CHILTON FOLIAT CofE VA PRIMARY SCHOOL

Our School Christian Vision

With thankfulness, courage and love,
we strive to improve heart and mind.

At Chilton Foliat Primary School we honour our educational heritage, supported by a strong Christian ethos. We strive to provide a diverse education that inspires children to develop a **thirst for knowledge**. This is delivered in a safe, thoughtful and nurturing environment promoting self-discipline, motivation and excellence in all that we do. We encourage strong partnerships and inclusive relationships amongst pupils, parents, carers, staff and the wider community. Our children leave Chilton Foliat Primary School with a deep understanding of the impact of living out our school Christian vision and values. As a result, they are well-rounded, confident and able to contribute positively to a wider community. They want to continue to **thirst for knowledge** and strive to improve **heart** and **mind** enjoying a diverse curriculum in their next educational setting.

Complaints Policy and Procedure

Date Reviewed	March 2024
Review Period	Annually/**2 Yearly**/Readopted/Other
Review Body	Headteacher with staff colleagues and key personnel

Introduction

At Chilton Foliat CE VA Primary School, we encourage every child to reach their full potential, nurtured and supported in a Christian community, living by the values of thankfulness, courage and love. The school's governors, Headteacher and all the staff at the school are committed to providing an excellent education that inspires and encourages its pupils and the entire school community.

At Chilton Foliat CE VA Primary School, we value feedback from parents and carers at the school. As a parent or carer of a pupil or as a member of our wider community, you may raise thoughts or concerns with the school and these insights can help us to improve, lead to more effective ways of working or highlight needs that may need addressing. The school will consider concerns or parents' thoughts to improve experiences for individual children, groups of children or systems. If you have a concern that you would like to discuss or an issue you wish to draw to the school's attention, we encourage you to first raise this with your child's class teacher or leave a message for them with the school office. If your class teacher is unable to discuss the concern with you at the time you raise it, they will arrange a convenient time for you both to discuss it. If the concern is not within the teacher's remit, they will ensure that your concern is directed to the appropriate person and will inform you of who will be responding to your concern.

Where you have a concern or issue which you consider is best dealt with by the Headteacher, or you consider that your concern has not been resolved satisfactorily, you may set it out in an email to the school office for the attention of The Headteacher, or alternatively contact the school office to make an appointment. You will be asked to explain the nature of your concern when you make the appointment.

If your concern is not as a parent of the school, please contact the school office, by email to admin@chiltonfoliat.wilts.sch.uk, or by phone on 01488 682630.

We hope that most concerns will be addressed to your satisfaction at this informal stage, however if you feel that your initial attempts to address a concern have not been satisfactorily resolved and you would like to make a formal complaint you should follow the steps set out in the proceeding policy. We also ask that the Code of Conduct for Parents Carers and Visitors is adhered to.

This document sets out the school's procedure for addressing your concerns and the formal complaints process. We aim to address these openly, fairly, promptly and without prejudice. (Please note this procedure does not address certain complaints, which are covered elsewhere by statutory procedures; these include admissions, exclusions and child protection issues. A full list can be found in the section Scope of this Complaints Procedure.)

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Who can make a complaint?

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

The difference between a concern and a complaint

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

It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. Chilton Foliat CE VA Primary School takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

This procedure deals with complaints but the underlying principle is that concerns ought to be handled, if at all possible, without the need for formal procedures. It would be helpful if staff were able to resolve issues on the spot. The requirement to have a complaints procedure need not in any way undermine efforts to resolve the concern informally. In most cases, the class teacher or the individual delivering the service in the case of extended school provision, will be the first to be notified of the concern.

We respect that it may be difficult discussing a concern with a particular member of staff. In these cases, please approach the Headteacher. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, it will be referred to the Headteacher. The matter of concern will be dealt with as objectively and impartially as possible and the aim will be to resolve it at this informal stage.

We understand however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, Chilton Foliat CE VA Primary School will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

How to raise a concern or make a complaint

A concern is typically the informal step to this procedure prior to formalising a complaint. This can be done in person, in writing or by telephone. In the event of a formal complaint, please complete the Complaint Form in Appendix 1 to commence

Stage 1 of the process. Concerns or complaints may also be made by a third party acting on behalf on a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

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

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

Complaints against school staff (except the Headteacher) should be made in the first instance, to the Headteacher via the school office**.** Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints that involve or are about the Headteacher should be addressed to the Chair of Governors via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

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

Ideally, complaints will be submitted in writing using the Complaint Form in Appendix 1. 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 accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure. For instance, providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

Anonymous complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

Time scales

You must raise the complaint within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

Complaints received outside of term time

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

Scope of this Complaints Procedure

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

Exceptions	Who to contact
• Admissions to schools • Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs • School re-organisation proposals	Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with Wiltshire Council.
• Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation	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 For Allegations (DOFA) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) 0300 4560108 (out of hours 0300 4560100) or email MASH@wiltshire.gov.uk
• Exclusion of children from school*	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions. **complaints about the application of the behaviour policy and anti-bullying policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.*
• 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 matters relating to education 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 about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the LA or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.
• Staff grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.

• Staff conduct	Complaints about staff will 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.
• 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.
• National Curriculum - content	Please contact the Department for Education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus

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

If a complainant commences legal action against Chilton Foliat CE VA Primary School in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure in relation to their complaint until those legal proceedings have concluded.

Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, Chilton Foliat CE VA Primary School wants to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- an explanation
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- an assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur
- an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint
- an apology.

Withdrawal of a Complaint

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

Stage 1

Formal complaints must be made to the Headteacher via the school office. This may be done in writing (preferably on the Complaint Form in Appendix 1). (Formal

complaints about the Headteacher, the Chair of Governors or an individual member or all of the governing body must be made to the Clerk to the Governing Body via the school office).

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.
Within this response, the Headteacher will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The Headteacher can consider whether a face-to-face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.
Note: The Headteacher may delegate the investigation to another member of the school's senior leadership team but not the decision to be taken.

During the investigation, the Headteacher (or investigator) will:

- if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish

- keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the Headteacher will provide a formal written response within 30 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint.
If the Headteacher is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions Chilton Foliat CE VA Primary School will take to resolve the complaint.
The Headteacher will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1.

Stage 2

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

A request to escalate to Stage 2 must be made to the Clerk of the Governing Body, via the school office, within 10 school days of receipt of the Stage 1 response.

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

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

The Clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within 20 school days of receipt of the Stage 2 request. If this is not possible, the Clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.
If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates, without good reason, the Clerk will decide when to hold the meeting. It will then proceed in the complainant's absence on the basis of written submissions from both parties.

The complaints committee/panel will consist of at least three governors. Any governor conducting an investigation or serving as a member of a complaints committee/panel must have no prior involvement or knowledge of the complaint and no conflict of interest and must confirm their independence to the Clerk of the Governing Body beforehand.

Prior to the meeting, they will decide amongst themselves who will act as the Chair of the Complaints Panel. If there are fewer than three governors from Chilton Foliat CE VA Primary School available, the Clerk to the Governing Body will source any additional, independent governors through another local school or through their LA's Governor Services team, in order to make up the committee/panel. Alternatively, an entirely independent committee/panel may be convened to hear the complaint at Stage 2.

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

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

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

Note: Complaints about staff conduct will not generally be handled under this complaints procedure. Complainants will be advised that any staff conduct complaints will be considered under staff disciplinary procedures, if appropriate, but outcomes will not be shared with them.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

At least 10 school days before the meeting, the Clerk will:

- confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that, if the complainant is invited, the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible

- request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the committee/panel at least 7 school days before the meeting.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 7 school days before the date of the meeting. The committee/panel will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

The committee/panel will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.

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

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

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

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

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

The Chair of the Committee/Panel will provide the complainant and Chilton Foliat CE VA Primary School with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 15 school days.

The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the Department for Education if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by Chilton Foliat CE VA Primary School.

Next Steps

If the complainant believes the school did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact the Department for Education after they have completed Stage 2.

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by Chilton Foliat CE VA Primary School.

They will consider whether Chilton Foliat CE VA Primary School has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint.

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

Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD.

Appendix 1 - Complaint Form

Please complete and return to Chilton Foliat CE VA Primary School Headteacher (Chair of Governors if the complaint concerns the Headteacher, Clerk of the Governing Body if the complaint concerns the Chair of Governors) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:
Pupil's name (if relevant):
Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):
Address: **Postcode:** **Day time telephone number:** **Evening telephone number:**
Please give details of your complaint. Please continue on additional sheets if required.

What actions, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint? (Who did you speak to, when and what was the response)?
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 complaint is received:
Complaints Co-ordinator informed of receipt of complaint:
Date acknowledgement sent:
Acknowledgement sent to complainant by:
Complaint referred to be investigated by:
Date:

Appendix 2 - Roles and Responsibilities

Complainant

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

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

Investigator

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

- providing a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint through:
  - sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved
  - interviewing staff and children/young people and other people relevant to the complaint
  - consideration of records and other relevant information
  - analysing information
- liaising with the complainant and the complaints co-ordinator 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, Chair of Governors or complaints committee/panel that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.

The Headteacher, Chair of Governors or complaints committee/panel will then determine whether to uphold or dismiss the complaint and communicate that decision to the complainant, providing the appropriate escalation details.

Complaints Co-ordinator (Clerk to Governors)

The complaints co-ordinator should:

- ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure
- liaise with staff members, Headteacher, Chair of Governors, Clerk and LAs (if appropriate) to ensure the smooth running of the complaints procedure
- be aware of issues regarding:
  - sharing third party information
  - additional support. This may be needed by complainants when making a complaint including interpretation support or where the complainant is a child or young person
- keep records.

Clerk to the Governing Body

The Clerk is the contact point for the complainant and the complaints committee/panel and should:

- ensure that all people involved in the complaint procedure are aware of their legal rights and duties, including any under legislation relating to school complaints, education law, the Equality Act 2010, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)
- set the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties (if they are invited to attend) and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- collate any written material relevant to the complaint (for example; stage 1 paperwork, school and complainant submissions) and send it to the parties in advance of the meeting within an agreed timescale
- record the proceedings
- circulate the minutes of the meeting
- notify all parties of the committee/panel's decision.

Committee/Panel Chair

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

- both parties are asked (via the Clerk) to provide any additional information relating to the complaint by a specified date in advance of the meeting
- the meeting is conducted in an informal manner, is not adversarial, and that, if all parties are invited to attend, everyone is treated with respect and courtesy
- complainants who may not be used to speaking at such a meeting are put at ease. This is particularly important if the complainant is a child/young person
- the remit of the committee/panel is explained to the complainant
- written material is seen by everyone in attendance, provided it does not breach confidentiality or any individual's rights to privacy under the DPA 2018 or GDPR.

If a new issue arises it would be useful to give everyone the opportunity to consider and comment upon it; this may require a short adjournment of the meeting. Once the meeting re-commences:

- both the complainant and the school are given the opportunity to make their case and seek clarity, either through written submissions ahead of the meeting or verbally in the meeting itself
- the issues are addressed
- key findings of fact are made
- the committee/panel is open-minded and acts independently
- no member of the committee/panel has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure
- the meeting is minuted
- they liaise with the Clerk (who is also the complaints co-ordinator).

Committee/Panel Member

Committee/panel members should be aware that:

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

Appendix 3 - Serial, Persistent, Unreasonable and Vexatious Complainants

There will be occasions when, despite all stages of the complaints procedure having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If a complainant tries to re-open the same issue, the school can inform them that the procedure has been completed and that the matter is now closed.
If the complainant contacts the school again on the same issue, the correspondence may then be viewed as 'serial' or 'unreasonable' or even 'vexatious' and the school may choose not to respond.
This abuse of the complaints system is often accompanied by the use of social media to portray an unbalanced view as they know the school does not engage with parents through social media. The school's view is that this type of use of the system should be viewed as unacceptable behaviour as it harms the education and wellbeing of the children within the school community.

Guidance on dealing with Serial, Persistent, Unreasonable and Vexatious Complainants

Schools should not ordinarily refuse to accept further correspondence or complaints from an individual they have had repeat or excessive contact with. The application of a "serial or persistent" marking should be against the subject or complaint itself rather than the complainant so where a complainant contacts the school again on the same issue, that correspondence may be viewed as serial or persistent.

Unreasonable Complainants

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

- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
- refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant expects to be taken into account and commented on
- raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales
- makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced
- changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation progresses
- repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed)
- refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where

the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including the referral of the complainant to the Department for Education
- aggressively uses the complaints process to mask or divert attention away from safeguarding issues
- seeks an unrealistic outcome
- makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint, whether in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with
- uses the process to put pressure on the school to treat an individual child, or children, in a manner that is contrary to statutory guidance, good practice or school policy
- uses threats to intimidate
- uses abusive, offensive, or discriminatory language or violence
- knowingly provides falsified information
- publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

Frivolous or Vexatious Complaints

The school defines a "frivolous" or "vexatious" complaint as having the following characteristics:

- complaints which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, 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 or annoyance
- Persistent in diverting resources away from the teaching and learning of other children within the school e.g., by taking up a teacher's planning time, diverting curriculum leadership to dealing with a complaint
- harassing a member of staff reducing their ability to carry out their job effectively and damaging their wellbeing
- demands for redress that lack any serious purpose or value.

Guidance on Dealing with Serial, Persistent, Unreasonable, Frivolous and Vexatious Complaints

Where the school receives complaints considered to be serial, persistent, unreasonable, frivolous and/or vexatious it can make a decision to stop responding to the complainant. The decision to stop responding should never be taken lightly and the following considerations will apply:

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

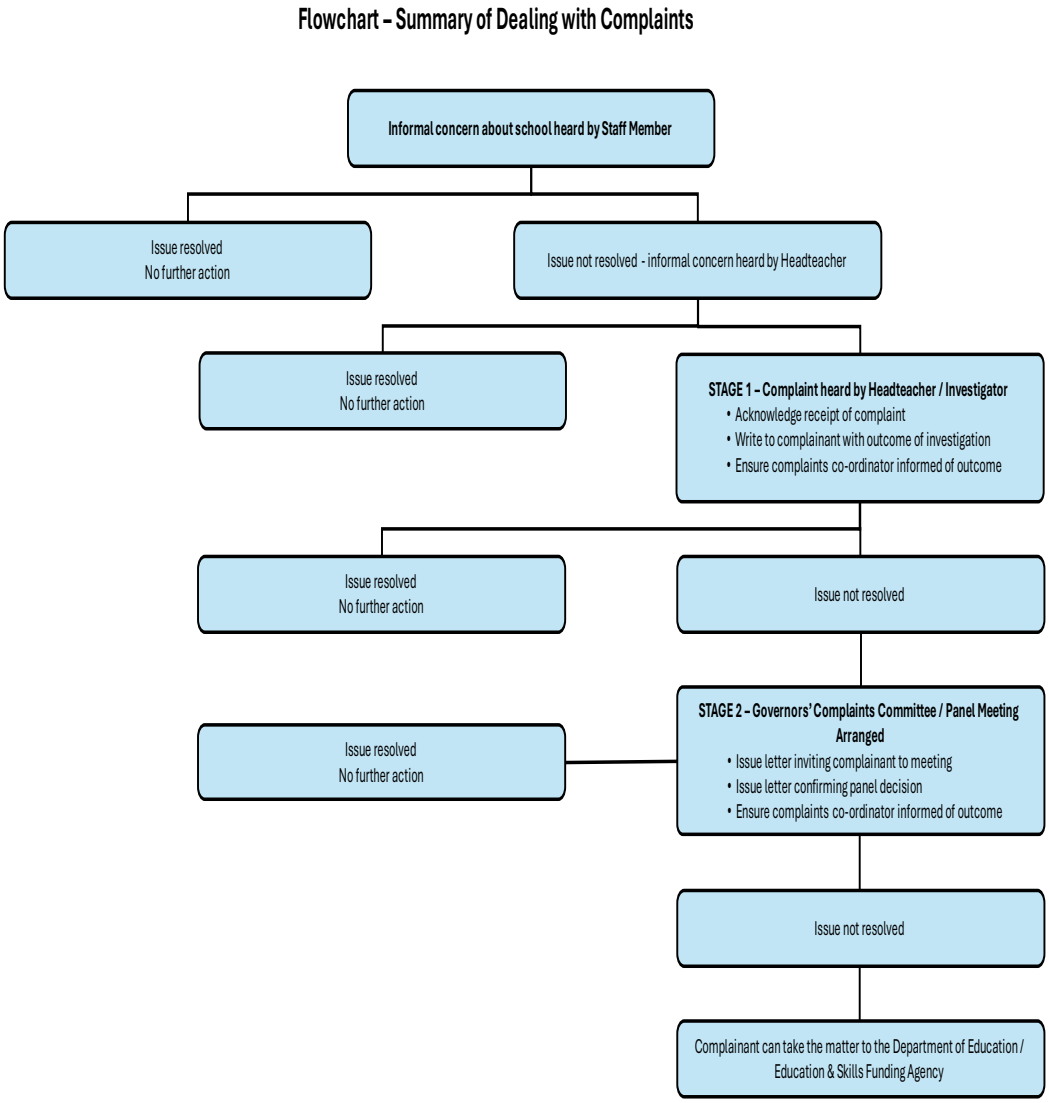
The case to stop responding to the complainant is stronger where:

- the complainant's letters, emails, or telephone calls are often or always abusive or aggressive
- the complainant makes insulting personal comments about or threats towards staff
- the school has reason to believe that the complainant is contacting the school with the intention of causing disruption or inconvenience.

Once the school has decided that it is appropriate to stop responding, it will need to inform the complainant.

NB: The school should not stop responding just because the complainant is difficult to deal with or asks complex questions.

Appendix 4 - Flowchart – Summary of Dealing with Complaints



Appendix 5 - Complaints against the Headteacher, Chair or Vice Chair of the Governing Body, Member of the Governing Body, Full Governing Body

To ensure the complaints procedure is fair and robust, it requires alterations if the complaint is against the Headteacher, Chair or Vice Chair of the governing body, a member of the governing body, or the governing body. This section aims to provide additional clarity on the procedure in these cases.

Headteacher

Where the complaint is against the Headteacher, it should be notified to the Chair of Governors (via the school office). The Chair or a suitably skilled governor will be appointed to complete all the actions/investigations at Stage 1. Should Stage 2 be required, the Chair of Governors, with the assistance of the Clerk to the Governing Body, will ensure Stage 2 of the process is made up of impartial members of the governing body.

Chair of Governors, Vice Chair or a member of the governing body or the entire governing body

Where the complaint is against the Chair of Governors or Vice Chair, a member of the governing body or the entire governing body, it should be notified to the Clerk to the Governing Body (via the school office), who should then determine the most appropriate course of action having taken advice/guidance from, for example, the Local Authority, the Governor Support Service or Diocese. The clerk should then arrange for the complaint to be investigated accordingly.

Depending on the nature of the complaint, the investigation may involve sourcing an independent investigator to investigate and then for the complaint to be heard by a panel made up of governors from other schools.

Note: Any governor conducting an investigation or serving as a member of a complaints committee/ panel must have no conflict of interest or prior knowledge of the complaint and must confirm their independence to the Clerk of the Governing Body beforehand.