | Unreasonably Persistent Communications and Unreasonable Correspondent Behaviour Policy/Procedure |
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| **Owner:** | Headteacher<br><br>Catrin Foulkes |
| **GB member/staff responsible for policy review: Chair of Governors** | Chair of Governors |

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The School/Governing Body is committed to serving all correspondents impartially and to providing a high quality service to those who communicate with us. Communication under this policy includes communication by: face to face meetings, written correspondence (including emails and messages) and by telephone.

The Headteacher and staff deal with specific correspondence and/or complaints as part of their day-to-day management of the school and, where appropriate, in accordance with the School's Complaints Policy this can be found on the school website www.awelymor.com or by contacting the school office on 01745 351892

The majority of correspondence and/or complaints are handled in an informal manner and are resolved quickly, sensitively and to the satisfaction of the correspondent. We are extremely committed to promoting positive relationships with all members of the school community, and welcome the opportunity to address and resolve issues that may arise.

However, there are a small number of members of the public who act in an unreasonable or unacceptable manner when contacting staff in the School/the Governing Body and/or when raising and/or pursuing concerns.

In some cases, through the frequency and nature of their contact with the School/Governing Body, they can hinder the consideration of their own or other people's service requirements. In some instances, the sheer number or nature of their contacts lead them to be considered as 'persistent' or 'vexatious' in their dealings with the School/Governing Body.

In these exceptional cases, where the nature of the contact, or the action of the correspondent is unreasonable or unacceptable, the School/Governing Body reserves the right to take action to manage contact in order to protect the interest of staff, the School and the wider public it serves.

In taking this action, the School/Governing Body will ensure that other members of the public or the school staff do not suffer any detriment from correspondents acting unreasonably. However, in doing so it will still enable the correspondent deemed an 'unreasonable correspondent' to have any legitimate concerns addressed.

## 2. AIMS OF THE POLICY

This policy aims to:

- Uphold the standards of courtesy and reasonableness that should characterise all communication between the School/Governing Body and its stakeholders/members of the public;
- Support the wellbeing of children, staff and everyone else who has legitimate interest in the work of the school, including governors and parents;
- Deal fairly, honestly, openly and transparently with those who engage in unreasonably persistent communications and/or unreasonable correspondent behaviour while ensuring that other stakeholders suffer no detriment.

## 3. STATUTORY/NON-STATUTORY GUIDANCE

The Data Protection Act 2018, Article 12(5), The Freedom of Information Act 2000, Section 14, and the Environment Information Regulations 2004, Reg.12, have provisions which deal with the concept of excessive, persistent and/or vexatious requesters, and authorise a reduced level of compliance to such requests. These statutory provisions have a separate system for appeals, which does not include the School's complaints procedure.

## 4. DEFINING UNACCEPTATBLE ACTIONS BY CORRESPONDENTS

Some people may act out of character in times of trouble or distress. The School/Governing Body acknowledge that there may have been upsetting or distressing circumstances leading up to the contact.

The School/Governing Body does not view behaviour as unacceptable just because a correspondent is forceful or determined. However, the actions of people who are angry, demanding or persistent may result in unreasonable demands or unacceptable behaviour towards staff. It is these actions that are considered unacceptable and that this policy aims to manage.

Actions which are defined as unacceptable have been grouped under three broad headings: **Aggressive or Abusive Behaviour**, **Unreasonable Demands** and **Unreasonable Persistence**, details of which are listed below. However, particular care must be taken in dealing with correspondents who have a learning disability or mental health problem whose condition may impact on their behaviour or understanding of school processes or decisions. Guidance should be sought from the Local Authority Officers in case of any doubt.

### 4.1 Aggressive or Abusive Behaviour

i. 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 to feel afraid, threatened, offended or abused.

ii. Examples of behaviours grouped under this heading include: threats, physical violence, personal verbal abuse, unsubstantiated allegations, derogatory remarks and rudeness. It is considered that inflammatory statements and unsubstantiated allegations can be abusive behaviour.

iii. Staff/governors are to be treated with courtesy and with respect. Violence or abuse towards any member of staff/governor is unacceptable. The anger felt by some correspondents relates to the subject matter of their concerns. However, it is not acceptable when anger escalates into aggression directed towards staff/governors.

### 4.2 Unreasonable Demands

i. A correspondent may make what are considered to be unreasonable demands 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 correspondent.

ii. Examples of actions grouped under this heading include: demanding responses within an unreasonable timescale, insisting on seeing or speaking to a particular member of staff/governor, continual phone calls or correspondence, repeatedly changing the substance of the contact or raising unrelated concerns.

iii. These demands are considered unacceptable and unreasonable if they start to impact substantially on the work of the School/Governing Body, such as taking up an excessive amount of staff/governor time to the disadvantage of other correspondents or services.

### 4.3 Unreasonable Persistence

i. It is recognised that some people will not, or cannot, accept the outcome of decision of a complaint, request or other investigations into their concerns. They may submit a formal complaint/escalation through the adopted complaints procedures if they feel that the School/Governing Body has not dealt with them in a fair manner. However, if they persist in disagreeing with the action or decision taken, or contact the School/Governing Body persistently about the same issue, this will be deemed unreasonable persistence.

ii. Also within this category is the refusal to accept the School/Governing Body's decision on a matter

of policy or strategy. Objections may be pertinent to the consideration of the matter in the first instance, but persistence in continuing such correspondence or other contact can intrude on the School's normal service delivery, especially when invalid complaints are submitted, and will be deemed to be unreasonable persistence.

iii. Examples of actions grouped under this heading include: persistent refusal to accept a decision made in relation to a complaint, persistent refusal to accept explanations relating to what can or cannot be done, continuing to pursue the same issue without presenting any new information, seeking to prolong contact by changing the substance of their issue and continually raising new issues and questions whilst the first issue is being addressed.

iv. The way in which these correspondents approach the School/Governing Body may be entirely reasonable, but it is their persistent behaviour in continuing to do so that is not.

v. The actions of persistent correspondents are considered to be unacceptable when they take up what is regarded by a Senior Leader or Governing Body as being a disproportionate amount of staff time and resources.

## 5. MANAGING UNACCEPTABLE ACTIONS BY CORRESPONDENTS

There are relatively few correspondents whose actions are considered to be unacceptable. How these actions are managed depends on their nature and extent.

If it adversely affects the School's/Governing Body's ability to do its work and provide a service to others, the correspondents' contact with the School/Governing Body may need to be restricted in order to manage the unacceptable action. The aim will be to do this in a way, wherever possible, that allows the service provided to the correspondent to continue to be delivered. Contact in person, by telephone, letter, electronically, Social Media (X formally Twitter) or by any combination of these may be restricted.

Effort will be made to try to maintain at least one form of contact. In extreme situations, the correspondent will be told, in writing, that their name is on a 'no personal contact' list. This means that they must restrict contact with the School/Governing Body to either written communication or through a third party.

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

The School/Governing Body will not deal with correspondence that is abusive to staff/governors or contains allegations that lack substantive evidence. When this happens, the correspondent will be told that their correspondence is considered offensive, unnecessary and unhelpful. They will be asked to stop communicating in such a manner and the member of staff/governor will state that there will be no response to their correspondence if they do not stop. Future contact may be required to be through a third party.

School staff/governors will end telephone calls/meetings if the correspondent is considered aggressive, abusive or offensive. The staff member/governor involved has the right to make this decision, tell the correspondent that the behaviour is unacceptable and end the call/meeting if the behaviour does not stop.

Where a correspondent repeatedly phones, visits the School, sends irrelevant documents or raises the same issues, the School/Governing Body may decide to:

- only take telephone calls from the correspondent at set times on set days or put an arrangement in place for either a dedicated telephone number or only one member of staff/governor to deal with calls or correspondence from the correspondent in the future;
- require the correspondent to make an appointment to see a named member of staff/governor before visiting the School or that the correspondent contacts the School/Governing Body in writing only;
- return the documents to the correspondent or, in extreme cases, advise the correspondent that further irrelevant documents will be destroyed;
- take other action considered appropriate by the School/Governing Body. However, the correspondent

will always be told what action is being taken and why.

Where a correspondent continues to correspond on a wide range of issues or pursues a single issue persistently, and this action is considered excessive, then the correspondent 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.

A correspondent's action may also be considered unreasonably persistent if, after making a formal complaint, all internal review mechanisms have been exhausted, and the correspondent continues to dispute the decision relating to their complaint (apart from through the recognised process of the Complaints Policy). The correspondent will be told that no future correspondence will be accepted or discussions undertaken concerning this matter.

Any future contact by the correspondent on this issue must be in writing. Future correspondence is read and filed, but only acknowledged or responded to if the correspondent provides significant new information relating to the complaint.

## 6. DECIDING TO RESTRICT CORRESPONDENT CONTACT

Staff/governors who directly experience aggressive or abusive behaviour from a correspondent can take immediate action to remove themselves from the situation and bring the interaction to an end and in line with this policy. The staff/governor should record what is happening, making a note of the time, date and what has been said or done. In some severe cases, the school might inform the police if a parent continues their abusive behaviour or is a risk to the health and safety of staff and pupils.

With the exception of such immediate decisions taken at the time of an incident, e.g.in response to aggressive behaviour or threats of violence or abuse, decisions to restrict contact are only taken after careful consideration of the situation by the Headteacher and/or Chair of Governors.

They should consider whether further action is necessary prior to taking the decision to designate the correspondent as unreasonable or unreasonably persistent, e.g. if no meeting has taken place between the correspondent and the Headteacher and/or Chair of Governors, and provided that nothing is known about the correspondent which would make this unadvisable, an offer of a meeting with the Headteacher and/or Chair of Governors should be considered. Sometimes such meetings can dispel misunderstandings and move matters towards a resolution.

If more than one department/member of staff/governor is being contacted by an unreasonably persistent correspondent, consider:

- setting up a strategy meeting to agree a cross-departmental approach; and
- designating a Single Point of Contact (SPOC) to co-ordinate the School/Governing Body's response(s).

If the correspondent has disabilities, an advocate might be helpful to both parties; consider offering to help the correspondent find an independent one.

Before applying any restrictions, the correspondent should be given a warning that if their actions continue the School/Governing Body may decide to treat them as unreasonably persistent. Wherever possible, the correspondent is to be given the opportunity to modify their behaviour or action before a decision is taken.

The correspondent will be informed in writing why a decision has been made to restrict future contact, the restricted contact arrangements and, if relevant, the length of time that these restrictions will be in place, as well as their right to appeal. A copy of this policy will be enclosed with the letter.

## 7. APPEALING A DECISION TO RESTRICT CONTACT

A correspondent can appeal a decision to restrict contact or a continuation of restricted contact following a review. A governor who was not involved in the original decision (usually the Vice-Chair of Governors) will consider the appeal.

The nominated governor will advise the correspondent in writing that either the restricted contact arrangements still apply or a different course of action has been agreed.

## 8. RECORDING AND REVIEWING A DECISION TO RESTRICT CONTACT

Records are kept of all incidents of unacceptable actions by correspondents. Where it is decided to restrict contact, an entry noting this is made in the relevant file and on appropriate computer records.

Where a correspondent has been assessed as persistent, the restriction on contact may be reviewed if, for example, the correspondent subsequently demonstrates a more reasonable approach. Staff/governors would previously have used discretion in recommending restricted contact and discretion should similarly be used in recommending that this status be withdrawn.

## 9. SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

A School/Governing body will implement restricted contact if required to do so as part of a court order and/on advice of a partner service (provided the partner service has undertaken due process against an appropriate policy).

Where the School/Governing Body suspects a member of the correspondent's family or a friend are taking up the same issues on behalf of the correspondent, the School/Governing Body reserves the right to include them in the Single Point of Contact