



Policy:	School Complaints
Policy Ref:	CM4
Review Date:	October 2024
Next Review:	October 2027
Authorised by:	Headteacher

Legal Context

From September 2003 governing bodies of all maintained schools and nursery schools in England are required, under Section 29 of the Education Act 2002, to have in place a clear and well communicated procedure to deal with complaints.

The School Standards and Framework Act 1998 provided an additional function of the governing body to establish and publish procedures for dealing with complaints relating to the school, other than those covered by legislation and formal procedures elsewhere.

Who is Allowed to Complain?

This policy may be used by anyone who has a concern or complaint about any aspect of the school. In the main this will mean the parents and carers of the school's pupils, but may include neighbours of the school, or any other members of the local community. Every effort will be made to resolve all complaints received. Consideration will also be given to complaints made by parents of pupils who no longer attend the school. A reasonable delay between the child ceasing attendance at the school and the complaint will be allowed and the action taken will be dependant on the nature and seriousness of the complaint. A child protection issue for example will always be investigated so that the school can ensure that all statutory duties are being met and if not address the issues raised and learn from them.

Aims and Objectives of the Policy

This complaints policy aims to:

- Encourage the resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible;
- Ensure that concerns are dealt with quickly, fully and fairly and within clearly defined time limits;
- Provide effective responses and appropriate redress;
- Maintain good working relationships between all people involved with the school.

Stages of the Procedures (please refer to the School's Complaints Procedure)

There are 3 stages outlined in the complaints procedure:

Stage 1 - Complaint heard by staff member

Stage 2 - Complaint is heard by the Headteacher

Stage 3 - Complaint is heard by a Governing Body Complaints Appeal Panel

This policy sets out the most suitable and effective process for dealing with the majority of complaints which are not covered by alternative procedures. In most cases any concern or complaint, regardless of whose attention it is initially brought to, should be discussed informally before being escalated to any of the following formal stages.

In some cases, it may be deemed inappropriate for individuals to discuss their concerns informally. In such cases, complainants may be directed to contact the Headteacher directly. Complainants may choose to contact the Headteacher directly of their own accord. In these cases it will be at the discretion of the Headteacher as to whether or not it is appropriate for the complainant to discuss the matter informally before invoking the formal complaints procedure at Stage 1.

In all cases where the complaint concerns the school's Headteacher directly, stage 1 will be missed out and the formal complaints procedure will begin at stage 2, but heard by the Chair of Governors.

Publicity and Communication

There is a legal requirement for schools to publicise their complaints procedures. This policy will be included on the school's website or available through the school office. Schools may make reference to the complaints policy in other school documentation.

Confidentiality

All conversations and correspondence will be treated confidentially. Personal information will only be shared between staff and governors on a 'need to know' basis. Confidentiality will be maintained within the Governing Body to ensure sufficient governors have no prior knowledge of the complaint to enable a complaints panel to be convened, if required, at stage 3.

Accompaniment

It is an expectation that equal respect will be granted to each person involved within the process and that differences between people will be respected and understood. This includes the complainant's right to be accompanied by a friend or relative at discussions and hearings and/or to submit formal complaints which have been written by another individual on their behalf.

Changes to Time Limits and Deadlines

In general, the time limits and deadlines contained within the school's procedures should be adhered to by the school. However, in certain circumstances it may be inappropriate or impractical, for example, if an investigation cannot be conducted due to school holidays or illness.

Where a complaint leads to criminal proceedings this will always be the case.

If and when it becomes necessary to alter the time limits and deadlines set out within this policy, the complainant should be told and given an explanation as to why this has been the case.

Circumstances Under Which This Policy Should Not Be Used

Issues related to child protection, criminal investigations and employee grievances must all be dealt with separately from this policy.

This complaints policy is distinct from formal staff disciplinary proceedings and this should be made clear to all concerned. There may be occasions where a complaint gives rise to disciplinary procedures which put the complaints process on hold. If and when this occurs, the complainant should be informed. Any non-disciplinary aspects of the complaint should continue to be dealt with through the usual complaints procedures.