

Complaints Policy and Procedure

This procedure is for use for complaints against the school, a member of staff or the governing board. The complainant must raise the complaint within **three months** of the incident (or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within **three months** of the last of these incidents). The school will consider complaints out of this time frame, only if exceptional circumstances apply. The school will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

Complainants should not approach individual governors to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and having prior knowledge of a complaint will prevent the governor from being able to sit on a panel at a later stage of the complaints process. Complainants should always be advised to follow the process laid out in this policy.

There are separate arrangements, laid down by law to cover the following:

- Appeals against admissions to schools.
- Appeals about statutory assessments and against Education Health Care Plans.
- Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation
- Appeals against the Exclusion of Children from School
- Whistleblowing
- Staff Grievance & Disciplinary procedures
- Staff conduct complaints.
- School re-organisation proposals.
- Services provided by other providers who may use the school premises or facilities.
- Complaints about the content of the national curriculum. Complaints about the 'content' of the national curriculum should be sent to the DfE using their contact form.
- Complaints about staff conduct will not generally be handled under this complaints procedure. Complainants will be advised that any staff conduct complaints will be considered under staff disciplinary procedures, if appropriate, but outcomes will not be shared with them.

In addition:

- Anonymous complaints will not be investigated unless deemed serious enough by the Headteacher or Chair of Governors.
- Complaints that are being investigated by other bodies such as the Police will be suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations.
- If a complainant commences legal action against the school in relation to their complaint, the school will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure in relation to the complaint until those legal proceedings have concluded.

Complaints against school staff (except the Headteacher) should be made in the first instance, to the Headteacher via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints that involve or are about the Headteacher should be addressed to the Chair of Governors, via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor or the whole governing body should be addressed to the Governance Professional via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

For ease of use, a template complaint form is included at the end of this procedure. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office.

Stage One: Informal Stage - Complaint Heard by Staff Member/Headteacher/ Chair of Governors.

In the first instance the complaint should be discussed between the person making the complaint and the member of staff involved. If a complainant indicates that they would have difficulty discussing a complaint with that particular member of staff they should be referred to another staff member.

Similarly, if a member of staff/Headteacher/Chair of Governors feels too compromised to deal with a complaint it should be referred to another member of staff or another governor. The ability to consider the complaint objectively and impartially is crucial and it is also important to give an indication of timescale if it is found that the complaint requires further investigation.

If a complainant first approaches a governor, they should be referred, via the Headteacher, to the appropriate person, i.e. the member of staff concerned or the Chair of Governors.

Whoever has heard the complaint at stage one will advise the complainant on how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome.

At this stage the complainant will be asked to complete the complaints form if they have not done so already. This may be done by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant, if they have appropriate consent to do so. Reasonable adjustments will also be made if required.

For ease of use, a template complaint form is included at the end of this procedure. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office. You can also ask third party organisations like the Citizens Advice to help you.

Mediation (Optional stage after stage one or two)

*The school **may** offer the option of mediation following stage one or two of the complaint consideration. This is not instead of stage two or three rather as an additional way of reaching agreement and securing a way forward. Complainants do not have to accept mediation nor do the school have to offer this step if it is felt to be inappropriate.*

Stage Two: Formal Consideration of Complaint.

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of stage one or the way the complaint has been handled at stage one and wishes to pursue their initial complaint further, the Headteacher, Chair of Governors or nominated officer may delegate the task of formally investigating the complaint to another staff member or another governor once the complaints form has been received.

The Headteacher/Chair of Governors/nominated officer may also, in exceptional circumstances, commission an investigating officer report to be undertaken by an external professional. Within this stage, the appointed person will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see.

The person making the complaint will be informed that an investigation is underway and that they will receive a response within **25 school days**, or a letter explaining the reason for any subsequent delay.

Once the relevant facts have been established and conclusions drawn, the Headteacher/Chair of Governors/nominated officer should relay the decision, and the reason for the decision, in writing to the complainant.

In addition, they may offer one or more of the following:

- an explanation
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- an assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not reoccur
- an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint
- an apology.

Stage Three: Complaint Heard by Governing Board Complaints Committee

If the complainant is still dissatisfied with the outcome, they should contact the Headteacher/Chair of Governors/nominated officer giving details of the complaint within **10 school days** of receipt of the stage two decision letter.

At least **7 school days** before the meeting, the Governance Professional will:

- confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that, if the complainant is invited, the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the committee at least **3 school days** before the meeting.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties before the date of the meeting. The committee will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

The committee will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.

If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates, without good reason, the Governance Professional will decide when to hold the meeting. It will then proceed in the

complainant's absence on the basis of written submissions from both parties.

When convened, the committee will consist of a minimum of three governors with delegated powers. The chair of the committee will be appointed when they meet. The complaints committee will take a decision as to any action to be taken in response to the complaint. For example, they may choose to:

- Convene a hearing at which the complainant will be invited to put forward their case. This should be held within **20 school days** of the decision to hold the hearing;
- Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;
- Uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
- Recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

In reaching a decision the committee may take the advice of such bodies as they see fit, in particular the Local Authority and, where appropriate, the Diocesan Authority. Guidance on preparing for and holding the hearing will be provided by the school's dedicated Governance Professional.

It should be noted that these complaints committees are not a form of legal proceeding and therefore it is inappropriate for either the school or the complainant to bring legal representation. The exception to this would be if a member of staff, as a witness, wished to bring individual union or legal representation.

Further Considerations

Making a complaint to the Department for Education should only happen once all other routes have been followed. The exception to this may be where there is a child protection concern, or where a child is missing education. If the complainant believes the school did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact the Department for Education after they have completed stage three.

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by the school. They will consider whether the school has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint.

The complainant can refer their complaint to the Department for Education online at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus, by telephone on: 0370 000 2288, or by writing to:

Department for Education,
Piccadilly Gate,
Store Street,
Manchester,
M1 2WD.

If a complaint has been made by a number of parents and it is about a whole school issue they may, at any stage of the procedure, ask the Chief Inspector of Schools to investigate their complaint. The Chief Inspector may or may not require the school's complaints

procedure to be exhausted before he decides whether or not to investigate.

However, should the school become the focus of a complaint campaign; receiving a large volume of connected complaints all based on the same subject or from complainants unconnected with the school then the school reserves the right to deal with these complaints by means of either a template response or a general response posted on the school website.

A separate policy is in place in respect of serial and persistent complainants.

Please complete and return to the Headteacher/Chair of Governors or Governance Professional who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken. If you have difficulties completing the form, please contact the school so specific arrangements to consider your complaint can be made.

The form is attached at the end of this policy.

Your name:

Pupil's name (if applicable):

Your relationship to the pupil (if applicable):

Address:

Postcode:

Day time telephone number:

Evening telephone number:

E mail:

Please give details of your complaint:

What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint. (Who did you speak to and what was the response)?

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details:

Signature:

Date:

Official Use Only

Date acknowledgement sent:

By whom:

Complaint referred to:

Date:

Review Cycle

Every three years

Last Review

April 2026

Next Review

April 2029

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