



DEANESFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL

COMPLAINTS & RESOLUTION

POLICY



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1. Introduction

This policy may be used by anyone who has a concern or complaint. In the main, this will mean parents (or those with parental responsibility, hereinafter 'parents') of pupils of the school, but may include others, for example, members of the local community.

Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as appeals relating to exclusions or admissions), the school will use this complaints procedure.

'Is this the right policy to process my concern?' – See APPENDIX A – Scope of this Complaints Procedure for more guidance.

2. The difference between a concern and a complaint

A concern may be defined as *'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'*. A complaint may be defined as *'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'*.

It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest opportunity. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the Complaints & Resolution procedure. We take all concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible. It is our expectation that most worries can be resolved at this informal stage.

We understand however, that there are occasions when due to the ongoing nature of concern without resolution, or seriousness of the concern, then it should be formally investigated. In this case, we will investigate the matter raised by following the procedure outlined in this policy in an attempt to bring it to resolution.

3. General Principles

This procedure is intended to allow parents to raise a concern or complaint relating to the school or the services that it provides.

3.1 Anonymous Complaints

The school will only consider complaints from individual families. An anonymous concern or complaint will not be investigated under this procedure unless there are exceptional circumstances.

3.2 Timescales

To enable a proper investigation, concerns or complaints must be brought to the attention of the school as soon as possible. In general, any matter raised more than three months after the event being complained of will not be considered unless again, there are exceptional circumstances.

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

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 (*see APPENDIX A – Scope of this Complaints Procedure*).

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



If at any point we cannot meet the timescales we have set out in this policy, we will:

- Set new time limits with the complainant
- Send the complainant details of the new deadline and explain the delay

3.3 Duplicate Complaints

If, after closing a complaint at the end of the Complaints & Resolution procedure, we receive a duplicate complaint from a spouse, a partner, a grandparent or a child not attending this school, we will remind them that we have already considered the complaint and the local process is complete. Complainants will be advised to contact the Department for Education (DfE) if they are dissatisfied with our handling of the complaint.

3.4 Complaint Campaigns

If we receive what we consider to be a large volume of complaints, all based on the same subject and possibly from complainants not connected to the school, then we will treat these complaints as being part of a campaign and respond in one of the following two ways, depending upon the nature and scale of the complaint:

- send the same response to all complainants;
- publish a single response on the school's website.

If the complaint is judged to be vexatious, then the complainant will be informed that their complaint will not be accepted and will not be investigated.

Deanesfield Primary School considers the use of social media websites to fuel campaigns and complaints against the school, the governing body, headteacher, school staff, other parents and even pupils as unacceptable and not in the best interests of the children or the whole school community. Therefore, any complaints raised from content observed on social media sites will not be processed and the complainant will be informed that their complaint will not be accepted and will not be investigated.

4. Aims

We aim to:

- ensure that parents know how they can raise concerns or lodge a formal complaint;
- deal with all concerns and complaints received by the school on a fair basis;
- ensure that concerns and complaints are dealt with as quickly as possible;
- respect people's desire for confidentiality;
- ensure that every effort is made to reach a satisfactory outcome; and
- use concerns and complaints as feedback to improve practice.

Records of complaints should be kept by all those involved, including brief notes of meetings and telephone calls.



It is important that all governors are aware of their role in the handling of complaints. In particular, individual governors should not investigate or pursue complaints on someone else's behalf. Responsibility for formal complaints rests with the Governing Body, which delegates its power to the Chair of Governors and the Complaints Committee as appropriate, in order to investigate the complaint.

5. Resolving Complaints

At each stage in the procedure, we aim to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, 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 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.

6. Withdrawal of a Complaint

If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint that is being investigated under formal procedures, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

7. Stages of Procedure

7.1 Informal Stage – Raising a Concern

Most complaints start off as concerns rather than complaints and every effort should be made to resolve issues at this time. It is normally appropriate to communicate directly with the class teacher. This may be by e-mail, telephone, a handwritten note, or in person by appointment (*see APPENDIX B – Meeting Request Form*) requested via the school office. Many concerns can be resolved by simple clarification or the provision of information, and it is anticipated that most issues will be resolved at the informal stage.

If the complainant feels that the concern has not been satisfactorily addressed by the class teacher, then he/she should approach the Phase Leader. If the concern is in relation to the class teacher, or in the case of serious concerns, it may be appropriate to address them directly to the Headteacher. The Headteacher will either deal with the matter or delegate to another senior leader to make contact with you.

The senior staff member should consider the concern fully and seriously and communications should be recorded. In general, the senior staff member will make contact and offer to meet with the complainant as appropriate in order to listen fully to the issues raised as soon as possible. The senior staff member will usually then need to investigate the facts before responding to the complainant. A timescale for a full response will be given, which should normally be within 10 school days from this initial meeting wherever possible.

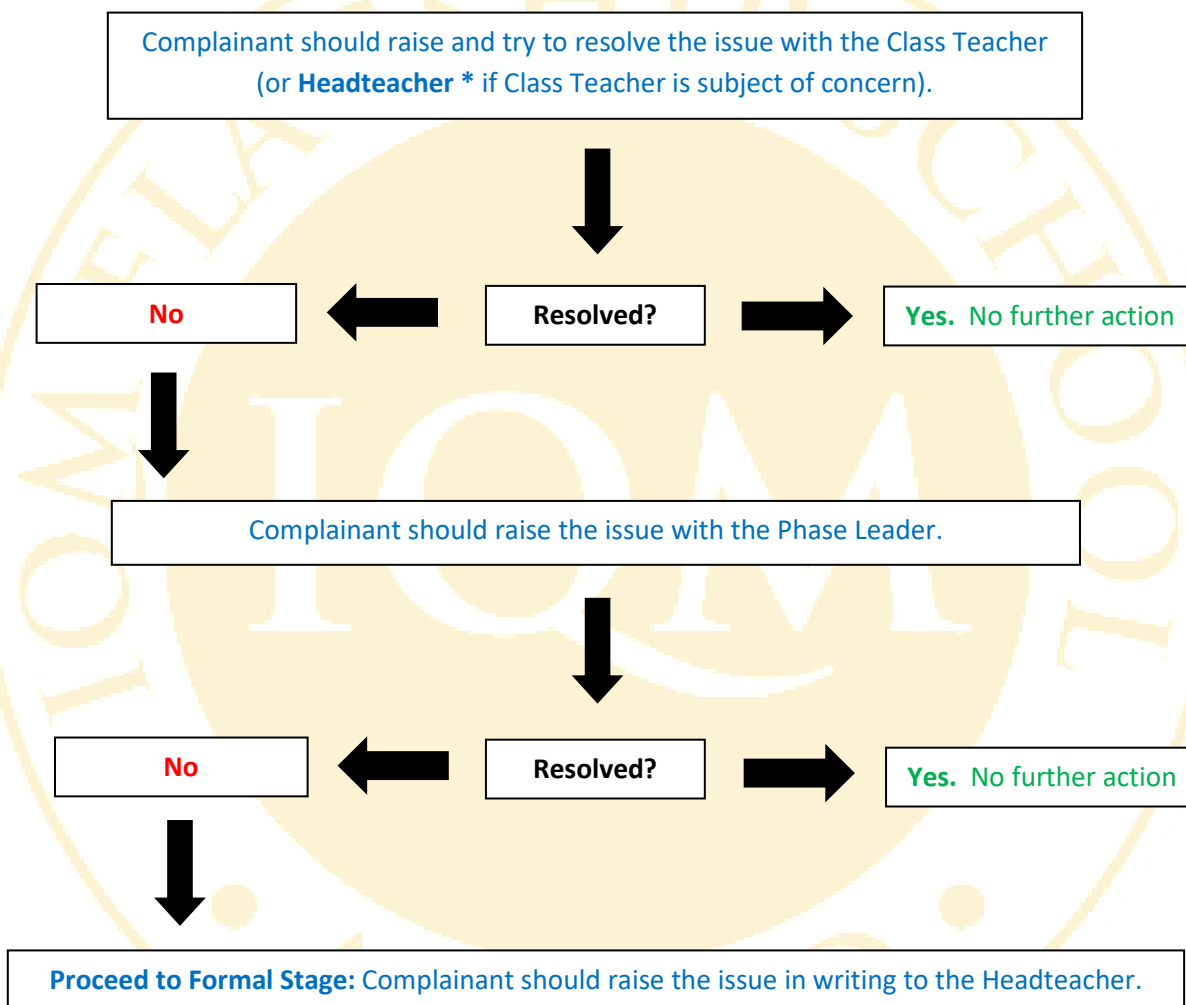


Complainants should not approach individual governors to raise concerns or complaints at this stage or copy (cc) governors into the communications. Governors have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at the Formal Stage 2 of the procedure.

If you are uncertain about who to contact, seek advice from the School Complaint and Resolution Co-ordinator, Mrs Taylor, in the school office.

The figure below summarises the steps to be taken during the Informal Stage of the procedure.

Figure 1 - Summary of Informal Stage





7.2 Formal Stage 1 – Escalating a Concern / Raising a Complaint

If your concern is not resolved at the informal stage, or if you are dissatisfied with the response you have been given, you will need to raise it as a formal complaint in writing (*see APPENDIX C – Formal Complaint Form*) and pass it to the Headteacher, who will be responsible for ensuring it is investigated appropriately. *If the complaint is about the Headteacher, your complaint should be passed to the clerk of the Governing Body and marked for the attention of the Chair of the Governing Body (see Section 8 - Complaints against Headteacher, a Governor or Governing Body)*. A formal complaint should not be addressed to both the Headteacher and the Chair of Governors, as any further escalation would be compromised.

You should include details that might assist the investigation, such as names of potential witnesses, dates and times of events, and copies of relevant documents. It is very important that you include a clear statement of the actions you would like the school to take to resolve your concern. Without this, it is much more difficult to proceed.

The completed form will then need to be passed to the School Office in a sealed envelope. The envelope should be addressed to the Headteacher (or clerk to the Governing Body, as appropriate). The Headteacher (or clerk) will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email). Within this response, the Headteacher will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The Headteacher can consider whether a face-to-face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this and may invite you to a meeting to clarify your concerns and explore the possibility of an informal resolution. If you accept that invitation, you may be accompanied by a friend, if you wish, to assist you in explaining the nature of your concerns.

Note: The Headteacher/Chair of Governors may delegate the investigation to another member of the school's senior leadership team/ Complaints Committee or Governor representative respectively, but not the decision to be taken.

It is possible that your complaint will be resolved through a meeting with the Headteacher (or Chair). If not, arrangements will be made for the matter to be fully investigated, using the appropriate procedure.

During the investigation, the Headteacher (or representative of the Chair of Governors) will:

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

In any case, you should learn in writing, usually within 10 school days of the school receiving and acknowledging your formal complaint, of how the school intends to proceed. This notification should include an indication of the anticipated timescale. If the Headteacher/Chair of Governors 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 we will take to resolve the complaint.

The Headteacher/Chair of Governors will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of the Formal Stage 1.

Any investigation will begin as soon as possible, and when it has been concluded, you will be informed, in writing, of its conclusion.

If you are not satisfied with the manner in which the investigation process has been followed, you may request that the Governing Body reviews the process followed by the school, in handling the complaint. Any such request must be made in writing to the clerk to the Governing Body, within 10 school days of receiving notice of the outcome, and include a statement specifying any perceived failures to follow the procedure (*see APPENDIX D – Complaint Review Request Form*). The procedure described below will be followed.



7.3 Formal Stage 2 – Review Process

Any review of the process followed by the school or will be conducted by a panel of three members/or appointed representatives of the Governing Body (Complaints Committee) who have had no prior knowledge or involvement in events leading to the investigation. This Committee will meet at the earliest opportunity and wherever possible, within 30 school days of receipt of your request.

The review will normally be conducted through a consideration of written submissions, but reasonable requests to make oral representations will be considered sympathetically.

The Clerk to the Governors will convene the meeting of the Complaints Committee where they should obtain a copy of the complaint and ensure it is clear and specific. Where necessary, he / she will assist complainants in this and should offer or refer to appropriate support if the complainant has literacy or language difficulties. The Clerk should ensure that the complainant has been given a copy of the school's Complaints Policy and that the complainant is aware of how the complaint will be formally heard by the governors and the conduct of the Complaints Committee. The Clerk should inform the complainant that they may bring a companion along to support them, if required, with prior agreement from the Committee. If the complaint is against a member of staff, a parent, or a Governor, all parties will have access to all written communications or be invited to any complaints hearing to give their perspective on the matter.

The Committee will consider the complaint and decide whether it is justified or not. Where a complaint may have consequences for a member of staff, it will need to be ensured that any investigation by a disciplinary committee is not prejudiced by the actions of the Complaints Committee.

Procedures to be followed before, during and after the meeting:

Before the meeting

The Clerk is responsible for the circulation of papers and notification of the date and time of the meeting. The complainant should be given five school days' notice, but may be offered up to two alternatives (after which time the meeting will go ahead). All parties should receive all relevant documents at least three school days before the meeting and be advised of all attendees and witnesses. The venue for the meeting should be in a 'neutral' area of the school i.e. not the Head Teacher's office. All parties must have full access to any documents that will be referenced during the meeting. Communications presented during a meeting previously unforeseen are not admissible and should be disregarded by the panel.

During the meeting

The complainant, school representative (usually the Head Teacher) and any other support personnel present should be invited into the meeting and leave the meeting at the same time. Neither the complainant nor the school representative or their respective support personnel should be alone with the Committee in the absence of the other. The Clerk should ensure that the proceedings are fair and take notes. Only information about the original complaint will be put before the Committee during the meeting. The meeting should involve the complainant explaining his / her complaint and the representative of the school explaining its views and actions. Each party should have the opportunity to say and ask what they wish via the chair. Each party should also be given the opportunity to call witnesses and question witnesses called by other parties as appropriate via the Chair. The meeting should be kept as informal as possible whilst having a clear, managed structure, which should be outlined by the Committee Chair. Children should only attend if they are needed to report on events and then only for the part of the discussion where their input is needed and by invitation of the chair.

After the meeting

The decision will be made only by the members of the Committee, and in private. The decision and the reasons for it, should be given in writing to the complainant and if it is about a staff member, the member of staff concerned. It should be copied to the school representative, within 10 school days of the meeting taking place. The letter to the complainant should explain how a further appeal can be made (this would be to the Local Government Ombudsman).



If appropriate, the Committee will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part and in addition, 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 the school will try to ensure that the event complained of will not recur;
- 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 and/or practices in light of the complaint;
- an apology.

Next Steps

If the complainant believes that 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 (DfE) after they have completed Stage 2.

The DfE 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.

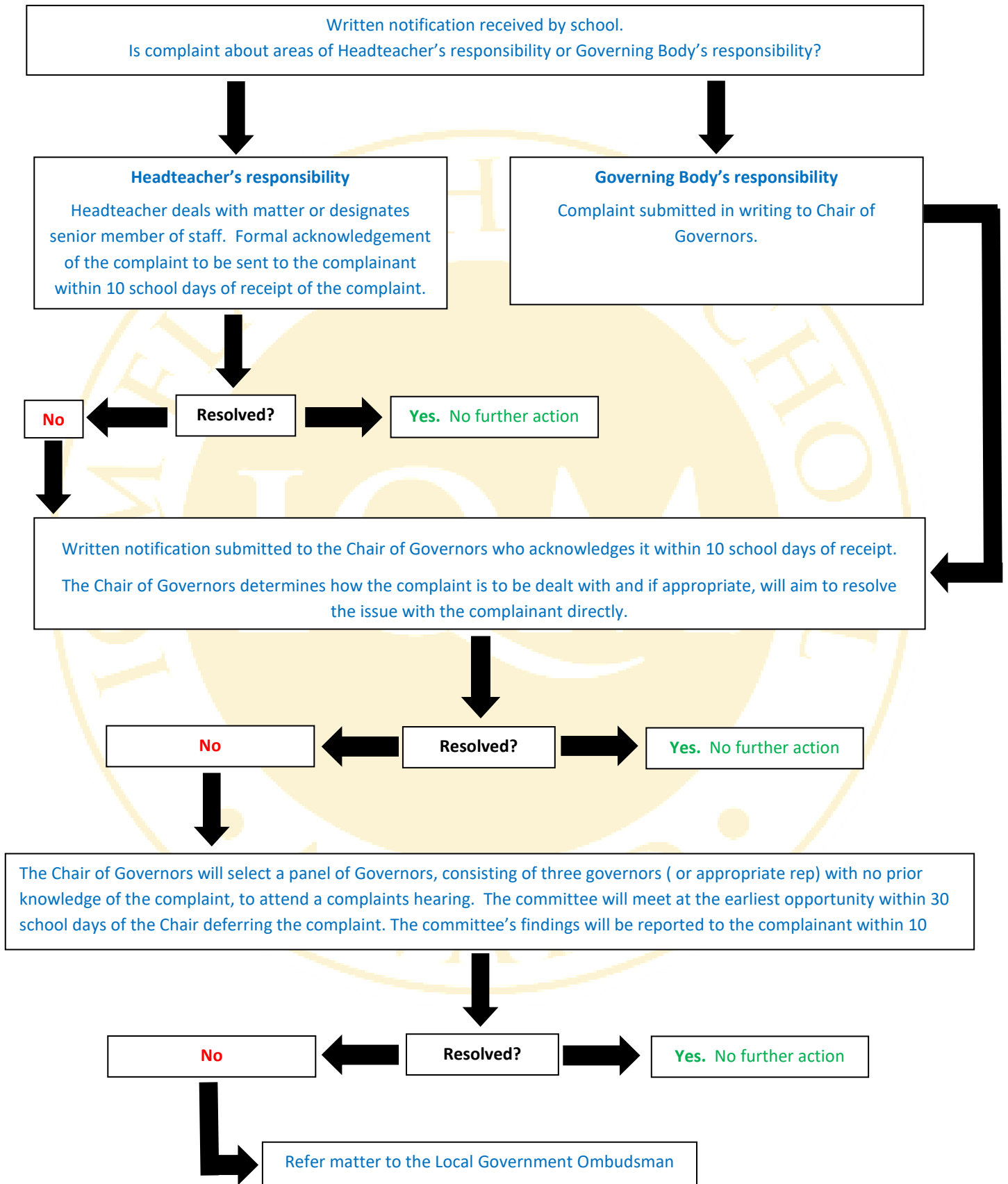
The complainant can refer their complaint to the DfE online at www.education.gov.uk/contactus, by telephone on 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:

Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD



The figure below summarises the steps to be taken during the Formal Stage of the procedure.

Figure 2 - Summary of Formal Stage





8. Complaints against Headteacher, a Governor or Governing Body

8.1 Raising Concerns

Concerns or complaints that involve or are about the Headteacher, or member of the governing body, must be made in writing and passed to the clerk to the Governing Body, for the attention of the Chair of Governors, via the school office and marked private and confidential. A suitably skilled and impartial governor will be appointed to carry out the outlined in the stages given in Section 7 above.

If the complaint is jointly about the chair and vice chair, or the entire governing body, or the majority of the governing body, the Formal Stage will be considered by an independent investigator appointed by the Governing body or a representative of the London Borough of Hillingdon (LBH) as appropriate. At the conclusion of its investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response.

8.2 Escalating Concerns / Complaints

If the complainant wishes to proceed to the next stage of the procedure, they should inform the clerk to the governing board in writing within 10 school days. Requests received outside of this timeframe will be considered in exceptional circumstances.

Complaints can be escalated by contacting the clerk to the governing board in writing, outlining the details of the complaint as set out above, as well as details from the complainant on how they feel the previous stage of the procedure has not addressed their complaint sufficiently, and what they feel would resolve the complaint.

The clerk will acknowledge receipt of the request within 10 school days.

8.3 Review Panels

If the complaint is about the Headteacher or a member of the governing board (including the chair or vice-chair), a committee of members of the governing board will hear the complaint. They will carry out the steps at Stage 2 (set out in section 7 above).

If the complaint is jointly about the chair and vice chair, or the entire governing body, or the majority of the governing body, a committee of independent governors will hear the complaint. They will be sourced from local schools, the local authority and will carry out the steps at stage 2 (set out in section 7 above).

9. Policy for 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. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with our school.

However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

The School defines unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the school, such as, if the complainant:

- 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;



- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure;
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways that are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice;
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information that they expect to be taken into account and commented on;
- 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 complaint 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 and complicated 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; and/or
- publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school that relates to their complaint, while the 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 ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact the School causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will be reviewed after six months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from the School.



10. Persistent correspondence

If complainants frequently contact the school, causing a significant level of disruption, but refuse to engage with the complaints procedure, the School can:

- restrict the complainant to a single point of contact via an email address; and/or
- limit the number of times the complainant can make contact.

This restriction will be limited to the complainant's capacity to complain. For all other issues the complainant can contact the school as normal.





APPENDIX A – Scope of this Complaints Procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by the 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"> Admissions to schools Statutory assessments of special educational needs School re-organisation proposals 	<p>Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of special educational needs or school reorganisation proposals should be raised with the local authority details of which can be found on the Hillingdon website:</p> <p>https://www.hillingdon.gov.uk/schools-directory</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation 	<p>Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding 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, details of which can be found in our Safeguarding Policy on our website by clicking here.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exclusion of children from school* 	<p>Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions.</p> <p><i>*complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure. <link to school behaviour policy>.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whistleblowing 	<p>We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all 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 whistle-blowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at www.education.gov.uk/contactus.</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 the DfE (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff grievances 	<p>Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff conduct 	<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 staff member 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"> Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities 	<p>Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National curriculum - content 	<p>Please contact the DfE at www.education.gov.uk/contactus</p>



NOTE:

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 the 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.





APPENDIX B – Meeting Request Form

Deanesfield Primary School: Meeting Request Form

I wish to meet *[insert name of the member of staff]* to discuss the following matter:

Brief details of topic to be discussed:

Dates/times when it would be most convenient for a meeting:

Your name:

Relationship with school (e.g. parent of a pupil on the school roll):

Pupil's name (if relevant to the matter to be discussed)

Your address:

Telephone numbers

Daytime:

Evening:

Email address:

Signed:

Date:

[Please complete this form and return it to the school office]

School use

Date form received:

Date response sent:

Received by:

Response sent by:



APPENDIX C – Formal Complaint Form

Deansfield Primary School: Formal Complaint Form

Please complete this form and return it to the School Office marked for the attention of the Headteacher who will acknowledge its receipt and inform you of the next stage of the procedure.

Your name:

Relationship with school (e.g. parent of a pupil on the school roll):

Pupil's name (if relevant to your complaint):

Your address:

Telephone numbers

Daytime:

Evening:

Email address:

Please give concise details of your complaint (including dates, names of witnesses, etc) to allow the matter to be fully investigated:

You may continue on separate paper, or attach additional documents if you wish.

Number of additional pages attached =

What action, if any, have you already taken to try to resolve your complaint? (ie who have you spoken with or written to, and what was the outcome?)

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

Signature:

Date:

School use

Date form received:

Received by:

Date acknowledgement sent:

Acknowledgement sent by:

Complaint referred to:			
Date:			



APPENDIX D – Complaint Review Request Form

Deanesfield Primary School: Complaint Review Request Form

Please complete this form, and return it to the head teacher (or clerk to the governing body) who will acknowledge its receipt and inform you of the next stage of the procedure.

Your name:

Your address:

Telephone numbers:

Daytime:

Evening:

Email address:

Dear Sir/Madam

I submitted a formal complaint to the school on, and I am dissatisfied by the procedure that has been followed.

My complaint was submitted to and I received a response from on

I have attached copies of my formal complaint and the response(s) from the school.

I am dissatisfied with the way in which the procedure was carried out, because

You may continue on separate paper, or attach additional documents if you wish.

Number of Additional pages attached =

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

Signature:

Date:

School use

Date form received:

Received by:

Date acknowledgement sent:

Acknowledgement sent by:

Request referred to:			
Date:			



APPENDIX E – Roles and Responsibilities

Complainant

The complainant will receive a more effective response to the complaint if they:

- explain the complaint in full as early as possible
- co-operate with the school in seeking a solution to the complaint
- respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint
- ask for assistance as needed
- treat all those involved in the complaint with respect
- refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality.

Investigator

The investigator's role is to establish the facts relevant to the complaint by:

- providing 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;
 - interviewing staff and children/young people and other people relevant to the complaint;
 - consideration and analysis of records and other relevant information;
- liaising with the complainant and the complaints coordinator as appropriate to clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.

The investigator should:

- conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning;
- keep notes of interviews or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of the meeting;
- ensure that any papers produced during the investigation are kept securely pending any appeal;
- be mindful of the timescales to respond;
- prepare a comprehensive report for the head teacher or complaints committee that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.

The head teacher or complaints committee will then determine whether to uphold or dismiss the complaint and communicate that decision to the complainant, providing the appropriate escalation details.



Complaints and Resolutions Co-ordinator

This could be the head teacher/designated complaints governor or other staff member providing administrative support. The complaints coordinator should:

- ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure;
- liaise with staff members, the head teacher, chair of governors, clerk and local authorities (if appropriate) to ensure the smooth running of the complaints procedure;
- be aware of issues regarding:
 - sharing third party information;
 - additional support – this may be needed by complainants when making a complaint including interpretation support;
- keep records.

Clerk to the Governing Body

The clerk is the contact point for the complainant and the committee and should:

- 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 General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR);
- set the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties (if they are invited to attend) and that the venue and proceedings are accessible;
- collate any written material relevant to the complaint (for example; stage 1 paperwork, school and complainant submissions) and send it to the parties in advance of the meeting within an agreed timescale;
- record the proceedings;
- circulate the minutes of the meeting;
- notify all parties of the committee's decision.

Committee Chair

The committee's chair, who is nominated in advance of the complaint meeting, should ensure that:

- both parties are asked (via the clerk) to provide any additional information relating to the complaint by a specified date in advance of the meeting;
- the meeting is conducted in an informal manner, is not adversarial, and that, if all parties are invited to attend, everyone is treated with respect and courtesy;
- complainants, who may not be used to speaking at such a meeting, are put at ease;
- the remit of the committee is explained to the complainant;



- written material is seen by everyone in attendance, provided it does not breach confidentiality or any individual's rights to privacy under the DPA 2018 or GDPR – if a new issue arises it would be useful to give everyone the opportunity to consider and comment upon it; this may require a short adjournment of the meeting;
- both the complainant and the school are given the opportunity to make their case and seek clarity, either through written submissions ahead of the meeting or verbally in the meeting itself;
- the issues are addressed;
- key findings of fact are made;
- the committee is open-minded and acts independently;
- no member of the committee has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure;
- the meeting is minuted;
- they liaise with the Clerk (and complaints coordinator, if the school has one).

Committee Member

Committee members should be aware that:

- the meeting must be independent and impartial, and should be seen to be so. No governor may sit on the committee if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it;
- the aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. We recognise that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the meeting does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations;
- many complainants will feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting. Parents/carers often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child;
- extra care needs to be taken a child/young person is present during all or part of the meeting. Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings should ensure that any child/young person present does not feel intimidated. The committee should respect the views of the child/young person and give them equal consideration to those of adults. Where the child/young person's parent is the complainant, the committee should give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the meeting, if any, the child/young person needs to attend;
- however, the parent should be advised that agreement might not always be possible if the parent wishes the child/young person to attend a part of the meeting that the committee considers is not in the child/young person's best interests;
- the welfare of the child/young person is paramount.