

Milverton Primary School



Dealing with Complaints 2020

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| Approved by: | Head teacher | Matt Fisher |
| | Chair of Governors | Catherine Robbins |

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COMPLAINTS POLICY

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

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1. Background

Milverton Primary School is committed to providing the very best education for our young people and we want our pupils to be healthy, happy and safe and to do well. We recognise the importance of establishing and maintaining good relationships with parents, carers and the wider community. We are aware that there may be occasions where people have concerns or complaints and the following procedure sets out the steps that should be followed in order to resolve these as promptly, fairly and informally as possible.

The Head teacher will be the first point of contact when following the complaints procedure.

2. Legal framework

2.1. This policy has due regard to statutory legislation, including, but not limited to, the following:

- The Education Act 2002
- The Freedom of Information Act 2000
- The Immigration Act 2016
- The Equality Act 2010
- The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
- The Data Protection Act 2018
- The School Information (England) Regulations 2008
- The Education (Pupil Information) (England) Regulations 2005

2.2. This policy also has due regard to guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- DfE (2019) 'Best practice guidance for school complaints procedures 2019'
- HM Government (2016) 'Code of Practice on the English language requirement for public sector workers'

2.3 This policy will be implemented in accordance with the following school policies:

- Records Management Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Grievance Policy

3. Aims and Principles of the Policy

This Policy aims to:

- ✓ Encourage the resolution of concerns and complaints by informal means wherever possible
- ✓ Ensure that concerns are dealt with quickly, fully and fairly within defined time limits wherever possible
- ✓ Provide effective and appropriate responses to concerns and complaints
- ✓ Maintain good relationships between the School and all those involved

Where concerns are raised, the School intends for these to be dealt with fairly, openly and promptly. The Governing Board has approved the following procedure which explains what the Complainant (or person who makes the complaint) should do if they have any concerns about the school.

The school will aim to give the complainant the opportunity to complete the complaints procedure in full.

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

Where appropriate, the School **may** offer mediation to resolve a concern or complaint at any stage of the process. The School may also use someone independent from the School to investigate a complex issue and to report back to the Head teacher or Chair of Governors (depending on which stage of the process the complaint is being dealt with).

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

Should the need arise, such as a complaint reaching Stage 4 of the process, the Complaint Appeal Panel (CAP) may consist of, or include, governors from the schools with which we have a Joint Hearing Panel Agreement.

4. Scope of this Complaints Procedure

School Governing Boards are required under Section 29(1) of the Education Act 2002 to have in place a procedure for dealing with complaints relating to the school. This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by Milverton Primary School other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

| Exceptions | Who to contact |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admissions to schools • Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs under Children & Families Act 2014 • School re-organisation proposals | <p>Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with Warwickshire County Council</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation | <p>Complaints about child protection matters will be handled in line with the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.</p> <p>Any child protection complaints should be directed to the LA designated officer (LADO) or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).</p> <p>Ring MASH 01926 414144 [option 3 for advice]</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclusion of children from school* | <p>Complaints about pupils being excluded from school should be dealt with by following the process explained at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff grievances, conduct and disciplinary procedures | <p>Staff grievances and disciplinary procedures will be dealt with using the school's internal grievance procedures.</p> <p>In these cases, complainants will not be informed of the outcome of any investigations; however, they will be notified that the matter is being addressed.</p> |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whistleblowing | <p>School has an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors.</p> <p>Complaints of this nature should not be addressed using this complaints procedure. These concerns can be directed to Ofsted by telephone on 0300 123 3155 or via email at whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk</p> <p>Volunteers who have concerns about the school should make their complaint in line with this policy. Volunteers may also be able to complain direct to the LA or DfE, depending on what the complaint is about.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Curriculum - content | <p>Please contact the Department for Education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Curriculum – RE and RSE | <p>Complaints about how the school delivers RE and RSE will be dealt with using this complaints procedure.</p> <p>Any complaints about the content of collective worship should be made to the LA, the local Standard Advisory Council on Religious Education or another relevant body.</p> <p>Complaints from parents who are dissatisfied with the handling of a request to withdraw their child from RE or collective worship will be handled in line with this complaints procedure.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities | <p>Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.</p> |

Arrangements for handling complaints from parent of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) about the school's support are within the scope of this policy. Such complaints should first be made to the class teacher; they will then be referred to the complaints policy. Our SEN policy and information report includes information about the rights of parents of pupils with disabilities who believe that our school has discriminated against their child.

5. Exceptional circumstances

The DfE expects complainants to have completed the school's complaints procedure before directing a complaint to them. The exceptions to this include when:

- Pupils are at risk of harm
- Pupils are missing education
- A complainant is being prevented from having their complaint progressed through the school's complaints procedure
- The DfE has evidence that the school is proposing to act or is acting unlawfully or unreasonably.

If a Social Services authority decides to investigate a situation, the head teacher or governing board may postpone the complaints procedure.

Where a matter can be resolved through a legal appeal, it will not be considered as a formal complaint. The key areas are admissions decisions, certain decisions relating to formal assessment of SEND and decisions to permanently exclude a child.

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

6. Roles and responsibilities

6.1 The **Complainant** (or person who makes the complaint) will receive a more effective response to the complaint if they:

- Co-operate with the school in seeking a solution to the complaint.
- Express the complaint / concern in full at the earliest possible opportunity, including the outcome they are looking for.
- Promptly respond to any requests for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint / concern.
- Ask for assistance as needed.
- Treat all those involved in the complaint with respect.
- Refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality.

6.2 The **Complaints co-ordinator** - Matt Fisher - Head Teacher

The Complaints co-ordinator will:

- Ensure that all parties involved in the complaint are fully updated throughout each stage of the procedure.
- Guarantee that all parties involved in the procedure are aware of any relevant legislation, including the Equality Act 2010, GDPR, Data Protection Act 2018 and Freedom of Information Act 2000.
- Keep up-to-date records throughout the procedure – these records will be kept securely on the school's ICT system and retained in line with the school's Records Management.
- Liaise with staff members, Head teacher, Chair of Governors, Clerk and LA (if appropriate) to ensure the smooth running of the complaints procedure
- Be aware of issues regarding sharing third party information.
- Understand the complainant's need for additional support, including interpretation support, and be aware of any issues concerning this

6.3 The **Investigator** (*the person involved in stages 1 and 2 of the procedure*) will

- Provide a sensitive, open, transparent and thorough interviewing process of the complainant to establish what has happened and who is involved.
- Consider all records, evidence and relevant information provided.
- Interview all staff and children / young people / students / pupils and other people that are involved in the complaint.
- Conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning.
- Analyse all information in a comprehensive and fair manner.
- Liaise with the complainant and complaints co-ordinator to clarify an appropriate resolution to the problem.

- Keep notes of interviews or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of meetings.
- Ensure that any papers produced during the investigation are kept securely pending any appeal.
- Be mindful of timescales and ensuring all parties involved are aware of these timescales.
- Prepare a comprehensive report for the Head teacher or Complaints Appeal Panel that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.
- Respond to the complainant in plain and clear language.

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

6.4 The **Chair of the Complaint Appeal Panel** will:

- 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
- Ensure 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.
- Ensure that minutes of the hearings are taken on every occasion.
- Explain the remit of the panel to the complainant.
- Ensure that all issues are addressed and that outcomes are reached based on facts and evidence.
- Help to put at ease individuals involved who are not used to speaking at such hearings, particularly any pupils involved.
- Conduct the hearing in an informal manner, ensuring that everyone is treated with respect and courtesy.
- Ensure that the room's layout and setting is informal and non-adversarial, yet still sets the appropriate tone.
- Confirm that no member of the panel has previously been involved in the earlier stages of the procedure or has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings.
- Give both the complainant and the school the opportunity to state their case and seek clarity without undue interruption.
- Provide copies of any written material or evidence to everyone in attendance of the meeting, ensuring that everyone has seen the necessary material.
- Organise a short adjournment of the hearing if required.
- Continuously liaise with the clerk and complaints co-ordinator to ensure the procedure runs smoothly.
- Help to provide the support necessary where the complainant is a child.

6.5 All **Complaint Appeal Panel Members** will remember that:

- The review panel hearing is independent and impartial.
- No individual with prior involvement in the complaint, or the circumstances surrounding it, is permitted to sit on the panel.
- The aim of the panel is to achieve a reasonable resolution and, ultimately, attain reconciliation between the parties involved.
- Reconciliation between the school and complainant is not always achievable, and that it may only be possible to establish facts and make recommendations to reassure the complainant that their case has been taken seriously.
- The aim of the meeting (which will be held in private) will always be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. However, it must be

recognised that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the meeting does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations which will satisfy the complainant that his / her complaint has been taken seriously.

The Complaint Appeal Panel can:

- ❖ Dismiss or uphold the complaint, in whole or in part.
- ❖ Decide on appropriate action to be taken.
- ❖ Recommend changes that the school can make to prevent reoccurrence of the problem.

Complainants may feel nervous or inhibited in a formal setting and, therefore, the proceedings should be as welcoming as possible.

When a child is present at the hearing, extra care needs to be taken to ensure that the child does not feel intimidated, as well as ensuring the child's view is represented equally.

The panel members should respect the views of the child / young person / student / pupil and give them equal consideration to those of adults.

If the child / young person / student / pupil is the complainant, the panel members should ask in advance if the support is needed to help them present their complaint.

If the child / young person's / student's / pupil's parent / carer is the complainant, the panel members should give the parent / carer the opportunity to say which parts of the meeting, if any, the child / young person / student / pupil needs to attend.

However, the parent / carer should be advised that agreement might not always be possible if the parent wishes the child / young person / student / pupil to attend a part of the meeting that the panel members consider is not in the child's / young person's / student's / pupil's best interests.

The welfare of the child / young person / student / pupil is paramount.

6.6 The **Panel Clerk** will be the contact point for the complainant and the Complaints Appeal Panel (CAP) members. He / she will circulate the relevant papers and evidence before the CAP meeting and will:

- Provide procedural advice and guidance.
- Continuously liaise with the complaints co-ordinator.
- Record the proceedings.
- Provide administrative support for the meeting, including convening it.
- Collate all written material or evidence involved and send it to the parties involved in timely advance of the hearing.
- Produce a record of the Complaints Appeal Panel Meeting.
- Act in accordance with the policy and procedure.

7. Making a complaint

7.1 Complaints are not restricted to parents of attending pupils. The school will consider all complaints.

7.2 The school will ensure that all aspects of the complaints procedure are:

- Easily accessible and publicised on the school's website.

- Simple to understand and put into practice.
 - Impartial and fair to all parties involved.
 - Respectful of confidentiality duties.
 - Continuously under improvement, using information gathered during the procedure to inform the school's SLT.
 - Fairly investigated, by an independent person when necessary.
 - Used to address all issues to provide appropriate and effective responses where necessary.
- 7.3 Complaints are expected to be made as soon as possible after an incident arises to amend the issue in an appropriate timescale.
- 7.4 The school upholds a 3-month time limit in which a complaint can be lodged regarding an incident.
- 7.5 Complaints made outside this time limit will not be automatically refused and exceptions will be considered.
- 7.6 In the case of any timescales changing, all parties involved will be informed of the changes in a timely manner.
- 7.7 Complaints should be made using the appropriate channels of communication, including the use of the Complaint Form (*Appendix 2*).
- 7.8 All complaints shall be considered, whether they are made in person, by telephone, in writing, electronically via email, or via a third party (such as the Citizen's Advice Bureau).
- 7.9 A complaint can progress to the next stage of the procedure even if it is not viewed as "justified". All complainants are given the opportunity to fully complete the complaints procedure.
- 7.10 Any complaint made against a member of staff will be initially dealt with by the Head teacher, and then by a committee of the governing board.
- 7.11 Any complaint made against the Head teacher shall be initially dealt with by a suitably skilled member of the governing board and then by a committee of the governing board.
- 7.12 Any complaint made against the chair of governors or any other member of the governing board should be made in writing to the clerk to the governing board.
- 7.13 Any complaint made against the entire governing board, or complaints involving the chair and the vice chair, should be made in writing to the clerk. The clerk will then determine the most appropriate course of action, depending on the nature of the complaint. This action may involve sourcing an independent investigator to initially deal with the complaint and then getting the complaint to be heard by co-opted governors from another school.
- 7.14 Under some circumstances, it may be necessary to deviate from the complaint's procedure. Any deviation will be documented.
- 7.15 Information about a complaint will not be disclosed to a third party without written consent from the complainant.



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Approved by:

Head teacher

Matt Fisher

Chair of Governors

Catherine Robbins

Introduction

Inevitably there will be occasions when parents / carers / stakeholders are worried or concerned about issues arising from their child's experiences whilst in the care of Milverton Primary School. Many of these issues are more correctly identified as concerns rather than complaints. Milverton Primary School is committed to taking such concerns seriously at the earliest stage and resolving them to the satisfaction of all parties as quickly as possible. However, on the rare occasions when a concern cannot be resolved, we have a formal complaints procedure which is outlined below.

The prime aim of Milverton Primary School policy is to resolve any complaint as fairly and speedily as possible. Formal complaints will be dealt with in a sensitive, impartial and confidential manner. Serial and Unreasonable Complaints will incur appropriate action by the school – please refer to our model Policy for Serial and Unreasonable Complainants for further guidance in this regard.

Definition

The DfE guidance explains the difference between a concern and a complaint:

- A **concern** is defined as “an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought”. The school will resolve concerns through day-to-day communications as far as possible.
- A **complaint** is defined as “an expression of dissatisfaction however made about actions taken or a lack of action”.

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

A '**grievance**' is an issue raised by a member of staff where they feel the school has not implemented a policy or process fairly or properly. Grievances will be dealt with in line with the school's Grievance Policy.

Where the Complainant has a concern or query about any aspect of the school or their child's education or wellbeing, we invite them to raise this with their child's class teacher in the first instance. Ideally the class teacher will be able to address the Complainant's concerns immediately or can arrange a meeting with them to discuss the issue.

All concerns will be dealt with confidentially, although it may be necessary to take notes if the matter may need to be taken further or may arise again in the future.

If a complainant has difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect their views. In these cases, the head teacher will refer them to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, they will refer them to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important.

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

Complaint Process from Start to Finish

Concern or Complaint Received

Stage 1 – INFORMAL STAGE

| SCHOOL ACTION | |
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| <p>Informal discussion with the class / form / subject / pastoral teacher or other relevant member of staff, usually resulting in the resolution of the issue.</p> <p>If the complaint is about the Head teacher – proceed to Stage 2*</p> | <p>Within 7 school days, the complainant is informed of the action to be taken to resolve the issue.</p> <p>If they are not satisfied with the outcome a copy of the school’s complaint procedure will be given together with information on how to proceed to Stage 2.</p> <p>If the Head teacher has addressed the complaint at this stage, then the matter should progress to Stage 3.</p> |

FORMAL STAGE

Stage 2 – COMPLAINT HEARD BY HEAD TEACHER

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| <p>The complaint is submitted to the Head teacher</p> | <p>Within 5 school days the Head teacher will acknowledge receipt of the complaint and after investigation will provide a full written response to the complainant within 15 school days.</p> <p>If the complaint is not resolved at this stage, information is given on how to progress the complaint to Stage 3.</p> |
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Stage 2* - COMPLAINT HEARD BY CHAIR OF GOVERNORS (if the complaint is about the Head teacher)

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| <p>A written complaint is sent to the Chair of Governors</p> | <p>The Chair of Governors acknowledges receipt and provides a full written response within 15 school days.</p> <p>If the complaint is not resolved at the stage, information is given on how to progress the complaint to Stage 4.</p> |
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Stage 3 – INVESTIGATION BY THE CHAIR OF GOVERNORS

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| <p>Complainant writes to the Chair of Governors within 10 school days of receiving the response confirming they remain dissatisfied and requesting further investigation of their complaint.</p> | <p>The Chair acknowledges receipt and provides a full written response within 20 school days.</p> <p>If the complaint is not resolved at the stage, information is given on how to progress the complaint to Stage 4.</p> |
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Stage 4 – COMPLAINTS APPEAL PANEL (CAP)

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| <p>Complainant writes to the Clerk of the Governing Board within 10 school days of receiving the response, requesting an</p> | <p>The Clerk will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 3 school days and will arrange for a CAP to meet within 20 school days.</p> |
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| appeal to be heard by a Complaints Appeal Panel. | Once the CAP meeting has taken place, the Clerk will inform the Complainant of the outcome within 5 school days. |
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| Final Stage - APPEAL | |
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| If the Complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome, they have the right to refer their complaint to the Secretary of State. | The Secretary of State may intervene if a Governing Board has acted unlawfully or unreasonably. |

NB: Every effort will be made to meet the timescales stated but if it is not possible to meet them at **any** stage of the process the complainant will be contacted with an explanation and a revised date.

Stage 1 - Informal Stage

Concerns may be raised with the school at any time and will often generate an immediate response, which will resolve the concern. The Complainant should start by sharing their concerns with the class teacher as this is usually the best and quickest way of resolving issues. In some cases, the concern raised may require investigation, or the class teacher may feel it more appropriate to refer the Complainant to a more senior or experienced member of staff who will try to resolve the concern informally. In this case the Complainant should receive an informal but considered response within 7 school days.

- It is recommended that the Complainant makes an appointment to speak to the class teacher as soon as possible as this will give both parties the opportunity to talk about the issue without being interrupted
- It is important to recognise that schools are busy organisations and may not be able to offer an appointment straight away
- The purpose of this meeting should be to establish the nature of the concern and to seek a resolution to the problem
- To prevent any later challenges or disagreements over what was said, it is good practice for the class teacher to make brief written notes of meetings and telephone calls and a copy of any written response should be added to the record. These notes are kept securely on the school's ICT system.
- They may need to talk to others before they can respond. The Complainant should be given a timescale for a response; no more than 7 school days.

Most concerns will be satisfactorily dealt with in this way. However, if the Complainant is not happy with the informal approach then a formal complaint must be made to the Head teacher (unless they are about the head teacher) within 10 school days via the school office, giving the reasons for the continued concern.

This may be done in person, in writing (preferably on the Complaint Form *Appendix 2*), or by telephone. The issue will then be escalated to **Stage 2 – Formal Complaint made to the Head teacher.**

At this stage, the complainant will be asked what they think might resolve the issue – any acknowledgement that the school could have handled the situation better is not an admission of unlawful or negligent action.

- If the complaint is about the head teacher, the Complaints Co-ordinator should be informed and will need to handle the complaint. The complainant can then be referred to the Chair of the Governing Board.
- If a complaint is made to a governor, the complainant should be referred to the appropriate person. The governor in question should not act alone on a complaint outside the adopted school procedure; if they do, they cannot be involved if the complaint is subject to a hearing at a later stage of the procedure.

Stage 2 – Formal Complaint made to the Head teacher

Stage 2 of the process should 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 head teacher will contact the complainant to inform them of a revised target date.

Formal complaints can be raised:

- By letter or email
- Over the 'phone
- In person
- By a third party acting on behalf of the complainant

The Head teacher will record the date the complaint is received by completing a Complaint Tracker Form (*Appendix 3*) and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within **5** school days.

An appointment with the head teacher should be made, as soon as reasonably practical, to avoid any possible worsening of the situation.

In certain circumstances, the school may need to refuse a request for a particular individual to attend any such meeting – for example, if there is a conflict of interest. If this is the case, the school will notify the complainant as soon as they are aware, so that the complainant can arrange alternative accompaniment.

The head teacher (or other person appointed by the head teacher for this purpose) will then conduct their own investigation. The written conclusion of this investigation should be sent to the complainant within **5** school days.

Where the head teacher or chair of the governing board has made reasonable attempts to accommodate the complainant with dates for a complaint meeting and they refuse or are unable to attend, the meeting will be convened in their absence and a conclusion will be reached in the interests of drawing the complaint to a close.

To prevent any later challenge or disagreement over what was said, brief notes of meetings and telephone calls are kept, and a copy of any written response is added to the record. These notes are kept securely on the school's ICT system and, where appropriate, encrypted.

The Head teacher or investigator will consider the complaint and in doing so will:

- Establish what has happened so far, and who has been involved;
- Meet or contact the Complainant if they need further information;
- Clarify how the Complainant may feel things could be put right (if this has not been set out in their letter or included on the Complaints form);
- Interview those involved in the matter and those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
- Conduct any interviews with an open mind;

- Keep notes of any interview for the record.

The Head teacher or investigator will keep in mind ways in which the complaint can be resolved. It may be enough to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- an apology
- an explanation
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better (please note this is not an admission of negligence)
- an assurance that the event complained of will not recur
- an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again
- an undertaking to review policies and practice in light of the complaint

It may also be the case that the complaint may not have any substance and is therefore considered to be unfounded or unsubstantiated.

Once all facts are established, within a maximum of 15 school days the Head teacher should contact the complainant in writing with an explanation of the decision.

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 Milverton Primary School will take to resolve the complaint.

The complainant will be advised of any escalation options (for example, escalation to Stage 3) and provided with details of this process.

Complaints can be escalated by contacting the clerk to the governing board:

- by letter or email
- over the 'phone
- in person
- through a third party acting on behalf of the complainant

The clerk will need the details of the complaint, as well as details from the complainant on how they feel the previous stage of the procedure has not addressed their complaint sufficiently, and what they feel would resolve the complaint.

The complainant will also be provided with copies of approved minutes, subject to any necessary redactions under the Data Protection Act 2018 and the GDPR.

Any further action the school plans to take to resolve the issue will be explained to the complainant in writing.

Stage 3 – Investigation by the Chair of Governors

The complainant should submit any complaint in respect of the head teacher's investigation in writing (or via an alternative method if necessary) within 10 school days to the chair of governors.

The chair of governors will carry out an investigation and consider all available evidence.

The complainant and the head teacher should be informed of the outcome within 20 school days of the chair of governors receiving the complaint. The complainant will be advised of any escalation options (for example, escalation to stage four) and will be provided with details of this process.

The complainant will also be provided with copies of minutes, subject to any necessary redactions under the Data Protection Act 2018 and the GDPR.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the way the process has been followed, considers the decision to be perverse, or believes that the chair has acted unreasonably, they may request that the governing board reviews the complaint (stage four).

Stage 4 – Complaint Appeal Panel (CAP)

Following receipt of a Stage 3 outcome, the complaint should be made in writing to the Clerk, via the school office within 10 school days requesting a Complaints Appeal Panel Meeting (CAP) – a meeting with members of the governing board’s complaints committee, which will be formed of three, impartial governors. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.

- Where there are communication difficulties, the complaint may be made in person or via telephone.

To prevent any later challenge or disagreement over what was said, brief notes of meetings and telephone calls are kept, and a copy of any written response is added to the record. These notes are kept securely on the school’s ICT system and, where appropriate, encrypted.

The Clerk to the Governing Board will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 3 school days.

The acknowledgment will advise the Complainant that three members of the School’s Governing Board (which may include or comprise of Governors from schools with whom the school has a Joint Hearings Panel agreement in place) should hear the complaint within 20 school days of receipt of the **Stage 4 – Complaint Appeal Panel** request.

The Complaint Appeal Panel members 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 it is not possible to convene the meeting within 20 school days, the Clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

The letter will invite the Complainant to attend and explain that they have the right to submit any further documentation relevant to the complaint. The Complainant may bring a friend or someone else for support.

Generally, we do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the CAP 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.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

The Clerk will enclose a copy of this Complaint Procedure with the acknowledgement.

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 based on written submissions from both parties.

An experienced governor will convene a CAP comprising of:

- Three members of the governing board.

If the whole governing board is aware of the substance of a complaint before the CAP has been completed, an independent panel should be arranged to hear the complaint.

If the complainant believes there is likely to be bias in the proceedings, they reserve the right to request an independent panel – complainants should provide evidence to support their request. Whilst the final decision regarding such a request rests with the governing board, it should be granted where the appearance of bias is enough to taint any decision reached.

To appoint a governor from another school onto an independent complaints appeal panel, the governing board does not have to enter into, or already be in, a formal arrangement under the School Governance (Collaboration) (England) Regulations 2003. **However** as Milverton Primary School has a Joint Hearings Panel agreement in place with other schools these governors may be appointed onto the CAP.

Where an independent panel is arranged on an ad-hoc, informal basis, governors who are suitably skilled and who can demonstrate their independence will be sourced.

If the attendance of any child / young person / student / pupil is required at the hearing, parental permission will be sought if they are under the age of 18.

A child / young person / student / pupil has the right to be accompanied at a Complaints Appeal Panel Meeting and extra care will be taken to consider the vulnerability of children where they are present at a Complaints Appeal Panel.

Where appropriate, the clerk will ask for support from Governor Services at the LA.

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

- confirm and notify all parties 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 at least 5 school days before the meeting.
- Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 5 school days before the date of the meeting. The CAP will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.
- The CAP 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 **Formal Stage 2 – Formal Complaint made to the Head teacher**

Prior to the hearing, the chair of governors will have written to the complainant informing them of how the review will be conducted. The head teacher will also have a copy of this letter.

At the hearing, all participants will be given the opportunity to put their case across and discuss any issues.

The CAP will consider issues raised in the original complaint and any issues which have been highlighted during the complaints procedure.

The CAP 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 Clerk will record the proceedings in the form of minutes. The typed minutes are a summary of the procedure followed and the discussions taking place at the meeting but will not include the deliberations of the panel. Notwithstanding this, full and comprehensive notes of the decision taken by the CAP should be taken. The minutes are the property of the governing board and the final approved version can be made available upon request, with release subject to the rules set out in the GDPR and the DPA 2018.

The CAP should allow for:

- ✓ The complainant to be present and accompanied at the hearing if they wish.
- ✓ The complainant to explain their complaint and the head teacher to explain the reasons for their decision.
- ✓ The complainant to question the head teacher, and vice versa, about the complaint.
- ✓ Any evidence, including witnesses who have been prior approved by the chair of the CAP, to be questioned.
- ✓ Members of the CAP to question both the complainant and the head teacher.
- ✓ Final statements to be made by both parties involved.

The CAP will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented, they 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 CAP 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 CAP will provide the complainant and Milverton Primary School with a written response explaining the panel's findings and recommendations within 5 school days. This letter will also explain whether there are any further rights of appeal and to whom they need to be addressed.

Where relevant, the person complained about will receive an approved summary of the panel's findings and recommendations. They will also receive a copy of the minutes, subject to any necessary redactions under the Data Protection Act 2018 and the GDPR.

If it is not possible to meet this timeline then the Clerk of the Panel will contact both parties to discuss a mutually convenient date. *Further information on how the Panel operates and the process it follows is attached as Appendix 8.*

Final stage – Appeal

If a complaint has completed the school's process and the complainant remains dissatisfied, they have the right to refer their complaint to the Secretary of State using the [online form](#) or in writing to:

Ministerial and Public Communications Division
Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street

The Secretary of State has a duty to consider all complaints raised but will only intervene where the governing board has acted unlawfully or unreasonably and where it is expedient or practical to do so. In this case, the word “unreasonably” is used in accordance with its legal definition, meaning acting in a way that no reasonable school or governing board could act in the circumstances.

Interviewing witnesses

When interviewing pupils to gather information regarding a complaint, the interview should be conducted in the presence of another independent member of staff. In the case of serious complaints, e.g. where the possibility of criminal investigation exists, in the presence of their parents / carers.

The school will ensure that the conduct of interviews does not prejudice an LA designated officer's (LADO), or police investigation.

The school understands the importance of ensuring a friendly and relaxed area which is free from intimidation.

All pupils interviewed will be made fully aware of what the interview concerns and their right to have someone with them.

Staff are allowed a colleague to support them at their interview. The colleague must not be anyone likely to be interviewed themselves, including their line manager.

The interviewer will not express opinions in words or attitude, so as to not influence the interviewee.

The interviewee will sign a copy of the transcription of the interview.

Recording a complaint

A written record shall be kept of any complaint made, whether made via phone, in person or in writing detailing:

- The main issues raised the findings and any recommendations.
- Whether the complaint was resolved following an informal route, formal route of panel hearing.
- Actions taken by the school as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint was upheld).

All records are made available for inspection on the school premises by the head teacher

Where there are communication difficulties or disabilities, the school may provide recording devices to ensure the complainant is able to access and review the discussions at a later point.

Recording devices will not be used without the prior consent of all parties.

Where the school allows complainants to record meetings, the following will be considered:

- How any decision to allow recordings may affect any third parties called to act as witnesses
- The impact and consequences on the individuals involved in the complaint if recordings are lost or leaked

The school will not accept, as evidence, any recordings that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

Details of any complaint made shall not be shared with the entire governing board. The exception to this is when a complaint is made against the whole governing board and they need to be aware of the allegations made against them, to respond to any independent investigation.

Complainants are likely to have a right to access copies of these records under data protection legislation.

The school will hold all records of complaints centrally. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection requests to access them.

Anonymous complaints

Milverton Primary School will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Head teacher or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

Duplicate complaints

There may be some cases where at the end of the complaints procedure Milverton Primary School receives a duplicate complaint on the same subject from a complainant's spouse, partner, grandparent or child.

The 'new' complaint will be assessed to establish whether there are new aspects to it that may not have been previously considered, or if there is any new information to consider. Any new elements of a complaint will be investigated and dealt with in line with the complaints procedure.

If Milverton Primary School are satisfied that there are no new aspects, the new complainant will be advised to contact the DfE if they are dissatisfied with the handling of the original complaint.

Unreasonable and / or persistent complaints

Most complaints raised will be valid, and therefore Milverton Primary School will follow the procedure outlined to deal with them. However, a complaint may become unreasonable if the person:

- ❖ Has made the same complaint before, and it has already been resolved by following the school's complaints procedure;
- ❖ Makes a complaint that is obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, defamatory or repetitive;
- ❖ Knowingly provides false information;
- ❖ Insists on pursuing a complaint that is unfounded, or out of the scope of the complaints procedure;
- ❖ Pursues a valid complaint, but in an unreasonable manner, e.g. refuses to articulate the complaint, refuses to co-operate with the complaints procedure, or insists that the complaint is dealt with in ways that are incompatible with this procedure and the time frames it sets out;
- ❖ Changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation goes on;
- ❖ Makes a complaint designed to cause disruption, annoyance or excessive demands on school time; or
- ❖ Seeks unrealistic outcomes, or a solution that lacks any serious purpose or value.

Steps Milverton Primary School will take:

Milverton Primary School will take every reasonable step to address the complainant's concerns and give a clear statement of our position and their options. We will follow our complaints procedure wherever possible.

If the complainant continues to contact the school in a disruptive way, we may put communication 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 on their behalf, such as Citizens Advice; or
- ❖ Put any other strategy in place as needed.

Complainants hold the right to refer their complaint to their local MP. This would not make the individual a 'serial' or 'persistent' complainant.

The school will not deny any individual access to information that they have a right to under the Education (Pupil Information) (England) Regulations 2005.

Stopping responding

Milverton Primary School may stop responding to the complainant when all 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; and
- ❖ 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.

Complaint campaigns

Occasionally, a school may become the focus of a complaint campaign and receive large volumes of complaints. For the purpose 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, Milverton Primary School may deviate from the procedure set out in this policy and would follow DfE recommendations.

Where Milverton Primary School becomes the subject of a complaint campaign from complainants who are **not** connected with the school, a standard, single response will be published on the school's website.

If Milverton Primary School receives a large number of complaints about the same subject from complainants who **are** connected to the school, e.g. parents, each complainant will receive an individual response.

If complainants remain dissatisfied with the school's response, they will be directed to the DfE.

Barring from school premises

School premises are private property and therefore any individual can be barred from entering the premises.

If an individual's behaviour is cause for concern, the head teacher can ask the individual to leave the premises.

The head teacher will complete an Anti-Social Behaviour Record (*Appendix 4*) documenting accurate details.

The head teacher will notify the parties involved in writing, explaining that their implied licence for access to the premises has been temporarily revoked and the reasons why, subject to any representations that the individual may wish to make.

Note: For any schools that contact Legal Services regarding this, they will write to the parents on the school's behalf.

The individual involved will be given the opportunity to formally express their views regarding the decision to bar them.

This decision to bar will be reviewed by the chair of governors or a committee of governors, considering any discussions following the incident.

If the decision is made to continue the bar, the individual will be contacted in writing, informing them of how long the bar will be in place, they will also be informed of when the decision will be reviewed.

Anyone wishing to make a complaint regarding a barring order can do so in writing, including email, to the head teacher or chair of governors.

Once the school's complaints procedure is completed, the only remaining avenue of appeal is through the Courts.

Social Media

For complaints to be resolved as quickly and fairly as possible, Milverton Primary School requests that complainants do not discuss complaints publicly via social media including, but not limited to, Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter. Complaints will be dealt with confidentially for those involved, and Milverton Primary School expect complainants to also observe confidentiality.

Safeguarding

Wherever a complaint indicates that a child's wellbeing or safety is at risk, Milverton Primary School is under a duty to report this immediately to the Local Authority. Any action taken will be in accordance with the school's safeguarding policy which can be found on the school's website.

Parental responsibility

Conflict between estranged parents over the application of parental responsibility is a common cause of complaints made to schools.

[Understanding and dealing with issues relating to parental responsibility](#) contains specific advice about how to approach issues concerning parental responsibility. Milverton Primary School will adhere to this advice as well as following this policy.

Complaints that Result in Staff Capability or Disciplinary

If at any formal stage of a complaint it is determined that staff disciplinary or capability proceedings are necessary, the details of any action will remain confidential to the Head teacher and/or the individual's line manager. The complainant is not entitled to participate in the process or receive any detail about the proceedings.

Complaints about the Governors

For Complaints against any member of the Governing Board Appendix 7 should be followed.

Time Scales

For Milverton Primary School to be able to investigate a complaint, the initial concern needs to be raised within 3 months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. If a concern / complaint relates to an incident older than this it will not be

investigated or discussed further, other than in exceptional circumstances which would be entirely at the discretion of the head teacher.

What is meant by exceptional circumstances is where new evidence has come to light, where the complaint is of an especially serious matter or where there is reasonable justification for why the complainant has been unable to raise the complaint before this time. The Head teacher will review the situation and decide whether to enact the complaints procedure, informing the chair of governors of the decision.

Complaints about our fulfilment of the 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 complainants of the outcome within 28 days of receiving the complaint. Milverton Primary School will keep a record of the complaint and make this available to Ofsted on request.

Parents / carers can notify Ofsted if they believe that the school is not meeting the Early Years Foundation Stage requirements, by calling 0300 123 4234 or 0300 123 4666, or by emailing enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk. An online contact form is also available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted#org-contacts>.

Timeframe for Formal Complaints

Milverton Primary School will endeavour to abide by the timeframes stated but acknowledges that in some circumstances, this is not always possible due to the complexity of information needed to review a complaint or difficulties regarding an individual's availability to deal with the complaint. If it becomes apparent that it is not possible to complete any stage of the complaints procedure within a given timeframe, the individual responsible for handling the complaint will contact the complainant as soon as possible and come to an agreed timeframe that works for all parties involved.

All timescales refer to school working days, i.e. excluding weekends, school holidays etc.

Complaints Received Outside of Term Time

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

Withdrawal of a Complaint

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

Record keeping and Confidentiality

Milverton Primary 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 telephone calls.

The records will be treated as confidential and held securely on the school's ICT system and will be viewed only by those investigating the complaint or on the CAP.

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 data protection or other legislation, 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 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 Complaint Appeal Panel needs to be convened at a later point.

Referring complaints on completion of the school's procedure

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

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

The Role of the Local Authority (LA)

There is no further right of appeal to the Local Authority.

In responding to complaints about schools the LA will explain to the complainant:

- that schools are self-managing and are responsible for administering procedures that deal with complaints made against them
- the appropriate procedures for their complaint and refer them to the Head teacher, Chair of Governors or Clerk as appropriate

Transferring data

Milverton Primary School will hold records of complaints separate to pupil records while a complaint is ongoing, so that access to these records can be maintained in circumstances in which the pupil (and therefore their educational record) transfers to a new school.

Information that Milverton Primary School retains relating to a complaint will be stored securely and in line with the school's Records Management.

Availability and Publishing our policy

A copy of this policy will be published on the school website in accordance with the School Information (England) Regulations 2008.

Reviewing and Monitoring Arrangements

The Governing Board will monitor the effectiveness of the complaints procedure in ensuring that complaints are handled properly. The Governing Board will track the number and nature of complaints, and review underlying issues as stated above.

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

The complaints procedure will be reviewed every 2 years, considering the latest guidance issued by the DfE.

Responsibility for reviewing the procedure belongs to a committee of the governing board, an individual governor or the head teacher.

Information gathered through reviewing the complaints procedure will be used to continuously improve and develop the process.

The monitoring and reviewing of complaints will be used to help evaluate the school's performance.

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
- ❖ Privacy notices



Serial and Unreasonable Complaints 2019

Date of publication: October 2019

Review date: October 2021

| | | |
|---------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Approved by: | Head teacher | Matt Fisher |
| | Chair of Governors | Catherine Robbins |

Introduction

This policy should be read and applied alongside the school's **Complaints Policy** document and relates to the management of the very small number of unreasonable and unreasonably persistent complainants the school may encounter. Milverton Primary School does not have unlimited resources of staff time and the aim of this policy is to apply a reasonable limit to the amount of time staff commit to such complainants whilst ensuring the school still behaves in a reasonable manner towards them.

Milverton Primary School welcomes feedback from parents/carers and will always try to resolve any concerns as quickly as possible, using the school's **Complaints Policy** as necessary. Sometimes however, complainants treat staff and others in a way that is unacceptable and/or behave in an unacceptable manner. Whilst we recognise that some complaints may relate to serious and distressing incidents, we will not accept disrespectful, threatening, inappropriate or harassing behaviour. The aim of this policy is to clarify the process for dealing with unreasonable complainants who act inappropriately.

Milverton Primary School is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with our school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will act to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

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

- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
- refuses to co-operate 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 the 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 the Complainant expects to be considered and commented on, raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales
- makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced
- changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds
- repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed)

- refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education
- seeks an unrealistic outcome
- pursues complaints in a manner which causes ongoing distress to school staff or others
- aggressively pursues complaints in any manner not appropriate to an effective resolution
- deliberately targets one or more members of school staff over a significant period of time
- makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with

A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if the person making the complaint does so either face-to-face, by telephone or in writing or electronically: -

- maliciously;
- aggressively;
- using threats, intimidation or violence;
- using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language;
- knowing it to be false;
- using falsified information;
- publishing unacceptable information in a variety of media such as in social media websites and newspapers.

What is 'harassment'?

- We regard harassment as the unreasonable pursuit of issues or complaints, particularly if the matter appears to be pursued in a way intended to cause personal distress rather than to seek a resolution.

A complainant will be acting unreasonably under the terms of this policy if their behaviour demonstrates one or more of the above traits.

Complainants should limit the numbers of communications with the school that relates to their complaint, while the complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text), as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the Head teacher or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an '*unreasonable*' marking.

If the behaviour continues, the Head teacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact Milverton Primary School causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will usually be reviewed after six months.

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



Complainants who behave in an unacceptable way

& Barring from the School Premises 2019

Date of publication: October 2019

Review date: October 2021

Approved by:

Head teacher

Matt Fisher

Chair of Governors

Catherine Robbins

Introduction

Schools are private places even though they serve a public function. Parents of pupils who are on the school roll have an implied license to enter school premises. This means parents of enrolled pupils can have access to school premises at certain stated times, for example, a playground at the beginning and end of the school day. The school can set out the conditions and terms of this licence.

This implied license may extend to additional facilities secured by the schools for recreation, physical and social training.

Schools will act to ensure they remain a safe place for students, staff and other members of their community and therefore the school has the power to withdraw the license if a parent is using abusive or insulting language that presents a risk to staff or pupils. It is enough for staff to feel threatened by this behaviour.

1. Managing inappropriate behaviour

- 1.1 If a parent is behaving inappropriately, a report will be made to the head teacher or the most senior member of staff available in their absence, who will decide on the most appropriate course of action.
- 1.2 Parents are advised to raise concerns regarding another parent's behaviour or conduct directly with their child's class teacher or the head teacher and not to approach the parent themselves.
- 1.3 Instances of parents displaying inappropriate behaviour will be managed in a variety of ways, depending on the severity of the situation.
- 1.4 When a parent has behaved inappropriately, they will be warned about their behaviour, either in writing or in a minuted meeting.
- 1.5 Where this is not enough to resolve the issue, the head teacher, in collaboration with other staff and relevant agencies, will consider what further action may be required. This action, depending on the situation, could include the following:
 - Barring the parent from the school premises
 - Contacting the police
 - Seeking legal redress through the courts
 - Restricting the parent's channels of communication to the school, e.g. no longer allowing the parent to send emails to a staff member directly
 - Reporting content the parent has posted online to the website's admin

- Referring the case to children’s social care, where the behaviour indicates that the parent poses a risk to children
- 1.6 Any child protection and safeguarding concerns will be addressed in accordance with the school’s Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.
 - 1.7 The school reserves the right to escort anyone off the premises who is displaying aggressive or disruptive behaviour and to bar a parent from the school’s premises without warning in exceptional circumstances.
 - 1.8 Under section 547 of the Education Act 1996, it is an offence for any person to cause a nuisance or disturbance on school premises, and that the police may be contacted to provide advice on managing an incident or to assist in the removal of individuals from the premises, where necessary.
 - 1.9 The police will be contacted where a parent is being violent or has committed assault, or where the event has caused harm to an individual.
 - 1.10 If a parent has been barred from the premises or has exceeded their implied access to the premises and is causing a disturbance, the police will be contacted to remove the individual from the premises.
 - 1.11 If concerns are raised in relation to a parent’s appearance or dress, personal factors will be taken into consideration, on a case-by-case basis, when addressing the concern.
 - 1.12 If a parent persistently displays unacceptable and inappropriate behaviour, this may result in them being barred from the school premises.

2. Barring from the school premises

- 2.1 The school has the right to bar a parent from the premises to keep the school community safe.
- 2.2 If a parent is displaying inappropriate or concerning behaviour, they will be asked to leave the school premises and an Anti-Social Behaviour Record form (*Appendix 4*) will be completed.
- 2.3 Behaviour that could result in a parent being asked to leave the premises includes aggressive, abusive or insulting behaviour or language that is a risk to staff or pupils, or behaviour that is making staff or pupils feel threatened.
- 2.4 If a parent persistently or consistently behaves inappropriately on the school site, or there is a one-off incident of extremely inappropriate behaviour, the school reserves the right to bar this individual from the school site.
- 2.5 The school will bar the parent temporarily, until the parent has had the opportunity to present their comments and any relevant evidence
- 2.6 The head teacher / legal advisors will send a letter to the parent, informing them of the following information:
 - Why they have been temporarily barred or face a bar

- The nature of the bar, i.e. if they are temporarily barred pending their representation or if they must present their side before the decision to bar can be made
- That they have the right to formally express their views on the decision to bar in writing to the chair of governors within 10 school days

2.7 **The appropriate person or body that should review a decision to bar will be based on your school type.** The head teacher's decision to bar the parent will be reviewed by a committee of governors.

2.8 The committee of governors will take account of any representations made by the parent and decide whether to confirm or lift the bar.

2.9 The parent will be notified in writing of the decision to uphold or lift the bar.

2.10 If the decision is confirmed, the parent will be notified in writing, explaining:

- How long the bar will be in place.
- When the decision will be reviewed.

2.11 Decisions to bar will be reviewed at the end of the agreed timescale, in line with the process outlined above.

2.12 Following a review, the bar may be lifted or, if there are grounds for continued concern regarding the parent's conduct, it may be extended.

2.13 Once the appeal process has been completed, parents that remain barred may be able to apply to the Civil Courts. If a parent wishes to exercise this option, they should seek independent legal advice.

Calling for police assistance

In an emergency, police assistance should be sought. In cases where a ban is in place but is ignored and the person comes onto the school site, the police should be notified immediately. (Staff will need to be aware of the ban and have agreed procedures in place should the person come onto the school site).

In situations where there is no immediate threat to staff, pupils, other members of the school community or the school's property, Head Teachers may still wish to make their local Community Police Officer (e.g. safer neighbourhood team) aware of the situation.

The police could consider warning the offender of formal action, which may include legal proceedings.

Legal proceedings

Where individuals persist in coming onto the school site even when permission to do so has been withdrawn, it is possible for legal proceedings to be pursued. The options include:

Prosecution under section 547 of the Education Act 1996

This requires substantial evidence to be gathered and presented by the police and/or local authority. Clearly it is not a quick process, and whilst in most cases the threat may prove to be a sufficient deterrent, prosecution can only be seen as the last resort as a punitive measure.

Appropriate / Acceptable behaviour contracts

These are voluntary agreements made between people involved in anti-social behaviour, and the school concerned. They are flexible in terms of content and format and can be an effective means of encouraging young adults, children and parents to take responsibility for unacceptable behaviour. The person named does not always agree with the contract, but it can be used as evidence at a later stage for an application for an anti-social behaviour order. Conditions can be put on the contract, e.g. not to enter school grounds.

Community Protection Notice (CPN)

A CPN is a quick response tool, used to tackle a range of behaviours, ranging from low level nuisance to serious acts of anti-social behaviour. Breaching the order is a Criminal Offence which can lead to a fine or other legal remedial action, such as seizure or forfeiture orders.

Civil Injunction

These are sought in the same manner as *'the old'* ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR INJUNCTIONS or ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR ORDERS however, the legal burden of proof is much lower than previously expected by the Courts. A Civil Injunction can be sought against anyone from the age of 10 upwards. The Order can include both prohibitive and positive measures as a means to control Anti-Social Behaviour. Breaching a Civil Injunction is not a criminal offence but can lead to stronger legal measures being considered.

Criminal Behaviour Orders (CBO's)

A Criminal Behaviour Order must be sought at Court via the Crown Prosecution Service. As such, it is a power mainly used by the Police. Additionally, the CBO can contain conditions and prohibitions that do not relate to the offence which resulted in Court action (i.e. the perpetrator might have been arrested for robbery in the Town Centre, but his/her CBO can relate not loud music in his home).

CBO application must be lodged before sentencing at Court. As with a Civil Injunction, the Criminal Behaviour Order can include both prohibitive and positive measures as a way of controlling Anti-Social Behaviour.

Breach of the order is a criminal offence.

Restraining orders (Protection from Harassment Act 1997)

Section 2 of the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 provides for criminal or civil Prosecution for cases where someone causes alarm or distress to another person on more than two occasions. Section four provides for criminal or civil prosecution where people have been put in fear of violence on at least two occasions. In each case the sanctions include both criminal penalties (fines, imprisonment or community sentences) and a restraining order. These orders are generally quicker and easier to obtain but are part of a criminal conviction.

Prosecution for criminal damage/assault

Prosecutions for causing deliberate damage or injury may occasionally be the most appropriate course of action. If the police are called, the option to make criminal allegations is readily available, and they may arrest suspected offenders there and then.

Official allegations should only be made if there is no intention of later withdrawing the complaint. Criminal proceedings can be initiated at a later date. All possible steps should be taken to prevent the loss of evidence. Witnesses should be asked to make a record of exactly what they saw and heard at the earliest opportunity.

Seeking further advice

Legal advice is available for schools via Warwickshire Legal Services, and individual cases should always be discussed with Legal Services to decide the most appropriate response.

Whilst the emphasis will usually be on ensuring safety and security of persons and property the injunction route is likely to be the most effective deterrent legal action, it does not however necessarily guarantee against the behaviour of the more persistent offender.

Record keeping

There should be clear and detailed records* of all events which must be kept up to date. Any witness statements (where appropriate) and contemporaneous notes of any subsequent meetings held to discuss the events should also be retained. Notes should be signed and dated. There is often a tendency to use generic language e.g. "he was threatening and abusive." Reporting must be precise e.g. "he pointed his finger at my face from a distance of two feet and shouted that he was "going to f...ing kill me." Words used and body actions / demeanour / voice volume and pitch should all be included

If there is recorded information, such as CCTV, this should be retained, and witnesses should be asked to make a record of exactly what they saw and heard at the earliest opportunity.

It is also advisable to ensure that in every case, even where a formal letter is not required parents receive a written confirmation of the events and the Head Teacher's response.

If the police are asked to deal with an incident as a criminal investigation, there are a number of actions that may hinder this process. Witness details should not be made known to suspected offenders or their families. Groups of witnesses or suspects should not be left together, or allowed to discuss what happened, before the police interview them.

If in doubt always seek the advice of the police officer first.

** A template Anti – Social Behaviour Record for Visitors to Site is attached as Appendix 4.*

If you ever need to complain about something like the examples above, you need to talk to somebody you trust. This could be anyone from the list below:

- ❖ Your parents
- ❖ The Head teacher
- ❖ Your class teacher
- ❖ Another member of staff

You can always talk to your friends about a problem, but if you want something done about it, it is important to tell an adult as well.

Of course, you should only make a complaint when you need to. When choosing whether to complain or not, ask yourself:

- Is my complaint about something which affects the whole school or a group of pupils?
- Could I solve the problem by talking to my class teacher, a teaching assistant, or someone else in school?
- Am I happy to ask an individual member of staff to sort the issue or do I want to use the steps in this policy?

Once you have thought about the questions above, you can make your complaint. When the complaint has been made, you should:

- ❖ Co-operate with the school to help with understanding and finding a solution to the complaint.
- ❖ Tell someone about the problem in lots of detail.
- ❖ Respond quickly to any questions the adult you told has asked.
- ❖ Ask for help when needed.
- ❖ Be respectful of the people involved.

As a result of your help, the head teacher will:

- ❖ Ensure you are involved in fixing the problem you are complaining about.
- ❖ Talk to you about the progress of the complaints process.
- ❖ Ensure your privacy and confidentiality is protected.
- ❖ Treat you with equality and fairness throughout.
- ❖ Tell you any information you need to know about what you have said or what will happen.

3. When should I complain?

Any pupil can complain if they need to. We will consider all complaints made.

When making a complaint, we ask that you make it as soon as possible so we can properly investigate it and resolve any problems you have. If you make a complaint 3 months after a problem happens, we may not be able to investigate your complaint. If this timescale changes, we will let you know.

When you make a complaint, you will be asked to complete a complaints form. You can find one at the end of this policy or you can ask your class teacher and they will give you a copy. You will always be given the chance to complete this form and hand it in to class teacher.

If you are making a complaint about the head teacher, you shouldn't complain directly to them – talk to your parents or another teacher. The governing board of the school will be also be told.

4. What will happen when I complain?

Stage 1 – meeting with a class teacher to explain the problem

In this stage, you will meet with a class teacher and you will be asked to complete a complaints form – you can fill it in by yourself or with a parent or teacher. Once you have finished the form, you should hand it in to your class teacher or the head teacher.

During the meeting your class teacher will take notes of what has been talked about, and notes of any additional discussions about the complaint will also be noted down.

If the complaint is about the head teacher, the governing board will deal with the complaint.

Within 7 school days of you first talking to an adult about your complaint, you and the adult dealing with the complaint will meet and discuss what will happen next. You will be asked your opinion on the resolution.

Stage 2 – formal complaint made to the head teacher

If the complaint is too complicated to be sorted out in 7 school days, then stage two will begin. It may take another 14 school days to try to resolve the complaint – you will be told by the head teacher if this needs to happen.

You will meet with the head teacher again, or, if the complaint is about the head teacher, the chair of the governing board. This meeting will be used to talk about the problem, and you will be told what has happened so far to help fix the problem.

During the meeting, notes will be taken of what has been talked about, as well as notes of any additional discussions that you have had with an adult about the complaint.

If, after an additional 14 school days, the problem has not been sorted out, stage three will begin.

Stage 3 – a meeting with the governing board

If the issue hasn't been resolved after stage one and two, the complaint will be given to the governing board.

The governing board will think about the complaint, talk about what has already been done to try and fix the problem and try and find a solution.

The problem will be looked at thoroughly and a solution will be found within 15 school days.

If a solution hasn't been found in 15 school days, or the solution found doesn't fix the problem, your parents can then appeal the decision. You will not be involved in this process, but you will be told about the outcomes of the appeal.

5. Who will talk to me about my complaint?

Once you have made a complaint, the adult you told will think of the best way to deal with it. This may include telling a more senior member of staff.

If it is really serious, someone from the local authority or the police might ask to talk to you.

You don't have to worry if somebody else is told about your complaint; you are not in trouble, it just means that the person you told thinks it is best to tell them to keep you safe and happy in school.

If one of the adults mentioned above wants to talk to you, you will always have another adult with you – this will likely be a parent / carer, unless you want someone else there.

You will be told what will happen during the interview before it starts and what you're allowed to do, e.g. have a parent / carer there.

When the interview has finished, a transcript will be made. *A transcript is a piece of paper with everything that was said on it (a bit like a film script).* You will be asked to read it, and if you are happy that it reflects what you said then you will be asked to sign it.

6. What will school ask me?

When you make a complaint, the adult you tell will talk to you about the following things:

- ❖ The main problems you have, your options and how it might be dealt with
- ❖ If the complaint will be resolved informally or by using the school's official complaints procedure
- ❖ If any actions will be taken by the school as a result of the complaint (even if the complaint was followed through or not)

When you make a complaint, the adult you talk to *may* record the conversation so that the full details of the complaint can be listened to at a later date. You will be told before being recorded and anything you say will only be listened to by the adult(s) dealing with the complaint.

We will look after personal information you give to us, and only share it if we have to or the law requires us to. If you want to hear what you said at a later date, you can ask school for a copy of the recording.

7. Serious complaints

If you have ever been physically or emotionally hurt by an adult or peer, it is important that you tell a responsible adult. They will ask you what has happened and if they think your safety is at risk, they might tell Social Services.

If this happens, the Social Services will take over the investigation of the complaint – you will be told what is happening at all times. If this happens, you can talk to your teacher if you have any worries.

8. Complaining about the same thing

Because we want to take every complaint seriously, it is important that you only tell us things you haven't complained about before unless the problem has not been resolved.

If we have found a solution to your complaint and told you what will happen to fix your problem, then the complaint is closed. If you complain about the same thing over and over again after we have fixed the problem, we don't have to discuss the issue anymore.

We don't want this to happen. So, to avoid any repeated requests, we will:

- ❖ *Make sure we have done all we can to fix the problem.*
- ❖ *Make sure we have told you what we have done to fix the problem.*
- ❖ *Tell you when you are repeating a complaint and why we won't be responding to you.*

If you feel you have not been listened to by the school, you and your parents can seek advice from organisations such as the Citizens Advice Bureau.

We will let you see any information we have about you and the complaint.

Child Friendly Complaint Form

This complaints form can be used to submit a complaint to the head teacher, or the governing board if your complaint is against the head teacher. You can ask a parent or teacher to help you to complete this form. Please hand it in to your class / form / subject / pastoral teacher once it has been finished.

| | |
|---|---------------|
| Name: | Home address: |
| Teacher's name: | |
| Year group: | |
| Pupil's date of birth: | |
| Parent's telephone number: | |
| Parent's email: | Postcode: |
| What is your complaint about, and what would you like the school to do to fix it? | |
| When did you talk to your teacher about the problem you have? | |
| What happened after the talk? Was your problem solved? | |
| Signed (pupil): | Date: |

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Appendix 1 - Complaints Process from Start to Finish

| Concern or Complaint Received | |
|---|---|
| Stage 1 – INFORMAL STAGE | |
| SCHOOL ACTION | |
| <p>Informal discussion with the class / form / subject / pastoral teacher or other relevant member of staff, usually resulting in the resolution of the issue.</p> <p>If the complaint is about the Head teacher – proceed to Stage 2*</p> | <p>Within 7 school days, the complainant is informed of the action to be taken to resolve the issue.</p> <p>If they are not satisfied with the outcome a copy of the school’s complaint procedure will be given together with information on how to proceed to Stage 2.</p> <p>If the Head teacher has addressed the complaint at this stage, then the matter should progress to Stage 3.</p> |
| FORMAL STAGE | |
| Stage 2 – COMPLAINT HEARD BY HEAD TEACHER | |
| <p>The complaint is submitted to the Head teacher</p> | <p>Within 5 school days the Head teacher will acknowledge receipt of the complaint and after investigation will provide a full written response to the complainant within 15 school days.</p> <p>If the complaint is not resolved at the stage, information us given on how to progress the complaint to Stage 3.</p> |
| Stage 2* - COMPLAINT HEARD BY CHAIR OF GOVERNORS (if the complaint is about the Head teacher) | |
| <p>A written complaint is sent to the Chair of Governors</p> | <p>The Chair of Governors acknowledges receipt and provides a full written response within 15 school days.</p> <p>If the complaint is not resolved at the stage, information us given on how to progress the complaint to Stage 4.</p> |
| Stage 3 – INVESTIGATION BY THE CHAIR OF GOVERNORS | |
| <p>Complainant writes to the Chair of Governors within 10 school days of receiving the response confirming they remain dissatisfied and requesting further investigation of their complaint.</p> | <p>Th Chair acknowledges receipt and provides a full written response within 20 school days.</p> <p>If the complaint is not resolved at the stage, information us given on how to progress the complaint to Stage 4.</p> |
| Stage 4 – COMPLAINTS APPEAL PANEL (CAP) | |
| <p>Complainant writes to the Clerk of the Governing Board within 10 school days of receiving the response, requesting an appeal to be heard by a Complaints Appeal Panel.</p> | <p>The Clerk will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 3 school days and will arrange for a CAP to meet within 20 school days.</p> <p>Once the CAP meeting has taken place, the Clerk will inform the Complainant of the outcome within 5 school days.</p> |

Final Stage - APPEAL

If the Complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome, they have the right to refer their complaint to the Secretary of State

The Secretary of State may intervene if a Governing Board has acted unlawfully or unreasonably.

NB: *Every effort will be made to meet the timescales stated but if it is not possible to meet them at **any** stage of the process the complainant will be contacted with an explanation and a revised date.*

Appendix 2 - Complaint Form

Please complete and return to Mr Matt Fisher, Headteacher 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 |
| What action has been taken so far (including staff member who has dealt with it) or solutions offered: |
| What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage? What outcome are you expecting? |

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

Signature:

Date:

Official use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By who:

Complaint referred to:

Date:

Appendix 3 - Complaint Tracker

| Complaint / Subject | Date original complaint received | Stage 2 – Formal Stage - Head teacher | Stage 2* – Chair of Governors (Complaint about Head Teacher) Date request received: | Stage 3 – Investigation by Chair of Governors Date request received: | Stage 3 – Complaint Appeal Panel Date request received: | Action to be taken: Use this column with dates to put latest progress, e.g.: |
|---------------------|----------------------------------|---|--|---|--|---|
| | | Who is dealing with? | Who is completing investigation? | Who is completing investigation? | Date panel to meet by: | |
| | | Date response to be sent by: | Date response to be sent by: | Date response to be sent by: | Date of Panel: | |
| | | Outcome: Upheld because: Not Upheld | Outcome: Upheld because: Not Upheld | Outcome: Upheld because: Not Upheld | Date papers to be received / sent: Panel Chair: Panel Member: Panel Member: | |
| | | Embed letter / documents here | Embed letter / documents here | Embed letter / documents here | Panel Outcome: | |

Appendix 3 - Complaint Tracker (Completed example)

| Complaint / Subject | Date original complaint received | Stage 2 – Formal Stage - Head teacher | Stage 2* – Chair of Governors (Complaint about Head Teacher) Date request received: | Stage 3 – Investigation by Chair of Governors Date request received: 25/2/19 | Stage 3 – Complaint Appeal Panel Date request received: 11/3/19 | Action to be taken: Use this column with dates to put latest progress, e.g.: | |
|--|----------------------------------|--|--|--|--|---|--|
| Mr and Mrs 123 complaining about the lack of marking in daughter's homework book | 1/2/19 | Who is dealing with: Mrs ABC (HT) | Who is completing investigation: | Who is completing investigation: xx – Chair of Governors | Date panel to meet by: 29/3/19 | 11/3/19 – received complaint and contacted COG. Panel to be arranged – waiting for 2 dates from HT before contacting governors. | |
| | | Date response to be sent by: 14/2/19 | Date response to be sent by: | Date response to be sent by: 10/3/19 | Date of Panel: 27/3/19 | | |
| | | Outcome: Upheld because: Not Upheld <i>No evidence to show that the homework book has not been marked.</i> | Outcome: Upheld because: Not Upheld | Outcome: Upheld because: <i>Partly upheld – investigation showed that on one occasion the escalation process wasn't correctly followed.</i> Not Upheld | Date papers to be received / sent: Received 19/3/19 and send 20/3/19 | Panel Chair: Governor 1 | 13/3/19 – HT given 2 dates – 26/3/19 and 27/3/19 – contacting governors with both dates to get a final date. |
| | | Embed letter / documents here | Embed letter / documents here | | Panel Member: Governor 2 | Panel Member: Governor 3 | |
| Panel Outcome: | 20/3/19 – sent all papers out. | | | | | | |

Appendix 4 – Anti – Social Behaviour Record for Visitors to site

ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR RECORD FOR VISITORS TO SITE

School Name: _____

Your Name: _____

| Time, date and duration of incident | Location of incident | Brief details of what happened | Who was involved? | Names and contact details of any witnesses | Were the police called? | How did this incident affect you? How do you feel? |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|--|-------------------------|--|
| | | | | | | |

Signed: _____

Date: _____

THIS INFORMATION MAY BE USED AS EVIDENCE IN LEGAL PROCEEDINGS

Appendix 5 - Responding to Complaints: Guidance for Governing Boards

This guidance is intended to be used together with the school's Complaints Procedures Policy to support the governing board with appropriately and professionally responding to complaints.

It also provides clarification of roles within the complaints management process and the areas of responsibility that the governing board has.

Responsibilities of the governing board

The governing board must ensure that a written Complaints Procedures Policy is in place that has due regard to any guidance given by the Secretary of State published via the DfE.

The governing board must ensure the complaints policy is published on the school's website. The board should also make certain that the Complaints Procedures Policy meets the following criteria:

- ✓ The policy is written in simple terms and is easy to understand.
- ✓ The policy is impartial.
- ✓ The policy is non-adversarial
- ✓ The policy provides a process for a full and fair investigation.
- ✓ The policy, where appropriate and necessary, respects confidentiality.
- ✓ The policy provides a process that addresses all issues raised within the complaint.
- ✓ The policy provides a process for effective responses and appropriate redress, where appropriate.
- ✓ The policy provides details to signpost complainants to the school's SLT.

Complaints made against the head teacher in a maintained school should be responded to, and investigated by, the governing board. The governing board is also responsible for establishing a Complaint Appeal Panel (CAP) when previous stages of the Complaints Procedures Policy have been exhausted by the complainant and they remain dissatisfied with either the outcome or process undertaken.

The School Complaints Procedures Policy

The Complaints Procedures Policy should include:

- Confirmation of what the school considers to be a complaint and what is considered to be a concern.
- Confirmation that a complaint can be made by anyone regarding the provision or facilities of the school.
- Signposts to the complaints process for procedures that have separate statutory procedures, e.g. admissions and exclusions.
- Details of how a complaint can be raised.
- Who to contact regarding a complaint about the head teacher.
- Who to contact regarding a complaint about the governing board.

- Details of how a complaint will be recorded.
- Timescales in which a complaint will be responded to.
- Details of the separate stages of the complaint process.
- Confirmation of the right for the complainant to request an independent review panel be convened and the circumstances in which this will be considered e.g. concerns about the impartiality of the review panel.
- How the school will respond to serial or persistent complainants.
- The procedure for an appeal, including the governing board review process.
- Information on the role of the school's complaint unit.
- Responsibilities and a timescale for reviewing the policy.

It is the responsibility of the governing board to determine the timescale for reviewing the Complaints Procedures Policy; the DfE recommends that an appropriate review period is every two to three years. The policy does not need to be reviewed by the full governing board, which can choose to delegate the review to a committee, individual governor or the head teacher.

Complaints against the Head Teacher

The Complaints Procedures Policy should explain how a complainant can raise a complaint against the head teacher. It is recommended that complaints against the head teacher are, in the first instance, submitted to the chair of governors via the clerk to governors.

A complaint can be made in writing, by email, in person or by telephone, and to ensure equality, all routes should be accepted within the school policy. Any information provided by the complainant may only be shared with a third party if the complainant has given their written consent.

On receipt of the complaint, the chair of governors should respond to the complainant to acknowledge receipt of the complaint, identify who will be responsible for responding to the complainant and explain the timescale in which the complaint will be considered. It is recommended that this acknowledgment is sent via email or post to secure an audit trail for the complaint process. The complainant should be informed of the process for escalating their complaint at each stage of the Complaints Procedures Policy.

The chair of governors is usually the most appropriate person to respond to a complaint against the head teacher; however, if they have had any previous discussion with the head teacher regarding the pupil or issue the complaint relates to, in respect of a fair and impartial investigation, they would be considered to be tainted and must remove themselves from the process. In this circumstance, the chair of governors should delegate the complaint investigation and response to another governor who has no prior knowledge of the issue, e.g. the vice chair of governors.

The response to a complaint against the head teacher should follow the Complaints Procedure Policy; this will usually include an initial stage where an informal meeting is held between the complainant, the head teacher and the governor responding to the complaint. The purpose of this meeting is to fully establish the circumstances of the complaint and attempt to resolve the issues raised. It is permissible for this stage to remain informal, but if the complainant wishes to escalate the complaint to follow the complaints policy's formal procedure, they must be provided this opportunity.

Investigating a Complaint

The complaint investigation should be considered as an exercise to explore and determine the facts of a situation. It should be undertaken fairly, objectively and within a defined process. If it is deemed necessary by the investigating officer or governor panel to deviate from the written complaint procedures at any point during the process, this decision should be recorded in full, with an explanation provided.

The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) suggests the following process for conducting investigations:

Preparation

The investigator should prepare by drafting a plan to identify:

- ✓ Who they may need to speak to as part of the investigation process, e.g. the class teacher, the parent or pupil.
- ✓ Information needed for review during the investigation, e.g. email correspondence, school policies.

The Investigation Meeting

An investigation meeting is the opportunity for the governor investigating the complaint to meet separately with relevant parties to ask questions and, where possible, establish facts. It is not part of a disciplinary process. The Complaints Procedure Policy should indicate that any party attending an investigation meeting has the right to be accompanied by a friend or family member for support.

The DfE's ['Best practice guidance for school complaints procedures 2019'](#) recommends that legal representation is avoided for either party. An exception to this would be, for example, if a member of school staff is called as a witness in a complaint investigation or hearing, they may then be entitled to union or legal representation.

There is no requirement for an investigation meeting to be independently clerked; however, the governor investigating the complaint may ask the clerk to governors to make notes during the meeting and provide regulatory advice. In the absence of a clerk, the school's complaints co-ordinator may take notes and prepare minutes of the meeting.

At the end of the meeting, these notes can be signed and kept as an accurate record of it taking place. In the absence of a complaints co-ordinator, the investigating governor can make notes during the meeting and ask the person attending to sign the notes at the end of the meeting. Any notes or meeting minutes should be protected and maintained in line with the school's Data Protection Policy.

If pupils are to be invited to an investigation meeting, parental consent must be granted for any pupil under the age of 18 and they should be given the opportunity to be accompanied by a friend, relative or staff member independent of the investigation. The meeting should be conducted with due sensitivity and consideration of the pupil's age and level of understanding.

The investigation report

The investigation report should summarise the investigation process and include:

- ✓ The name and role of the investigating governor.
- ✓ The date and timescale of the investigation.
- ✓ A summary of the complaint received.
- ✓ A summary of the investigation process undertaken.
- ✓ The evidence collected and considered.
- ✓ The details of any evidence requested but not produced or unavailable.
- ✓ The names of all people interviewed during the investigation meeting(s).
- ✓ The details of any anonymised statements submitted and considered
- ✓ A summary of the investigation findings, to include:
 - ✓ A summary of evidence collated during the investigation meeting(s).
 - ✓ The established facts based on evidence collated.
 - ✓ A summary of any mitigating circumstances or factors.
 - ✓ Any other information considered to be relevant.
- ✓ A concluding statement, including the investigator's decision to uphold, uphold in part or to dismiss the complaint
- ✓ Any recommendations arising from the investigation.
- ✓ Any further right of appeal.

The DfE's '[Best practice guidance for school complaints procedures 2019](#)' guidance suggests that the investigating officer should ensure that each decision made in response to a complaint is made in consideration of '*The 7 principles of public life*' which are:

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Selflessness: | Holders of public office should act solely in the public interest |
| Integrity: | Holders of public office should not place themselves under external obligations that could influence their public duties |
| Objectivity: | Holders of public office should make public appointments based on merit |
| Accountability: | Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their actions |
| Openness: | Holders of public office should be open in their decision making |
| Honesty: | Holders of public office must declare any private interest that could impact on their public work |
| Leadership: | Holders of public office should promote these principles through leading by example |

and is:

- ✓ Lawful.
- ✓ Rational.
- ✓ Reasonable.
- ✓ Fair.
- ✓ Proportionate.

The investigation report should be shared with the complainant and the head teacher; with information given on the next stage of the complaint process should the complainant not be satisfied with the outcome of this stage. The information recorded within the investigation report should be protected and maintained in line with the school's Data Protection Policy.

The next stage of the process is for a governing board review to be convened to consider the complainant's appeal against the decision made by the investigating governor. It should be noted that, in the circumstance of a complaint made against the head teacher, some complaints procedures policies will not include the complaint investigation stage but will move straight from the informal meeting at stage one to the governing board review. Guidance is that the complaint investigation stage is completed in all cases, but that the Chair of Governors undertakes this role in relation to complaints concerning the Headteacher. Governing boards should always work within the current policy in place.

Governing Board Review

When a complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation stage, the next stage of the process is the governing board review.

This meeting can either be convened in the event of a complaint against the head teacher or as part of the appeal process for a complaint that has exhausted all previous stages of the complaints procedure. Notice of the meeting must be given in writing to all parties and in line with the timescales documented in the Complaints Procedures Policy.

A governing board review involves at least three members forming a Complaint Appeal Panel (CAP). Governors who are members of the CAP must have no prior knowledge of the complaint and no conflict of interest, including financial interest, which may prevent them from acting with impartiality. A panel of a minimum of three members is recommended to ensure a decision can be made in the event of a split decision and a vote being required. The clerk to governors should be in attendance to take notes / minutes of the meeting.

The complainant has the right to request that an independent CAP hear the appeal if they have cause to believe that the panel is not impartial or cannot be objective. It is the responsibility of governors to decide to uphold or reject the request. If governors do allow for an independent panel to be convened, they may approach the LA, the diocese, or governors from local schools to provide members for the panel. It is acceptable to pay for the services of an independent chair for the meeting to ensure impartiality and objectivity on the panel.

During the Complaint Appeal Panel meeting it is usual for all parties to be present: each party should be given the opportunity to challenge the evidence presented. If the issues are sensitive or confrontational, a decision should be made about whether this is appropriate in any given case. At the end of the meeting, all parties should be given the opportunity to make a final statement.

If a witness is unable or unwilling to attend the governing board review meeting, their evidence can be presented in writing. In order to secure a fair process, the whole panel should seek to meet the witness. If this is not possible, then the panel should ensure they agree on questions in advance for the representative panel governor to relay and make certain that all meetings are noted.

Once the meeting has finished, the panel should retire to consider all of the evidence available to them. The clerk will remain present to provide procedural advice and guidance and

administrative support. The panel will reach an agreement and agree on the wording of the outcome letter.

The complainant must not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against the head teacher or any other member of staff as a result of the complaint, but should be told that the matter is being addressed.

The outcome letter should also include any further right of appeal the complainant may have.

If the complainant has exhausted a maintained school's complaint procedure, they must be advised that they have the right to refer the complaint to the Secretary of State for Education using the DfE complaints form, or in writing to the address provided in the complaint outcome letter.

Sharing Complaints with the Governing Board

Transparency in governance is important but, when it comes to managing and responding to complaints initially, the head teacher or chair of governors must only share details of complaints received with the rest of the governing board on a 'need-to-know' basis.

It is vital that governors remain impartial and untainted in case of any appeal arising and the need for a Complaint Appeal Panel (CAP) to be formed. Whilst governors may know that a complaint has been received and is being investigated, they should not be given any further details. If all governors are made aware of the nature of a complaint, an independent investigation into the complaint should be organised by the clerk to governors.

Once the complaint process has been completed, the governing board can be told that the process is complete and whether the complaint was dismissed or upheld.

Monitoring Complaints

Governors should have an oversight of the number of complaints the school receives and should expect to see details of the number of complaints received and investigated by the school and governing board. This can be included as a regular item within the head teacher's report to the full governing board. Governors can then ask questions and identify trends and establish how many complaints proceed to the appeal stage and the effectiveness of the Complaints Procedures Policy.

It is recommended the governing board undertake a monitoring visit to review the complaint log and use a resolved complaint as a case study to monitor practice in line with the school development plan.

Complaints against the Governing Board

The governing board should ensure that any complaint made against an individual governor, including the chair of governors, is made to the clerk to governors. The clerk should ensure that an impartial governor is appointed to investigate the complaint in line with the school complaints policy.

If a complaint is made against the whole governing board, the clerk may request that an independent governor from another school investigates the complaint. If the complaint reaches stage 4 of the school's complaints procedure, an independent panel made up of

governors from schools with which the school has a Joint Hearings Panel agreement in place may be convened to hear the complaint.

If a complaint is made against the whole governing board then it is appropriate to inform all governors of the nature of the complaint. This will ensure a fair process and enable governors to be able to respond to the complaint investigation.

The Next Step

When a complaint has been resolved or the process exhausted, all paperwork related to the complaint should be stored by the head teacher or chair of governors in line with the school's Record Management Policy and in line with the school's Data Protection Policy. Any papers that are given to CAP members should be returned to the Clerk to Governors who will ensure they are securely disposed of.

Complaints made to Ofsted

Ofsted provides an online complaint form for anyone wishing to complain about a service or provider that it inspects or regulates.

Ofsted advises complainants they should initially raise any issues with the school by following the school's written complaint procedures and reserves the right to dismiss complaints which have not followed this process.

Ofsted will only consider complaints that relate to the whole school and will not consider any complaint which:

- ✓ Relates to an individual pupil or a specific incident
- ✓ Asks the inspectorate to judge how well a school has responded to a complaint
- ✓ Requests mediation or dispute resolution
- ✓ Has an alternative legal complaint process, e.g. complaints about pupil admissions

The 'Governance handbook' explains that Ofsted will use its powers to investigate a complaint received from a parent as part of its inspection decision-making process.

The governing board and senior leaders must provide Ofsted with any information requested for the purpose of the investigation and any other information that may be relevant to the complaint investigation.

If appropriate to the complaint investigation, Ofsted may arrange to meet with the complainant; representatives from the LA and governing board are also entitled to attend this meeting.

Depending on the outcome of the investigation, Ofsted may prepare a report following the conclusion of its investigation. If a report is received, the school must share this with the governing board who must ensure the report is sent to all registered parents of the school.

Appendix 6 - Where the Complaint is about the Actions of an Individual Governor

For complaints against the Chair of Governors, or any other individual governor, the Complainant should briefly outline the content of the complaint using the Complaint Form (see *Appendix 2*). The Complaint Form should be sent to the Clerk, via the school office.

The Clerk to Governors will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 5 school days and initiate the process.

A suitable skilled governor will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 2 - Formal Complaint.

The appropriate governor will consider the complaint and write to advise the complainant of the outcome within 10 school days. There will be no further internal right of appeal for complaints against individual governors.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire governing board or
- the majority of the governing board;

Stage 2 - Formal Complaint will be considered by an independent investigator appointed by the governing board. At the conclusion of their investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response.

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 Milverton Primary School will take to resolve the complaint.

Where the Complainant is unhappy about the decision the Chair of Governors or Investigating Governor has made about their complaint, this does not become a complaint about the Chair of Governors / Investigating Governor, however, the Complainant will be advised of their entitlement to take their original complaint to the next stage by writing to the Clerk to the Governing Board via the school office within 5 school days of receipt of the Stage 2 - Formal Complaint response and requesting that a Stage 4 - Complaint Appeal Panel (CAP) is convened.

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

A panel will be convened to complete all the actions at Stage 4 - Complaint Appeal Panel (CAP).

An experienced governor will convene the CAP meeting which will comprise of:

- (Maintained schools) Three members of the governing board.

The independent Complaint Panel member will be the Chair of the Complaint Panel

Appendix 7 - Governor Complaint Appeal Panel Meeting Process

Before the Complaint Appeal Panel Meeting

A copy of the agenda together with the complaint and all papers should be sent to the Complaint Appeal Panel members at least 5 school days before the meeting.

Each member must read the papers to check that they have no significant involvement with the case under consideration but should not discuss it with anyone else. If they need to withdraw from the panel, they should inform the Clerk immediately so that a substitute can be arranged.

Practical Arrangements

The tone of the meeting is often set by what happens when the complainant first arrives. Therefore, it is worth the Chair considering the following:

- ✓ What time will participants be asked to arrive?
- ✓ Who will greet participants when they arrive?
- ✓ Will anyone wait with them?
- ✓ Where will other people wait? (Separate rooms for complainants and school representatives is advisable).
- ✓ Will there be any refreshments provided?
- ✓ Where will the meeting take place?
- ✓ How will the meeting room be arranged? (Small informal arrangements are usually best)
- ✓ What route will the complainant and school representatives take to the meeting room?

The Meeting

A model agenda is attached in Appendix 9

The same rules apply as for other committee meetings of governors. For example, governors are not bound to accept tabled papers and may adjourn if they feel that they need time to consider an unexpected issue, including procedural issues.

Panel Chair's Role

During the meeting

- ✓ Take control of the meeting with confidence; use their judgement to move the meeting on when necessary and aim towards a resolution by coming to a conclusion on the written and oral evidence presented at the meeting.
- ✓ Convey to all concerned that as Chair you are acting impartially by treating all participants fairly.
- ✓ The complainant and the Head teacher (with their friends/advocates) should be invited into the room together and at the end of the meeting will be asked to leave together.
- ✓ At the discretion of the Chair witnesses should be invited to join the meeting when their input is required and to leave immediately afterwards.

- ✓ Having ascertained the names of all those waiting outside the meeting room, start the meeting by agreeing with the panel members who should be invited in to speak to the committee and in what order; at no time should the complainant, Head teacher or a witness be able to talk to panel members without both the complainant and Head teacher being present; these arrangements may have to be modified if one or more of the parties have absented themselves from the meeting.
- ✓ If witnesses are waiting, the Chair should try to ensure that they are called in due course if required or sent home early if it becomes apparent that they will not be seen.
- ✓ Once the main participants have joined the meeting, explain the proceedings.
- ✓ Begin to hear the complaint, being firm about keeping to the agenda and reminding participants as necessary about the procedure, e.g. if interruptions occur.
- ✓ Bear in mind that all participants will be under stress; be fair and consistent in the treatment of all participants.

Explaining the proceedings

- ✓ Introduce the people around the table.
- ✓ Confirm that everyone has a copy of the agenda and explain the meeting will follow the agenda.
- ✓ Make it clear that although the meeting will be as informal as possible, it is intended to keep to the agenda to allow everyone to have a fair hearing.
- ✓ Explain that the format is to allow the complainant to speak without interruption and then the Head teacher and Panel Members will be given the opportunity to ask any questions to clarify any issues raised; then the Head teacher's response will be heard, again without interruption and there will be an opportunity for the Panel Members and the complainant to ask any questions about what has been said.
- ✓ Indicate any time limits to adhere to.

Concluding the discussion

- ✓ It is important that all the participants feel that they have had every opportunity to be heard but if they are beginning to repeat themselves at the "further questions or points" stage, move the meeting on by proceeding to the summing up. The complainant and head teacher should then be invited to sum up if they wish but if the issues are clear, formal summing up may not seem to be appropriate
- ✓ Confirm the arrangements for the participants to receive the decision of the meeting.
- ✓ Write down the decision of the committee so this can be accurately recorded in the minutes.

At the end of the Complaint Appeal Panel Meeting

- ✓ The Chair will thank all parties for attending and advise that the Panel Members will now meet to review the evidence they have heard and read, and they will make their decision.
- ✓ Confirm that both parties will receive a decision letter within 3 school days.
- ✓ The chair will ask the Clerk to escort both parties out of the room, the complainant to reception and the school staff to the staff room / Head Teacher's office

The Decision Letter

- ✓ The Clerk to the Complaint Appeal Panel should send a copy of the decision letter to the complainant and head teacher.
- ✓ It is usual for all documents relating to a complaint to be kept confidential.

After the meeting

- ✓ The chair of the Complaint Appeal Panel meeting should receive a copy of the notes / minutes for confirmation and approval.

Appendix 8 - Model Complaint Appeal Panel Agenda

A Hearing by the Complaint Appeal Panel of **Milverton Primary School** will be held at **<Venue>** on **<day and date>** at **<time>**

The order of business for the Complaint Appeal Panel meeting is set out below:

1. Introductions
2. The Chair to outline the procedure
3. **<Name of complainant>** to explain his/her complaint
4. The Head teacher and Complaint Appeal Panel Members to ask questions
5. Head teacher to explain the school's response
6. **<Name of complainant>** and Panel Members to ask questions
7. The Head teacher to make a statement in summary
8. **<Name of complainant>** to make a statement in summary
9. Summing up by the Chair
10. **<Name of complainant>** and Head teacher escorted from the meeting room
11. Except for the Panel Members and the Clerk everyone will leave the meeting room whilst the Complaint Appeal Panel Members consider their decision in private

Written notice of the decision will be sent to **<Name of complainant>** and the Head teacher within **3** school days of the meeting.

Enc: List all the enclosures to accompany the agenda e.g.:

- a) A copy of the school's complaints procedure
- b) A copy of the original complaint
- c) Copies of letters between **<Name of complainant>** and the school in connection with the complaint
- d) Copy of written submissions from **<Name of complainant>** and the Head teacher

Appendix 9 - Interviewing Best Practice Tips

Interviewing Children / Young People

- Children / young people should be interviewed in the presence of another member of staff, or in the case of serious complaints e.g. where the possibility of criminal investigation exists, in the presence of their parents / carers. However, it may not always be possible to conduct an interview in case it prejudices a LADO or police investigation.
- Care should be taken in these circumstances not to create an intimidating atmosphere.
- Children / young people should be told what the interview is about and that they can have someone with them.

Interviewing Staff / Witnesses

- Explain the complaint and your role clearly to the interviewee and confirm that they understand the complaints procedure and their role in it
- Staff are allowed a colleague to support them at their interview. The colleague must ensure the child / young person's best interests and should not be anyone likely to be interviewed themselves, including their line manager
- Use open, not leading questions
- Do not express opinions in words or attitude
- Ask single, not multiple questions, i.e. one question at a time
- Try to separate 'hearsay' evidence from fact by asking interviewees how they know a particular fact
- Persist with questions if necessary. Do not be afraid to ask the same question twice. Make notes of each answer given
- Deal with conflicting evidence by seeking corroborative evidence. If this is not available, discuss with the complaints co-ordinator, head teacher, chair of governors the option of a meeting between the conflicting witnesses
- Make a formal record of the interview from the written notes as soon as possible while the memory is fresh. Show the interviewee the formal record, ask if he / she has anything to add and to sign the record as accurate.

Appendix 10 – Model Letters Index

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| 11.3 | Model Letter 3 | Acknowledgement of complaint received – stages 1 & 2 |
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Model Letter 1 – Response to a concern where more than 3 months has passed since the incident that caused the complaint

Name of School

Telephone

Date

Dear

I am writing further to the letter received concerning your complaint **about / regarding** **xxxxxxx**.

The school Complaints Policy makes clear that complaints should be made as soon as possible after an incident arises and no later than 3 months afterwards. Exceptions will be considered where there are valid reasons for not making a complaint at the time.

Having reviewed your complaint I can advise that given the time frame which has passed, your complaint will not be investigated by the school.

I have enclosed a copy of the school's Complaints Policy and Procedure for your information,

Yours sincerely,

Head teacher / Chair of Governors

Model Letter 2 – Response to send when complaint received is outside the scope of the complaints policy

Name of School

Telephone

Date

Dear

I am writing further to the letter received concerning your complaint **regarding / about xxxxxx**.

As stated in the School Complaints Policy, your complaint is outside the scope of the policy and procedures and there are separate procedures to deal with your complaint.

I have enclosed a copy of the school's Complaints Policy and Procedures which gives further information of who you should contact.

Yours sincerely,

Head teacher

Model Letter 3 – Acknowledgement of complaint received – stages 1 & 2

This letter can be sent at stages 1 & 2 of the complaints procedure, but must be sent within 5 school days of receipt of the complaint

Name of School

Telephone

Date

Dear

Re: Your complaint

I write to acknowledge receipt of your letter dated **xxxx** and write to let you know how your complaint will now be dealt with. Please be assured that our school takes all complaints very seriously and all complaints are investigated fully,

As **Head teacher / designated staff member (delete as appropriate)** I will now investigate your complaint. I would be very grateful if you could contact the school, within 5 school days, to arrange a time to meet with me to discuss your issues as raised in your letter.

I will do everything I can to resolve the issue and to this end it would be very helpful if you could be clear about what it is that would resolve the situation.

I will also be meeting with any other persons concerned with your complaint to ensure I understand all of the issues raised.

After I have met with you and other relevant people, I will write to you outlining the following:

- Your complaint with each item specified
- The resolution to each item
- Details of what you can do next if you are not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation.

This will be completed within **xxx** school days.

I look forward to hearing from you shortly.

Yours sincerely,

Head teacher / designated staff member (Delete as appropriate)

Model Letter 4 – Response to complainant by Head teacher

Name of School

Telephone

Date

Dear

Further to our meeting on (xxxx) **OR** further to your letter dated (xxx). I have now had the opportunity to investigate your concerns and am able to report the following:

(Insert a summary or list of complaints raised, investigations and outcomes – if necessary, where there are a number of complaints, list them. The outcomes could be any of the following:

- Dismiss the complaint in whole or part
- Uphold the complaint in whole or 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 recur)

I hope that you are satisfied that your concerns have been dealt with appropriately. However, if you are dissatisfied with the outcome please contact me to discuss the matter further or write to the Clerk of the Governing Board to request the complaint is investigated at the second stage (either by letter or using the form provided in the Complaints Policy) as soon as possible,

Should you require any further details please contact the school office.

Yours sincerely,

Head teacher

Model Letter 5 – Response letter following investigation

Name of School

Telephone

Date

PRIVATE and CONFIDENTIAL

Dear

Thank you for meeting with <Name> investigator / governor to support the investigation into your complaint(s) regarding xxx at Milverton Primary School under Stage 2 of the schools Complaints Policy and Procedure.

<Name> has considered your complaint and I am writing to you to inform you of the outcome.

Complaint:

- Summarise the complaint and the investigator's findings evidencing these from the evidence provided
- Include whether the complaint is upheld or not upheld or partially upheld
- Include any recommendations the investigator is making

Next Steps:

Should you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation of your Stage 2 complaint you should write to the Clerk to the Governing Board <Name> at <email > within xx school days of the date of this letter, setting out how the outcome of the stage 2 process did not resolve your complaint satisfactorily.

I have enclosed a copy of the schools Complaints Policy and Procedure for information.

Yours sincerely,

Clerk to the Governing Board – *this letter could be sent from the Investigator or the Clerk*

Model Letter 6 – Acknowledgement of Stage 3 complaint received

An example of a letter that may be sent to the complainant, upon receipt of a complaint at stage 3

Name of School

Telephone

Date

Dear

Thank you for your letter dated xxx setting out the reasons why you are not satisfied with the xxx response to your complaint about xxxxx.

If the reasons why the complaint hasn't been resolved at stage 2 aren't clear or it isn't clear what outcome the complainant is seeking, the following paragraph can be used:

I would be grateful if you could confirm the following information:

- The nature of your complaint and how the previous stage did not address your complaint sufficiently *
- Any evidence appropriate to your complaint *
- What outcome you would like to see *

** Delete as appropriate*

I am writing to let you know that I will be arranging for a Complaint Appeal Panel (CAP) to consider your complaint, in accordance with our school's Complaint Procedure.

As explained in the procedure, the xxx of the CAP will advise, in writing, how the CAP intends to consider your complaint.

Yours sincerely,

Clerk to the Governing Board

Model Letter 7 – Letter inviting complainant to a Governing Board CAP Meeting

Name of School

Telephone

Date

Dear

Your Complaint

I write to acknowledge receipt of your letter of (insert date) and write to let you know how your appeal will now be dealt with.

A hearing by the Complaint Appeals Panel will be held within (insert number) school working days from the receipt of your request for an appeal i.e. by (insert date).

The panel is made up of 3 governors who have no prior knowledge of the details of the complaint. The role of the panel is to consider your complaint and the action taken to address the complaint to date, together with any information that you and the Head teacher (*or Chair of Governors or designated member of staff/governor as appropriate*) wishes to put forward.

The Panel will then consider in private all the information presented to it and arrive at its decision. The Panel has the authority to:

- dismiss the appeal in whole or in part;
- uphold the appeal in whole or in part;
- decide on any 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 recur.

You will be notified in writing of the decision of the panel within (insert date) school days of the meeting.

I will be acting as clerk to the panel and it is my responsibility to make all the necessary arrangements for the meeting and to take the notes of the meeting and offer procedural guidance only. Any correspondence that you may wish to submit to the panel should be sent to me at the address shown at the head of this letter. This will be shared with the panel and (insert the person attending the panel on behalf of the school)

Optional paragraph – I currently work part-time and therefore your correspondence will be answered at the earliest opportunity. I will answer any procedural matters but cannot comment on the complaint.

You are entitled to attend the meeting and to present your appeal and you may be accompanied by a friend who may speak on your behalf if you so wish. You or your friend may also submit, in advance, written representations. These will be circulated to the panel and to the Head teacher and must therefore be sent to me to arrive not less than 10 school

working days prior to the meeting. If the Head teacher similarly submits any written representations, then you will be provided with a copy in advance of the meeting.

I will contact you again soon to discuss the date, time and venue for the meeting but in the meantime if you have any questions in connection with this matter please do not hesitate to contact me. Please let me know if you have any specific requirements for the meeting e.g. hearing loop, disabled access etc.

For your information the panel members are:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Please do **not** contact these members as they will not respond to any correspondence or read any items you send them directly as all enclosures will be circulated by the clerk. This is to ensure that they can act fairly and without prejudice at the hearing.

Yours sincerely

Clerk to the Complaint Appeals Panel of (name of school) Governing Board

Model Letter 8 – Proposed agenda for CAP Meeting

A Hearing by the Complaint Appeal Panel of **Milverton Primary School** will be held at **<Venue>** on **<day and date>** at **<time>**

The order of business for the Complaint Appeal Panel meeting is set out below:

1. Introductions
2. The Chair to outline the procedure
3. **<Name of complainant>** to explain his/her complaint
4. The Head teacher and Complaint Appeal Panel Members to ask questions
5. Head teacher to explain the school's response
6. **<Name of complainant>** and Panel Members to ask questions
7. The Head teacher to make a statement in summary
8. **<Name of complainant>** to make a statement in summary
9. Summing up by the Chair
10. **<Name of complainant>** and Head teacher escorted from the meeting room
11. Except for the Panel Members and the Clerk everyone will leave the meeting room whilst the Complaint Appeal Panel Members consider their decision in private

Written notice of the decision will be sent to **<Name of complainant>** and the Head teacher within **3** school days of the meeting.

Enc: List all of the enclosures to accompany the agenda e.g.:

- a) A copy of the school's complaints procedure
- b) A copy of the original complaint
- c) Copies of letters between **<Name of complainant>** and the school in connection with the complaint
- d) Copy of written submissions from **<Name of complainant>** and the Head teacher

Model Template Pack – Template for Pack to be sent to all parties

Governing Board Complaint Appeal Panel Meeting

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Letter to <Complainant(s)> dated <date>, advising for date for Complaint Appeal Panel Meeting |
| 2 | Complaint Appeal Panel Meeting Agenda |
| 3 | Milverton Primary School School's Complaints Policy and Procedure |
| 4 | Request for Governing Board Complaint Appeal Panel |
| 5 | Information regarding complaint from <Complainants> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Item 1• Item 2• |
| 6 | Information regarding complaint from Milverton Primary School <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Item 1• Item 2• |

Model Letter 9 – Complaint Appeal Panel Outcome Letter

Name of School

Telephone

Date

PRIVATE and CONFIDENTIAL

Dear

Re: Governing Board Complaint Appeal Panel Outcome

First of all I would like to take the time to thank you for attending the Appeals Panel on <date> and providing information regarding your complaint to the appeals panel, I appreciate that this was a sensitive matter for you to discuss and I am grateful that you did so that we were able to carry out a fully informed investigation.

Within this meeting, you confirmed that there were <number> allegations which formed your formal complaint, these were:

(Insert here a full list of allegations the complainant raised, these should be written clearly so that there is no ambiguity over what was said and the issues the complainant raised.)

The Complaint Appeal Panel considered the following information:

- Your statement to the panel
- The statement made from name of school staff and their role
- The complaint investigation report
- The complaint outcome report
- The responses to questions

We also requested the following additional information:

(Insert a list of any additional information you requested from the complainant).

After taking all the information and evidence into account, the panel have drawn the following conclusions:

(Outline the conclusions of the appeals meeting, including how the panel reached each decision, why they reached the decision and any following action to be taken as a result of the panel hearing – each allegation should be addressed individually).

Based on the information outlined above, your complaint **has / has not / has partially** been upheld. I appreciate this experience may have caused you distress and frustration and I

hope the information provided explains clearly to you why we have come to this conclusion. I am confident that, moving forward, all parties will be able to gain value from this experience and work collaboratively in the future.

We reached this decision fully in line with the Complaints Policy and Procedure, and all stages of the policy have been completed.

(Maintained schools only) if, however, you are unsatisfied with this resolution, you are entitled to appeal this decision to the Secretary of State for Education in writing to:

Ministerial and Public Communications Division
DFE
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

You can also use the “contact the Department for Education” freedom of information form. The form will allow you to discuss the process you have already gone through and why you are dissatisfied.

If you would like to appeal the decision, you have xx school days to do so.

If you have any more questions regarding the details of this letter, please feel free to contact me on <email address>.

Yours sincerely,

Chair of the CAP of Milverton Primary School

Name of School

Telephone

Date

PRIVATE and CONFIDENTIAL

Dear

First of all I would like to take the time to thank you for attending the Appeals Panel on <date> and providing information regarding your complaint to the appeals panel, I appreciate that this was a sensitive matter for you to discuss and I am grateful that you did so that we were able to carry out a fully informed investigation.

The panel after carefully considering all the information presented has decided to uphold your complaint for the following reasons:

Set out reasons e.g.

- a) It is recognised that an error had occurred at the early stage of the matter the subject of your complaint and that this error had not been identified or action taken to correct it.
- b) Because the error was not identified you had to pay twice for the music lessons;

The Panel has determined that the following action should be taken to address your complaint:

Set out redress offered e.g.

- a) The head teacher and the panel offer an unreserved apology to you for the distress caused by the failure to properly address the original error,
- b) A refund of the overpaid music lessons fee will be made to you as soon as possible,
- c) Measures have now been put in place to prevent any further similar errors occurring.

The Panel hopes that this now brings this matter to a conclusion and thanks you for the professional and courteous way in which you dealt with the matter at the hearing.

The hearing of your complaint by the Panel ends the formal procedures set out in the school's Complaints Policy and Procedure.

(Maintained schools only)

However, if you remain dissatisfied you are entitled to appeal this decision to the Secretary of State for Education in writing to:

Ministerial and Public Communications Division
DFE
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street

Manchester
M1 2WD

You can also use the “contact the Department for Education” freedom of information form. The form will allow you to discuss the process you have already gone through and why you are dissatisfied.

Yours sincerely,

Chair of the CAP of Milverton Primary School

Model Letter 11 – Decision letter – rejecting complaint

Name of School

Telephone

Date

PRIVATE and CONFIDENTIAL

Dear

First of all I would like to take the time to thank you for attending the Appeals Panel on <date> and providing information regarding your complaint to the appeals panel, I appreciate that this was a sensitive matter for you to discuss and I am grateful that you did so that we were able to carry out a fully informed investigation.

The panel after carefully considering all the information presented has decided that no further action should be taken on your complaint for the following reasons:

Set out reasons e.g.

- a) It is recognised that an error had occurred at the early stage of the matter, the subject of your complaint. Whilst this was regrettable it is the view of the panel, that the early action taken by the Head teacher to correct the error once it was discovered was enough to correct the situation.
- b) Because action was taken early there was no evidence to demonstrate that you had suffered materially as a consequence:
- c) The Head teacher has already apologised to you both verbally and in writing for the error.

The hearing of your complaint by the Panel ends the formal procedures set out in the school's Complaints Policy and Procedure.

However, if you remain dissatisfied you are entitled to appeal this decision to the Secretary of State for Education in writing to:

Ministerial and Public Communications Division
DFE
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

You can also use the "contact the Department for Education" freedom of information form. The form will allow you to discuss the process you have already gone through and why you are dissatisfied.

Yours sincerely,

Chair of the CAP of Milverton Primary School

Model Letter 12 – Banning Warning Letter

Name of School

Telephone

Date

PRIVATE and CONFIDENTIAL

Dear

I am writing to you about your conduct on <date and time>

<Add summary of the incident and of its effect on staff, pupils, other parents>

I must inform you that the School will not tolerate conduct of this nature on its premises and will act to defend its staff and <children / pupils / staff>. On behalf of the governing board I am therefore issuing a formal warning to you, and if this behaviour is repeated, I will have no alternative but to ban you from the premises in line with Section 206 of the Education Act 2002.

In order for us to re-establish good working relationships, I would therefore ask you to contact me at the school to arrange a meeting in order to agree next steps.

Yours sincerely,

Head teacher

Model Letter 13 – Initial Banning Letter

Name of School

Telephone

Date

PRIVATE and CONFIDENTIAL

Dear

I am writing to you about your conduct on <date and time>

<Add summary of the incident and of its effect on staff, pupils, other parents>

I must inform you that the School will not tolerate conduct of this nature on its premises and will act to defend its staff and <children / pupils / staff>. On behalf of the governing board I am therefore instructing that (for a temporary period – make this proportionate, this should be a cooling off period not a punishment) you are not to reappear on the premises of the school.

If you do not comply with this instruction, I shall arrange for you to be removed from the premises and prosecuted under Section 206 of the Education Act 2002. If convicted under this section, you are liable for a fine.

In the case of a primary school include: For the duration of this decision you may bring your son(s) / daughter(s) (complete as appropriate) to school and collect them / him / her (delete as appropriate) at the end of the school day, but you must not go beyond the school gate.

In the case of infant children, also insert: Arrangements have been made for your son(s) / daughter(s) (insert child/rens names) to be collected and returned to you, at the school gate by a member of the school staff.

The withdrawal of permission for you to enter the school premises takes effect immediately, However, I still need to decide whether it is appropriate to confirm this decision and before I do so I would like to give you an opportunity to give me in writing any comments or observations of your own in relation to this letter. These comments may include any expressions of regret on your part and any assurances you are prepared to give about your future good conduct. To enable me to take a decision on this matter at an early point, you are asked to send me any written comments you wish to make within 5 school days.

If on receipt of your comments I consider that my decision should be confirmed, you will be supplied with details of how to pursue a review of the circumstances of your case.

Yours sincerely,

Head teacher

Model Letter 14 – Revoking the ban

Name of School

Telephone

Date

PRIVATE and CONFIDENTIAL

Dear

I am writing to you about your conduct on <date and time>

<Add summary of the incident and of its effect on staff, pupils, other parents>

Following your communication with me regarding the circumstances of the above behaviour, in this instance I have decided to revoke the ban that was imposed on date. Therefore, on behalf of the governing board, I would like to invite you to meet with myself and / named governor to agree how we move forward to ensure that we establish clear expectations and lines of communication between home and school, so that this incident is not repeated.

Please contact me at the school to arrange a meeting.

May I reassure you of our continued commitment to provide the very best education for your child / children.

Yours sincerely,

Head teacher

Model Letter 15 – Endorsing the ban

Name of School

Telephone

Date

PRIVATE and CONFIDENTIAL

Dear

I am writing to you about your conduct on <date and time>

<Add summary of the incident and of its effect on staff, pupils, other parents>

I must inform you that the school will not tolerate conduct of this nature on its premises and will act to defend its staff and pupils. On behalf of the Governing Board I am therefore instructing that you are not to reappear on the premises of the school. If you do not comply with this instruction, I shall arrange for you to be removed from the premises and prosecuted under Section 206 of the Education Act 2002. If convicted, you are liable to a fine.

This decision will be reviewed on (set a date that is proportionate to the incident) and I will be in contact with you within one working week of this date to discuss the outcome of the review.

May I reassure you of our continued commitment to provide the very best education for your child / children and I hope that after this cooling – off period; we can agree further arrangements which will enable us to re-establish a good working relationship.

Yours sincerely,

Head teacher

Model Letter 16 – Serial and persistent complaints

Name of School

Telephone

Date

PRIVATE and CONFIDENTIAL

Dear

I am writing further to your letter dated <date> concerning your **complaint (insert details of complaint)**.

Having considered your letter I am advising you that the issues raised have been fully investigated through the school's complaints policy. As such I am advising you that the procedure has been completed and the school considers that the matter is now closed. Should you choose to contact the school again in connection with these issues, the complaint will be viewed as serial and persistent and the school will choose not to respond to these matters.

As previously advised, if you believe the school did not handle your complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, you can contact the School Complaints Unit (SCU), which investigates complaints relating to maintained schools on behalf of the Secretary of State.

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

Yours sincerely,

Chair of Governors

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