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FORGE VALLEY SCHOOL

Vexatious Communication Procedure

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Forge Valley School are committed to professional, timely and courteous communication between the school, parents and other stakeholders. Equally, we expect that parents, carers and members of the local community should always communicate with Forge Valley staff in a respectful and appropriate way. This includes conversations when visiting the school, telephone calls, letters and emails.

This document includes the following:

- A definition of vexatious communication
- School procedure for dealing with vexatious communication

Vexatious Communication

Communication between home and school (or indeed the school and its local community) is extremely important. We work in partnership to ensure young people achieve all that they can. If parents, carers or members of the community are dissatisfied with the school then there is a clear complaints procedure.

Vexatious communication includes conversations (face to face or on the phone), letters or emails that are:

- Overly persistent – i.e. continuing to communicate with a colleague even when it has been made clear that they have responded to a complaint and dealt with it. If a complainant is still dissatisfied they have recourse to the next step in the complaints procedure. As a school we have an additional step in our approach to dealing with complaints – we take additional professional advice. This might mean the complaint is discussed by a wider group of professionals in school, with the school governors, with colleagues in another school or with professionals working for another organisation (e.g. an anti-bullying charity). This ensures we have done all we can and if the complainant is still dissatisfied, they must take the next step in the complaints procedure. A final point is that our communications principles state that we will aim to set up a meeting in most circumstances if more than three emails are exchanged. If this meeting is offered but the complainant does not wish to meet then colleagues in school will politely end the communication.
- Inappropriate in manner – i.e. when pejorative, mean spirited, personal or inappropriate comments are made.
- Threatening – i.e. direct or indirect threats about what might be done or they would like to do. This may be threats of a physical nature or to do with what they will say to or about a colleague or the school (this may involve threats of contact with external agencies). It may also include speaking to colleagues in an unpleasant or bullying manner or using abusive or threatening language.
- Prolific – prolific correspondence or excessive email or telephone contact about a concern or complaint

School procedure for dealing with vexatious communication

- Firstly colleagues in school will politely but clearly indicate that the communication is becoming vexatious. If it is a phone call or face to face meeting then they will politely end their side of the conversation. The parent, carer or member of the public will be sent a copy of this policy and asked to refer to it in future communications with school. A record will be made of this. At this stage it may be appropriate to insist that all future communications should be with a school leader (i.e. Subject or Team Leader or a member of the School Leadership Team).
- If vexatious communications continue then a letter of warning will be sent outlining our expectations for positive communications. A meeting with the Headteacher will be arranged to clarify the importance of positive communication.
- Any future reoccurrences will most probably indicate a break down in relationship between the school and the parent, carer or member of the local community. At this point the school may seek legal advice or discuss a school transfer for the benefit of all.

Appendix 1

Sign displayed in reception, offices and meeting rooms:

'Schools work in partnership with parents and we seek to respond to your phone calls and emails promptly and professionally. We would hope that all your encounters with Forge Valley staff are courteous and positive. If you ever have cause for concern we urge you to contact a member of the Leadership Team.

Equally, we ask that all those contacting us in school treat all members of staff with respect and courtesy.

Ambition, Endeavour, Success'