EMMAUS CATHOLIC ACADEMY TRUST

Managing Serial and Unreasonable Complaints

September 2026

POLICY DOCUMENT	Managing Serial and Unreasonable Complaints Policy
Legislation/Category: Academy Schools	RECOMMENDED
Lead Member of Staff:	Director of Governance, Risk and Compliance
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EMMAUS CATHOLIC ACADEMY TRUST

The Diocese of Salford provides Catholic Academy Trusts, schools, and colleges for the following reasons:

1. **To assist in the mission of making Christ known to all people;**
2. **To assist parents and carers, who are the prime educators of their children, in the education and religious formation of their children;**
3. **To be of service to the local Church – the Diocese – the Parish and the Christian home;**
4. **To be of service to society.**

Emmaus Catholic Academy Trust Vision:

To provide great Catholic education across Greater Manchester.

Journey with Emmaus CAT…

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1. Policy Statement

Our core purpose is to create a healthy Catholic organisation serving the pupils in our Catholic schools, communities, families, and parishes across Greater Manchester. We are aligned in our mission to work collegially to ensure that we have great schools, strong in faith, serving society. Schools where every pupil has an equal opportunity to thrive and receive the very best Catholic education and formation. Our guiding principles and this Pupil Allergy Policy exist to ensure that each Emmaus CAT school has a clear and compelling vision for all of its pupils, focused on creating an inclusive environment, tailored to the needs and abilities of each and every pupil. At Emmaus CAT we will succeed with our philosophy of aligned autonomy, the belief that talent is key and the sharing of curriculum knowledge and academic rigor.

2. Aim of Emmaus CAT Policies

The aim of this, and all Emmaus CAT policies is to support the seven major themes of Catholic Social Teaching, which include;

- The dignity of work and the rights of the worker;
- Solidarity with all people;
- A preferential option for the poor;
- Stewardship and care for creation;
- The call to community and participation;
- The sacredness of life and the dignity of the human person;
- Human rights and the responsibility to protect them;

as well as ensuring that national legislation and guidance are implemented across all our schools. Our policies should not be viewed in isolation, but along with our guiding principles, as integral to all aspects of school improvement. With our policies we aim to create an effective partnership with parents and carers, the prime educators of their children, to ensure that all children reach their potential whist setting high expectations and aspirations, in a positive and supportive environment. All Emmaus CAT policies will clearly define and communicate the core principles which underpin our Catholic culture, mission and vision.

3. Aim of this Policy

At Emmaus CAT we believe talent is key and that our talented people are our most significant resource. We are committed to working together to provide the highest standards for our young people.

Emmaus Catholic Academy Trust is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with our schools. 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.

This policy statement sets out the approach of the Emmaus Catholic Academy Trust to dealing with concerns and complaints. All references to 'headteacher' in this policy include executive headteacher and head of school depending on the leadership structure in place at the time of the complaint.

Emmaus Catholic Academy Trust defines "serial complaints" as:

Complaints made repeatedly by the same individual or group, often about the same issue or related issues, despite previous investigations, responses, or resolutions having already been provided.

A serial complainant may:

- Submit multiple complaints on the same matter.
- Raise issues that have already been fully investigated and addressed.
- Continuously escalate concerns without providing significant new evidence.
- Make frequent complaints across different channels about similar grievances.
- Redefines and/or changes the theme of the complaint during the course of the investigation

Emmaus CAT defines "unreasonable complaints" as:

Complaints where the manner in which the complaint is pursued, rather than the complaint itself, places a disproportionate burden on the organisation's resources, staff, or processes.

A complaint may be regarded as unreasonable when the complainant:

- Refuses to accept evidence-based findings after a thorough investigation.
- Repeatedly raises the same issues without presenting new information or evidence.
- Makes excessive demands on time and resources that are out of proportion to the issue raised.
- Uses abusive, threatening, or offensive language towards staff.
- Makes unrealistic or unattainable demands or expectations.
- Submits an excessive volume of correspondence that hinders effective complaint handling.
- Attempts to relitigate matters that have been fully investigated and concluded.

Emmaus CAT defines "vexatious complaints" as:

Complaints that are pursued primarily to harass, frustrate, burden, or cause disruption to an organisation or its staff, rather than to seek a genuine resolution to a legitimate concern.

In summary:

Term	Meaning
Serial complaint	Repeated complaints about the same or similar issues.
Unreasonable complaint	The pursuit of a complaint places disproportionate or unrealistic burdens upon resources.
Vexatious complaint	Pursued primarily to harass, disrupt, or cause detriment rather than resolve a genuine concern.

Other aspects of unreasonable behaviour that are covered under the scope of this policy include:

- Refusing to articulate the complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance.
- Refusing to cooperate with the complaint investigation process
- Refusing to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaint's procedure
- Insisting that the complaint is dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaint's procedure or good practice.
- Introducing trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented upon
- Raising large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, insisting that they are fully answered, often immediately or to the complainant's own timescales
- Making unjustified complaints about those who are trying to deal with the issues, including seeking to have them replaced.
- Changing the basis of the complaint during the course of the investigation.
- Seeking an unrealistic outcome
- Using threats to try and intimidate and/or control the process and outcome
- Using abusive, offensive and/or discriminatory language or violence
- Knowingly providing falsified information.
- Publishing or publicising unacceptable information, including via social media.

So as to protect the investigation process, complainants should try to limit their communication with the school that relates to their complaint, whilst this is being investigated. It is not helpful or conducive to an investigation for repeated correspondence to be sent in any form and this could delay an outcome being reached.

Ordinarily, the headteacher, chair of governors or representative of the central team will discuss any concerns with the complainant prior to applying the serial, unreasonable or vexatious definition.

If the behaviour continues, the headteacher, chair of governors or representative of the central team will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it.

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

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from one or more Emmaus CAT schools.

Use of Artificial Intelligence

Whilst it is our preference to receive and understand complaints that genuinely reflect the complainants views in their own words, Emmaus CAT recognises that complainants may choose to use Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools to assist with drafting, editing, translating, summarising, or presenting their complaints and correspondence. The use of AI, in itself, will not be considered a factor in determining whether a complainant is acting unreasonably, persistently or vexatiously.

However, where the use of AI results in the repeated submission of substantially similar complaints, excessive volumes of correspondence, inaccurate or misleading information, duplication of issues that have already been addressed, or conduct that otherwise meets the criteria set out in this policy, the organisation may choose to apply the provisions of this policy.

Emmaus CAT reserves the right to request clarification where AI-generated content is unclear, contradictory, excessively lengthy, or where it is necessary to establish the complainant's specific concerns. Any actions taken under this policy will remain proportionate, evidence-based, and consistent with the principles of fairness, accessibility, and natural justice.