



CITY OF PLYMOUTH  
***Riverside Community  
Primary School***  
***(Primary and Nursery)***



Poole Park Road, St Budeaux Plymouth PL5 1JH Telephone 01752 365297  
e-mail: [admin@riverside.plymouth.sch.uk](mailto:admin@riverside.plymouth.sch.uk)



**COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE POLICY**

Adopted by the Full Governing Body 2009  
Update Spring 2019  
Reviewed Summer 2026  
Due Summer 2028  
Approved by: Ruth Sayers

## RIVERSIDE COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

### COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

#### **Who can make a complaint?**

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

#### **The difference between a concern and a complaint**

A concern may be defined as *'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'*.

A complaint may be defined as *'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'*.

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

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, Mrs Willcocks, Head Teacher, will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, you will be referred 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, Riverside School will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

#### **How to raise a concern or make a complaint**

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf on a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

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

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

Complaints against school staff (except the headteacher) should be made in the first instance, to Mrs Willcocks, the head Teacher via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints that involve or are about the headteacher should be addressed to Ruth Sayers (the Chair of Governors), via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential. Complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor or the whole governing body should be addressed to Katherine Joy (the Clerk to the Governing Body) via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

For ease of use, a template complaint form is included at the end of this procedure. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office. You can also ask third party organisations like the Citizens Advice to help you.

In accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure. For instance,

providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

### **Anonymous complaints**

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

### **Time scales**

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

### **Complaints received outside of term time**

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

### **Scope of this Complaints Procedure**

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

| <b>Exceptions</b>                                                                                                                                                                   | <b>Who to contact</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Admissions to schools</li> <li>• Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs</li> <li>• School re-organisation proposals</li> </ul> | <p>Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with the Local Authority's School Admission Team Tel: 01752 307481</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation</li> </ul>                                                                      | <p>Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exclusion of children from school*</li> </ul>                                                                                              | <p>Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: <a href="http://www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions">www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions</a>.</p> <p><i>*complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.</i></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whistleblowing</li> </ul>                                                                                                                  | <p>We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors.</p> <p>The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus">www.education.gov.uk/contactus</a>.</p> <p>Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the LA or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff grievances</li> </ul>                                                                                                                | <p>Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |

|                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff conduct</li> </ul>                                                                                   | <p>Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate.</p> <p>Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities</li> </ul> | <p>Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Curriculum - content</li> </ul>                                                                   | <p>Please contact the Department for Education at: <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus">www.education.gov.uk/contactus</a></p>                                                                                                                                                                                        |

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

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

### **Resolving complaints**

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

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

### **Withdrawal of a Complaint**

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

### **Stages of the procedure**

#### **Stage 1**

Formal complaints must be made to the headteacher (unless they are about the headteacher), via the school office. This may be done in person, in writing (preferably on the Complaint Form), or by telephone.

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

Within this response, the headteacher will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The headteacher can consider whether a face to face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

*Note: The headteacher may delegate the investigation to another member of the school's senior leadership team but not the decision to be taken.*

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

- if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
- keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the headteacher will provide a formal written response within 12 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint.

If the headteacher is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions Riverside School will take to resolve the complaint.

The headteacher will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1.

If the complaint is about the headteacher, or a member of the governing body (including the Chair or Vice-Chair), a suitably skilled governor will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 1.

Complaints about the headteacher or member of the governing body must be made to the Clerk, via the school office.

If the complaint is:

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

Stage 1 will be considered by an independent investigator appointed by the governing body. At the conclusion of their investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response.

## **Stage 2**

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

A request to escalate to Stage 2 must be made to the Clerk, via the school office, within 5 school days of receipt of the Stage 1 response.

The Clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 2 school days.

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

The Clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within 15 school days of receipt of the Stage 2 request. If this is not possible, the Clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates, without good reason, the Clerk will decide when to hold the meeting. It will then proceed in the complainant's absence on the basis of written submissions from both parties.

The complaints committee will consist of at least three governors with no prior involvement or knowledge of the complaint. Prior to the meeting, they will decide amongst themselves who will act as the Chair of the Complaints Committee. If there are fewer than three governors from Riverside School available, the Clerk will source any additional, independent governors through another local school or through their LA's Governor Services team, in order to make up the committee. Alternatively, an entirely independent committee may be convened to hear the complaint at Stage 2.

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

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

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

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

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

At least 12 school days before the meeting, the Clerk will:

- confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that, if the complainant is invited, the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the committee at least 7 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 committee will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded. The committee will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.

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

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

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

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

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

The Chair of the Committee will provide the complainant and Riverside School with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 5 school days.

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

If the complaint is:

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

Stage 2 will be heard by a committee of independent, co-opted governors.

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 Riverside School will take to resolve the complaint.

The response will also advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied.

### **Next Steps**

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

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by Riverside School. They will consider whether Riverside School has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint.

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

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

### **Complaint Form**

Please complete and return to Riverside School, Mr B Jones, Head Teacher 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, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it.**

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

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

**Signature:**

**Date:**

**Official use**

**Date acknowledgement sent:**

**By who:**

**Complaint referred to:**

**Date:**

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Complainant**

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

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

### **Investigator**

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

- providing a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint through:
  - sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved
  - interviewing staff and children/young people and other people relevant to the complaint
  - consideration of records and other relevant information
  - analysing information
- liaising with the complainant and the complaints co-ordinator as appropriate to clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.

The investigator should:

- conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning
- keep notes of interviews or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of the meeting
- ensure that any papers produced during the investigation are kept securely pending any appeal
- be mindful of the timescales to respond
- prepare a comprehensive report for the headteacher or complaints committee that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.

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

**Complaints Co-ordinator** (this could be the headteacher / designated complaints governor or other staff member providing administrative support)

The complaints co-ordinator should:

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

### **Clerk to the Governing Body**

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

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

### **Committee Chair**

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

- both parties are asked (via the Clerk) to provide any additional information relating to the complaint by a specified date in advance of the meeting
- the meeting is conducted in an informal manner, is not adversarial, and that, if all parties are invited to attend, everyone is treated with respect and courtesy
- complainants who may not be used to speaking at such a meeting are put at ease. This is particularly important if the complainant is a child/young person
- the remit of the committee is explained to the complainant
- written material is seen by everyone in attendance, provided it does not breach confidentiality or any individual's rights to privacy under the DPA 2018 or GDPR.  
If a new issue arises it would be useful to give everyone the opportunity to consider and comment upon it; this may require a short adjournment of the meeting
- both the complainant and the school are given the opportunity to make their case and seek clarity, either through written submissions ahead of the meeting or verbally in the meeting itself
- the issues are addressed
- key findings of fact are made
- the committee is open-minded and acts independently
- no member of the committee has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings

- or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure
- the meeting is minuted.
- they liaise with the Clerk (and complaints co-ordinator, if the school has one).

### **Committee Member**

Committee members should be aware that:

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

**If you have a compliment, comment, concern or complaint.....**

.....we would like you to let us know. You are requested to raise directly with the school/academy any issues regarding the school/academy or its staff before posting any comments or pictures/videos on social media that have implications for the school/academy or its staff. All members of staff are familiar with the procedure and are able to assist you.

**Compliment** – We like to hear when we have done a good job so that we can share what we do well with the staff and children to ensure we continually improve.

**Comment** – We welcome suggestions for improving our work.

**Concern** – A concern is an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought. Please tell us of any concern you have as soon as possible so that we can try to resolve it.

If you are a parent/carer be assured that no matter what you want to talk to us about, our support for you and your child will not be affected in any way.

**Complaint** – A complaint is a concern which has not been satisfactorily resolved. If you feel we have not dealt satisfactorily with your concern, please tell us as soon as possible that you wish to make a formal complaint, as it is difficult for us to investigate properly an incident or problem that happened some time ago.

If at any formal stage of the complaint it is determined that staff disciplinary or capability proceedings are necessary in order to resolve the issue, the details of this action will remain confidential to the headteacher and/or the individual's line manager. As the complainant you are entitled to be informed that action is being taken, but you are not entitled to participate in the proceedings or receive any detail.

We will not usually investigate complaints about issues and incidents that are more than three months old.

We aim to keep to the timeframes outlined for stages 2 and 3 in the attached flowchart but sometimes more complex complaints take longer to investigate. If this is the case we will keep you informed of progress.

If you seek to remain anonymous it may not be possible to take action. However, if an anonymous complaint is received which may need to be treated as a child protection matter it will be dealt with under the appropriate statutory procedure.

**This policy does not cover the following types of complaints for which there are statutory or formalised procedures in place:**

| <b>Procedure dealing with:</b>                                       | <b>Further information available from:</b>                                                                                                      |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Appeals with respect to admissions                                   | See school's/academy's Admissions policy or contact the local authority's School Admissions Team<br>Telephone: 01752 307481                     |
| Appeals with respect to exclusion of pupils                          | See school's/academy's Behaviour/Exclusions policy or contact the local authority's Inclusion and Attendance Manager<br>Telephone: 01752 307471 |
| Special Educational Needs Statements/Education Health and Care Plans | Local authority's 0-25 SEND Statutory Assessment Team<br>Telephone: 01752 307409                                                                |
| National Curriculum and Religious Education                          | Local authority's Education and Learning team<br>Telephone: 01752 307485                                                                        |
| Child Protection Issues                                              | Local authority's Advice and Assessment team, Children's Social Care<br>Telephone: 01752 308600                                                 |
| Child Protection Investigations against staff                        | Local Authority Designated Officer<br>Telephone: 01752 307144                                                                                   |

|                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Whistleblowing                                                                                      | <p>The school/academy has an internal whistleblowing procedure for employees and voluntary staff which is available from the school/academy office.</p> <p>Other concerns can be raised direct with Ofsted on 0300 123 3155 or via email at <a href="mailto:whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk">whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk</a></p> |
| Staff grievances and disciplinary procedures                                                        | The school/academy has internal grievance and disciplinary procedures for employees which are available from the school/academy office.                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Subject Access Requests and Freedom of Information requests                                         | See the school's/academy's Freedom of Information and Data Protection policies                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Services provided by other external organisations who use the school/academy premises or facilities | External providers should have their own complaints procedures and should be contacted direct.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Services provided by Plymouth City Council                                                          | <p>Local authority's Customer Services team</p> <p>Telephone: 01752 668000</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

### **What to do first if you have any concerns**

Most concerns can be sorted out quickly by speaking with your child's class teacher, or another member of staff.

If you have a concern that you feel should be looked at by the headteacher you can contact him/her first. It is usually best to discuss your concerns face to face. You may need to make an appointment to do this, and can make one by phoning or going to the reception.

You can take a friend or relation to the appointment with you if you want to.

All staff will make every effort to respond to your concerns informally. They will make sure that they understand what you feel went wrong, and they will explain their own actions to you. They will ask what you

would like the school or academy to do to put things right. Of course, this does not mean that in every case they will come round to your point of view but it will help both you and the school/academy to understand both sides of the issue. It may also help to prevent a similar problem arising again.

### **What to do next**

If you are dissatisfied with the response to your concern you can make a formal complaint to the complaints co-ordinator. This can be done verbally or by completing the attached complaint form. Please contact the school/academy office if you need assistance with this.

The complaints co-ordinator will investigate the complaint and may interview any members of staff or pupils involved. The complaints co-ordinator will ask to meet you for a discussion of your complaint and the outcome of the investigation. Again you may take a friend or relation with you if you wish. You will receive a written response to your complaint.

If your complaint is about an action of the headteacher or a member of the Board of Governors, then you should refer it to the clerk to the Board of Governors instead of the complaints co-ordinator. (see 'If you are still unhappy' section below).

### **If you are still unhappy**

The complaint will normally be resolved by this stage. However, if you are dissatisfied with the response you may wish to contact the clerk to the Board of Governors to ask for your complaint to be referred to the Board of Governors' Complaints Appeal Panel. You can contact the clerk at the school/academy address.

The clerk will arrange a panel meeting at a mutually convenient time. Your complaint will then be heard by a panel of three governors who have no previous knowledge of the issue and so will be able to give it a fresh assessment. You, and the headteacher, will be invited to attend and speak to the panel at a meeting. Again you may take a friend or relation with you if you wish. Please remember that a complaints appeal panel meeting is designed to find a formal resolution and it is therefore not appropriate to bring legal representation with you.

The panel will be as informal as possible and at the start of the meeting the governor chairing the panel will explain what will happen during the meeting. Both you and the school/academy will be given an opportunity

to put your case to the panel members. Notes will be taken of the meeting.

The panel can make the following decisions:

- 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/academy's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur

Following the meeting the clerk will issue a letter confirming the panel's decision.

### **Further action**

Complaints about school problems are almost always settled within schools but, if you are dissatisfied with the school's internal procedure you can refer your complaint to the Secretary of State. The School Complaints Unit of the Department for Education considers complaints on behalf of the Secretary of State by looking at whether the school has followed its own procedures but will not normally reinvestigate the substance of the complaint. The School Complaints Unit will not overturn a school's decision about a complaint except in exceptional circumstances where it is clear that the school has acted unlawfully or unreasonably, and they may ask the school to reconsider the complaint.

Further information can be obtained from the School Complaints Unit by calling the National Helpline on 0370 000 2288 or going online at [www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus](http://www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus) or by writing to the Department for Education, School Complaints Unit, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD.

OR

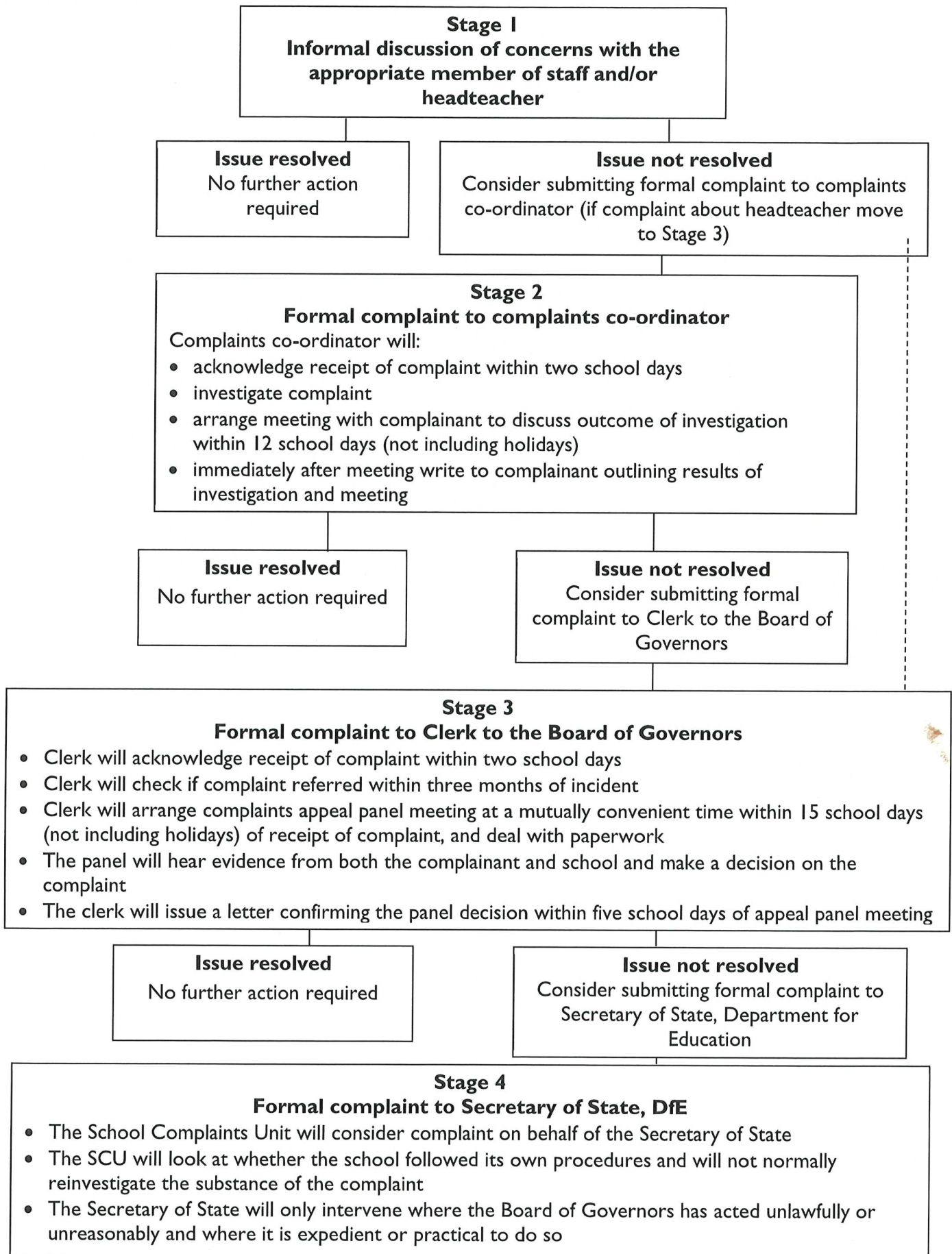
Complaints about academy problems are almost always settled within academies but, if you are dissatisfied with the academy's internal procedure you can refer your complaint to the Education Funding Agency. Complaints about academies can be sent by going online at [www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus](http://www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus) or by post to Ministerial and Public Communications Division, Department for Education, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD

## **Unacceptable behaviour**

As a school/academy, we are committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, providing a high quality service to those who make them. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with the school/academy. However, there are a small number of people who hinder our work with serial or persistent complaints, for example where the school/academy is contacted repeatedly by an individual making the same points, or who asks us to reconsider our position. We consider this unacceptable behaviour and will inform the individual and ask them to change it. If the unacceptable behaviour continues, we will take action to restrict their contact with our school/academy staff. In all cases where we decide someone's behaviour is unacceptable, we will write to tell them why, what action we are taking and how long it will last. We will also tell them how they can challenge the decision if they disagree with it. New complaints from people whose behaviour has been unacceptable in the past will be looked at without bias.

We also do not expect our staff to tolerate behaviour that is unacceptable, for example, abusive, offensive or threatening and we will take action to protect our staff from such behaviour, including reporting the matter to the police or taking legal action. In such cases, we may not give prior warning of that action. Alternatively we may temporarily bar such an individual from the school/academy premises. We will write to tell them why they are being barred from the school/academy site, how they can maintain contact with the school/academy, and how long it will last. Anyone wishing to complain about being barred can do so by letter or email to the headteacher or Chair of Governors. However, complaints about barring cannot be escalated to the Secretary of State or the Education Funding Agency.

## CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS FLOWCHART



## **School/Academy Name**

### **Complaint form**

This form is designed to help you ask the complaints co-ordinator to investigate your formal complaint, or where your complaint is against the headteacher to ask the Clerk to the Board of Governors to arrange a Complaints Appeal Panel meeting.

Please complete this form and return it to .....  
(complaints co-ordinator) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

If you need assistance with completing this form please contact the school/academy administrator or parent support adviser.

|                                         |  |
|-----------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Your name:</b>                       |  |
| <b>Pupil's name:</b>                    |  |
| <b>Your relationship to the pupil:</b>  |  |
| <b>Your address:</b>                    |  |
| <b>Your postcode:</b>                   |  |
| <b>Your telephone number (daytime):</b> |  |
| <b>Your telephone number (evening):</b> |  |
| <b>Your email</b>                       |  |

**Please give details of your complaint including dates, names of staff and what happened:**

**What have you already done to try and sort out your complaint, including who have you spoken to at school/academy and what did they say?**

**What do you feel would be a satisfactory and reasonable outcome to this complaint?**

**If you have attached any relevant documents to this form please list them below:**

**Your signature:**

**Date:**

**OFFICIAL USE**

**Date acknowledgement sent:**

**By who:**

**Complaint referred to:**

**Date:**

**Data Protection Act** – We will hold personal data about you in our files and on computer. We will hold this data securely and only use it to help us to deal with your comment or complaint. You have rights under the Data Protection Act 1998 to have a copy of your personal data. There are exceptions to this right, the main one being where we feel that releasing particular information to you would prevent us from properly investigating your complaint. A fee will normally be charged. Analysis will be restricted to types of complaints and individual complainants will not be identified. The analysis will be reported to the Board of Governors on an annual basis. The reporting will include identifying particular trends of complaints, which may require some change in the school's/academy's procedures.

26 April 2016