

# **Littledean Church of England Primary School and Pre-School**



## **Complaints Policy and Procedure**

*Aspiration - Resilience - Community*

Littledean C of E Primary School aims to resolve all complaints at the earliest possible stage, and where possible, informally, and is dedicated to continuing to provide the highest quality of education possible throughout the procedure.

This policy has been created to deal with any complaint against a member of staff or the school as a whole, relating to any aspects of the school or the provision of facilities or services. It is designed to ensure that the school's complaints procedure is straightforward, impartial, non-adversarial, allows a full and fair investigation, respects confidentiality and delivers an effective response and appropriate redress.

Any person, including a member of the public, is able to make a complaint about the provision of facilities or services that the school provides. This policy outlines the procedure that the complainant and school must follow. Once a complaint has been made, it can be resolved or withdrawn at any stage.

The Head Teacher will be the first point of contact when following the complaints procedure

### **Legal Framework**

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation including, but not limited to, the following:

- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Education Act 2002
- The Education (Pupil Information) (England) Regulations 2005
- Equality Act 2010
- Immigration Act 2016
- The School Information (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016
- UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
- Data Protection Act 2018

This policy has also due regard to guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- HM Government (2016) 'Code of Practice on the English language requirement for public sector workers'
- DfE (2021) 'Best practice guidance for school complaints procedures 2020'

### **Who can make a complaint?**

This complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children registered at the school or pre-school. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to Littledean C of E Primary School and Pre-School about any provision of facilities or services that we provide. Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as those relating to exclusions or admissions), we will use this complaints procedure.

### **Definitions**

For the purpose of this policy:

A "**complaint**" may be generally recognised as an expression or statement of dissatisfaction about actions taken or a lack of action.

A "**concern**" may be treated as an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important, and for which reassurances are sought.

The school will class concerns as complaints and follow the same procedures for both, as outlined within this policy.

Complaints can be resolved formally, through this procedure, or informally dependent on the complainant's choice. Any complaint or concern will be taken seriously, whether formally or informally, and the appropriate procedures will be implemented.

A “**grievance**” is an issue raised by a member of staff where they feel the school has not implemented a policy or process fairly or properly. Grievances will be dealt with in line with the school's Grievance Policy.

The definition of “**unreasonable complaints**” is outlined in the ‘Managing Serial and Unreasonable Complaints’ section of this policy.

For the purpose of this policy, “**duplicate complaints**” are identical complaints received from a complainant's spouse, partner, grandparent or child. These complaints will not be addressed again, the individual making the second complaint will be informed that the complaint has been dealt with on a local level and if they are dissatisfied with the result, they can appeal to the DfE.

Any new details provided by a complainant's spouse, partner, grandparent or child, will be investigated and dealt with in line with the complaints procedure.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

The complainant will:

- Cooperate with the school in seeking a solution to the complaint.
- Express the complaint and their concerns in full at the earliest opportunity.
- Promptly respond to any requests for information or meetings.
- Ask for assistance as needed.
- Treat anyone involved the complaint with respect.
- Refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality.

The complaint investigator will:

- Ensure that all parties involved in the complaint are fully updated throughout each stage of the procedure.
- Guarantee that all parties involved in the procedure are aware of any relevant legislation, including the Equality Act 2010, UK GDPR, Data Protection Act 2018 and Freedom of Information Act 2000.
- Keep up to date records throughout the procedure – these records will be kept securely of the school's ICT system and retained in line with the school's Retention Policy.
- Liaise with all parties involved to ensure that the complaints procedure runs smoothly, including the Head Teacher, Clerk to Governors and Chair of Governors.
- Provide a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint through sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved.
- Liaising with the complainant as appropriate to clarify what the complainant feels would remedy the situation.
- Conduct interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in questioning.
- Keep notes of interview or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of the meeting.
- Ensure, where the complainant is dissatisfied with the response, they are allowed to escalate it to the next formal stage and are provided the opportunity to complete the complaints procedure in full.

- Be aware of issues with regard to sharing third part information.
- Understand the complainant's need for additional support, including interpretation support, and be aware of any issues concerning this.

Where complaints are made against the Head Teacher, the Chair of Governors will be responsible for:

- Providing a sensitive and thorough interviewing process of the complainant to establish what has happened and who is involved.
- Considering all records, evidence and relevant information provided.
- Interviewing all parties that are involved in the complaint, including staff and pupils.
- Analysing all information in a comprehensive and fair manner.
- Liaising with the complainant to clarify an appropriate resolution to the problem.
- Identifying and recommending solutions and courses of action to take.
- Be mindful of timescales and ensuring all parties involved are aware of these timescales.
- Responding to the complainant in a clear and understandable manner.

The Panel Chair will:

- Ensure both parties are asked, via the Clerk, to provide any additional information relating to the complaint by a specific date in advance of the meeting.
- Ensure that minutes of the meetings are taken on every occasion.
- Explain the remit of the panel to the complainant.
- Ensure that all issues are addressed and that outcomes are reached based on facts and evidence.
- Help put at ease individuals who are not used to speaking at such hearings.
- Ensure that the room's layout and setting is informal and non-adversarial while still setting the appropriate tone.
- Conduct the hearing in an informal manner, ensuring everyone is treated with respect and courtesy and is not adversarial.
- Give both the complainant and the school the opportunity to state their case and seek clarity without undue interruption.
- Provide written copies of any written material or evidence to everyone in attendance of the meeting, ensuring that everyone has seen the necessary material.

All panel members will be aware that:

- The review panel meeting is impartial and should be seen to be so.
- No individual with prior involvement with the complaint, or the circumstances surrounding it, is permitted to sit on the panel.
- The aim of the panel is to achieve a reasonable resolution and ultimately, attain a harmonious reconciliation between the parties involved where practicable.
- Reconciliation between the school and complainant is not always achievable, and it may only be possible to establish facts and make recommendations to reassure the complainant that their case has been taken seriously.
- The panel can:
  - Dismiss or uphold the complaint in whole or in part.
  - Decide on appropriate action to be taken.
  - Recommend changes that the school can make to prevent a reoccurrence of the problem.
- When a child is present at the hearing, extra care needs to be taken to ensure that child does not feel intimidated, as well as ensuring the child's view is represented equally.

The Clerk to the Governing Board will:

- Ensure that all people involved in the complaint procedure are aware of their legal rights and duties, including any under legislation relating to school complaints, education law, the Equality Act 2010, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and the UK GDPR.
- Take minutes of any panel hearing.
- Collate all written material or evidence and send to the parties involved in timely advance of the hearing.
- Ensure the minutes of the panel hearing are circulated.
- Notify the relevant parties of the panel's decision and any other actions to be taken.

### **Making a Complaint**

The school is aware that any member of the public, including the parents of past and present pupils, can make a complaint about the provision of facilities or services that a school provides.

The school will consider all complaints, providing they are not anonymous, and ensure that the complaints procedure is:

- Easily accessible and publicised on its website.
- Simple to understand and put into practice.
- Impartial, non-adversarial and fair to all parties involved.
- Respectful of confidentiality duties.
- Fairly investigated, by an independent person where necessary.
- Continuously under improvement, using information gathered during the procedure to inform the school's SLT.
- Used to address all issues to provide appropriate and effective redress where necessary.

Complaints are expected to be made as soon as possible after an incident arises to amend the issue in an appropriate timescale. The school upholds a three-month time limit in which a complaint can be lodged regarding an incident. Complaints made outside this time limit will not be automatically refused and exceptions will be considered. In the case of any timescales changing, all parties involved will be informed of the changes in a timely manner.

Complaints should be made using the appropriate channels of communication. All complaints will be considered, whether they are made in person, by telephone, in writing, electronically via email, or via a third party (such as the Citizen's Advice Bureau), providing they are not anonymous.

All complainants will be given the opportunity to fully complete the complaints procedure and a complaint can progress to the next stage of the procedure even if it is not viewed as "justified".

### **Complaints about staff**

Any complaint made against a member of staff will be initially dealt with by the Head Teacher, and then by a committee of the governing board if not resolved.

Any complaint made against the Head Teacher will be initially dealt with by a suitably skilled member of the governing board and then by a committee of the governing board.

### **Complaints about governors**

Complaints may be made against:

- The chair of governors.

- The vice chair of governors.
- Any other member of the governing board
- The governing board as a whole.

These complaints should be made to the clerk to the governing board, who will then arrange for the complaint to be heard.

For complaints about the entire governing board, or the chair or vice chair of governors, the clerk to governors will determine the most appropriate course of action, depending on the nature of the complaint. This action may involve sourcing an independent investigator to initially deal with the complaint and then getting the complaint to be heard by co-opted governors from another school.

Under some circumstances, it may be necessary to deviate from the complaints procedure. Any deviation will be documented, along with the reasons for this.

Information about a complaint will not be disclosed to a third party without written consent from the complainant.

### **How to raise a concern or make a complaint**

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of the complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

Concerns should be raised with either the class teacher or Mrs McGoldrick. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

Complainants should not approach individual governors to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at Stage 2 of the procedure.

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

Complaints that involve or are about the Head Teacher should be addressed to Mr Mike Barnsley (Chair of Governors), via the school office. Please mark as Private and Confidential.

Complaints about the Chair of Governors, and individual governor or the whole governing board should be addressed Clerk to the Governing Body, via the school office. Please mark as Private and Confidential.

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

In accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure. For instance, providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings at accessible locations.

### **Time scales**

You 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. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

### Complaints received outside of term time

We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

### Scope of this Complaints Procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by Littledean C of E Primary School, other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

| Exceptions                                                                                                                                                                         | Who to contact                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Admissions to schools</li> <li>• Statutory assessment of Special Educational Needs</li> <li>• School re-organisation proposals</li> </ul> | <p>Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with Gloucestershire County Council</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation</li> </ul>                                                                     | <p>Complaints about child protection are handled under our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.</p> <p>If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), who has local responsibility for safeguarding. Contact details: Nigel Hatten (01452 426994).</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exclusion of children from school*</li> </ul>                                                                                             | <p>Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: <a href="http://www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions">www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions</a> .</p> <p><i>*Complaints about the application of the school behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.</i></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whistleblowing</li> </ul>                                                                                                                 | <p>We have adopted the GCC Whistleblowing Policy for all of our employees, including temporary staff and contractors.</p> <p>The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters directly with their employer. Referrals can be made at: <a href="http://Contact the Department for Education (DfE) - GOV.UK">Contact the Department for Education (DfE) - GOV.UK</a></p> <p>Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the Local Authority or Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.</p> |

|                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff grievances</li> </ul>                                                                                    | Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff conduct</li> </ul>                                                                                       | <p>Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate.</p> <p>Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a member of staff as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use the school premises or facilities</li> </ul> | Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Curriculum - content</li> </ul>                                                                       | Please contact the Department for Education at: <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus">www.education.gov.uk/contactus</a> .                                                                                                                                                                                                |

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, Local Authority (LA) safeguarding teams or tribunals, this may impact on our ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations.

If a complainant commences legal action against Littledean C of E Primary School in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure in relation to their complaint until those legal proceedings have concluded.

### Resolving complaints

At each stage of the procedure, Littledean C of E Primary School wants to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, we 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 recur
- an explanation of the steps that have been taken or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which changes will be made
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint
- an apology

### Withdrawal of a complaint

If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

## Complaints Procedure

### Stage 1

Formal complaints must be made to the Head Teacher (unless they are about the Head Teacher), via the school office. This may be done in person, in writing (preferably on the complaint form), or by telephone.

The Head Teacher will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 5 school days.

Within this response, the Head Teacher will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The Head Teacher can consider whether a face to face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

During the investigation the Head Teacher will:

- if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
- keep written records of any meetings/interview in relation to their investigation

At the conclusion of their investigation, the Head Teacher will provide a formal written response within 10 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint.

If the Head Teacher is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions Littledean C of E Primary School will take to resolve the complaint.

The Head Teacher will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1.

If the complaint is about the Head Teacher or a member of the Governing Body (including the Chair or Vice-Chair), a suitably skilled governor will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 1.

Complaints about the Head Teacher or member of the Governing Body must be made to the Clerk, via the school office.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice-Chair or
- the entire Governing Body or
- the majority of the Governing Body

Stage 1 will be considered by an independent investigator appointed by the Governing Body (possibly a suitably skilled governor from another school). At the conclusion of the investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response.

## **Stage 2**

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 1 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 2 – a meeting with members of the Governing Body's complaints committee, which will be formed of the first three, impartial, governors available. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.

A request to escalate to Stage 2 must be made to the Clerk, via the school office, with 5 school days of receipt of the Stage 1 response.

The Clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 5 school days.

Requests outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

The Clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within 10 school days of receipt of the Stage 2 request. If this is not possible, the Clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates, without good reason, the Clerk 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.

The complaints committee will consist of at least three governors with no prior involvement or knowledge of the complaint. Prior to the meeting, they will decide amongst themselves who will act as the Chair of the Complaints Committee. If there are fewer than three governors from Littledean C of E Primary School available the Clerk will source any additional, independent governors through another local school or through the LA Governor Services Team, in order to make up the committee. Alternatively, an entirely independent committee may be convened to hear the complaint at Stage 2.

The committee will decide whether to deal with the complaint by inviting parties to a meeting or through written representations, but in making their decision they will be sensitive to the complainant's needs.

If the complainant is invited to attend the meeting, they may bring someone along to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. Generally, we do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the committee meeting. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate.

For instance, if a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by union and/or legal representation.

*Note: 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.*

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

At least 3 school days before the meeting, the Clerk 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 material to be submitted to the committee at least 2 school days before the meeting

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 2 school days 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.

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

The committee will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The committee can:

- uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part

If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the committee will:

- decide on appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future

The Chair of the Committee will provide the complainant and Littledean C of E Primary School with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 5 school days.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire Governing Body or
- the majority of the Governing Body

Stage 2 will be heard by a committee of independent governors.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions Littledean C of E Primary School will take to resolve the complaint.

The response will also advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied.

### **Next steps**

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 2.

The Department for Education will not normally investigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by Littledean C of E Primary School. They will consider whether Littledean C of E Primary 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](http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus), by telephone on: 03700 000 2288 or by writing to:

Department for Education  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

## **Recording a Complaint**

A written record will be kept of any complaint made, whether made via phone, in person or in writing, detailing:

- The main issues raised, the findings and any recommendations.
- Whether the complaint was resolved following an informal route, formal route or panel hearing.
- Actions taken by the school as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint was upheld).

Recording devices will not be used to review discussions of complaints at a later date. Where there are communication difficulties or disabilities, recording devices may be used for the purposes of reasonable adjustments. The school will consult with the LA before using recording devices.

Details of any complaint made will not be shared with the entire governing board. The exception to this is when a complaint is made against the whole governing board and they need to be aware of the allegations made against them, to respond to any independent investigation. Complainants have a right to access copies of these records under the UK GDPR and the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

The school will hold all records of complaints centrally. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection requests to access them.

As data controllers, the schools will ensure in all cases that they comply with their obligations and responsibilities as outlined in the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK GDPR.

## **Complaints not Covered by this Procedure**

There are a variety of areas where the complaints procedure does not apply because of other separate statutory procedures being in place. The school will deal with complaints regarding these topics in line with the procedures outlines below.

The following complaints should be directed to the LA:

- Statutory assessments of SEND
- School reorganisation proposals
- Admissions to schools

Complaints about child protection matters will be handled in line with the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance. Any child protection complaints should be directed to the LADO or the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH).

Complaints concerning admissions will be directed to the appropriate admissions authority. Complaints regarding exclusions will be dealt with in accordance with procedures outlined in the school's Suspension and Exclusion Policy.

The school has an internal whistleblowing procedure for all employees, including contractors and temporary staff outlined in the Whistleblowing Policy. Any whistleblowers not wishing to raise the issue with their employer will direct their complaint to the DfE.

Volunteers who have concerns about the school or a member of staff should make their complaint in line with this policy. Volunteers may also be able to complain to the LA or DfE, depending on what the complaint is about.

Staff grievances and disciplinary procedures will be dealt with in line with the school's Grievance Policy. In these cases, complainants will not be informed of the outcome of any investigations; however, they will be notified that the matter is being addressed.

This complaints procedure is not to be used when addressing any complaints made about services provided by a third party who may use the school premises or facilities. The Head Teacher will ensure all third-party suppliers have their own complaints procedures in place, and all complaints concerning this should be directed to the service provider.

Complaints about the content of national curriculum should be made to the DfE. Complaints about how the school delivers the curriculum, including RE and RSHE, will be dealt with using this complaints procedure.

Any complaints about the content of the daily act of collective worship are dealt with by either:

- The LA.
- The local Standard Advisory Council on Religious Education.
- Another relevant body, e.g. the diocese.

Complaints from parents who are dissatisfied with the handling of a request to withdraw their child from RE or collective worship will be handled in line with this complaints procedure.

Requests for information and issues with the school's process for dealing with FOI requests, will be dealt with in accordance with the Freedom of Information Policy.

### **Exceptional Circumstances**

The DfE expects complainants to have completed the school's complaints procedure before directing a complaint to them. The exceptions to this include when:

- Pupils are at risk of harm.
- Pupils are missing education.
- A complainant is being prevented from having their complaint progress through the school's complaints procedure.
- The DfE has evidence that the school is proposing to act or is acting unlawfully or unreasonably.

If a social services authority decides to investigate a situation, the Head Teacher or governing board may postpone the complaints procedure.

Where a matter can be resolved through a legal appeal, it will not be considered as a formal complaint. The key areas are: admissions decisions, certain decisions relating to formal assessment of SEND, and decisions to permanently exclude a child.

If a complainant commences legal action against the school in relation to their complaint, the school will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure, until those legal proceedings have concluded.

## **Managing Serial and Unreasonable Complaints**

The school is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain. The school will not normally limit the contact complainants have with it; however, the school will not expect staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

A complaint may be regarded as unreasonable when the person making the complaint:

- Refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance.
- Refuses to cooperate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved.
- Refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaints procedure.
- Insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice.
- Introduces trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant expects to be taken into account and commented on, or raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales.
- Makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues and seeks to have them replaced.
- Changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds.
- Repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed).
- Refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaints procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the DfE.
- Seeks an unrealistic outcome.
- Makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with.
- Uses threats to intimidate.
- Uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence.
- Knowingly provides falsified information.
- Publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

Complainants should limit the numbers of communications with a school while a complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text) as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the Head Teacher or chair of governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking.

If the behaviour continues, the Head Teacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and asking them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact the school causing a significant level of disruption, the school may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will usually be reviewed after six months.

A decision to stop responding will only be considered in circumstances where the following statements are true:

- Every reasonable step has been taken to address the complainant's concerns.
- The complainant has been given a clear statement of the school's position and their options.
- The complainant contacts the school repeatedly, making substantially the same points each time.

If the above criteria are met, in making a decision to stop responding the school will also consider if the complainant is often abusive or aggressive in their communication, makes insulting personal comments about staff or threats towards them, and if the school believes their intent is to disrupt or inconvenience the school.

The school will not stop responding to a complainant on the basis that they are difficult to deal with or they ask complex questions.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the concerns and actions taken will be put in writing immediately and the police informed. This may include banning an individual from the premises.

### **Complaints Campaigns**

For the purposes of this policy, "**complaints campaigns**" are where the school receives large volumes of complaints that are all based on the same subject.

Where the school becomes the subject of a complaints campaign from complainants who are not connected with the school, a standard, single response will be published on the school's website.

If the school receives a large number of complaints about the same subject from complainants who are connected to the school, e.g. parents, each complainant will receive an individual response.

If complainants remain dissatisfied with the school's response, they will be directed to the DfE.

### **Barring from the Premises**

The school premises is private property and therefore any individual may be barred from entering the premises.

If an individual's behaviour is cause for concern, the Head Teacher or chair of governors will ask the individual to leave the premises.

The Head Teacher will notify the parties involved in writing, explaining that their implied licence for access to the premises has been temporarily revoked and why, subject to any representations that the individual may wish to make.

The individual involved will be given the opportunity to formally express their views regarding the decision to bar them. This decision to bar will be reviewed by the chair of governors or a committee of the governing board, taking into account any discussions following the incident. If the decision is made to continue the bar, the individual will be contacted in writing, informing them of how long the bar will be in place, and when the decision will be reviewed.

Anyone wishing to make a complaint regarding a barring order can do so in writing, including email, to the Head Teacher or chair of governors.

Once the school's complaints procedure is completed, the only remaining avenue of appeal is through the Courts.

### **Standard of Fluency Complaints**

As members of a public authority, all staff are subject to the fluency duty imposed by the Immigration Act 2016, which requires staff members to have an appropriate level of fluency in English in order to teach pupils.

The school is free to determine the level of spoken communication necessary in order for staff members to develop effective performance, but it will be matched to the demands of the role in question.

The school will be satisfied that an individual has the necessary level of fluency appropriate for the role they will be undertaking, whether this is an existing or potential new member of staff. If a member of the school community feels that a staff member has insufficient proficiency in spoken English for the performance of their role, they are required to follow the complaints procedure outlined in the 'Complaints Procedure' section of this policy.

For the purpose of this policy, a "**legitimate complaint**" is one which is about the standard of spoken English of a member of staff; complaints regarding an individual's accent, dialect, manner or tone of communication are not considered legitimate complaints.

All legitimate complaints regarding the fluency duty will be handled in line with the processes outlined in this policy.

In addition to the processes outlined in this policy, the school will assess the merits of a legitimate complaint against the necessary standard of spoken English fluency required for the role in question. To assess the merits, the school will undertake an objective assessment against clear criteria set out in the role specification or, against the level of fluency descriptors relevant to the role in question. If the complaint is upheld, the school will consider what action is necessary to meet the fluency duty; this may include:

- Specific training
- Specific retraining
- Assessment
- Redeployment
- Dismissal

Appropriate support will be provided to staff to ensure that they are protected from vexatious complaints and are not subjected to unnecessary fluency testing.

Records of complaints regarding fluency will be kept in accordance with the processes outlined in the 'Recording a Complaint' section of this policy.

### **Role of the DfE**

If a complainant remains dissatisfied once the complaint procedure has been completed, they have the right to refer their complaint to the Secretary of State.

If a complainant wishes to escalate a complaint of bias, the DfE will require evidence to be submitted with the complaint. The Secretary of State will only intervene when they believe that the governing board has acted unlawfully or unreasonably.

They will not overturn a school's decision about a complaint except in exceptional circumstances, such as the school acting unlawfully.

When making a final decision about a complaint, the school reserves the right to seek advice from the DfE on whether they are acting reasonably and lawfully; however, they will not be able to advise on how to resolve the complaint.

This policy and procedure should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- Data Protection
- Whistleblowing
- Safeguarding and Child Protection
- Behaviour Regulation
- Grievance Policy

**Date of review: April 2026**

**Approved by FGB : May 2026**

**Date of next review: April 2027**