Complaints policy

Senior Leader responsible	Headteacher
Date approved by LGB	03/12/2025
Next review date	Autumn 2026

1. Aims and application

1.1 The aims of the policy are to deal with complaints and concerns:

- about the school or any individual connected with it by following the correct procedure;
- thoroughly; and
- in an open, honest and fair manner.

1.2 This complaints policy is not limited to parents or carers of children who are registered at the school. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to the school about any provision of facilities or services that we provide. Part 1 of this policy outlines how parents/carers of registered pupils currently attending the school can raise a concern or complaint. Concerns or complaints from other persons will be dealt with in accordance with Part 2 of this policy.

1.3 This policy does not apply to concerns and complaints relating to the matters listed in Annex 1.

1.4 Anonymous concerns or complaints will not normally be investigated under this policy. The Headteacher or Chair of Governors will determine whether there are exceptional circumstances to justify conducting an investigation into the issues raised.

1.5 All staff will be made aware of our complaints procedures and are expected to review this policy regularly in order that they are familiar with our process of dealing with complaints and can be of assistance when an issue is brought to their attention.

1.6 In this policy:

- '**concern**' means an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought;
- '**complaint**' means an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action;
- '**meeting**' means an in person or virtual meeting (i.e. telephone or video conference where all parties can participate verbally). Virtual meetings will only be held in the event that all parties have access to appropriate equipment to attend and are happy to do so;
- '**parent**' means a parent, carer or anyone with legal responsibility for a child;
- '**school days**' excludes weekends and school holidays and periods of partial or total school closure;
- '**trust**' means the academy trust (i.e. Enrich Learning Trust)

1.7 The timeframes referred to in this policy are our usual timeframes and the school will seek to adhere to these timeframes where possible.

1.8 Reasonable adjustments will be made to procedures where required to ensure that all complainants can access and complete this complaints policy. For example, providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

2. Key principles

2.1 The school expects all complainants to make reasonable attempts to seek an informal resolution.

2.2 The school encourages parents and others to approach the school with any concerns and refrain from airing concerns about the school and its staff on social media sites. Posting negative comments on social media can cause damage and upset and is often counter-productive to pupils' education.

2.3 To investigate your complaint properly and fairly, we have implemented a staged approach. We anticipate that almost all complaints that arise will be resolved at Stage 1 or Stage 2 outlined below.

2.4 We expect our members of staff to be addressed in a respectful manner and for communication to remain calm at all times. The procedure under Part 3 will only be used on very rare occasions to deal with repetitious and/or vexatious complaints or complaints pursued in an otherwise unreasonable manner.

2.5 Concerns or complaints should be brought to our attention as soon as possible. Any matter raised more than 3 months after the incident being complained of (or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within 3 months of the last of these incidents) will not be considered unless the Headteacher / Chair of Governors accepts that there are good reasons to explain the delay or the complaint is about a particularly serious matter.

2.6 Where a complaint is received outside of term time, we will consider it to have been received on the first school day following the holiday period.

2.7 On rare occasions the school may receive complaints from a number of individuals relating to the same issue. In order to deal with these complaints efficiently the school will follow the procedure set out in Part 4.

2.8 If it becomes necessary to alter the time limits and deadlines set out within this procedure, you will be advised accordingly and given an explanation as to why this has been the case and provided with revised timescales. If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority safeguarding teams or tribunals/courts, 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. Where a complaint is raised but we do not have clarity from the complainant on the issues and/or desired outcomes, we will inform the complainant what information we need to progress the complaint and pause this procedure until reasonable clarity is achieved.

2.9 Complainants should not approach individual governors to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may prevent them from considering complaints at later stages.

2.10 If a complainant commences legal action against the school or the academy trust in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether it would be appropriate to suspend the complaints procedure until those legal proceedings have concluded.

2.11 At each stage in the procedure, the school's aim is to resolve the concern or complaint. If appropriate, the school will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, the school may offer one or more of the following:

- an explanation;
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
- reasonable specific action(s) to rectify any wrongdoing that may have been committed;
- an assurance that the school 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 or procedures in light of the complaint;
- an apology.

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

3. Records of complaints

A record will be kept of all written formal complaints (i.e. Stage 2 or higher) including at what stage they were resolved and action taken by us as a result of those complaints regardless of whether they were upheld. The Head's PA will also maintain a log of any concerns that have been brought to the Headteacher's attention but subsequently dealt with by other members of staff at Stage 1 (Informal Resolution). Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where:

- access is requested by the Secretary of State;
- disclosure is required in the course of a school inspection;
- an individual has a legal right to access their own personal data contained within such documentation; or
- under other legal authority.

We will make the findings and recommendations of the Complaints Committee available to relevant authorities for inspection on the school premises by the Headteacher.

4. Complaints procedures

Part 1: Complaints procedure for parents

Stage 1: Informal resolution

4.1(a) An initial concern can be raised in person or by telephone, letter or email. Complaints may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of a parent, as long as they have appropriate authority to do so.

4.1(b) Most enquiries and concerns can be dealt with satisfactorily by a class teacher, head of department, pastoral leader, Assistant Head, Deputy Head or other members of staff without the need to resort to the formal procedure. We value informal meetings and discussions and encourage parents to approach staff with any concerns they may have, aiming to resolve all issues with open dialogue and mutual understanding.

4.1(c) If the complainant is unclear who to contact or how to contact them, they should contact the school office for details (email: office@neatherd.org; Tel: 01362 697981).

4.1(d) It is always helpful if you can fully explain the nature of the concern and identify the outcome you are looking for. Where appropriate, you may be invited to an informal meeting with the member of staff most appropriate for dealing with that concern. The member of staff dealing with the concern will make sure that you are clear on what action (if any) has been agreed. This may be put in writing if appropriate.

4.1(e) If the matter is brought to the attention of the Headteacher, they will direct you to the most relevant member of staff and request that you attempt to resolve the issue at the informal stage initially. In some circumstances, the headteacher may decide to deal with your concerns directly at this informal stage.

4.1(f) If the concerns are specifically about the Headteacher, these should be referred directly to the Clerk of the Local Governing Body under Stage 2.

4.1(g) The school will respect the views of a parent who indicates that they would have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff. In this case, the Headteacher will refer the parent to another designated member of staff. This would ordinarily be the original member of staff's line manager. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved in the circumstances leading to the concern feels too compromised to deal with it, the Headteacher may consider referring the parent to another member of staff.

4.1(h) Staff members should log all informal concerns on the communications section of Bromcom.

4.1(i) For any serious concerns, staff members should also notify the Head's PA. The Head's PA will in turn notify the Headteacher, enter the concern on the central log and follow up accordingly to ensure that the concern has been brought to a mutually satisfactory resolution.

4.1(j) There is no suggested timescale for resolution at this stage given the importance of dialogue through informal discussion, although it would be expected that most issues will be resolved within 15 school days. Where no satisfactory solution has been found, you will be advised that, if you wish your concerns to be considered further, you should write to the Headteacher under Stage 2 of this procedure within 15 school days.

Stage 2: Formal written complaints

4.2(a) If your concerns are not resolved under Stage 1, you are entitled to put your complaint in writing and send this to the Headteacher.

4.2(b) It is very important that you include a clear statement of the actions that you would like us to take to resolve your complaint. We strongly encourage you to use the Complaint Form provided at Annex 2 of this procedure. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office. You can also ask third party organisations like the Citizens Advice to help you. In all cases your written complaint must include:

- the nature of the complaint;
- details of how the matter has been dealt with so far;
- the names of potential witnesses, dates and times of events and copies of all relevant documents; and
- a clear statement of the actions that you would like us to take to resolve your complaint.

4.2(c) Your complaint will normally be acknowledged in writing within five school days of receipt. The acknowledgement will give a brief explanation of the school's complaints procedure and a target date for providing a response to the complaint. This will normally be within 15 school days of receipt.

4.2(d) The Headteacher may appoint an impartial Investigating Officer who will not have previously been involved in dealing with the concern or complaint. The Investigating Officer may be a member of the school's own Senior Leadership Group or, where more appropriate, a senior leader from another school, typically within the same trust. The role of the Investigating Officer is to establish the facts of the case regarding the complaint. S/he will produce a report for the Headteacher upon completion of the investigation.

4.2(e) If appropriate, the Headteacher (or the Investigating Officer) may invite you to a meeting to clarify your complaints and to explore possible resolutions. If you accept that invitation, you may be accompanied by one other person, such as a friend, relative or interpreter, to assist you. Where possible, this meeting will take place within 10 school days of receipt of the written complaint.

4.2(f) If necessary, witnesses will be interviewed and statements taken from those involved. If the complaint centres on a pupil, the pupil will usually be interviewed. Pupils will normally be interviewed with their parent present, but if this would seriously delay the investigation of a serious or urgent complaint or if the pupil has specifically said that they would prefer that their parents were not involved, another member of staff with whom the pupil feels comfortable will be present. If the matter includes a complaint relating to a member of staff, the member of staff will have the opportunity to respond to the complaint.

4.2(g) Once the relevant facts have been established as far as possible, you will be provided with a written response to the complaint, including an explanation of the decision and the reasons for it. This will include what action will be taken to resolve the complaint (if any). You will be advised that if you are dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaint, you may request that your complaint be heard by the Complaints Committee under Stage 3 of this procedure.

Q. What if the complaint is about the Headteacher *or* the Headteacher has already considered your complaint under Stage 1?

In these cases, your complaint should be sent to the Clerk of the Local Governing Body at the school's address who will arrange for a suitably-skilled governor to carry out the Stage 2 procedure.

Q. What if the complaint is about a governor on the Local Governing Body?

Complaints about the Chair of Governors or any individual governor should be addressed to the Clerk of the Local Governing Body via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential. The Clerk will arrange for an impartial governor or trustee to investigate the concerns in accordance with Stage 2.

If the complaint is about the Clerk of the Local Governing Body or the Local Governing Body as a whole, you should send your complaint to the Clerk of the Trustees (c/o Enrich Learning Trust, 1 Norwich Business Park, Whiting Road, Norwich, NR4 6DJ) who will then determine the most appropriate action with regards to Stage 2 and Stage 3.

Stage 3: Referral to the Complaints Committee

4.3(a) If you are dissatisfied with the decision under Stage 2, you may request that a Complaints Committee be convened to consider your complaint. The Complaints Committee will principally consider how the complaint was handled at the previous stages but has discretion to review other aspects of the complaint as it sees fit. The Complaints Committee will not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.

4.3(b) To request a hearing before the Complaints Committee, you should write to the Clerk of the Local Governing Body ("**Clerk**") via the school office within 15 school days of receiving notice of the outcome of Stage 2. Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply. You should ensure that you provide copies of all relevant documents and state all the grounds for your complaint and the outcome that you are looking for.

4.3(c) Your written request will be acknowledged within five school days of receipt.

4.3(d) The Clerk will arrange for a Complaints Committee to be convened, made up of at least three committee members, including:

- governors of the Local Governing Body and/or trustees of the trust with no prior involvement in the matter; and,
- one person who is independent of the management and running of the school.

The Clerk shall appoint one of these committee members to be the Chair of the Committee.

4.3(e) Every effort will be made to enable the hearing to take place within 20 school days of the receipt of your request. As soon as reasonably practicable, and in any event at least five school days before the hearing, you will be sent written notification of the date, time and place of the hearing, together with brief details of the committee members who will be present. Fair consideration will be given to any *bona fide* objection to a particular member of the committee. You will also be informed of the name of the person who will be presenting the case on behalf of the school (referred to in this policy as the '**school representative**'). This may be the person who is the subject of the complaint, the person who undertook the investigation at Stage 2 and/or another person with sufficient knowledge of the matter.

4.3(f) If, despite best efforts, it is not possible to find a mutually convenient date and time for a hearing within a reasonable timeframe, the Clerk may determine that the hearing proceeds on the basis of written submissions from both parties.

4.3(g) You have the right to be accompanied to the hearing by a friend, relative or interpreter. You should notify the Clerk in advance if you intend to bring anyone to the hearing. We do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the Complaints Committee meeting. Representatives from the media are **not** permitted to attend. The Complaints Committee itself may take legal advice and/or be supported by a legal advisor at the hearing on matters of law and procedure.

4.3(h) A copy of the complaint and any other documents provided by you in support of your complaint, or by the school representative in defence of the complaint, will be provided to the Complaints Committee as soon as practicable upon receipt. Copies of these documents shall also be provided to you or to the school representative (as applicable) at least 3 school days before the hearing. The Complaints Committee reserves the right not to consider any documentation presented by either party less than 3 school days prior to the hearing. The Complaints Committee is under no obligation to hear oral evidence from witnesses but may do so and/or may take written statements into account. The committee will not normally accept recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

4.3(i) The hearing will be conducted to ensure that each party has the opportunity to address the Complaints Committee. The procedure to be followed during the hearing will be explained to the parties by letter in advance of the hearing. The Clerk will ensure that sufficient notes are taken to record an accurate reflection of the points considered and any decisions taken or actions agreed. Electronic recordings of the hearing will not normally be permitted and, in any event, would require the consent of all those present.

4.3(j) Unless otherwise stated, the procedure for the Stage 3 hearing is as follows:

- the parent and school representative will enter the hearing together;
- the Chair of the Committee will introduce the committee members and outline the process;
- the parent will explain the complaint;
- the school representative and committee members will question the parent;
- the school representative will explain the school's actions;
- the parent and the committee members will question the school representative;
- the parent will sum up their complaint;

- the school representative will sum up the school's actions;
- the Chair of the Committee will explain that both parties will hear from the committee within five school days;
- both parties will leave together while the committee decides;
- the Clerk, and any legal advisor assisting the committee (if applicable), will stay to assist the committee with its decision making.

4.3(k) The Clerk and/or Complaints Committee reserves the right to modify the above procedure at their sole discretion, for example requiring the parent and the school representative to present their complaint/actions separately to the Complaints Committee in the absence of the other party.

4.3(i) A Complaints Committee may be adjourned if the Complaints Committee require further evidence or in exceptional circumstances (for example, if clarification sought by the Complaints Committee is essential to the proceedings). The adjourned date must be as soon as possible.

4.3(j) After the hearing, the Complaints Committee will consider their decision and inform you and, where relevant, the person who is the subject of the complaint of their decision in writing within five school days. The letter will set out the decision of the committee together with the reasons underpinning that decision. The committee can (by a majority if necessary):

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

Stage 4: Referral of complaint to the Department for Education (DfE)

4.4(a) 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 DfE after they have completed Stage 3.

4.4(b) The DfE will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by the school. They will consider whether Dereham Neatherd High School has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint and whether they have followed Part 7 of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

4.4(c) At the time of writing this procedure, details about the DfE procedure and the DfE academy complaints form are available at:

www.gov.uk/complain-to-dfe

Or you can write to the DfE at the following address:

Ministerial and Public Communication Division
Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

Part 2: Concerns or complaints from other persons

Part 1 of this complaints policy applies only to complaints made by parents or carers of current registered pupils of the school. However, the school wishes to work closely with other members of the local community and will deal with their concerns and complaints as follows:

Stage 1

A concern regarding the school or its operations may be made to any member of staff. That member of staff will attempt to resolve the matter immediately or may, if appropriate, refer the matter to their line manager or member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) who is best placed to deal with the concern. It is expected that most concerns will be responded to orally or in writing within five school days. If a longer period is required, you will be kept informed of the progress of the investigation.

Stage 2

Where a concern is not resolved at Stage 1, you should put your complaint in writing and send this to the Headteacher to investigate. The Headteacher may delegate the task of investigation and/or responding to the complaint to a member of SLG or may escalate the complaint straight to Stage 3. A formal response to the complaint will usually be provided within 15 school days of receipt of the letter of complaint although if a longer period is required to respond, you will be kept updated.

Stage 3

If you are not satisfied with the response at Stage 2, you may request a review by writing to the Clerk of the Local Governing Body of the school. You should write to the Clerk within 15 school days of receipt of the letter at Stage 2. Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply. The Clerk will usually arrange for a governor to consider the complaint alone or may convene a Complaints Committee on the same terms as set out in Part 1 of this complaints policy. The decision at this stage will usually be sent to you within 15 school days of receipt of the request for a review or within five school days of the Complaints Committee hearing (as applicable).

Stage 4

If you are dissatisfied with the decision at Stage 3, you are entitled to refer your complaint to the Department for Education (DfE) as outlined in Part 1 of this complaints policy.

Concerns or complaints regarding the Headteacher should be referred direct to the Clerk of the Local Governing Body (via the school office) who will arrange for the stages above to be considered by an appropriate person.

Part 3: Repetitious and vexatious complaints and complaints pursued in an otherwise unreasonable manner

There are rare circumstances where we will deviate from the Complaints Procedure set out in Parts 1 and 2. These include, but are not necessarily limited to:

Repetitious, including serial and/or persistent, complaints

Where the complainant's complaint is the same, similar to or based on the same facts of a complaint which has already been considered in full and we have:

- taken every reasonable step to address the complainant's concerns; and
- given the complainant a clear statement of our position and their options,

we will write to the complainant to advise that the complaints procedure has been exhausted and that we will not be responding to any further correspondence in relation to these matters. The complainant will be referred to Stage 4.

Vexatious complaints

The Office of the Independent Adjudicator defines the characteristics of a 'frivolous' or 'vexatious' complaint as:

- complaints which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific or repetitious;
- insistence upon pursuing unmeritorious complaints and/or unrealistic outcomes beyond all reason;
- insistence upon pursuing meritorious complaints in an unreasonable manner;
- complaints which are designed to cause disruption, annoyance or excessive demands on school time; and
- demands for redress that lack any serious purpose or value.

Examples include but are not limited to:

- refusal to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance;
- refusal to co-operate with the complaints investigation process;
- refusal to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure;
- insistence on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice;
- introducing trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on;
- raising large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales;
- making unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced;
- changing the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds;
- seeking an unrealistic outcome, such as the inappropriate dismissal of staff;
- making 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;
- knowingly providing falsified information;
- publishing unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

Complaints pursued in an otherwise unreasonable manner

Where the complainant's behaviour or language towards staff or governors is aggressive, abusive, offensive, discriminatory or threatening or insulting personal comments are made about, or threats are made towards, staff.

In the circumstances outlined in (2) and (3) above, we may:

- inform the complainant that we consider their complaint to be vexatious or the manner in which they are pursuing their complaint to be unreasonable and why, and ask them to desist;
- conduct the Complaints Committee on the papers only i.e. not hold a hearing;
- refuse to consider the complaint any further and refer the complainant directly to Stage 4.
- We may also restrict the complainant's access to the school, e.g. requesting contact in a particular form (for example, letters only), requiring contact to take place with a named person only, restricting telephone calls to specified days and times or number of contacts or banning the complainant from the school's premises.
- Where the complainant's behaviour is so extreme that it threatens the immediate safety and welfare of staff or governors, we will consider other options - for example, reporting the matter to the police or taking legal action. In such cases, we may not give the complainant prior warning of that action.

Part 4: Complaint campaigns

For the purposes of this policy, a complaint campaign is defined as a complaint from three or more separate individuals (whether or not connected with the school) which are all based on the same subject.

Depending on the subject in question, we may deviate from the procedure set out in this policy and instead:

- send a template response to all complainants; and/or
- publish a single response on the school's website (as applicable).

5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 **The role of the 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;
- do not approach individual governors about the complaint;
- refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality.

5.2 **The role of the Headteacher**

The Headteacher has responsibility for dealing with formal written complaints that have reached Stage 2 of the Complaints Procedure. Their role is:

- to ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure;
- to ensure that the correct procedure has been followed;
- to ensure that an investigation is carried out, and a report compiled;
- to be aware of issues regarding:
    - sharing third party information;
    - additional support. This may be needed by complainants when making a complaint including interpretation support, or where the complainant is a child or young person;
- to ensure that records are kept;
- to meet the complainant, if appropriate;
- to determine whether to uphold or dismiss the complaint and communicate that decision to the complainant, providing the appropriate escalation details;
- if the complaint is being referred to Stage 3, notify the Clerk of the Local Governing Body to arrange the Complaints Committee.

5.3 **The role of the Investigating Officer (where appointed)**

The Investigating Officer'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 of records and other relevant information
    - analysing information
- liaising with the complainant and the Headteacher 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 Headteacher or complaints committee that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.

5.4 **The role of the Clerk of the Local Governing Body**

The Clerk of the Local Governing Body is the contact point for the complainant and the Complaints Committee, and should:

- ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure;

- liaise with staff, the Headteacher and the Chair of Governors to ensure the smooth running of the complaints procedure;
- be mindful of the timescales to respond to complaints;
- 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);
- ensure that the Complaints Committee has access to legal advice, where appropriate;
- set the date, time and venue of the meeting, taking reasonable steps to find a date that is convenient to all parties 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;
- minute the meeting;
- notify all parties of the Complaint Committee's decision;
- assist the school in issuing a summary letter to the complainant.

5.5 **The role of the Chair of the Complaints Committee**

The Chair of the Complaints Committee has a key role, ensuring that:

- 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. This is particularly important if the complainant is a child;
- the remit of the Complaints Committee is explained to the complainant;
- the 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);
- key findings of fact are made, and that any issues not previously mentioned in writing should not be raised at the meeting and, if they are mentioned at the meeting, these should not be noted or considered by the Complaints Committee;
- 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 Complaints Committee is open-minded, acts independently and no commitee member has an external interest in the outcome or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure;
- the meeting is minuted.

6. Monitoring and policy review

6.1 Records of concerns and complaints will be reviewed termly by the Headteacher and a report will be submitted to the Local Governing Body for its consideration. This report will cover the types of complaints received, whether they were upheld and at which stage of the complaints procedure they were resolved.

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

6.3 This policy will be reviewed by the Headteacher and approved by the Local Governing Body on an annual basis.

Annex 1

Matters excluded from the scope of this policy

Excluded Matters	Signposting
Admissions	The process for challenging admissions decisions is set out in our admissions policy in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.
Child protection matters	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance. If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).
Exclusions	The process for challenging exclusions decisions is set out in the DfE's statutory guidance and information can be found at: School suspensions and permanent exclusions - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
National Curriculum content	Please contact the Department for Education at www.education.gov.uk/contactus
School re-organisation proposals	Where concerns are not adequately addressed by the school, complaints can be raised direct with the Department for Education.
Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.
Staff grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.
Staff conduct	Certain complaints about staff may need to be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate. 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.
Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN)	Concerns about statutory assessments of special educational needs should be raised directly with the Local Authority.
Whistleblowing	We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors. The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus Volunteer staff who have concerns should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of the complaint

Annex 2

Complaints Form

Your name:
Pupil's name:
Your relationship to pupil:
Your address and postcode:
Your daytime telephone number:
Your evening telephone number:
Your email address:
Your complaint is: (if you have more than one complaint, please number these)
What action have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint(s) in accordance with Stage 1 of the school's complaints procedure? (Who did you speak to and what was the response?)

What would you like as an outcome from your complaint(s)?
Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, give details here:

Your signature …… **Date ……**

All functions of the complaints procedure must adhere to the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Please complete and return to the school office in a sealed envelope marked 'Private and Confidential' and addressed to the Headteacher or the Clerk of the Local Governing Body (as appropriate).

Office use

Date received ……

Date acknowledgement sent ……

Responsible member of staff ……

Annex 3

Summary of Complaints Procedure for Parents & Carers (Part 1)

Stage 1: **Informal Resolution**	Parent brings concern to attention of member of staff
	Issue to be resolved (guide: within 15 school days)
	Where no satisfactory solution has been found, parent to be advised that they should proceed to Stage 2
Stage 2: **Formal Written Complaint**	Parent to put complaint in writing using Complaint Form within 15 school days
	Complaint to be acknowledged within five school days
	Meeting with parents within 10 school days (where appropriate)
	Response to the complaint sent within 15 school days
Stage 3: **Referral to Complaints Committee**	Parent to request hearing within 15 school days of receiving notice of the outcome of Stage 2
	Request to be acknowledged within five school days
	Hearing to take place within 20 school days of receipt of request
	Notification of date, time and place of the hearing and details of the committee members present sent at least five school days before the hearing
	School representative and parents to submit evidence in support of their case to Clerk of the trustees at least 3 school days before the hearing
	Complaints Committee decision sent not more than five school days after the hearing