

Reviewed on:	May 2026
Reviewed by:	Brett Runchman
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Complaints Procedure

May 2026
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This policy should be read in conjunction with the capability and conduct policy and GDPR Policy

SCHOOL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

ALL COMPLAINTS MUST BE RECORDED IN THE SCHOOL'S COMPLAINT LOG

1. Stages of the Procedure

It is in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage.

The experience of the first contact between the complainant and the school can be crucial in determining whether the complaint will escalate. To that end, staff should understand the Complaints Procedure so they know what to do should they receive a complaint.

A complaint may be made in person, by telephone or in writing, but a standard complaint recording form will be used, and this is attached at Appendix 1.

The School Procedure makes clear the time limit within which a complaint may be made. Time also needs to be allowed for the Director and Head of Centre to implement any changes following a complaint being upheld. A flowchart of suggested stages can be found in Appendix 2.

1.1 Stage One: Complaint Heard by Staff Member (to be completed on day of complaint)

Stage one should run in the following order:

1. The complainant is asked to take the complaint directly to the Operational Senior of the school their complaint is regarding.
 - a. The views of a complainant who indicates that they would have difficulty discussing a complaint with a particular member of staff should be respected and, in these cases, the complainant can be referred to another senior staff member.
 - b. If the member of staff directly involved feels too compromised to deal with a complaint, the complainant may be referred to another senior staff member. The ability to consider the complaint objectively and impartially is crucial.
 - c. Where the complaint concerns either or both the Director and Head Teacher, the complainant should be advised to write to the proprietor who would seek external investigation.
2. The Operational Senior should pass the complaint on to the Head Teacher in writing and the Head Teacher will instruct on further process and advise the complainant of the school's procedure.
3. Individual members of the Senior Leadership Team should not act unilaterally on an individual complaint outside the formal procedure or be involved at the early

stages, in case they are needed to sit on a Panel at a later stage of the procedure.

4. In any of the above instances, a full record using the school's complaint recording form (appendix 1) should be completed.

Where the first approach is made to the Head Teacher, they should follow up the complaint and advise the complainant about the school's procedure. Most complaints will be resolved at this informal stage.

1.2 Stage Two: Complaint Heard by Head Teacher (to be completed within the same day of complaint)

The Head Teacher's influence will already have shaped the way complaints are handled in the school. At this point, however, as well as pursuing their initial complaint, the complainant may be dissatisfied with the way the complaint was handled at Stage 1

The Head Teacher may delegate the task of collating the information to another staff member, but not the decision on the action to be taken.

The Head Teacher should investigate the complaint, review all the information and discuss the findings, together with any recommendations or apology, with the complainant.

Reconciliation should be achieved at this stage. If the complaint relates to the alleged conduct or capability of a member of staff that could result in disciplinary action, the complaints process should be replaced with appropriate line management and disciplinary procedures. **As almost all complaints concern the day-to-day management of the school, few matters should need to go further.**

1.3 Stage Three: Complaint Heard by Complaints Appeal Panel (within 7 working days)

If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they should write to the Proprietor giving details of the complaint. Sometimes the Proprietor will be able to diffuse the situation at this point, by speaking with or writing to the complainant and reassuring them that the school has taken the complaint seriously. This may be sufficient to satisfy the complainant. Should, however, this prove not to be the case, the proprietor will convene a Complaints Appeal Panel. The Panel will be drawn from the nominated members who are all independent from the day-to-day running of the school and may consist of two or three nominated persons. The Panel may choose its own Chairperson. The complainant, if they wish, can be accompanied and represented by another person at the panel hearing.

The appeal hearing is the last school-based stage of the complaints process and is not convened merely to rubber stamp previous decisions. The procedure adopted by the Panel for hearing appeals is part of the school's complaints procedure and is set out in Appendix 3.

2. The Remit of the Complaints Appeal Panel

The Panel can:

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

There are several points which any person sitting on a Complaints Appeal Panel needs to remember:

- (a) All information relating to the complaint and complainant, student and school is confidential and should not be discussed outside the Panel.
- (b) All records should be stored securely and always kept confidential.
- (c) It is important that the appeal hearing is independent and impartial and that it is seen to be so. No person may sit on the Panel if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it.
- (d) The aim of the hearing, which should be held in private, will always be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. However, it has to be recognised that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the hearing does not find in their favour. It may, however, be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations, which will satisfy the complainant that their complaint has been taken seriously.
- (e) An effective Panel will acknowledge that many complainants feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting. Parents/Carers often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child. The Panel Chair will ensure that the proceedings are as welcoming as possible. The layout of the room will set the tone and care is needed to ensure the setting appears appropriate and not adversarial.
- (f) The persons sitting on the Panel need to be aware of the entire complaints procedure.

A checklist for a Panel Hearing is attached in Appendix 3.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 The Role of the Clerk

The Complaints Appeal Panel should be clerked. The clerk would be the contact point for the complainant at the third stage and be required to:

- set the date (within 7 working days of complaint), time and venue of the hearing, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible;

- collate any written material and send it to all the parties in advance of the hearing;
- meet and welcome the parties as they arrive at the hearing;
- keep written records of all complaints indicating whether they were resolved at the preliminary stage or whether they proceeded to a panel hearing;
- notify the complainant, the proprietors, the head teacher, and, where relevant, the person complained about, of the Panel's findings and recommendations.

3.2 The Role of the Director

- Check that the complaints procedure has been correctly followed to this point.
- If a hearing is appropriate, notify the clerk to arrange the Panel.

3.3 The Role of the Chair of the Panel Ensures that:

- No member of the Panel has a vested interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure.
- The remit of the Panel is explained to the parties, and each party has the opportunity of putting their case without undue interruption.
- At least one member of the Panel will be from outside of the direct management or running of the school.
- Parents and others who may not be used to speaking at such a hearing are put at ease, encouraged to attend and are offered appropriate support to attend.
- The issues are addressed.
- Key findings of fact are made.
- The hearing is conducted in an informal, although structured manner, with each party treating the other with respect and courtesy.
- Each side is given the opportunity to state their case and ask questions.
- Written material is seen by all parties. If a new issue arises, all parties should be given the opportunity to consider and comment on it.
- The Panel is seen to be open-minded and acting independently.

4. Notification of the Panel's Decision

The Chair of the Panel should ensure that the complainant and the Head Teacher are notified of the Panel's findings and recommendations, in writing, within one working day of the Panel's decision. The letter needs to explain that any further appeal should be addressed to the Secretary of State.

5. Sharing of information

All correspondence, statements and records of complaints must be kept confidential but are available to the Proprietor and Head Teacher for inspection on the school

premises; they must be shown to HMI / ISI when they inspect. Copies must also be made available to the registration authority on request.

Note: This model is based on a procedure published by the Department for Education and Skills, arising from Section 29 of the Education Act 2002, and recommended to Governing Bodies, as approved by the Council on 22.03.2004.

Number of complaints received 2025-2026: 0.

Date:

This form needs a continuation sheet to enable the school to record the actions taken and the final outcomes.

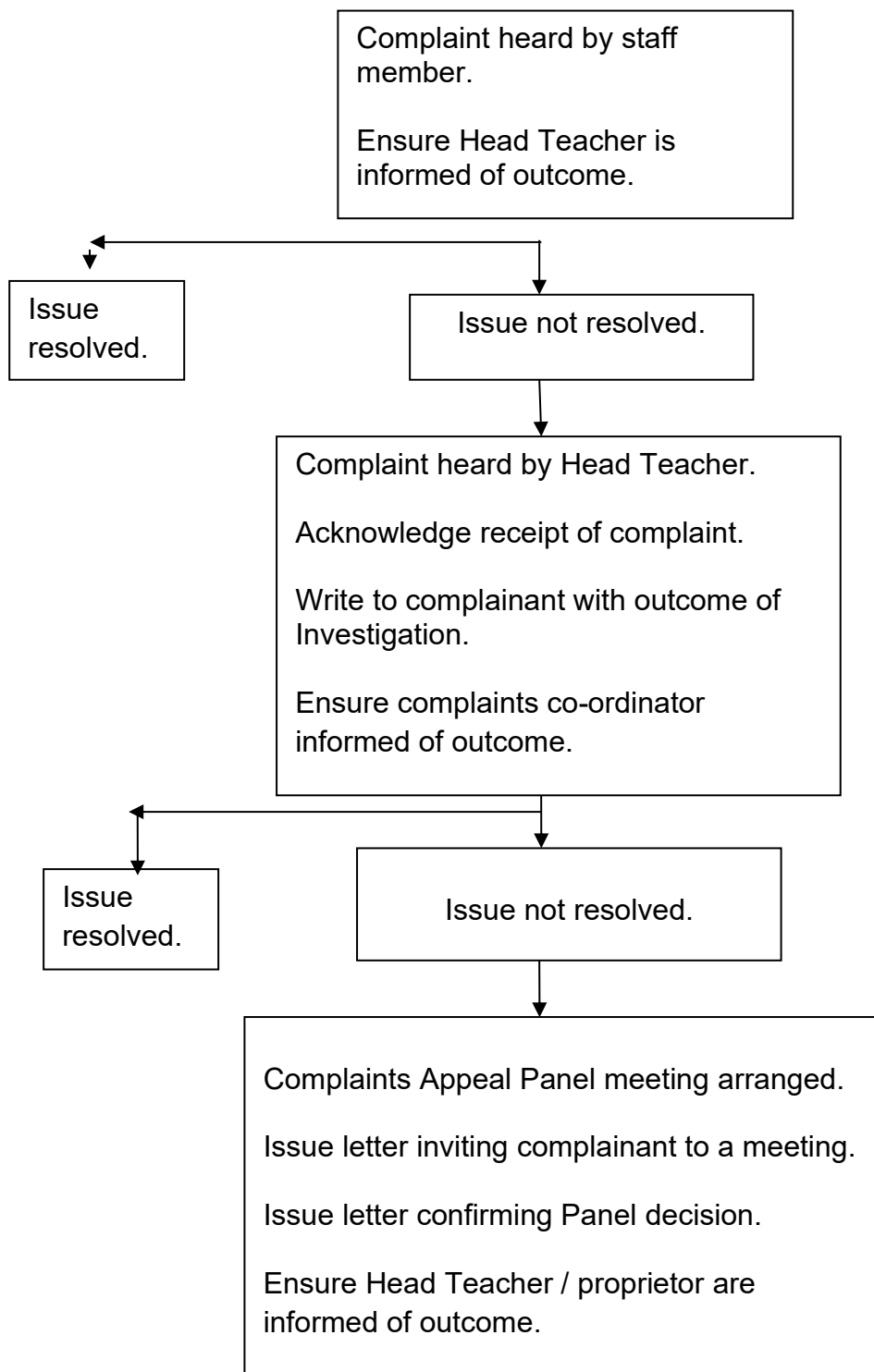
Complaints continuation sheet.....

Sheet number.....

Date.....

Appendix 2

Flow Chart



Appendix 3

Checklist for a Panel Hearing

The Panel needs to take the following points into account:

The hearing, while structured, is conducted as informally as possible.

Witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing in which they give their evidence.

After introductions, the Complainant is invited to explain their complaint, and be followed by their witnesses.

The Head Teacher may question both the complainant and the witnesses after each has spoken.

The Head Teacher is then invited to explain the school's actions and be followed by the school's witnesses.

The Complainant may question both the Head Teacher and the witnesses after each has spoken.

The Panel may ask questions at any point.

The Complainant is then invited to sum up their complaint.

The Head Teacher is then invited to sum up the school's actions and response to the complaint.

Both parties leave together while the Panel decides on the issues.

The Chair explains that both parties will hear from the Panel within a set timescale.