



AYLESBURY
GRAMMAR SCHOOL
Founded 1598

COMPLAINTS POLICY

CATEGORY A

This policy is updated and approved by the Full Governing Body every three years

This version was approved May 2025

The next update will be due by May 2028

SIGNED: _____

1 Aims

- 1.1 This is the Complaints Policy of Aylesbury Grammar School.
- 1.2 The aims of this policy and related procedures are to provide a framework for the resolution of complaints which:
 - 1.2.1 allows for their resolution informally and sets out the School's formal procedures where this is not achievable
 - 1.2.2 is easily accessible and publicised, simple to understand and use, and impartial and non-adversarial
 - 1.2.3 enables a full, fair and transparent investigation where appropriate
 - 1.2.4 respects people's desire for confidentiality
 - 1.2.5 addresses all the points at issue and provides an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary
 - 1.2.6 provides information to the School's senior leadership / management team so that services can be improved and any systemic issues can be identified and addressed
 - 1.2.7 helps promote a whole school culture of safety, equality and protection.

2 Definitions and interpretation

- 2.1 Where the following words or phrases are used in this policy:
 - 2.1.1 references to **school days** mean Monday to Friday, when the School is open to students during term time. The dates of terms are published on the School's website
 - 2.1.2 references to **Parent** or **Parents** means the natural or adoptive parents of the student (irrespective of whether they are or have ever been married, with whom the student lives, or whether they have contact with the student) as well as any person who is not the natural or adoptive parent of the student, but who has care of, or parental responsibility for, the student (e.g. foster carer / legal guardian);
 - 2.1.3 references to **Other Complainants** means any third party other than Parents. The complaints procedures for Complainants is dealt with under this policy at Appendix 4;
 - 2.1.4 references to **complainants** refers to both Parent or Parents (as defined at paragraph 2.1.3) and Other Complainants (as defined at paragraph 2.1.4).
- 2.2 All parental complaints should be identified at the outset by the School and dealt with in accordance with the School's Complaints Policy.
- 2.3 Timescales for each stage of the complaints procedure are set out below in the relevant paragraphs. It is expected that the management of every complaint will progress in a timely manner.
- 2.4 The School aims to resolve all complaints efficiently and promptly and Parents are encouraged to bring any matter causing concern to the School's attention as soon as possible.

- 2.5 Where there are exceptional circumstances resulting in a delay to the timescales for a stage of the complaints procedure, the School will notify the Parent and inform them of the new timescales and explain the delay as soon as possible.
- 2.6 Complaints raised should be in writing unless a reasonable adjustment is requested by the complainant to amend this.

3 Scope and application for Parents

- 3.1 This policy applies to the whole School.
- 3.2 This policy applies to complaints by Parents (as defined at paragraph 2.1.3). The scope and application of this policy for persons other than Parents is outlined at Appendix 4. The School has separate grievance and whistleblowing policies to cover concerns that a member of staff may have.
- 3.3 This policy applies to any expression of dissatisfaction however made about actions taken, or a lack of action, by the School where the Parent may seek an apology, explanation and / or action by the School.
- 3.4 This policy does not apply to matters for which there are separate statutory procedures:
 - 3.4.1 Admission appeals (see Admissions Appeals policy);
 - 3.4.2 Representations about exclusion (see Behaviour Policy);
 - 3.4.3 Appeals in relation to Education Health Care Plans which are dealt with by Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal;
 - 3.4.4 Subject access requests (see data protection policy and privacy notices); Freedom of Information requests which will be dealt with in line with guidance from the Information Commissioner's Office;
 - 3.4.5 Safeguarding and welfare issues (see School's safeguarding and child protection policy).
- 3.5 This policy applies to complaints from each of the following:
 - 3.5.1 Parents of current students;
 - 3.5.2 Parents of former students, if the complaint was initially raised when the student was registered as a student at the School, or within three months of the student being removed from the register provided that the fact of the complaint relates to the time the student was registered at the School
- 3.6 The School will not normally investigate anonymous complaints, unless it decides it would be appropriate to do so.
- 3.7 Requests for financial awards, such as claims for compensation or damages are beyond the scope of the School's Complaints Policy.
- 3.8 All Parents should be aware that, regardless of the nature of a complaint and whether or not it is upheld, Parents are not entitled to details of any related sanctions imposed on staff or students other than their child, or measures in respect of other Parents, for data protection and confidentiality reasons.
- 3.9 There may be occasions when it is necessary to deviate from this complaints procedure if this is reasonable and justified, subject to the School continuing to meet the statutory requirements under Part 7 of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Parents will be notified of any changes.

4 Timescales

- 4.1 The School aims to resolve all complaints efficiently and promptly and Parents are encouraged to bring any matter causing concern to the School's attention as soon as possible.
- 4.2 Whenever possible, in the interests of a prompt resolution of issues, a complaint should be raised 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, however, consider complaints made outside of this time frame where exceptional circumstances apply. A complaint raised outside this time frame should therefore confirm the reasons for the delay in raising it.
- 4.3 Timescales for each stage of the School's complaints procedure are set out below. It is expected that the management of every complaint will progress in a timely manner. Where there are exceptional circumstances resulting in a delay to the timescales for a stage of the complaints procedure (such as other bodies investigating aspects of the complaint), the School will notify the Parent and inform them of the new timescales as soon as possible.
- 4.4 Complaints which are raised in the school holidays will usually be deemed to have been received on the first school day after receipt.
- 4.5 If a Parent commences legal action against the School in relation to their complaint, the Headmaster or Chair of Governors will consider whether or not to suspend the complaints procedure until those proceedings have been concluded.

5 Regulatory framework

- 5.1 This policy has been prepared to meet the School's responsibilities under:
 - 5.1.1 Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (**ISSRs**);
 - 5.1.2 Education and Skills Act 2008;
 - 5.1.3 Children Act 1989;
 - 5.1.4 Childcare Act 2006;
 - 5.1.5 Data Protection Act 2018 and UK General Data Protection Regulation (**UK GDPR**); and
 - 5.1.6 Equality Act 2010.

6 Responsibility statement

- 6.1 The School has overall responsibility for all matters which are the subject of this policy.
- 6.2 The School is aware of its duties under the Equality Act 2010 and the requirement under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty. This means in carrying out its functions, the School is required to have due regard to the need to:
 - 6.2.1 eliminate discrimination and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act;
 - 6.2.2 advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and
 - 6.2.3 foster good relations across all characteristics - between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

7 Publication and availability

- 7.1 This policy is published on the School's website.
- 7.2 This policy is available in hard copy on request.
- 7.3 A copy of this policy is available for inspection from the School's office during the school day.
- 7.4 This policy can be made available in large print or other accessible format if required and the School will make other reasonable adjustments required to enable Parents to access and complete this procedure, such as holding meetings in accessible locations.
- 7.5 Information regarding the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure of this policy during the preceding school year is available to Parents of students and Parents of prospective students and, on request, to the Chief Inspector of Ofsted, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate. The School makes this available by contacting the School office.

8 Management of complaints

- 8.1 The School's policy allows for complaints from Parents to be considered at three stages (Appendix 4 of this policy outlines the complaints procedure for persons other than Parents):
 - Stage 1: Informal raising of a complaint. Further details of this procedure are set out in Appendix 1.
 - Stage 2: A formal complaint in writing. Further details of this procedure are set out in Appendix 2.
 - Stage 3: Complaint Panel Hearing. Further details of this procedure are set out in Appendix 3.
- 8.2 The roles and responsibilities of those involved in the School's complaints procedures are outlined at Appendix 8.

9 Expected standards of behaviour by those making complaints

- 9.1 It is the intention of the School to deal with concerns and complaints fairly and work constructively with parents towards resolving them.
- 9.2 As concerns and complaints will be dealt with confidentially and the School will not discuss these publicly either at the time of the complaint or thereafter. The School has a firm expectation that Parents will not publicise the fact or content of their complaint in social media or any other public forum whilst the complaint is being considered under this Policy, as doing so is likely to hamper the complaints process.
- 9.3 While the School will not normally limit the contact complainants have with the School attention is drawn to the information included in Appendix 5, which has been developed having regard to:
 - 9.3.1 Best practice guidance for academies complaints procedures;
 - 9.3.2 Controlling access to school premises (DfE, November 2018).

10 Complaint meetings

- 10.1 The School may use recording devices to record complaints meetings at any stage in the School's complaints procedure where there are communication difficulties with the Parents. The recording will only take place if all parties confirm they do not have any objections

- 10.2 The School may, at its discretion and having taken into account all the circumstances, permit the Parents to record meetings for the purposes of a reasonable adjustment or where it deems that there is a fair and reasonable purpose for allowing the Parents to record meetings. The recording will only take place if all parties confirm they do not have any objections and only where the School has agreed.
- 10.3 Unless exceptional circumstances apply, the DfE will support the School if it refuses to accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without informed consent of all parties being recorded. Covert recordings are not permitted under any circumstances.
- 10.4 If the School has made reasonable attempts to accommodate the Parents with dates for complaints meetings at any stage of the School's complaints procedure and they refuse or are unable to attend, the School can:
 - 10.4.1 convene meetings in the Parents' absence;
 - 10.4.2 reach a conclusion in the interests of drawing the complaint to a close.

11 Record keeping and confidentiality

- 11.1 All records created in accordance with this policy are managed in accordance with the School's policies that apply to the retention and destruction of records.
- 11.2 The School keeps a written record of all formal complaints, including the following:
 - 11.2.1 whether they were resolved at Stage 2 or Stage 3;
 - 11.2.2 the action taken by the School as a result of the complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).
- 11.3 The records created in accordance with this policy may contain personal data. The School has a number of privacy notices which explain how the School will use personal data about students and parents. The privacy notices are published on the School's website.
- 11.4 School staff will ensure that they follow the School's data protection policies and procedures when handling personal data created in connection with this policy.
- 11.5 In accordance with data protection principles, details of individual complaints will be kept only for as long as is considered to be reasonably necessary in the circumstances.
- 11.6 Complaints which do not have safeguarding implications will be retained for a minimum of seven years (a period determined by the six-year inspection cycle with allowance for unforeseen circumstances).¹
- 11.7 Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential, except where access is requested by the Secretary of State or where disclosure is required in the course of an inspection or under other legal authority or court order.

12 Complaints to the Department for Education (DfE)

- 12.1 Parents who are dissatisfied with the way the School has handled their complaint may contact the DfE, which will consider the complaint on behalf of the Secretary of State.
- 12.2 The DfE cannot overturn the decision about a complaint. The DfE's role is to make sure the complaint is handled properly in line with the regulatory framework.

¹ In accordance with the terms of reference of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse all schools are required to retain information which relates to allegations (substantiated or not) of organisations and individuals who may have been involved in, or have knowledge of child sexual abuse or child sexual exploitation; allegations (substantiated or not) of individuals having engaged in sexual activity with, or having a sexual interest in, children; institutional failures to protect children from sexual abuse or other exploitation. Details of any complaints made about such matters will be retained.

- 12.3 Further information about making a complaint to the DfE, including an online enquiry form, can be accessed on the DfE's website here - [How DfE handles complaints about academies](#).

13 Training

- 13.1 The School ensures that regular guidance and training is arranged on induction and at regular intervals thereafter so that staff and volunteers understand what is expected of them by this policy and have the necessary knowledge and skills to carry out their roles.
- 13.2 The level and frequency of training depends on the role of the individual member of staff.
- 13.3 The School maintains written records of all staff training.

Appendix 1 Stage 1 - Informal complaint

1 Informal resolution of a complaint

- 1.1 We hope and expect that most complaints can be resolved informally without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. For example, dissatisfaction about some aspect of teaching or pastoral care should be able to be resolved by the relevant member of staff.
- 1.2 An informal complaint will be acknowledged by telephone, email, or letter within three school days of receipt, indicating the action that is being taken and the likely timescales. Such action may include an investigation and / or a meeting with the Parent.
- 1.3 Wherever appropriate, the School will ask the Parent at the earliest stage what they think might resolve the issue.
- 1.4 The Parent will receive a response to the complaint within **15 school days** unless further time is necessary.
- 1.5 If the Parent is dissatisfied with the response to the informal complaint or in the event that the complaint cannot be resolved by informal means, the Parent may make a formal complaint under Stage 2 of this procedure as set out in Appendix 2.

2 Who to contact

- 2.1 Where appropriate, complaints should initially be raised with the most appropriate person at the School, who will work constructively with parents to resolve them, in person, in writing, or via a phone call as follows:
 - 2.1.1 **Educational issues:** if the matter relates to the classroom, the curriculum or special educational needs, please speak or write initially to the Head of Department. Your complaint may be passed to a more senior member of staff if appropriate;
 - 2.1.2 **Pastoral care:** for complaints relating to matters outside the classroom, please speak or write to the Head of Year;
 - 2.1.3 **Disciplinary matters:** a problem over any disciplinary action taken or a sanction imposed should be raised first of all with the member of staff who imposed it / the Head of Year;
 - 2.1.4 **Financial matters:** a query relating to financial matters should be addressed in writing to the Resources Director;
 - 2.1.5 **Staff:** if the matter relates to the conduct of staff, please write or speak to the Headmaster or someone they designate, such as an Assistant Headteacher.

3 Complaints about the Headmaster

- 3.1 The procedure for dealing with an informal complaint about the Headmaster is set out below:
 - 3.1.1 Parents may choose to raise complaints directly with the Headmaster if they feel that the matter is capable of resolution informally. The complaint may be raised orally or in writing. If in writing, the School will not automatically treat the complaint as a formal (Stage 2) complaint and the Headmaster will endeavour to resolve the complaint informally under Stage 1;
 - 3.1.2 the Headmaster will acknowledge informal complaints within three school days and will seek to resolve the matter under this Stage 1 by means of direct conversation or a meeting with the Parents, to be held within **15 school days** of the initial complaint unless further time is deemed necessary;

- 3.1.3 If the Parent is dissatisfied with the Headmaster's response to the informal complaint or in the event that the complaint cannot be resolved by informal means, the Parent may make a formal complaint under Stage 2 of this procedure as set out in Appendix 2.
- 3.2 Alternatively, Parents may choose to make their complaint about the Headmaster in writing to the Chair of Governors via the Clerk to the Governors. In this case, the complaint will be treated as a formal complaint under Stage 2 of this procedure as set out in Appendix 2.

4 Complaints about the Governors

- 4.1 Complaints about individual Governors should be made in writing and addressed to the Clerk to the Governors. Please mark them as Private and Confidential;
- 4.2 The Clerk to the Governors will then arrange for the complaint to be considered by the Chair of Governors who will confirm their decision in writing. A panel hearing in accordance with Appendix 3 will be requested if applicable;
- 4.3 Complaints against the Chair of Governors, the entire Governing Body or complaints involving both the Chair and Vice Chair should also be sent to the Clerk to the Governors, who should then determine the most appropriate course of action which will be explained in writing

Appendix 2 Stage 2 - Formal complaint

1 How to make a formal complaint

- 1.1 Complaints will usually only progress to Stage 2 after first being considered at the informal stage, and where the Parent indicates that they intend to escalate a matter to the formal stage. Stage 2 complaints will be decided by the Headmaster unless the complaint relates to them or they have delegated the role of decision maker to a senior member of staff or third party.
- 1.2 The formal complaint must be in writing addressed to the Headmaster and should include:
 - 1.2.1 the Parent's name and full contact details;
 - 1.2.2 details of all the grounds of the complaint and who it has previously been raised with;
 - 1.2.3 a copy of any relevant documents; and
 - 1.2.4 the outcome desired.
- 1.3 The complaint will be acknowledged by telephone, email, or letter within **three school days**, indicating the action that is being taken and the likely timescales. However the timescales provided can be subject to change depending on the circumstances of the complaint, and Parents will be notified of any changes to these.
- 1.4 The complaint form in Appendix 7 can be used to submit a formal complaint to the Headmaster who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

2 Investigation

- 2.1 The decision maker will ensure the complaint is investigated in the most appropriate manner, which may include some or all of the following steps:
 - 2.1.1 delegation of the investigation to a senior member of staff or third party;
 - 2.1.2 involvement of one or more Governor;
 - 2.1.3 request for additional information from the Parent, including what they think might resolve the issue (if not already requested at Stage 1); and
 - 2.1.4 request for a conversation and / or a meeting with the Parent personally and / or others with relevant knowledge of the circumstances to define the scope of the complaint and / or assist in the investigation.
- 2.2 The investigation may be conducted by the decision maker themselves or alternatively, by a person appointed by them.
- 2.3 Written records will be kept of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint. Where the investigation has been delegated to a senior member of staff, they will prepare a report on the investigation which will be considered by the Headmaster. Personal data may be redacted and names anonymised or cyphered in line with data protection principles.

3 Decision

- 3.1 The decision maker will notify the Parent by email or letter of his / her Stage 2 decision and the reasons for it within **15 school days** from receipt of the formal complaint, unless further time is deemed necessary.

- 3.2 If the Parent is dissatisfied with the Stage 2 response to the complaint, the Parent can request that the complaint be referred to a Complaint Panel under Stage 3 using the procedure set out in Appendix 3.

4 **Complaints about the Headmaster**

- 4.1 The procedure for dealing with a formal complaint about the Headmaster is set out below:
- 4.1.1 The complaint should be put in writing to the Chair of Governors via the Clerk to the Governors. The Chair of Governors will be the decision maker unless they have previously been involved in the complaint or decide to delegate their decision making role to a suitable person. The written complaint should include a copy of all relevant documents and full contact details and details of all the grounds of the complaint and the outcome desired;
 - 4.1.2 The Chair of Governors via the Clerk to the Governors will acknowledge the complaint by telephone, email or letter within three school days of receipt and indicate the action that is being taken and the likely timescale. Such action may include an investigation and / or a meeting with the Parent. The Parent will receive a response to the complaint within **15 school days** unless further time is deemed necessary;
 - 4.1.3 The decision maker will follow the Stage 2 procedure set out above in relation to the complaint; and
 - 4.1.4 If the Parent is dissatisfied with the response to the complaint, the Parent can request that the complaint be referred to a Complaint Panel under Stage 3 using the procedure set out in Appendix 3.

Appendix 3 Stage 3 - Complaint Panel Hearing

1 Complaint Panel Hearing

- 1.1 If a Parent is dissatisfied with the Stage 2 response to the complaint, the Parent can request a Complaint Panel Hearing (**Panel Hearing**).
- 1.2 A Panel Hearing is a hearing to consider those elements of the Stage 2 response to the Parent's complaint with which the Parent remains dissatisfied. The Complaint Panel is not obliged to consider any new complaints which have not been previously raised.

2 How to request a Panel Hearing

- 2.1 A request for a Panel Hearing must be put in writing to the Clerk to the Governors and will usually only be considered if the procedure at Stage 2 has been completed.
- 2.2 The written request must be made within **5 school days** from receipt of the Stage 2 decision and include:
 - 2.2.1 the Parent's name and full contact details;
 - 2.2.2 a copy of any relevant documents;
 - 2.2.3 details of all the grounds of the complaint about which the Parent remains dissatisfied and the outcome desired;
 - 2.2.4 a list of the documents which the Parents believe to be in the School's possession and wish the Complaint Panel to consider; and
 - 2.2.5 whether the Parent proposes to be accompanied to the Panel Hearing (see paragraph 3.5 below).
- 2.3 In the event that the request is received late, it will be at the discretion of the School whether to consider the complaint taking into account the reasons for the delay and the extent of the delay.
- 2.4 If assistance with the request is required, for example because of a disability, please inform the Clerk to the Governors who will be happy to make appropriate arrangements.
- 2.5 The Clerk to the Governors will acknowledge the request for a Panel Hearing in writing within **three school days** of receipt unless further time is deemed necessary.
- 2.6 Every effort will be made to enable the Panel Hearing to take place within **15 school days** of receipt of the request unless further time is deemed necessary.
- 2.7 Parents may withdraw their request for a Panel Hearing at any point up to and including the intended date of the Panel Hearing.

3 Planning the Panel Hearing

- 3.1 The Clerk to the Governors will endeavour to send written notification to each party of the date, time and place of the Panel Hearing at least **ten school days** before the date of the Panel Hearing.
- 3.2 Copies of any additional documents that the Parent wishes the Complaint Panel to consider must be sent to the Clerk to the Governors to be received at least **seven school days** prior to the Panel Hearing.
- 3.3 The Clerk to the Governors will endeavour to circulate a copy of the bundle of documents to be considered by the Complaint Panel to all parties at least **three**

school days prior to the Panel Hearing where possible. The bundle of documents will include all records held in the complaint file following Stage 1 and / or 2, together with all correspondence and documents received from the Parent following notification of the formal response at Stage 2.

- 3.4 The Parent may be accompanied at the Panel Hearing, for example by a relative or friend. The Panel Hearing is an internal process, not legal proceedings, and legal representation is unnecessary.
- 3.5 If the Parent wishes to be accompanied by a relative or friend who is legally qualified, the Parent is required to notify the Clerk to the Governors in the initial request for a Panel Hearing. The Parent should note that the Complaint Panel will wish to speak to that person directly prior to the Panel Hearing, and they will not be permitted to act as an advocate or address the Complaint Panel at the Panel Hearing unless invited to do so by the Chair of the Complaint Panel.
- 3.6 A person will be appointed to take minutes of the Panel Hearing.

4 Composition of the Complaint Panel

- 4.1 The Complaint Panel will comprise at least three individuals who have no detailed prior knowledge of the circumstances of the complaint, including at least one person who is independent of the management and running of the School (i.e. they will not be a Governor or employee of the School).
- 4.2 The Parent may ask the Clerk to the Governors to inform them who has been appointed to sit on the Complaint Panel ahead of the Panel Hearing. Fair consideration will be given to any reasonable objection to a particular member of the panel.
- 4.3 The Complaint Panel members will appoint one of their number to be the Chair of the Complaint Panel throughout the proceedings.

5 Role of the Complaint Panel

- 5.1 The role of the Complaint Panel is to establish the facts surrounding the complaints that remain in issue by considering:
 - 5.1.1 the documents provided by both parties; and
 - 5.1.2 any representations made by the parties;
 - 5.1.3 and to review the decision reached at Stage 2 and to consider, on a balance of probabilities, as to whether or not to uphold each complaint.

6 The Panel Hearing

- 6.1 Unless prior to the commencement of the Panel Hearing, a Parent confirms they are satisfied with the outcome of their complaint, the Panel Hearing will proceed notwithstanding that the Parent may decide not to attend. In these circumstances, the Complaint Panel will consider the Parent's complaint in their absence and issue findings on the substance of the complaint.
- 6.2 The panel will usually hear representations from the Stage 2 decision-maker and the Parent(s).
- 6.3 During the Panel Hearing, the parties will be given the opportunity to ask questions and make comments in an appropriate manner. The Panel Hearing is not a legal process.
- 6.4 The parties will be entitled to write their own notes for reference purposes.

- 6.5 All those present during the Panel Hearing are expected to show courtesy, restraint and good manners or, after due warning, the Panel Hearing may be adjourned or terminated at the discretion of the Chair. Any person who is dissatisfied with any aspect of the way the Panel Hearing is conducted must say so at the earliest opportunity during the Panel Hearing and his / her comment will be minuted.
- 6.6 The Chair may, at their discretion, adjourn the Panel Hearing if they consider it appropriate to do so, for instance for welfare reasons or to allow additional information to be provided to the Panel.
- 6.7 The discussions during a Panel Hearing are private. This means that no notes or other records or oral statements about any matter discussed can be published or otherwise made available directly or indirectly to the press or other media (including social media).
- 6.8 When the Chair of the Complaint Panel is satisfied that sufficient consideration has been given to the documentation provided and any representations made by the parties, they will conclude the Panel Hearing.

7 Decision

- 7.1 The Complaint Panel will make findings about each complaint on the balance of probabilities, and may make recommendations.
- 7.2 It is not within the powers of the Complaint Panel to make any financial award, nor to impose sanctions on the School's staff, students or other Parents, although the Complaint Panel may make recommendations.
- 7.3 The minutes of the Panel Hearing, together with the Complaint Panel's findings and any recommendations will be provided in writing to the Parent and, where relevant, the person complained about, within **five school days** of the Panel Hearing unless further time is deemed necessary.
- 7.4 The School will ensure that the panel decision is recorded appropriately and that any recommendations made in the course of a complaint are properly considered and actioned as appropriate.
- 7.5 The Complaint Panel's findings and any recommendations will also be made available for inspection on the School's premises by the Governing Body and the Headmaster.
- 7.6 The decision of the Panel is final. There will be no further opportunity within the School for consideration of the complaint. The completion of Stage 3 represents the conclusion of the School's complaints procedure.
- 7.7 If a duplicate complaint is received by a new complainant following completion of the Stage 3 procedure, the School will inform the new complainant that the matter is closed.

Appendix 4 Complaints procedure for persons other than Parents

- 1 The School encourages persons other than Parents (**Other Complainants**) (see paragraph 2.1.4 of the School's Complaints Policy) who have concerns about the School's operation or site to raise them with the School.
- 2 They should do so by writing to the Headmaster / Chair of Governors setting out their concerns and the action sought.
- 3 On receipt of a complaint under this Appendix the School may attempt an exploration of an informal resolution if appropriate. If this is not possible, there may be an investigation and determination of the complaint with the right to request a review of the decision made at the informal stage, as set out below.
- 4 If these cannot be informally resolved, any concerns raised will be investigated and responded to under Stage 2 of this procedure as set out in Appendix 2.
- 5 If the Complainant is dissatisfied with the Stage 2 response to the complaint, the Complainant can request a review of the decision by writing to the Clerk to the Governors. The review will be carried out by a Governor who will confirm their decision in writing.
- 6 A request for a review must be put in writing and will only be considered if the complaints procedure at Stage 2 has been completed.
- 7 The written request for a review must be made within **5 school days** from receipt of the Stage 2 decision and include:
 - 7.1 a copy of any relevant documents and full contact details;
 - 7.2 details of all the grounds of the complaint about which the Other Complainant remains dissatisfied and the outcome desired; and
 - 7.3 a list of the documents which the Other Complainant believe to be in the School's possession and wish the Governor to consider.
- 8 In the event that the request for a review is received late, it will be at the discretion of the School whether to consider it taking into account the reasons for the delay and the extent of the delay.
- 9 The role of the Governor is to:
 - 9.1 establish the facts surrounding the complaints that have been made by considering the documents provided by the Complainant;
 - 9.2 review the decision reached at Stage 2; and
 - 9.3 consider, on a balance of probabilities, as to whether or not to uphold each complaint.
- 10 The Governor will make findings about each complaint, on the balance of probabilities, and may make recommendations as appropriate. The review will be conducted on the basis of the documents available and there will not be a meeting to discuss the complaint.
- 11 Any recommendations will be provided in writing to the Other Complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about, within **15 school days** from receipt of the written request for the review unless further time is deemed necessary.
- 12 The Governor's findings and any recommendations will also be made available for inspection on the School's premises by the Trust and the Headmaster

- 13 The decision of the Governor is final. The completion of the review represents the conclusion of the School's complaints procedure for Other Complainants. There will be no further opportunity within the School for consideration of the complaint.
- 14 If, at the conclusion of the review, a duplicate complaint is made the School will inform the Other Complainant that the matter is closed.
- 15 Other Complainants who are dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint may contact the Department for Education (**DfE**), which considers complaints about academies on behalf of the Secretary of State. Further information about making a complaint to the DfE, including an online enquiry form, can be accessed on the DfE's website here - [How DfE handles complaints about academies](#).

Appendix 5 Serial and persistent complaints

- 1 Serial and persistent complaints are taken seriously by the School as they put a strain on valuable resources and hinder the progress of proper investigations.
- 2 If a complainant tries to re-open the same issue, the School will inform them that the procedure has been completed and that the matter is now closed.
- 3 If the complainant contacts the School again on the same issue, the correspondence may be determined as "serial" or "persistent" and the School may choose not to respond.
- 4 The School will not mark a complaint as "serial" before the complainant has completed all stages of the complaints procedure.
- 5 Under no circumstances will a complainant be marked as "serial" for exercising their right to refer their complaint to their MP, regardless of which stage the complaint has reached.
- 6 The School may consider a complaint to be "frivolous" or "vexatious" if:
 - 6.1 complaints are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious;
 - 6.2 there is insistence upon pursuing unmeritorious complaints and / or unrealistic outcomes beyond all reason;
 - 6.3 there is insistence upon pursuing meritorious complaints in an unreasonable manner;
 - 6.4 complaints are designed to cause disruption or annoyance; or
 - 6.5 demands for redress lack any serious purpose or value.
- 7 Complainants should try to limit their communication with the School about the complaint while it is being progressed, as it is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text) which is likely to delay an outcome being reached.
- 8 For complainants who excessively contact the School causing a significant level of disruption, the School may specify particular methods of communication, provide a single point of contact and / or limit the number of communications which may be made with the School in a communication plan. Any communication plan will usually be reviewed after three months.
- 9 The School will stop responding to a complainant where:
 - 9.1 the School has taken every reasonable step to address the complainant's concerns;
 - 9.2 the complainant has been given a clear statement of the School's position and their options; and
 - 9.3 the complainant contacts the School repeatedly, making substantially the same points each time.
 - 9.4 The School is likely to stop responding if it agrees with any of the following statements:
 - 9.5 the complainant's letters, emails, or telephone calls are often or always abusive or aggressive;
 - 9.6 the complainant makes insulting personal comments about or threats towards staff; and / or
 - 9.7 the School has reason to believe the individual is contacting the School with the intention of causing disruption or inconvenience.

- 10 In response to any serious incident or threat of aggression or violence, the School will immediately report this to the police for criminal investigation. The School may also withdraw the complainant's implied permission to enter or be on the School site(s).
- 11 If the complainant's behaviour is a cause for concern, the Headmaster can ask them to leave the school premises and bar individuals from entering. If the School makes the decision to bar a complainant from the school premises, it will provide the complainant the opportunity to express formally their views on a decision to withdraw permission to access or remain on school premises.
- 12 The Headmaster's decision to bar will be reviewed by the Chair of Governors or a Governor appointed by the Chair for this purpose. If the decision is confirmed, the complainant will be notified in writing, explaining how long the bar will be in place and when the decision will be reviewed.

Appendix 6 Complaint campaigns

- 1 Where the School becomes the focus of a campaign and receives a large volume of complaints all based on the same subject, particularly if these complaints come from complainants unconnected with the School, the School may respond by:
 - 1.1 sending a consistent response to all complainants;
 - 1.2 publishing a single response on the School website.

The normal procedures will apply if the complainant is not satisfied with the School's response.

Appendix 7 Complaint form (please continue on additional pages if necessary)

Complaint Form	
Name of complainant(s)	
Address:	
Telephone:	
Mobile:	
Email:	
Name and role of who the complaint has been raised with (Please include any relevant dates)	
Reason for complaint (Please include as much information as possible about what specifically you are unhappy about and why)	
Desired outcome	
List of relevant documents enclosed with the complaint form	

Declaration

The information included in this complaint form is accurate to the best of my knowledge. I agree to cooperate fully with the complaints procedures and acknowledge my ongoing obligation to treat the School and its staff in a reasonable manner at all times.

Signed:

Dated:

Appendix 8 Roles and responsibilities

1 Parent / Complainant

- 1.1 The Parent or Complainant will receive a more effective response to the complaint if they:
- (a) explain the complaint in full as early as possible. This will include giving sufficient detail of the complaint, including relevant names and dates;
 - (b) cooperate with the School in seeking a solution to the complaint;
 - (c) respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint;
 - (d) ask for assistance as needed;
 - (e) treat all those involved in the complaint with respect;
 - (f) refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality.

2 Investigator

- 2.1 The investigator will not determine whether to uphold or reject the complaint unless the decision maker is also the investigator.
- 2.2 The role of the investigator of the complaint at Stage 2 of the Complaints Procedure is to establish the facts relevant to the complaint by:
- (a) providing a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint through:
 - (i) sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved;
 - (ii) interviewing staff and young people, and other people, relevant to the complaint;
 - (iii) consideration of records and other relevant information;
 - (iv) analysing information;
 - (b) liaising with the complainant and the Complaints Co-ordinator as appropriate to clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.
- 2.3 The investigator will:
- (a) ensure each and every ground of complaint is identified;
 - (b) review all relevant documentation;
 - (c) conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning;
 - (d) keep notes of all interviews or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of the meeting;
 - (e) ensure that any papers produced during the investigation are kept securely pending any appeal;
 - (f) be mindful of the timescales to respond;

- (g) prepare a comprehensive report for the Headmaster / Governor or Complaints Panel that sets out all the grounds of complaints, the facts and where requested identifies appropriate solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems and lists all documents considered and interviews held as an Appendix to their report.

3 **Complaints Co-ordinator (if required)**

3.1 The Complaints Co-ordinator should:

- (a) ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure;
- (b) liaise with staff members, the Headmaster, Chair of Governors, or the Clerk and to ensure the smooth running of the complaints procedure;
- (c) be aware of issues regarding:
 - (i) sharing third party information and / or required redaction;
 - (ii) additional support (e.g. interpretation support);
- (d) keep records.

4 **Clerk to the Governors**

4.1 The Clerk is the contact point for the complainant and the Complaints Panel and should:

- (a) 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 UK General Data Protection Regulations (**UK GDPR**);
- (b) 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;
- (c) 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;
- (d) record the proceedings;
- (e) circulate the minutes of the meeting;
- (f) notify all parties of the Complaints Panel's decision.

5 **Complaint Panel Chair**

5.1 The Complaint Panel Chair, who is nominated in advance of the Panel Hearing, should ensure that:

- (a) 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;
- (b) 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;
- (c) Parents who may not be used to speaking at such a meeting are put at ease;
- (d) the remit of the Complaints Panel is explained to the Parent;

- (e) 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 UK GDPR;
- (f) both the Parent 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;
- (g) the issues are addressed;
- (h) key findings of fact are made;
- (i) the Complaints Panel is open-minded and acts independently;
- (j) no member of the Complaints Panel has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure;
- (k) the meeting is minuted;
- (l) they liaise with the Clerk.

6 **Complaint Panel Member**

6.1 Complaint Panel members should be aware that:

- (a) the meeting must be independent and impartial, and should be seen to be so no Governor or Trustee may sit on the Complaint Panel if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it;
- (b) the aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the School and the Parent. It is recognised that the Parent 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;
- (c) many Parents will feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting. Parents often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child;
- (d) extra care needs to be taken when a child / young person is present during all or part of the meeting:
 - (i) careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings should ensure that the child / young person does not feel intimidated;
 - (ii) the Complaints Panel should respect the views of the child / young person and give them equal consideration to those of adults;
 - (iii) the Complaints Panel should give the Parent the opportunity to say which parts of the meeting, if any, the child / young person needs to attend;
 - (iv) 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 Complaints Panel considers is not in the child / young person's best interests;
 - (v) the welfare of the child / young person is paramount.