



Compliments & Complaints Policy

INTRODUCTION

We view compliments and complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve for the future, as well as a chance to put things right for the person that has made a complaint.

We care about what you think. We try hard to do our best for all our pupils. Your views help us plan for the future. We like to know when things are going well. We also want parents/carers to tell us about their worries, concerns or complaints as soon as possible. It is much easier for the school to sort out a recent problem, than something that happened some time ago.

AIMS

- We will deal with your concern or complaint in a professional manner.
- It will be looked into thoroughly, fairly and as quickly as possible.
- We will keep you up-to-date with what we are doing.
- We will apologise if the school has made a mistake.
- We will tell you what we are going to do to put things right.

WHAT TO DO FIRST

You may wish to compliment or praise the work of a teacher or another staff member working with your child. Compliments are always greatly received, so if you are happy with our school or have seen/heard something you particularly liked, then we would love to hear it, so please tell us. It is helpful for us to know when we are 'getting it right'.

If you have a concern about anything we do, you can tell us by telephone, in person or in writing. If any of these are difficult for you, a friend or advocate can speak to the school on your behalf. Most concerns or complaints will be sorted out quickly either by putting things right or by explaining the school's actions to you.

Try to go to the member of staff involved or your child's class teacher who will either deal with your issue or pass you on to someone who is more able to help.

Please remember that the beginning or end of the school day can be a very busy time. If you talk to a teacher at these times, for practical reasons, it may not be possible to sort things out there and then. Be prepared for them to make an appointment to see you/to telephone you at a more convenient time.

In considering concerns or complaints, the school will ensure that they are dealt with effectively and with fairness to all parties. Where possible, complaints will be resolved informally. Where a complaint has not been resolved informally, then the formal procedures



set out below will be followed. Where your concern or complaint is considered sufficiently complex or serious, the school may choose to investigate formally from the outset.

MAKING A COMPLAINT

The school expects the majority of complaints to be made within 3 months of the incident. The school will consider complaints beyond this timeframe in exceptional circumstances only. Dependent on the type of complaint, the following table is a guide to whom it should be referred to:

Type of complaint:	Contact:
Something that has happened, or failed to happen, in school	Class teacher
The actions of the Class teacher	Headteacher
The actions of the Headteacher	Chair of Governors
The actions of a governor	Chair of Governors
The actions of the Chair of Governors	Vice Chair
The actions of the Governing Body	Clerk to the Governors

The school and Governing Body would in most cases hope to resolve concerns and complaints at an informal stage, but the procedures allow for formal consideration of a complaint and a review stage if matters cannot be resolved.

The school is committed to dealing with complaints as speedily as possible and would plan to complete each stage within 20 school days. From time to time, it may not be possible to complete the process in that timescale. Where it is not possible, the complainant will be informed of any delays.

Where complaints are made against an individual member of the school staff or governor, the individual will be informed of the complaint at the earliest opportunity and certainly before any investigation commences.

THE COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

Stage 1: Informal Stage

It is in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. The experience of the first contact between the complainant and the school can be crucial in determining whether the complaint will escalate. To that end, all staff are made aware of the procedures so that they know what to do should they receive a complaint.

The school will respect the views of a complainant who indicates that he/she would have difficulty discussing a complaint with a particular member of staff. In these cases, the Office Manager will refer the complainant to another staff member. Where the complaint

concerns the Headteacher, the Office Manager will refer the complainant to the Chair of Governors.

Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels too compromised to deal with a complaint, the Office Manager may consider referring the complainant to another staff member. The ability to consider the complaint objectively and impartially is crucial.

Where the first approach is made to a Governor, the next step is to refer the complainant to the appropriate person and advise them about the procedure. Governors should not act unilaterally on an individual complaint outside the formal procedure or be involved at the early stages in case they are needed to sit on a Panel at a later stage of the procedure.

The school will seek to make every effort to resolve complaints promptly, either by email, telephone call or brief meeting as appropriate. It may be the case that the provision or clarification of information will resolve the issue. If the complaint is unable to be resolved at this stage, the school will ask you to put your concerns or complaint in writing and the 'Formal Stage' of the procedure will commence from the date that the letter is received by the school.

If the school has not heard from you within 20 school days, it will assume that you do not want to take things any further and the complaint will be closed.

Stage 2: Formal Stage

This stage will commence when the:

- Informal complaint has not been resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant, or
- Complainant has indicated they wish to go straight to the formal stage, or
- School feels that the complaint is inappropriate for an informal resolution.

If the complaint is regarding the Headteacher or a governor, this will be investigated by the Chair of Governors, or nominated governor if the Chair has previously been involved.

The Headteacher will:

- Following receipt of the written complaint, formally acknowledge receipt of the complaint and ensure the complainant receives an up-to-date copy of the school's Compliments & Complaints Policy. It should be clarified what the complainant feels would put things right, if it is not clear in the correspondence.
- Seek advice, as appropriate. Dependent on the nature of the complaint, this could include the Clerk to the Governing Body, Legal Services, Schools' HR team, Schools' Finance team or External agency.
- Inform the member of staff, or governor if the complaint concerns them and provide them with a copy of the complaint and the school's policy.
- Call a meeting to clarify concerns and seek a resolution. The complainant may be accompanied to this meeting, and should inform the school of the identity of their companion in advance.

- Arrange and complete a full investigation of the complaint (or another person appointed by the Headteacher for this purpose).
- Prepare a report following the investigation; consider what actions need to be taken and whether it be substantiated or unsubstantiated.
- Advise the complainant, in writing, of the conclusion of the investigation within 20 school days.

Should the complaint remain unresolved:

- If the Headteacher/Chair of Governors has undertaken the investigation, the complainant can request a review to the Complaints Review Committee. The request must be received within 20 school days of the notification and set out the grounds as to which matters remain unresolved. If the Clerk to the Complaints Review Committee does not hear from the complainant within 20 school days of the notification of the outcome of the investigation, the complaint will be closed.
- The Headteacher/Chair of Governors should make a record in the Compliments and Complaints Register of the complaint and its outcome. This record may need to be updated by the Chair of the Complaints Review Committee in due course. The Compliments and Complaints Register should be available for Ofsted Inspection purposes.

Stage 3: Complaints Review Committee

In very exceptional circumstances where the complaint has not been resolved by the Headteacher/Chair of Governors, a meeting of the Complaints Review Committee will be arranged. The request must be made in writing to the Clerk of the Complaints Review Committee.

The Clerk will convene the Complaints Review Committee. It is not expected to take more than 20 school days to convene, but the Clerk to the Committee will update the complainant as appropriate.

The Committee will consist of members of the governing body. These individuals will have access to the existing record of the complaint's progress.

The complainant must have reasonable notice of the date of the Complaints Review Committee; however, the Complaints Review Committee reserves the right to convene at their convenience rather than that of the complainant. At the Complaints Review Committee, the complainant and representatives from the school, as appropriate, will be present. Each will have an opportunity to set out written or oral submissions prior to the meeting.

The complainant must be allowed to attend the Complaints Review Committee and be accompanied by a suitable companion if they wish.

At the meeting, each individual will have the opportunity to give statements and present their evidence, and witnesses will be called as appropriate to present their evidence.

The Complaints Review Committee, the complainant and the school representative will be given the chance to ask and reply to questions. Once the complainant and school representative have completed presenting their cases, they will be asked to leave and evidence will then be considered.

At the end of their review, the Complaints Review Committee will:

- Determine whether to dismiss or uphold the appeal in whole or part.
- Where upheld, decide on recommendations that should be reported to the Governing Body by the Chair of the Complaints Review Committee.
- Advise the Headteacher/Chair of Governors (as appropriate) and complainant of their findings in writing within 7 school days.
- Advise the complainant of any further action they may wish to take if they remain dissatisfied.

Following the review, the Chair of the Committee will arrange for the school's Compliments & Complaints Register to be amended to include a brief summary of the complaint and the findings. In addition, the Chair of the Committee will ensure that they matter in general terms and any recommendations be reported to the Governing Body.

This concludes the school's Compliments & Complaints Procedure.

WITHDRAWAL OF A COMPLAINT

If the complainant wishes to withdraw their complaint at any time, they will be asked to confirm this in writing.

THE ROLE OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY

The role of the Local Authority is prescribed by legislation. In responding to complaints about schools, the Local Authority will explain to the complainant:

- That schools are self-managing and are responsible for administering procedures that deal with complaints made against them.
- The appropriate procedures for their complaint and refer them to the Headteacher, Chair of Governors or Clerk, as appropriate.
- The school may seek advice and support from the appropriate Local Authority Officer.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Whilst the school accepts that complainants have a right to an opinion and make it public through the use of social media, complainants are reminded that they are not entitled to use social media to defame or harass individual staff or governors.

NEXT STAGE

Complainants who remain unsatisfied with the outcome, may refer their complaint to the Schools Complaints Unit, which investigates complaints relating to maintained schools on behalf of the Secretary of State.

For more information, see the following webpage:

<https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school>

Department for Education
School Complaints Unit
2nd Floor Piccadilly Gate
Stove Street
MANCHESTER
M1 2WD

REFERRING COMPLAINTS ON COMPLETION OF THE SCHOOL'S PROCEDURE

If the complainant is unsatisfied with the outcome of the school's complaints procedure, they can refer their complaint to the School Complaints Unit (SCU), which investigates complaints relating to maintained schools on behalf of the secretary of state.

The SCU will not re-investigate the matter of the complaint. It will look at whether the school's complaints policy and any other relevant statutory policies that the school holds were adhered to. The SCU also looks at whether the school's statutory policies adhere to education legislation. It may direct the school to re-investigate the complaint where it is clear the school has acted unlawfully or unreasonably.

For more information or to refer a complaint, see the following webpage:

<https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school>

PERSISTENT COMPLAINTS

Where a complainant tries to re-open the issue with the school after the complaints procedure has been fully exhausted and the school has done everything it reasonably can in response to the complaint, the chair of governors (or other appropriate person in the case of a complaint about the chair) will inform the complainant that the matter is closed.

If the complainant subsequently contacts the school again about the same issue, the school can choose not to respond. The normal circumstance in which we will not respond is if:

- The school has taken every reasonable step to address the complainant's needs, *and*
- The complainant has been given a clear statement of the school's position and their options (if any), *and*
- The complainant is contacting the school repeatedly but making substantially the same points each time

However, this list is not intended to be exhaustive.

The school will be most likely to choose not to respond if:

- We have reason to believe the individual is contacting the school with the intention of causing disruption or inconvenience, and/or
- The individual's letters/emails/telephone calls are often or always abusive or aggressive, and/or
- The individual makes insulting personal comments about, or threats towards, school staff

Unreasonable behaviour which is abusive, offensive or threatening may constitute an unreasonably persistent complaint.

Once the school has decided that it is appropriate to stop responding, the complainant will be informed in writing, either by letter or email.

The school will ensure when making this decision that complainants making any new complaint are heard, and that the school acts reasonably.

Unreasonably persistent complaints

There will be occasions when despite all stages of the procedure having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the Chair of the Governing Body can inform the complainant in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

Complaint campaigns

Where the school receives a large volume of complaints about the same topic or subject, especially if these come from complainants unconnected with the school, the school may respond to these complaints by:

- Publishing a single response on the school website
- Sending a template response to all of the complainants

If complainants are not satisfied with the school's response, or wish to pursue the complaint further, the normal procedures will apply.

RECORD-KEEPING

The school will record the progress of all complaints, including information about actions taken at all stages, the stage at which the complaint was resolved, and the final outcome. The records will also include copies of letters and emails, and notes relating to meetings and phone calls.

This material will be treated as confidential and held centrally, and will be viewed only by those involved in investigating the complaint or on the review panel.

This is except where the secretary of state (or someone acting on their behalf) or the complainant requests access to records of a complaint through a freedom of information (FOI) request or through a subject access request under the terms of the Data Protection Act, or where the material must be made available during a school inspection.

Records of complaints will be kept securely, only for as long as necessary and in line with data protection law and our privacy notices.

The details of the complaint, including the names of individuals involved, will not be shared with the whole governing board in case a review panel needs to be organised at a later point.

Where the governing board is aware of the substance of the complaint before the review panel stage, the school will (where reasonably practicable) arrange for an independent panel to hear the complaint.

Complainants also have the right to request an independent panel if they believe there is likely to be bias in the proceedings. The decision to approve this request is made by the governing board, who will not unreasonably withhold consent.

LEARNING LESSONS

The Governing Body will review any underlying issues raised by complaints with the Headteacher where appropriate, and respecting confidentiality, to determine whether there are any improvements that the school can make to its procedures or practice to help prevent similar events in the future.

ASSOCIATED POLICIES

Safeguarding and Child Protection
Admissions
Exclusions
Staff Grievance
Staff Disciplinary

This policy appears on the school website

VERSION CONTROL

Date	Version	Approved by	Title	Changes
04/2014	1	FGB	Complaints Policy	
10/2018	2	FGB	Compliments & Complaints Policy	School responsibilities updated
11.04.19	3	FGB	Compliments & Complaints Policy	'Repeated complaint' section added