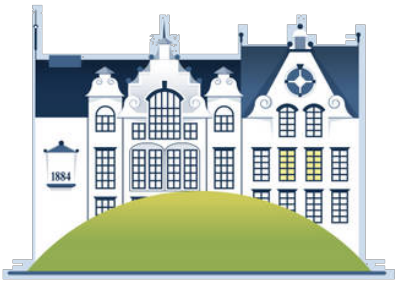
Primrose Hill Primary School



Complaints Procedure

Policy Owner	Pippa Higgins
Approved Body	Resources Committee
Effective date / Approved	October 2026
Review date	September 2027

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 Primrose Hill Primary 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. Individuals who are not parents or carers of children that are registered at the school should address their complaints directly to the Headteacher.

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. Primrose Hill Primary 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, the Headteacher will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, the Headteacher will refer you 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, Primrose Hill Primary 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 can be raised in person, in writing or by telephone. A formal complaint can be made in writing on the Complaint Form, with a summary of no more than 250 words, or in a meeting with the Headteacher. 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 the Headteacher. We will generally respond within 15 school days. Should the concern be of sufficient seriousness or be unlikely to be resolved informally, the Headteacher may respond under Stage 1 of this procedure. We resolve most concerns informally but if the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

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

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

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

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

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 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.

Keeping complaints clear and focused

Written complaints must be made on the complaint form at Appendix 1, and the summary of the complaint must be no more than 250 words. This limit applies to every written complaint, including those sent by email.

You may attach evidence that supports your complaint, such as emails, letters, photographs or reports. Attachments must not be used to add further explanation or argument, and any such material will not be considered.

If you cannot set out your complaint in 250 words, you must arrange a meeting with the Headteacher to explain it in person. The meeting can take place at school or online, and you may bring someone with you for support. A written complaint that is longer than 250 words or not on the form will be returned, and you will be asked either to resubmit it or to arrange a meeting. The timescales in this procedure will start from the date we receive a complaint that meets these requirements, or from the date of the meeting.

If a disability or other need makes it difficult for you to follow this process, please contact the school office and we will consider reasonable adjustments, as set out above.

You may use any tool to help you write your complaint, including artificial intelligence (AI). You are responsible for making sure it is accurate and reflects your own account of events. Where a complaint relies on references to law, guidance or policy that are inaccurate or do not apply to schools, we will say so briefly and respond to the substance of the complaint only.

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 Primrose Hill Primary other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

Exceptions	Who to contact
• Admissions to schools	Admissions to schools are covered by the Admissions Appeals Code.
• Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs	Concerns about statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs with the London Borough of Camden or your home borough as appropriate.
• School re-organisation proposals	Concerns about school re-organisation proposals should be raised with the London Borough of Camden.
• Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance. If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). Camden Duty LADO can be contacted by calling 020 7974 3317 or LBCMASHadmin@camden.gov.uk
• Exclusion of children from school*	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions. *complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.
• Whistleblowing	We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors. The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus. Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the LA or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.

• Staff grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.
• Staff conduct	Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate. Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.
• Complaints about services provided by other providers using school premises or facilities	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them directly. This does not apply to extra-curricular provision arranged and offered by the school, but delivered by an external provider.
• National Curriculum - content	Please contact the Department for Education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus

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

If a complainant commences legal action against Primrose Hill Primary 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, Primrose Hill Primary 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 wishes to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

Stage 1

Formal complaints must be made to the Headteacher (unless they are about the Headteacher), via the school office. This must be done in writing on the Complaint Form, with a summary of no

more than 250 words, or in a meeting with the Headteacher. Written complaints that do not meet this requirement will be returned.

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 three 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 as to the final response.

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 twenty 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 Primrose Hill Primary 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.

The aim of our complaints procedure is to reach a resolution for all parties. If, at the conclusion of Stage 1, the complainant remains unsatisfied and wishes to progress to Stage 2, the Chair will consider whether it would be appropriate for the actions in Stage 1 to be repeated by a suitably skilled governor prior to the commencement of Stage 2.

Where such a decision is taken, it will ensure either that the complaint can be resolved prior to a Stage 2 hearing or that the Stage 2 hearing has a wider evidence base, with any concerns regarding the school fully reviewed in advance.

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. If the complaint is about a governor or Headteacher, the investigator should consider their wellbeing when planning their investigation. This should include offering to have a friend attend the meeting with them and that they can discuss this with their union. You could also offer access to Employee Assistance or through Camden Learning or to a service such as Independent Governor Support to independent advice if needed.

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 ten school days of receipt of the Stage 1 response.

The request must be made in writing and must explain, in no more than 250 words, why you remain dissatisfied with the Stage 1 response and what outcome you are seeking. Requests longer than this will be returned. If you cannot set out your request in 250 words, you must contact the Clerk within the same ten school days to arrange a meeting with the Chair of the complaints committee.

The Clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within five 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 twenty 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 Committee 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 Primrose Hill Primary available, the Clerk will source any additional, independent governors through another local school or through the London Borough of Camden'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 eight 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 five school days before the meeting.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least five 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 Primrose Hill Primary with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within fifteen 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 Primrose Hill Primary.

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 Primrose Hill Primary 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 Primrose Hill Primary. They will consider whether Primrose Hill Primary has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint.

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

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

Policy for managing serial and unreasonable complaints

Primrose Hill Primary 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 take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

Primrose Hill Primary defines unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders our 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
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on
- raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales
- makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced
- changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation 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
- 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
- submits lengthy, repetitive or automatically generated correspondence at a volume, frequency or level of complexity that is disproportionate to the issues raised, including where it relies on inaccurate statements of law, fact or school policy after these have been explained
- repeatedly submits written complaints that exceed the word limit after being asked to resubmit or arrange a meeting
- uses threats to intimidate
- uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence
- knowingly provides falsified information
- publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

Complainants should try to limit their communication 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 headteacher or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an '*unreasonable'* marking.

If the behaviour continues, the headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact

Primrose Hill Primary causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will 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 barring an individual from Primrose Hill Primary.

Appendix 1 - Complaint Form

Please complete this form and email it to admin@primrosehill.camden.sch.uk or hand it in at the school office. We will acknowledge receipt within three school days. Your summary of the complaint must be no more than 250 words. If you cannot explain your complaint in 250 words, please contact the school office to arrange a meeting with the Headteacher instead.

Your name:
Pupil's name (if relevant):
Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):
Address: **Postcode:** **Day time telephone number:** **Evening telephone number:** **Email address:**
Is this a new complaint (Stage 1) or a request to escalate to the governing body (Stage 2)? ☐ Stage 1 ☐ Stage 2
Are you making this complaint on behalf of someone else? If so, please give their name and confirm that you have their consent.
Summary of your complaint. Please tell us what happened, what is still unresolved and whether you have already spoken to anyone at school about it. This must be no more than 250 words. Forms with a longer summary will be returned. If you cannot explain your complaint in 250 words, please contact the school office to arrange a meeting with the Headteacher.

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?
Are you attaching any evidence, such as emails, letters, photographs or reports? If so, please list them here. Attachments must not be used to add further explanation of your complaint, and any that do will not be considered.
Is there anything we can do to make this process easier for you, for example because of a disability or language needs?
I confirm that the information in this form is accurate and reflects my own account of events. **Signature:** **Date:**
We will use the information on this form to deal with your complaint, in line with the school's privacy notice.
Official use
Date acknowledgement sent:
Word limit met: Yes / No
If no, date returned and meeting offered:
Date of meeting with Headteacher:
By who:
Complaint referred to:
Date:

Appendix 2 - Roles and Responsibilities

Complainant

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

- explain the complaint in full as early as possible
- co-operate with the school in seeking a solution to the complaint
- respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint
- ask for assistance as needed
- 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

APPENDIX 3

MODEL PROCEDURE FOR A GOVERNORS' COMPLAINTS COMMITTEE (Stage 2)

When should a complaints panel be convened?

A committee will be convened if a complainant makes an appeal against a decision made at Stage 1 of the school's complaints procedure.

The complaint must be made in writing, outlining what action has been taken by the school so far and what desirable outcome the complainant would like. The complainant should state why the response made at Stage 1 was not satisfactory and what would satisfy their complaint.

The following sets out the procedure that will be followed when the Complaints Committee decide that a meeting will be held to resolve the complaint.

Who should attend?

The Chair will invite the Headteacher and/or Governor who carried out the Stage 1 investigation to attend the meeting and they will prepare a written report for the panel in response to the complaint.

Witnesses, including the Headteacher if they are the subject of the complaint, are not required to attend. Both parties have the right to call witnesses however and both parties have the right to question all the witnesses if called. However, witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing for which they give their evidence.

The meeting

The aim of the meeting will be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. However, it has to be recognised that sometimes it may only be possible to establish facts and make recommendations which will satisfy the complainant that their complaint has at least been taken seriously.

The panel will take into account that many parents are unused to dealing with groups of people in formal situations and may feel inhibited when speaking to the panel. The Chair will therefore ensure that the proceedings are as informal as possible.

If either party wishes to introduce previously undisclosed evidence or witnesses, it is in the interests of natural justice to adjourn the meeting so that the other side has time to consider and respond to the new evidence.

If the conduct of one of the parties is such that the hearing cannot proceed, the panel will adjourn. The panel may restart the hearing following the adjournment. However, if the conduct continues, it will decide to reach its decision based on written submissions, and will inform the parties of this in writing.

The process

Any party have the right to call witnesses if applicable (subject to the approval of the Chair) and all parties have the right to question all the witnesses. However, **witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing for which they give their evidence**. Whilst **the panel may ask clarifying questions of either party at any point**, the process of the complaint panel is as follows:-

a. Welcome and introductions from the Chair

b. The Chair explains the purpose of the meeting, the procedure and that all written evidence has been made available to all parties

c. Complainant is invited to explain their complaint, followed by any witnesses they wish to call. Witnesses should only attend that part of the meeting concerning themselves

d. The head teacher and/or the Governor (henceforth Investigator) who carried out the Stage 1 Investigation may then question both the complainant and the witnesses.

e. The panel may then question both the complainant and the witnesses

f. Investigator is invited to explain the school's actions, including those taken to address the complaint at Stage 1 of the procedure, followed by any witnesses for the school.

g. The complainant may question both the Investigator and any witnesses the school wishes to call. At the conclusion of their evidence, each

h. Any remaining witnesses to leave

i. The head teacher is invited to make a final statement, briefly summing up their position. New evidence should not be introduced at this point.

j. The complainant is invited to make a final statement, briefly summing up their position. New evidence should not be introduced at this point.

k. The Chair of the Panel explains to the complainant and head teacher that the panel will now consider its decision, and that a written decision will be sent to both parties within 15 school days

l. The complainant and the head teacher leave together

m. Panel deliberations and decisions

6.7 The decision

6.7.1 The panel will then consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. They will:

- Reach a unanimous, or at least a majority, decision on the complaint
- Decide upon the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- Where appropriate, suggest recommended changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not happen again.

6.7.2 A written statement outlining the decision of the panel will be sent to the complainant within 15 school days. The letter to the complainant will explain whether a further appeal can be made and, if so, to whom (ordinarily, the Department for Education). A copy will be provided to the head teacher.

6.7.3 Generally this would be the end of the governing body's involvement in the complaint process. However, the governing body might also consider an appeal if a complainant is able to demonstrate that new information or evidence has come to light which was not available at the time of the original complaint and which might significantly affect the findings of the complaints panel.

6.7.4 The school will ensure that a copy of all correspondence and notes are kept on file in the school's records. These records will be kept separately from the pupil's personal records.

6.8 Summary of complaint panel timescales

6.8.1 A summation of the timescales in a Governors' Complaints Panel is as follows:

i. Written acknowledgement of the Stage 2 request sent within 5 school days of the complaint receipt date

ii. The written acknowledgement should inform the complainant that the complaint is to be heard by / within 20 school days of the complaint receipt date

iii. Once known, the Chair will then write and inform relevant parties of the date, time and place of the meeting and this should be done at least 8 school days in advance of the panel date

iv. Any relevant and / or additional documents for consideration at the panel, including the head teacher's report, should be received by all concerned – including the complainant – 5 school days prior to the meeting

v. The panel Chair will send a written decision to both head teacher and complainant within 15 school days of the panel date