

# CLIFTONVILLE PRIMARY AND PRE-SCHOOL



**Independence   Safe and Settled   Resilience   Respect   Aspiration   Learning   Community**

## OUR MISSION

As an outstanding school we will inspire children to achieve more than  
they ever believed possible

## OUR VISION

That every member of our school community is challenged and supported  
to be the very best they can be  
That through our high-quality learning experiences & curriculum we will improve the  
life-chances of our children  
That we educate the whole child so they can thrive in a changing world

## Complaints policy

|                            |                |                           |
|----------------------------|----------------|---------------------------|
| <b>Approved by:</b>        | Governing body | <b>Date:</b> October 2025 |
| <b>Last reviewed on:</b>   | September 2025 |                           |
| <b>Next review due by:</b> | September 2027 |                           |

## Contents

|                                                                                   |    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| 1. Aims .....                                                                     | 2  |
| 2. Legislation and guidance .....                                                 | 3  |
| 3. Definitions and scope .....                                                    | 3  |
| 4. Roles and responsibilities .....                                               | 3  |
| 5. Principles for investigation .....                                             | 6  |
| 6. Stages of complaint (not complaints against the headteacher or governors)..... | 7  |
| 7. Complaints against the headteacher, a governor or the governing board .....    | 7  |
| 8. Referring complaints on completion of the school's procedure.....              | 8  |
| 9. Persistent complaints .....                                                    | 8  |
| 10. Record keeping.....                                                           | 9  |
| 11. Learning lessons.....                                                         | 10 |
| 12. Monitoring arrangements .....                                                 | 10 |
| 13. Links with other policies.....                                                | 10 |

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## 1. Aims

Cliftonville Primary and Pre School aims to meet its statutory obligations when responding to complaints from parents of pupils at the school, and others.

When responding to complaints, we aim to resolve complaints at the earliest possible stage and, where possible, informally, and are dedicated to continuing to provide the highest quality of education possible in the school throughout the procedure. Cliftonville Primary School aims to:

- Be impartial and non-adversarial
- Facilitate a full and fair investigation by an independent person or panel, where necessary
- Address all the points at issue and provide an effective and prompt response
- Respect complainants' desire for confidentiality
- Treat complainants with respect and courtesy
- Make sure that any decisions we make are lawful, rational, reasonable, fair and proportionate, in line with the principles of administrative law
- Keep complainants informed of the progress of the complaints process
- Consider how the complaint can feed into school improvement evaluation processes

We try to resolve concerns or complaints by informal means wherever possible. Where this is not possible, formal procedures will be followed.

We also will aim to give the complainant the opportunity to complete the complaints procedure in full.

To support this, we will make sure we publicise the existence of this policy and make it available on the school website.

Throughout the process, we will be sensitive to the needs of all parties involved, and make any reasonable adjustments needed to accommodate individuals.

As one of the largest primary schools in the country, Cliftonville Primary & Pre-School is very proud of the exceptionally low numbers of formal complaints. There have only been five formal parental complaints from 2012 – 2023. This is evidence that the school has a very positive relationship with parents and carers and concerns are addressed, satisfactorily for all parties, before requiring a formal procedure to be engaged.

## 2. Legislation and guidance

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

- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Education Act 2002
- Equality Act 2010
- The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014
- Immigration Act 2016
- UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- Data Protection Act 2018
- HM Government (2016) 'Code of Practice on the English language requirement for public sector workers'
- ESFA (2021) 'Best practice guidance for academies complaints procedures'
- ESFA (2023) 'Academy trust handbook 2023'

## 3. Definitions and scope

### 3.1 Definitions

For the purpose of this policy, a “**complaint**” is defined as ‘an expression of dissatisfaction’ towards the actions taken or a perceived lack of action. Complaints can be resolved formally or informally.

A “**concern**” is defined as ‘an expression of worry or doubt’ where reassurance is required. For the purpose of this policy, concerns will be classed and addressed as complaints.

Any complaint or concern will be taken seriously, whether raised formally or informally, and the appropriate procedures will be implemented.

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

For the purpose of this policy, “**duplicate complaints**” are identical complaints received from a complainant’s spouse, partner or child. These complaints will not be addressed again and the individual making the second complaint will be informed that the complaint has been dealt with on a local level. If the individual is dissatisfied with the result, they can appeal to the Coastal Academies Trust or to the ESFA, as outlined in ‘The role of the ESFA’ subsection of this policy. Any new details provided by a complainant’s spouse, partner or child, however, will be investigated and managed in line with the complaints procedure.

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

### 3.2 Scope

Cliftonville Primary and Pre School intends to resolve complaints informally where possible, at the earliest possible stage.

There may be occasions when complainants would like to raise their concerns formally. This policy outlines the procedure relating to handling such complaints.

This policy does **not** cover complaints procedures relating to:

- Admissions Policy
- Statutory assessments of special educational needs (SEN)
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Suspension and Exclusion Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Staff discipline
- Grievance Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Records Management Policy
- Withdrawal from the curriculum (parents and carers can withdraw their child from any aspect of religious education, including the daily act of collective worship. They do not have to explain why)
- Complaints about services provided by other providers who use school premises or facilities should be directed to the provider concerned.
- All other complaints will be directed towards the procedures laid out in this policy.
- Complainants may make complaints in person, in writing or by telephone. Complaints should be made using the appropriate channels of communication.
- Complaints are expected to be made as soon as possible after an incident arises to amend the issue in an appropriate timescale. The academy upholds a **three-month** time limit in which a complaint can be lodged

regarding an incident. Complaints made outside this time limit will be considered in exceptional circumstances. In the case of any timescales changing, all parties involved will be informed of the changes in a timely manner. Complaints received outside of term time will be treated as **being received on the first school day after the holiday period**.

- A complaint can progress to the next stage of the procedure even if it is not viewed as “justified”. All complainants will be given the opportunity to fully complete the complaints procedure.

### **Complaints about school staff or governors**

Complaints against staff will:

- Be dealt with by the headteacher.
- Follow the complaints procedure, including a panel hearing where applicable.

Complaints against a headteacher will:

- Be dealt with by the chair of trustees.
- Follow the complaints procedure, including a panel hearing where applicable.

Complaints against governors will:

- Be made in writing to the clerk, who will arrange for them to be heard.
- Be dealt with by the chair of trustees.
- Potentially involve escalation to conduct an investigation – this will be handled by the CEO.
- Involve a panel hearing where applicable.

Complaints against the chair of governors will:

- Be made in writing to the clerk, who will determine the most appropriate course of action dependent on the nature of the complaint.

Complaints against the board of governors will:

- Be dealt with by the CEO.
- Follow the complaints procedure, including a panel hearing where applicable.

Complaints against the CEO will:

- Be dealt with by the **chair of trustees**, with a panel hearing where applicable.

Complaints against the trust will:

- Be dealt with by the CEO.
- Begin with stage two of the 'Complaints procedure' outlined in this policy, i.e. via a formal, written complaint.

### **Complaints escalated to the trust**

Where a complainant wishes to escalate their complaint to the trust of the academy, the complaint will be handled by the CEO.

The clerk to the board of trustees will write to the complainant to acknowledge their complaint within **15** school days of receiving it. If appropriate, the CEO will investigate the complaint and provide an initial response.

Where the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the initial response, they will be prompted to write to the clerk to the board of trustees to ask for the complaint to be held before a panel within **10** school days. The clerk will record the date this complaint is received and will respond within **10** school days. The panel hearing will be organised in accordance with stage three of the 'Complaints procedure'.

If a complaint is escalated beyond the panel, its resolution may involve sourcing an independent investigator to deal with the complaint. In exceptional circumstances, where it is necessary to deviate from the complaints procedure, this deviation will be appropriately documented.

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

## **4. Roles and responsibilities**

### **4.1 The complainant**

The complainant will get a more effective and timely response to their complaint if they:

- Follow these procedures
- Co-operate with the Cliftonville Primary and Pre School throughout the process, and respond to deadlines and communication promptly
- Ask for assistance as needed
- Treat all those involved with respect
- Not publish details about the complaint on social media

### **4.2 The investigator**

An individual will be appointed to look into the complaint and establish the facts. They will:

- Interview all relevant parties, keeping notes
- Consider records and any written evidence and keep these securely
- Prepare a comprehensive report to the headteacher or complaints committee which includes the facts and potential solutions

### **4.3 The complaints co-ordinator**

The complaints co-ordinator can be:

- The headteacher or CEO of our academy trust
- The designated complaints governor
- Any other staff member providing administrative support

The complaints co-ordinator will:

- Keep the complainant up to date at each stage in the procedure
- Make sure the process runs smoothly by liaising with staff members, the headteacher, chair of governors, clerk and CEO and chair of trustees of the Coastal Academies Trust (CAT)
- Be aware of issues relating to:
  - Sharing third party information
  - Additional support needed by complainants, for example interpretation support or where the complainant is a child or young person
- Keep records

### **4.4 Clerk to the governing board**

The clerk will:

- Be the contact point for the complainant and the complaints committee, including circulating the relevant papers and evidence before complaints committee meetings

- Arrange the complaints hearing
- Record and circulate the minutes and outcome of the hearing

#### 4.5 Committee chair

The committee chair will:

- Chair the meeting, ensuring that everyone is treated with respect throughout
- Make sure all parties see the relevant information, understand the purpose of the committee, and are allowed to present their case

### 5. Principles for investigation

When investigating a complaint, we will try to clarify:

- What has happened
- Who was involved
- What the complainant feels would put things right

Complaints against school (except the headteacher) should be made in the first instance, to Ms C Whichcord (Headteacher) via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential- see section 6

Complaints that involve or are about the headteacher should be addressed to Mrs Marianne Hooper (the Chair of Governors), via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential- see section 7

Complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor or the whole governing body should be addressed to Mrs Debbie Shallcross (the Clerk to the Governing Body) via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential- see section 7

Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.

#### 5.1 Time scales

The complainant must raise the complaint within 3 months of the incident. If the complaint is about a series of related incidents, they must raise the complaint within 3 months of the last incident.

We will consider exceptions to this time frame in circumstances where there were valid reasons for not making a complaint at that time and the complaint can still be investigated in a fair manner for all involved.

When complaints are made out of term time, we will consider them to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

If at any point we cannot meet the time scales 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

#### 5.2 Complaints about our fulfilment of early years requirements

We will investigate all written complaints relating to the school's fulfilment of the Early Years Foundation Stage requirements and notify the complainant of the outcome within 28 days of receiving the complaint. The school will keep a record of the complaint (see section 10) and make this available to Ofsted on request.

Parents and carers can notify Ofsted if they believe that the school is not meeting Early Years Foundation Stage requirements, by calling 0300 123 4666, or by emailing [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk). An online contact form is also available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted#org-contacts>.

We will notify parents and carers if we become aware that the school is to be inspected by Ofsted. We will also supply a copy of the inspection report to parents and carers of children attending the setting on a regular basis.

## **6. Stages of complaint (not complaints against the headteacher or governors)**

### **6.1 Stage 1: informal**

Cliftonville Primary and Pre School will take informal concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve the matter quickly. It may be the case that the provision or clarification of information will resolve the issue.

The complainant should raise the complaint as soon as possible with the relevant member of staff or the headteacher, either in person or by letter, telephone or email. If the complainant is unclear who to contact or how to contact them, they should contact the school office on 01843 227575 or [office@cliftonvilleprimary.co.uk](mailto:office@cliftonvilleprimary.co.uk)

The school will acknowledge informal complaints within 5 school days, and investigate and provide a response within 10 school days.

The informal stage will involve a meeting between the complainant and the Headteacher or the subject of the complaint.

If the complaint is not resolved informally, it will be escalated to a formal complaint.

### **6.2 Stage 2: formal**

The formal stage involves the complainant putting the complaint to the headteacher and/or the subject of the complaint in writing via an email or letter.

The complainant should provide details such as relevant dates, times and the names of witnesses of events, alongside copies of any relevant documents. The complainant should also state what they feel would resolve the complaint.

If complainants need assistance raising a formal complaint, they can contact the school office on 01843 227575 or [office@cliftonvilleprimary.co.uk](mailto:office@cliftonvilleprimary.co.uk)

Stage two of the process will be completed within **15** school days. Where the situation is recognised as complex, and it is deemed to be unable to be resolved within this timescale, the person managing the complaint will contact the complainant to inform them of the revised target date via a written notification.

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

The headteacher (or other person appointed by the headteacher for this purpose) will then conduct their own investigation. The written conclusion of this investigation will be sent to the complainant within 10 school days.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response and wishes to proceed to the next stage of this procedure, they should inform the clerk to the governing board in writing within 10 school days.

### **6.3 Stage 3: review panel**

#### **Convening the panel**

Complaints will be escalated to the panel hearing stage if the complainant is not satisfied with the response to the complaint at the second, formal, stage.

The panel will be appointed by or on behalf of the Coastal Academies Trust and must consist of at least 3 people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. At least 1 panel member must

be independent of the management and running of the school. The panel cannot be made up solely of governing board members, as they are not independent of the management and running of the school.

The panel will have access to the existing record of the complaint's progress (see section 10).

The complainant must have reasonable notice of the date of the review panel. The clerk will aim to find a date within 10 school days of the request, where possible.

If the complainant rejects the offer of 3 proposed dates without good reason, the clerk will set a date. The hearing will go ahead using written submissions from both parties.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 5 school days before the date of the meeting.

### **At the meeting**

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

At the review panel meeting, 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 panel hearing and be accompanied if they wish. We don't encourage either party to bring legal representation but will consider it on a case-by-case basis. For instance, if a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by their union.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

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 panel, the complainant and the school representative(s) will be given the chance to ask and reply to questions. Once the complainant and school representative(s) have presented their cases, they will be asked to leave and evidence will then be considered.

The panel will then put together its findings and recommendations from the case. The panel will also provide copies of the minutes of the hearing and the findings and recommendations to the complainant and, where relevant, the individual who is the subject of the complaint, and make a copy available for inspection by the Coastal Academy Trust and headteacher.

### **The outcome**

The committee can:

- Uphold the complaint, in whole or in part
- Dismiss the complaint, in whole or in part

If the complaint is upheld, the committee will:

- Decide the appropriate action to resolve the complaint
- Where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future

The school will inform those involved of the decision in writing within 10 school days.

## **7. Complaints against the headteacher, a governor or the governing board**

### **7.1 Stage 1: informal**

Complaints made against the headteacher or any member of the governing board should be directed to the clerk to the governing board in the first instance.

If the complaint is about the headteacher or one member of the governing board (including the chair or vice-chair), a suitably skilled and impartial governor will carry out the steps at stage 1 (set out in section 6 above).

### **7.2 Stage 2: formal**

If the complaint is:

- Jointly about the chair and vice-chair or
- The entire governing board or
- The majority of the governing board

An independent investigator will carry out the steps in stage 2 (set out in section 6 above). They will be appointed by the governing board and will write a formal response at the end of their investigation.

### **7.3 Stage 3: review panel**

If the complaint is:

- Jointly about the chair and vice-chair or
- The entire governing board or
- The majority of the governing board

A committee of independent governors will hear the complaint. They will be sourced from local schools and will carry out the steps at stage 3 (set out in section 6 above).

## **8. 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 Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). The ESFA will check whether the complaint has been dealt with properly by the school. The ESFA will not overturn a school's decision about a complaint, but will intervene if a school or trust has:

- Breached a clause in its funding agreement
- Failed to act in line with its duties under education law
- Acted (or is proposing to act) unreasonably when exercising its functions

If the school's complaints procedure is found to not meet regulations, the school will be asked to correct its procedure accordingly.

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

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

We will include this information in the outcome letter to complainants.

## 9. Persistent complaints

### 9.1 Unreasonably persistent complaints

The head teacher and governing body are fully committed to the improvement of our school. We welcome feedback from parents/carers and will always try to resolve any concerns as quickly as possible. There is a procedure for parents to use if they wish to make a formal complaint.

Sometimes, however, parents or carers pursuing complaints or other issues treat staff and others in a way that is unacceptable. Whilst we recognise that some complaints may relate to serious and distressing incidents, we will not accept threatening or harassing behaviour towards any members of the school community.

Most complaints raised will be valid, and therefore we will treat them seriously. However, a complaint may become unreasonable. For the purposes of this policy, “**unreasonable complaints**” include:

- Vexatious complaints, which:
  - Are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, or repetitious.
  - Insist upon pursuing unmeritorious complaints and/or unrealistic outcomes beyond all reason.
  - Insist upon pursuing meritorious complaints in an unreasonable manner.
  - Are designed to cause disruption or annoyance.
  - Demand for redress which lacks any serious purpose or value.
- Serial or persistent complaints, which:
  - Are duplicated, sent by the same complainant once the initial complaint has been closed.
  - Are new complaints that are submitted additionally, as part of an existing open complaint, by the same complainant.

A complaint may also be regarded as unreasonable when 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 while still wishing their complaint to be resolved.
- Refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaints procedure.
- Insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice.
- Introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on, or raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales.
- Makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues and seeks to have them replaced.
- Changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds.
- Repeatedly makes the same complaint despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed.
- Refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the trust’s complaints procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed, including referral to the ESFA.
- Seeks an unrealistic outcome.
- Makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with.

A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if the complainant:

- Acts maliciously or aggressively.
- Uses threats, intimidation or violence.

- Uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language.
- Knows the complaint to be false.
- Uses falsified information.
- Publishes unacceptable information in media such as social media websites and newspapers.

The above applies regardless of the method the complaint is made, e.g. face-to-face, by telephone, in writing or electronically.

### **Steps we will take**

We will take every reasonable step to address the complainant's concerns and give them a clear statement of our position and their options. We will maintain our role as an objective arbiter throughout the process, including when we meet with individuals. We will follow our complaints procedure as normal (as outlined above) wherever possible.

If the complainant continues to contact the school in a disruptive way, we may put communications strategies in place. We may:

- Give the complainant a single point of contact via an email address
- Limit the number of times the complainant can make contact, such as a fixed number per term
- Ask the complainant to engage a third party to act on their behalf, such as Citizens Advice
- Put any other strategy in place as necessary

### **Stopping responding**

We may stop responding to the complainant when all of these factors are met:

- We believe we have taken all reasonable steps to help address their concerns
- We have provided a clear statement of our position and their options
- The complainant contacts us repeatedly, and we believe their intention is to cause disruption or inconvenience

Where we stop responding, we will inform the individual that we intend to do so. We will also explain that we will still consider any new complaints they make.

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 our school site.

## **9.2 Duplicate complaints**

If we have resolved a complaint under this procedure and receive a duplicate complaint on the same subject from a partner, family member or other individual, we will assess whether there are aspects that we hadn't previously considered, or any new information we need to take into account.

If we are satisfied that there are no new aspects, we will:

- Tell the new complainant that we have already investigated and responded to this issue, and that the local process is complete
- Direct them to the DfE if they are dissatisfied with our original handling of the complaint

If there are new aspects, we will follow this procedure again.

## **9.3 Complaint campaigns**

If we receive a large volume of complaints about the same topic or subject, especially if these come from complainants unconnected with the school, Cliftonville Primary and Pre 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.

## 10. Record keeping

Cliftonville Primary and Pre School 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, our privacy notices and records management policy/record retention schedule

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.

## 11. Learning lessons

The local governing body and the Coastal Academies Trust will review any underlying issues raised by complaints 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.

## 12. Monitoring arrangements

The local governing body will monitor the effectiveness of the complaints procedure in making sure that complaints are handled properly. The local governing body will track the number and nature of complaints, and review underlying issues as stated in section 11.

The complaints records are logged and managed by the Headteacher

This policy will be reviewed by Headteacher and local governing body every 2 years.

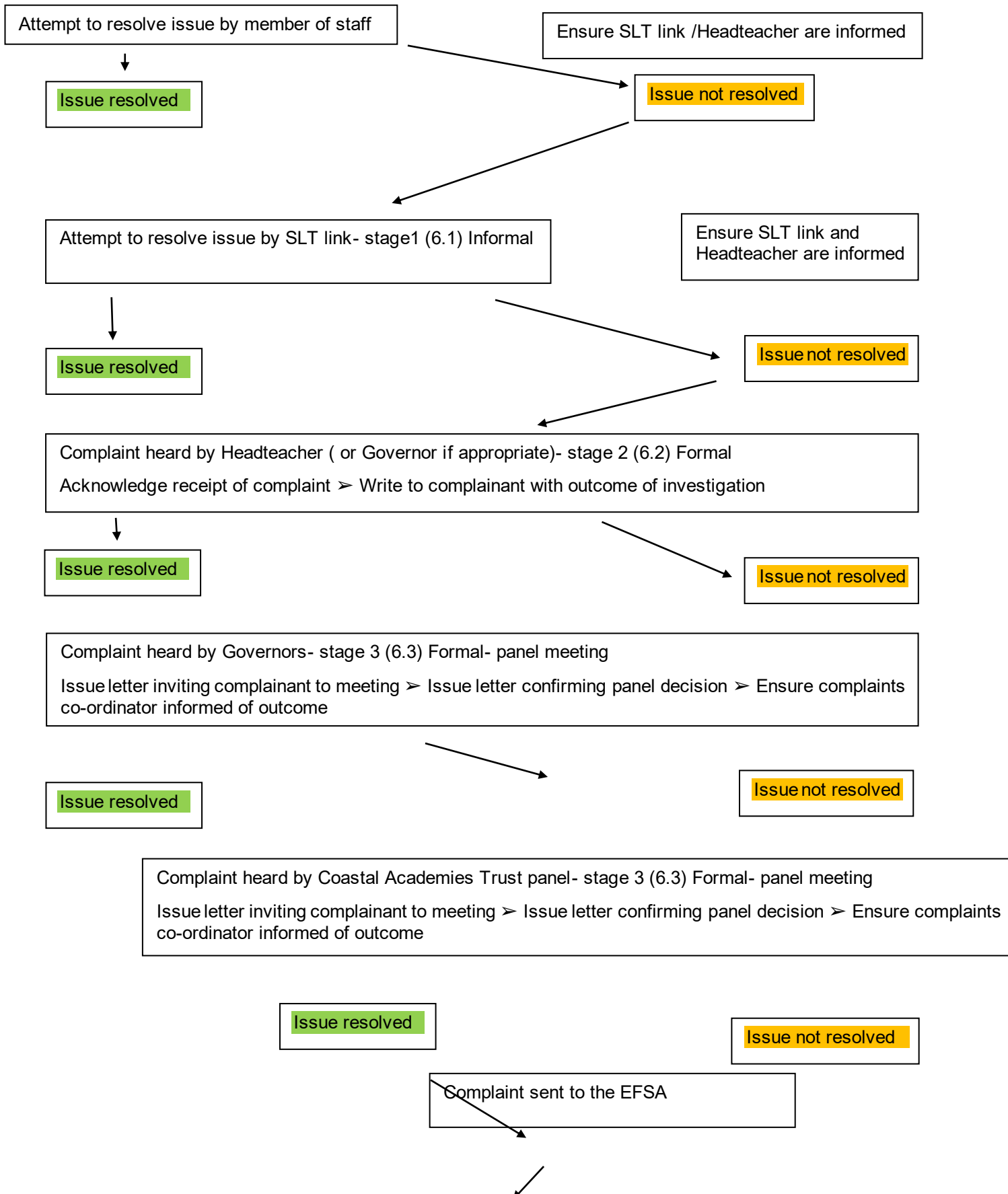
At each review, the policy will be approved by local governing body.

## 13. Links with other policies

Policies dealing with other forms of complaints include:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures
- Admissions policy
- Exclusions policy
- Staff grievance procedures
- Staff disciplinary procedures
- SEN policy and information report

## Flowchart of complaints



# Complaint Form

Please complete and return to Ms C Whichcord (Headteacher) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

|                                                                                                                    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Your name:</b>                                                                                                  |
| <b>Pupil's name (if relevant):</b>                                                                                 |
| <b>Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):</b>                                                               |
| <b>Address:</b>                                                                                                    |
| <b>Postcode:</b>                                                                                                   |
| <b>Day time telephone number:</b>                                                                                  |
| <b>Evening telephone number:</b>                                                                                   |
| <b>Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it.</b> |

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

**Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.**

**Signature:**

**Date:**

**Official use**

**Date acknowledgement sent:**

**By who:**

**Complaint referred to:**

**Date:**

## 1. Model Text / Information for a 'How to Complain' leaflet

### Concerns and Complaint about School

#### **If you have a concern or complaint**

We would like you to tell us about it. We welcome suggestions for improving our work in the school. Be assured that no matter what you want to tell us, our support and respect for you and your child in the school will not be affected in any way. Please tell us of your concern as soon as possible. It is difficult for us to investigate properly an incident or problem which has happened some time ago.

#### **What to do first:**

Most concerns and complaints can be sorted out quickly by speaking with your child's class teacher.] Any member of staff at the school / academy can help you and direct you to the most appropriate person to deal with your concern / complaint. If you feel you have a complaint which you feel should be looked at by the headteacher/principal in the first instance you can make contact if you prefer. It is usually best to discuss the problem face to face. You may need an appointment to do this and you can make one by ringing or emailing the school/academy. You can take a friend or relative to the appointment if you feel you would like to do so.

All staff will make every effort to resolve your issue informally. They will make sure you understand what you feel went wrong, explain their actions to you and ask what resolution you require to put things right. This does not mean that in every case the resolution will be as you wish but it will help both you and the school/academy to understand both sides and possibly help to prevent a similar problem arising again.

#### **What to do next:**

If you are dissatisfied with the teacher's response (or with the headteacher/principal's initial reaction if already involved), you may wish to make a formal complaint to the headteacher/principal. This should be made in writing using the form provided in the School/Academy Complaints Policy and Procedure. A copy of this is available on the school/academy's website.

If your complaint is about an action of the headteacher/principal personally, then you should refer your complaint to the Chair of the Governing Body; contact details can be obtained from the school office or website.

The headteacher/principal will ask to meet you for a discussion of the problem and try to resolve the matter informally. Again, you may take a friend or relative to support if you wish. If we are unable to resolve informally, the headteacher/principal (or suitable representative) will conduct a full investigation of the complaint and may interview members of staff or pupils involved. You will receive a written response to your complaint.

Most problems can be resolved by the end of this stage.

#### **If your complaint has not been resolved:**

If you are still not satisfied, you may wish to contact the Chair of the Governing Body to ask for a referral of your complaint to a panel of the governing body. The complaint will be heard by a panel of governors who have no previous knowledge of the issue and who will be able to provide fresh assessment. You will then be invited to attend and speak to the panel which the headteacher/principal will also attend. The Complaints Policy and Procedure explains how these meetings operate.

#### **Further action:**

Complaints about the school/academy problems are almost always settled within the school/academy but in exceptional cases it may be possible to refer the problem to an outside body such as the Secretary of State for Education. The Department of Education will expect the complaint to have been considered by the school governors first. Complaints about academies are handled by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education. There is more detail in the full Complaint Policy and Procedure, on the school's website or via the Department for Education website at [www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus](http://www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus).

## 1. Sample outcome of meeting regarding informal discussion

Dear xxx,

Thank you for meeting with me on xxx, to discuss your concerns regarding xxxxx

**Option A):** -----

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I am pleased that we reached a positive outcome and you are assured that the matter has/will be addressed. We are always grateful for feedback, as this enables us to improve our school/academy and provide a better education service for our pupils and to our community.

The complaint has now been concluded. However, should you have any concerns in the future, please do not hesitate to get back in touch.

**Option B):** -----

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It is unfortunate that we were unable to resolve your concerns at our meeting on xxxxxx. As discussed, this matter is now being dealt with formally.

The complaint(s), as noted on your complaint form, will be investigated.

**Option B1:** As agreed, we will meet on xxxx [within ... School days of complaint notice] to discuss the outcome of the investigation. There may be the possibility of an earlier meeting, if the investigation is concluded sooner.

**Option B2:** As discussed I will notify you of the investigation, in writing, within ...school days. (this option removes the possibility for discussion that might lead to resolution, if appropriate).

In the meantime, if you have any queries regarding this process, please do contact me. I have enclosed a copy of our complaints policy and procedures (if not already given).

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher

Or Chair of Governing Board

## 2. Outcome of Investigation Letter (assuming a meeting has taken place, if agreed as per above)

Dear xxx

Further to my letter of xxx, I am pleased to confirm that the investigation has been concluded.

The outcome of the investigation in relation to your complaint(s) is as follows:

**Complaint 1:** [Description] was upheld/dismissed. [if dismissed, why/if upheld, what is the school's response / what action will be taken] etc...

**Complaint 2:** [Description] was upheld/dismissed. [if dismissed, why/if upheld, what is the schools response / what action will be taken] etc...

I am satisfied that the matter has been investigated thoroughly and that outcome(s) is appropriate. I hope you will be reassured that this matter has been taken seriously and that your complaint has been thoroughly investigated. However, if you are still dissatisfied, you may ask for your complaint to be reviewed by a panel of governors, which you will be invited to attend.

The panel has the remit to review: how the complaint was handled, the suitability of the investigation undertaken and whether the outcome(s) was appropriate. This stage does not involve a reinvestigation of the complaint. The scope of the review is to consider only the original complaint.

If you would like to request a review by the Governing Board, you must inform me, in writing within ... school days, otherwise the case will be closed. You must also explain why you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher

Or Chair of Governing Board

### 3. Typical Agenda for reviewing complaints

#### **A: Introductions and confirmation of process**

1. Welcome
2. Apologies
3. Consider declaration of interests
4. To confirm the order of the procedure and process and roles of individuals

#### **B: Presentation of complainant's case**

5. Presentation of information by the complainant (including witnesses)
6. Questions on matters of fact by others
7. Questions on matters of fact by the review panel

#### **C: Presentation of Information by the Headteacher / Principal / Governor**

8. Presentation of information by the headteacher/principal/chair of governors (including witnesses and investigator)
9. Questions on matters of fact by others
10. Questions on matters of fact by the review panel

#### **D: Summing up**

11. Summing up by the headteacher / principal /chair of governors
12. Summing up by the complainant

#### **E: Decision making**

13. Everyone except the panel members and the clerk will withdraw. The panel will decide on the outcome and a record of the reasons for the decision will be taken.