



## **Complaints Policy**

**Status of policy: Statutory**

**Frequency of review: 2 years**

**Date of most recent review: 28/09/23**

**Date of next review: September 2025**

**Approved by FGM: Holly Clark, Chair of Governors**

## **MISSION**

**We provide a safe and inclusive learning environment where everyone is valued and encouraged to reach their full potential.**

## **RATIONALE**

Under Section 29 of the [Education Act 2002](#), Governing Bodies of all maintained schools in England have been required to have in place a procedure to deal with complaints relating to the school. The law also requires the procedure to be publicised.

There is a difference between a concern and a complaint; taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage will reduce the number that develop into formal complaints. The formal procedures will need to be invoked only when initial attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further.

## **AIMS**

We will endeavour to be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaint and will always put the interests of our children above all else. We will give careful consideration to all complaints and we aim to resolve any complaint through dialogue and mutual understanding.

Our complaints procedure will:

- encourage resolution of problems by **informal** means wherever possible;
- be easily **accessible** and **publicised**;
- be **simple** to understand and use;
- be **impartial and non-adversarial**;
- allow **swift** handling with established **time-limits** for action and keeping people informed of the progress;
- ensure a full and **fair** investigation by an independent person where necessary;
- respect **confidentiality**;
- address all the points at issue and provide an **effective** response and **appropriate** redress; and
- provide **information** to the school's senior management team and governors so that services can be improved.

## **GUIDELINES**

### **For a general complaint:**

**Step 1** If a parent is concerned about anything to do with the education or support that we are providing at our school, they should, in the first instance, discuss the matter with their child's class teacher; most matters of concern can be resolved positively in this way. All teachers work very hard to ensure that each child is happy at school, and are making good progress; they naturally want to know if there is a problem, so that they can take action before it seriously affects the child's progress.

**Step 2** Where a parent feels that a situation has not been resolved through contact with the class teacher, or that their concern is of a sufficiently serious nature, they should make an appointment to discuss it with the Headteacher. The Headteacher will consider all matters of concern very seriously and investigate each case thoroughly. Most complaints would normally be resolved at this stage.

**Step 3** Only when an informal complaint fails to be resolved by the Headteacher should a formal complaint be made to the governing body. This complaint must be made in writing, stating the nature of the complaint, who has been spoken to already and the preferred outcome. The parent should send this written complaint to the Chair of Governors via the school office (see example complaint form enclosed at the end of this policy).

### **For a complaint about the Headteacher:**

**Step 1** If a parent is concerned about anything to do with the behaviour, leadership or management of the Headteacher, they should, in the first instance, discuss the matter with the Headteacher; most matters of concern can be resolved positively in this way.

**Step 2** Where a parent feels that a situation has not been resolved through contact with the Headteacher, or that their concern is of a sufficiently serious nature, they should make an appointment to discuss it with the Chair of Governors. The Chair will consider all matters of concern very seriously and investigate each case thoroughly. Most complaints would normally be resolved at this stage.

**Step 3** Only when an informal complaint fails to be resolved by the Chair should a formal complaint be made to the Governing Body. This complaint must be made in writing, stating the nature of the complaint, who has been spoken to already and the preferred outcome.

### **Governing body complaints committee**

The Governing Body must consider all written complaints **within 21 school working days** of receipt.

The Chair of Governors will nominate a governor to co-ordinate the procedure and will appoint a **complaints panel** consisting of 3 governors who are not employees of the school. The nominated co-ordinator will chair the complaints panel and finalise the procedure for any panel meeting.

The co-ordinator will arrange a meeting of the complaints panel to discuss the complaint and will invite the person making it to attend the meeting so that they can explain the complaint in more detail. The school will give the complainant at least five working days' notice of the meeting. If the complainant cannot attend the suggested date, a further date will be set. If the complainant does not attend the second date, a third and final date will be set, at which time the meeting will proceed without the complainant present.

The Headteacher will write a report addressing the complaint and ensure that the complaints panel members and the complainant receive a copy four working days before the meeting. (If it is a complaint about the Headteacher, the Chair of Governors will write the report).

The complainant is invited to write a report addressing the issue and must ensure that the complaints panel members and the Headteacher (or Chair of Governors) receives a copy two working days before the meeting. Other written evidence will not be accepted at the meeting, except in exceptional circumstances.

### **Check list for a panel hearing**

The panel must take the following points into account:

- the hearing is as informal as possible;
- after introductions, the complainant is invited to explain their complaint (with the support of a friend or other advocate if required);
- the panel members and Headteacher (or Chair of Governors) may ask questions;
- the Headteacher (or Chair of Governors) is then invited to explain the school's actions (with support of the Deputy Headteacher, Special Educational Needs Coordinator or other supporter if required);
- the panel members or complainant may ask questions;
- the complainant is then invited to sum up their complaint;
- the Headteacher (or Chair of Governors) is then invited to sum up the school's actions and response to the complaint;
- the chair of the panel explains that both parties will hear from the panel within 5 working days; and
- both parties leave the meeting while the panel decides on the issues.

When the panel has fully investigated the complaint, the chair of the panel, on behalf of the Governing Body, will write to the complainant confirming the outcome of the complaint and any agreed action to be taken. The panel can:

- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;
- uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
- decide on appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint; or
- recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

### **Investigating Complaints**

At each stage, the panel investigating the complaint should make sure that they:

- establish **what** has happened so far, and **who** has been involved;
- clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved;
- meet with the complainant or contact them;
- clarify what the complainant feels would put things right;
- interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
- conduct the interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning; and
- keep notes of the interview.

## **Resolving Complaints**

At each stage in the procedure we will look for a way in which a complaint can be resolved. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- an apology;
- an explanation;
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
- an assurance that the event complained of will not recur;
- an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again; or
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint.

It should be noted that an admission that the school could have handled the situation better is not the same as an admission of negligence.

## **Monitoring Complaints**

The Governing Body will review all complaints and recommended actions annually at a Full Governing Body Meeting. Any recommended actions will be forwarded to the appropriate committee for continued monitoring.

## **Unresolved complaints**

We hope our procedure will limit the number of complaints that become protracted. However, there will be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedures having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the chair or the Governing Body is able to inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed

Any complaint that the complainant feels is unresolved by the school can be addressed to the Secretary of State for Education.

## COMPLAINT FORM

Please complete and return to the school office addressed to the Chair of Governors (marked Private and Confidential) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

<b>Your name:</b>
<b>Pupil's name:</b>
<b>Your relationship to the pupil:</b>
<b>Address:</b>
<b>Postcode:</b>
<b>Day time telephone number:</b>
<b>Evening telephone number:</b>
<b>Please give details of your complaint.</b>
<b>What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint.</b>

**(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**

**Date acknowledgement sent:**

**By who:**

**Complaint referred to:**

**Date:**