




## PLUMPTON SCHOOL

# COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

### Roles within these Procedures

Complaints Coordinator:	
Head teacher:	Sarah Penny
Chair of Governors:	Mark Halliburton
Clerk to the Governors:	Fiona Gill

### Approved by<sup>1</sup>

Name:	MARK HALLIBURTON
Position:	CHAIR OF GOVERNORS
Signed:	
Date:	12-02-2025
Proposed Review Date <sup>2</sup>	JANUARY 2026

1. Approval – GB free to delegate to others e.g., to the Complaints Coordinator
2. Review frequency – Governing body free to determine. DfE strongly advise annually

## REVIEW SHEET

Each entry in the table below summarises the changes to this Policy and procedures made since the last review (if any).

Version Number	KAHSC Version Description	Date of Revision
1	Based on the 2019 DfE Model Complaints Procedure - Original procedures	November 2020
2	No legal or procedural changes but very significant updates throughout to clarify each stage of the complaint procedure with several new sections describing the different types of complaint and how each is handled in full and one to reflect updates to the Ofsted procedure and new web based 'Complain about a school' service.	September 2022
3	New section for boarding schools on complaints about boarding provision	October 2022
4	Revised to include complaints relating to the EYFS statutory framework (applies to schools with EYFS provision only).	February 2023
	Minor updates only to reflect new unitary authorities and amend links to KAHub and other external websites.	September 2023
	Reviewed (minor formatting changes only)	October 2024

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## 2. How to raise a concern or make a complaint

### 2.1 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'*.

We encourage anyone with concerns or complaints to bring them to our attention directly and as soon as possible. We appreciate all feedback and suggestions to help us plan for the future and we welcome any opportunity to provide reassurance about what we do and why.

It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. We have a three-step complaints process to help us do this, starting with the Informal Stage and progressing to the two-stage Formal process.

### 2.2 Our aims when resolving complaints

At every stage in our procedures, we want to resolve the complaint. We aim to handle it:

- politely, and with honesty and professionalism,
- in complete confidence,
- transparently, fairly, and thoroughly, and
- more quickly if it is urgent.

Following our investigation, we may not uphold your complaint, or we may uphold it wholly or only partly. We will offer you one or more of the following as an outcome:

- an explanation of why we did or did not uphold all or part of your complaint,
- an apology if we have made mistakes,
- an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that what you complained about 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.

### 2.3 Our expectations when resolving complaints

Every concern or complaint raised must be:

- genuine, reasonable, and not vexatious (unreasonable or repeated), and
- drawn to our attention politely and in a reasonable way without using offensive, abusive, or threatening language or behaviour

Please see [Section 8](#) for how we handle complaints which do not meet these expectations.

### 2.4 Maintaining Governor impartiality

Except as directed below (where your complaint is about the Head teacher or a member of the Governing Body or where your complaint has already been escalated to the Formal Complaints - Stage One ) you should not raise your concern or complaint with individual Governors.

If your first contact about your complaint is with a Governor, he or she will ask you not to explain and will instead refer you to an appropriate member of staff or the Head teacher. They are not unwilling to help nor are they dismissing your concerns. A Governor has no power to act alone and will need to remain impartial because they may be required to sit in a meeting to formally hear your complaint if you take Step Three and progress it to the Formal Complaints - Stage Two .

### 2.5 Withdrawal of a complaint

If you want to withdraw your complaint, we will ask you to confirm this in writing.

- the nature of your complaint (if the Head teacher was not involved at the Informal Stage);
- why you were dissatisfied with the outcome at the Informal Stage; and
- what outcome you would like to see.

The Head teacher can consider whether a face to face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

*Note: The Head teacher 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 Head teacher (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 Head teacher will provide a formal written response about the outcome 10 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint. When we receive a complaint in writing about our fulfilment of the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the framework requires us to investigate and provide a written response **within 28 days** of receiving it.

If the Head teacher is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide an update and a revised response date.

The written response detailing the outcome will include:

- any actions taken to investigate the complaint
- a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it,
- where appropriate, details of actions this school will take to resolve the complaint, and
- how to take Step Three and escalate your complaint to Formal Complaints - Stage Two should you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage One (usually to the Chair of Governors but may be another Governor if the Chair has been involved at the Informal Stage or Formal Complaints - Stage One or is the subject of the complaint).

You must take Step Three within 20 school days of receipt of your Stage One written outcome. In keeping with our commitment to resolving complaints as quickly as possible, we will only consider requests for a Formal Stage Two investigation received outside this time period in exceptional circumstances.

## 4.2 Complaints about the Head teacher

A formal complaint about the Head teacher must be addressed to the Chair of Governors and made via the Clerk to the Governing Body through the school office, preferably on the Complaint Form at the end of these procedures. Please mark any written complaint as Private and Confidential.

The Chair of Governors will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 10 school days.

In their response, the Chair of Governors will seek to clarify:

- the nature of your complaint;
- why you were dissatisfied with the outcome at the Informal Stage; and
- what outcome you would like to see.

The Chair of Governors can consider whether a face to face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

The Chair of Governors (or another suitably skilled impartial Governor) will conduct an investigation and at the conclusion, will provide a formal written response about the outcome within 10 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint. When the substance of a complaint about the Head teacher is regarding their fulfilment of the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the framework requires us to investigate and provide a written response **within 28 days** of receiving it.

investigator who has not been involved at either the Informal Stage or the Formal Complaints – Stage One).

You must take Step Three within 28 school days of receipt of your Stage One written outcome. In keeping with our commitment to resolving complaints as quickly as possible, we will only consider requests for a Formal Stage Two investigation received outside this time period in exceptional circumstances.

## **5. Step Three: Formal complaints - Stage Two**

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome at Formal complaints Stage One and want to take the matter further, you can take Step Three and escalate the complaint to Formal Complaints - Stage Two – 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 school complaints procedure.

A request to escalate a Formal complaint to Stage Two must be made to the Clerk, via the school office, preferably on a new Complaint Form at the end of these procedures within 28 school days of receipt of the Stage One response.

When completing a new Complaint Form for Stage Two please:

- Make it clear whether you are asking the Formal Stage Two investigation to consider the original complaint or how it was handled at the Informal Stage or Formal Complaint - Stage One.
- Ensure you include as much information as possible with copies of any supporting evidence.
- Remember the Complaints Committee has no prior knowledge of your complaint and may not be involved with this school at all so be clear about the roles of people you name, dates, times, and facts.
- Include as much detail as clearly as you can because the less clarification and/or investigation needed the more quickly your complaint can be resolved.

The Clerk will record the date the Stage Two request is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint escalation in writing (either by letter or email) within 10 school days. Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

The acknowledgement will also explain that a Complaints Committee will be formed to handle the complaint and it will first decide whether to deal with it by inviting parties to a meeting or through written representations. They will be sensitive to the needs of all parties in making their decision.

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

### **5.1 Pre-meeting**

The Complaints Committee will first agree if the information submitted in the request to escalate the complaint to Stage Two needs clarification or investigation before a meeting. The amount of clarification or investigation required will affect the timing of the meeting. It may involve gathering information and interviewing people.

Once the Committee has determined the nature of any investigation needed, they will be able to agree a timetable for undertaking that investigation and a date for the meeting.

The Clerk, or a meeting 'convener' we appoint will write to you to inform you of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene this meeting within 10 school days of receipt of the Stage Two request. Where the complaint is complex and/or external parties are involved and this is not possible, the 'convener' will provide an anticipated date and keep you informed.

If you are invited to attend the meeting and you reject the offer of three proposed dates, without good reason, the 'convener' will decide when to hold the meeting. It will then proceed in your absence and be based on written submissions from both parties.

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire Governing Body or
- the majority of the Governing Body

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 this school will take to resolve the complaint.

The response will also advise you how to escalate your complaint should you remain dissatisfied.

## 6. Next steps

### 6.1 Complaining to the Department for Education

If you believe the school did not handle your complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or we acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of our duties under education law, you can contact the Department for Education after we have completed Stage Two.

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by a school. They will consider whether we have adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint. For more information visit [Complain about a school: State schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complain-about-a-school).

You can refer your complaint to the Department for Education online at: [Contact the Department for Education - Contact type - DFE Online Forms](#), by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:

Ministerial and Public Communications Division | Department for Education  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

### 6.2 Complaining to Ofsted

The only role Ofsted have in considering a complaint about a school, is solely to determine if there is a need to inspect. Ofsted cannot seek to resolve or establish cause for any individual complaint.

If your concern affects the school as a whole and you have followed the school complaints procedure right to the end, Ofsted have powers to consider some complaints made in writing about schools. They provide an [online form](#) for this.

These complaints may come from registered parents or carers of pupils at the school that the complaint is about and complaints from other people. This includes the parents and carers of pupils who may be off sick or temporarily excluded. Examples could include:

- the school is not providing a good enough education
- the pupils are not achieving as much as they should, or their different needs are not being met
- the school is not well led and managed, or is inappropriately managing finances as a group, the pupils' personal development and well-being are being neglected (as stated above, Ofsted cannot look at individual cases).

Please visit [Complaints to Ofsted about schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complaints-to-ofsted-about-schools) for more information about the process.

## 7. Duplicate complaints

After closing a complaint at the end of the complaints procedure, we might receive a duplicate complaint from:

- a spouse;
- a partner;

- publishing unacceptable information in a variety of media such as in social media websites and newspapers.

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

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

If the behaviour continues, the Head teacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and asking them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact this school causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan.

This will usually be reviewed after 6 months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the concerns and actions taken will be put in writing immediately and the Police informed. This may include banning an individual from Plumpton School.



\* Complaints about the application of our Behaviour Policy *can* be made through the school 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](http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus).

Volunteers or staff with concerns about this school should complain through our school complaints procedure or Whistleblowing procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to our Local Authority or to the Department for Education (see links above), depending on the substance of your complaint. Staff and volunteers may also wish to contact [Protect \(Speak up, stop harm\)](#) – Free, confidential whistleblowing advice. Tel No: 020 3117 2520.

### **Staff grievances**

Complaints from staff will be dealt with under our school's internal grievance procedures.

### **Staff conduct**

Complaints about staff will be dealt with under our school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate.

Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member because of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.

### **Complaints about others who may use school premises or facilities to provide services**

Other individuals or organisations that use our premises or facilities to provide services should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about them. Please contact them direct.

### **National Curriculum content**

Please contact the Department for Education at: [www.education.gov.uk/contactus](http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus).

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

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

Signature:

Date:

**For official use only:**

Acknowledgement sent by whom:

Method e.g., email:

Date:

Complaint referred to:

Date:

Action taken:

Action Date:

- 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 .

### 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.

## Example Meeting Format

Section	What will happen	Who
<b>Welcome</b>	<p><b>Introductions</b> including clarification of roles e.g. <i>Complainant</i> being the person making the complaint, <i>Respondent</i> being the person who responded to the complaint at Stage One, <i>Chair</i> being the chairperson of the Complaints Committee meeting and the person who will direct it etc.</p> <p><b>Clarification of meeting purpose and complaint lodged</b></p> <p><b>Meeting expectations:</b> to be as informal and relaxed as possible, non-confrontational, request breaks if needed etc.</p> <p><b>Whether everyone has had sight of and is happy with the running order</b></p>	Chair of Committee
<b>Presentations</b>	<p>Complainant presents a summary of their complaint highlighting the points made in their Complaint Form and referencing their supporting evidence.</p> <p>Witnesses are called into the meeting and leave as and when required to support or evidence the Complainant's summary.</p> <p>The Committee may question the complainant or witnesses at any time to clarify the points they make if necessary.</p>	Complainant
	<p>Respondent presents the facts as s/he perceives them, highlighting points made in the written response to the Stage One complaint and other supporting evidence.</p> <p>Witnesses are called into the meeting and leave as and when required to support or evidence the Respondent's summary.</p> <p>The Committee may question the Respondent or witnesses at any time to clarify the points they make if necessary.</p>	Respondent
<b>Summaries</b>	<p>Complainant summarises their case highlighting evidence including anything that has emerged in the questioning.</p>	Complainant
	<p>Respondent summarises the case for the school highlighting evidence including the school's response and actions in relation to the complaint before the meeting and anything that has emerged in the questioning.</p>	Respondent
<b>Close</b>	<p>Meeting Chair thanks the Complainant and Respondent for attending and explains what will happen next.</p> <p>Complainant and Respondent leave the meeting.</p>	Chair of Committee
<b>Decision</b>	<p>Committee considers all the evidence and comes to its conclusion.</p>	Committee

Witnesses will only attend the part of the meeting in which they give their evidence.

The Committee may ask questions at any point or adjourn the meeting.