



Hagley Primary School

Complaints Procedure and Policy

Date: November 2023

Date of review: September 2025

Responsible member of staff: Vanessa Payne

Signature:

(Chair of Governors)

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "RCCore".

Signature:

(Head Teacher)

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Vanessa Payne".

1. Rationale

Hagley Primary School values the good relations enjoyed with parents and the community. These good relations are based on mutual respect and a willingness to listen to other points of view. This is part of our ethos and values and promoted in all aspects of school life.

The purpose of the complaints procedure is to provide a framework for the school and Governing Body to adopt; giving a structured opportunity for all concerned to express and resolve concerns and thus improve provision.

Hagley Primary School aims to resolve all complaints at the earliest possible stage and is dedicated to continuing to provide the highest quality of education possible throughout the procedure. Whilst we are very proud of our school, we know that no one gets things right all the time.

We believe that learning is a lifelong endeavour, and we have systems in place to monitor any concerns and complaints received so that we can evaluate how quickly we resolved matters and how effective the resolution was and use this to improve our practices.

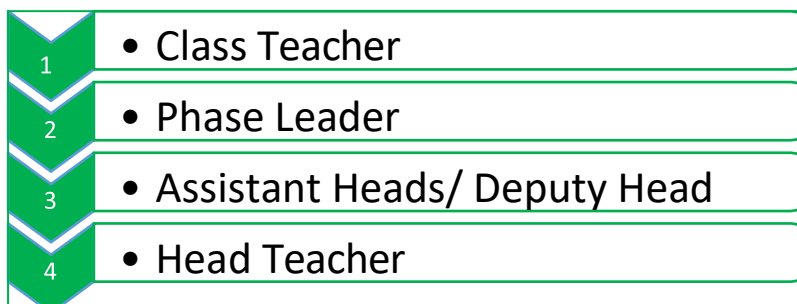
2. Definitions

For the purpose of this policy, a 'concern' may be treated as 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'.

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

Complaints can be resolved through a formal or informal procedure; however, it is in everyone's interest that complaints are taken seriously and resolved at the earliest possible stage.

Our lines of communication within school are as follows:



3. Scope

This procedure is appropriate for use not only by parents and carers, but by any person who engages with the school, including members of the local community. This procedure also includes parents or carers whose children are no longer at the school.

Complaints regarding the following topics should be directed to the LA:

- Statutory assessments of SEND
- School re-organisation proposals
- Matters which may require a child protection investigation
- Admissions to schools

Complaints about child protection matters will be handled in line with the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance. Any child protection complaints should be directed to the LA designated officer (LADO) or the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH).

Complaints concerning admissions will be directed to the appropriate admissions authority.

Complaints about children being excluded from the school should be dealt with by following the process explained at: <https://www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions>.

The school has an internal whistleblowing procedure and policy for all employees, including contractors and temporary staff. Complaints by parents, carers or members of the public of this nature should not be addressed using this complaints procedure. These concerns can be directed to Ofsted by telephone on: 0300 123 3155 or via email at: whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk.

Volunteers who have concerns about the school or a member of staff should make their complaint in line with this policy. Volunteers may also be able to complain to the LA or DfE, depending on what the complaint is about.

Staff grievances and disciplinary procedures will be dealt with using the school's internal grievance procedure. In these cases, complainants will not be informed of the outcome of any investigations; however, they will be notified that the matter is being addressed.

This complaints procedure is not to be used when addressing any complaints made about services provided by a third party who may use the school premises or facilities. All complaints concerning this should be directed to the service provider.

Complaints about the content of the National Curriculum should be made to the DfE.

Complaints about how the school delivers the curriculum, including RE and RSE, will be dealt with using this complaints procedure.

Any complaints about the content of collective worship should be made to the LA, the local Standard Advisory Council on Religious Education or another relevant body.

Complaints from parents who are dissatisfied with the handling of a request to withdraw their child from RE or collective worship will be handled in line with this complaints procedure.

4. Principles

The following sets out how we will work with you to resolve any complaints raised, as quickly as possible.

Dealing with concerns

When expressing a concern, your first point of contact will always be your child's Class Teacher as most concerns can be addressed with the support of the class teacher. Every effort will be made to resolve this at this stage. Staff will listen to your worries and may also share any actions that they or the school have taken out. They may ask you for suggestions as to how you feel your concerns can be addressed. In some cases there may not be a shared point of view; however, discussions around a concern will help you and the school to understand both sides. It may also prevent a similar problem arising again. It is important that problems are discussed calmly and sensibly so that concerns are resolved in the best interests of the child/children.

If you feel that your concerns have not been dealt with to a satisfactory resolution via the class teacher, then the next point of contact will be your Class Teacher's Phase Leader. This person oversees the 2-year groups and you will be able to make an appointment to see them (possibly alongside your child's Class Teacher) in order to address your worries.

Following the Phase Leader's involvement, if you still feel dissatisfied then at this point you can make an appointment to speak with either the Assistant Headteachers or the Deputy Head Teacher. They may call upon either the Phase Leader or the class teacher to join everyone in the meeting. This enables easier sharing of information following previous meetings and ensures that all parties are part of the discussion and subsequent actions.

Dependent on the nature of the concern, e.g. assessment procedures, SEND provision, or curriculum content, then these may be passed directly to the person responsible within school rather than a class teacher or Phase Leader.

Dealing with complaints

A complaint can be made in person, by telephone or in writing. Complaints can also be made by a third party acting on behalf of the complainant (written consent will be obtained from the complainant before any information is disclosed to a third party). We will not normally respond to or investigate an anonymous complaint unless in extreme circumstances and where we believe the safety of a pupil may be compromised.

Once a complaint has been made, it can be resolved or withdrawn at any stage.

We are committed to working with all stakeholders to provide the absolute best for all of our children and this includes responding quickly and proportionately to concerns. The length of the period of investigation will be dependent upon the complexity of the complaint. The school aims to complete investigations and notify the complainant of the outcome within 10 working days whenever possible. If this is not possible, the complainant will be kept informed of the progress of the complaint on a weekly basis.

We are committed to working with all stakeholders to provide the absolute best for all of our children and this includes responding quickly and proportionately to concerns.

All complaints will be dealt with fairly and impartially. We encourage partnerships with our parents and carers and work hard to maintain mutual respect and recognition of shared responsibility for the children. Abusive, aggressive or threatening behaviour towards staff will not be tolerated as we firmly strongly believe that all members of the school community have a right to expect that their school is a safe place regardless of the situation.

5. Roles and responsibilities

The complainant will:

- Co-operate with the school in seeking a solution to the complaint.
- Express the complaint and their concerns in full at the earliest possible opportunity.
- Promptly respond to any requests for information or meetings.
- Ask for assistance as needed.
- Treat any person(s) involved in the complaint with respect.

The investigator will:

- Ensure that all parties involved in the complaint are fully updated throughout each stage of the procedure.
- Guarantee that all parties involved in the procedure are aware of any relevant legislation, including the Equality Act 2010, GDPR, Data Protection Act 2018 and Freedom of Information Act 2000.
- Keep up-to-date records throughout the procedure – these records will be kept securely on the school's ICT system and retained in line with the school's GDPR Policy.
- Liaise with all parties involved to ensure the complaints procedure runs smoothly, including the Head Teacher, Clerk and Chair of Governors (as appropriate).
- Be aware of issues in regards to sharing third party information.
- Understand the complainant's need for additional support, including interpretation support, and will be aware of any issues concerning this.
- Provide a sensitive and thorough interviewing process of the complainant, and anyone (children or member of staff) related to the complaint, in order to establish what has happened.
- Analyse all information in a comprehensive and fair manner.
- Liaising with the Senior Leadership Team and Governing Body (where appropriate) to clarify an appropriate resolution to the problem.
- Identify and recommend solutions and courses of actions to take, including where adjustments to policies and practices may need to be made
- Be mindful of timescales and ensure all parties involved are aware of these timescales.
- Respond to the complainant in a clear and understandable manner.

6. Record keeping and communication

A written record shall be kept of any complaint made, whether made via phone, in person or in writing, detailing:

- The main issues raised, the findings and any recommendations.
- Whether the complaint was resolved following an informal route, formal route or panel hearing.
- Actions taken by the school as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint was upheld).

All records are made available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the Head Teacher.

We ask that you do not share your concerns/grievances on social media and speak with a staff member instead. Although we use facilities for home learning, such as Seesaw, which enables home/school communication, any concerns or complaints should not be sent through this platform. It is not checked regularly and is not a facility within our lines of communication.

The school holds the right to use recording devices, where appropriate, to ensure all parties involved are able to review the discussions at a later date.

Where there are communication difficulties or disabilities, the school may provide recording devices to ensure the complainant is able to access and review the discussions at a later point.

Recording devices will not be used without the prior consent of all parties and the school will not accept, as evidence, any recordings that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties.

When interviewing children in order to gather information regarding a complaint, the interview should be conducted in the presence of another member of staff or, in the case of serious complaints, e.g. where the possibility of criminal investigation exists, in the presence of their parents.

The school will ensure that the conduction of interviews does not prejudice an LA designated officer's (LADO), or police, investigation.

The school understands the importance of ensuring a friendly and relaxed area which is free from intimidation.

All children interviewed will be made fully aware of what the interview concerns and their right to have someone with them.

Staff are allowed a colleague to support them at their interview. The colleague must not be anyone likely to be interviewed themselves, including their line manager.

The complainant may be accompanied by a friend, colleague or other representative.

Neither the complainant nor the school will bring legal representation to any meeting, as these meetings are not a form of legal proceedings.

The interviewer will not express opinions in words or attitude, so as to not influence the interviewee.

Details of any complaint made shall not be shared with the entire Governing Body in case an independent panel is needed to hear the complaint. The exception to this is when a complaint is made against the whole Governing Body and they need to be aware of the allegations made against them, to respond to any independent investigation.

The school will hold all records of complaints centrally. Complainants have a right to access copies of these records under the GDPR and the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under Section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 (an Ofsted or similar inspection) requests access to them.

Following the completion of the complaints procedure, if you are still unhappy with the way the school has managed your complaint, you can submit a complaint to the Department for Education online at www.gov.uk/complain-about-school or write to:

School Complaints Unit
Department of Education
2nd Floor, Piccadilly Gate,
Store Street,
Manchester M1 2WD

National helpline: 0370 000 2288

7. Informal procedure (School Resolution Process)

The Head Teacher will normally direct the complainant to the most appropriate member of staff to deal with it informally. If the complainant indicates that they would have difficulty discussing the complaint with this member of staff, the Head Teacher may direct them to another member of staff. Similarly, if the most appropriate member of staff feels they would have difficulty in dealing with the complaint objectively, the Head Teacher may direct the complainant to another member of staff.

Once you have raised your concern or complaint, the person who is looking into it will contact you within 2 working days (in term time). They can arrange to talk to you face-to-face, on the telephone, or they can contact you by letter or email if you prefer.

Most concerns or complaints are not likely to involve extensive or lengthy enquiries, and therefore you should expect an approach that is proportionate to the issue you have raised.

As the School Resolution process is aimed at quickly resolving your concern or complaint and learning from it, it won't lead to conduct or capability proceedings against a member of staff. However, where appropriate, the member of staff might receive further support or training as a result.

The school could take the following actions to resolve your concern or complaint:

- Give you further information or an explanation to clear up a misunderstanding
- Learn from the issue, accepting that something could have been handled better and explaining what has been done to stop the same thing happening again
- Arrange action by the Head Teacher to address an issue with a member of staff through support and development
- Arrange action by the Governing Body to address matters of policy or procedure
- Move the complaint or concern to the formal procedure

Possible outcomes include:

- (a) complaint resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant;
- (b) complaint not resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant;
- (c) complaint dealt with under another procedure

8. Formal procedure

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the informal stage outlined above, then a written record should be sent to the school using the complaints procedure form (see appendix).

The Head Teacher will ensure the complaint is investigated fully. The Head Teacher may delegate responsibility for conducting the investigation to another member of staff.

If the complaint is about the Head Teacher or one of the Governors, then any letter of complaint should be addressed to the Chair of Governors c/o the school. If the complaint is about the Chair of Governors, then this should be addressed to the Vice Chair of Governors.

Although this is a formal investigation into your complaint, it will still be in the spirit of quickly reaching an effective outcome and maintaining positive and productive relationships. All parties need to work together to maintain productive relationships, and establish a way forward in partnership.

The investigation may call for more information to be gathered before the person investigating can explain what has happened from the perspective of the school or the staff member involved. This way of dealing with your concern or complaint means solving, explaining, clearing up or settling your complaint directly with you, but doing so with a more detailed investigation than at a School Resolution level. In all instances, each party commits to a full and fair investigation which, where necessary, respects confidentiality of those involved

The School Investigation should be completed within 10 working days when you will receive a letter explaining the findings and any actions that may need to happen as a result. However, in complex matters it may take longer. The person investigating will keep in regular contact with you to keep you informed of progress.

The Head Teacher will decide on the outcome and inform the complainant in writing of the decision, together with details of how to appeal against the decision if they remain dissatisfied.

Possible outcomes include:

- (a) complaint withdrawn;
- (b) complaint dismissed;
- (c) complaint dealt with under another procedure;
- (d) complaint upheld.

9. Appeal

The formal procedure of this complaints policy includes an appeal process should you not be satisfied with the outcome of the investigation. Following our initial investigation, we will write to you to let you know of your right to appeal and you will have 20 working days to let us know if you would like to do so. (This does not include school holidays where there may be no one in school to respond to your request).

The Chair may be able to resolve the complaint informally, with the result that the complainant withdraws their appeal.

If you decide you would like to appeal, we will invite you to attend an appeal meeting. You will also receive any further paperwork that relates to the initial School Investigation 7 days in advance of the appeal meeting.

The Chair of Governors, or another nominated Governor, will convene a CAP (Complaints Appeal Panel) comprising: three members of the Governing Body. The Committee may not include the Chair Board member who has had a prior involvement in the complaint, or in the incident to which the complaint refers.

At the hearing, all participants will be given the opportunity to put their case across and discuss any issues. The CAP will consider issues raised in the original complaint and any issues which have been highlighted during the complaints procedure.

The Chair of the Panel needs to ensure that the complainant is notified of the panel's decision, in writing, with the panel's response (including the reasons for the decision); this is usually within a set deadline and at Hagley Primary will be within 10 working days. The letter should explain if there are any further rights of appeal and, if so, to whom they need to be addressed. This will be the local authority.

10. Serial and persistent complainants

There will be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedures having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the Chair of the Governing Body is able to inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

The school will act in a manner they believe to be appropriate when dealing with an individual who consistently makes the same complaints or who continuously asks the school to reconsider their position.

If the complainant contacts the school regarding the same issue again, the complaint may be classed as 'serial' or 'persistent' and the school does not have an obligation to respond.

The school must ensure that a complaint is not classed as 'serial' before they have fully completed the complaints procedure.

If the complaint is raised by another member of a family about the same subject, the Head Teacher will inform the new complainant that the school has already considered that complaint and the complaint process is complete; however, the school will ensure that it does not overlook any new aspects to the complaint that they may not have previously considered.

If the school finds it difficult to deal with a complainant due to their unreasonable behaviour, then their complaint can be directed to the LA.

11. Unreasonable complaints

The school defines unreasonable complainants as 'those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with the school, hinder our consideration of their or other people's complaints'.

A complaint may be regarded as unreasonable when the person making the complaint:

- 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 while still wishing their complaint to be resolved.
- Refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaints procedure.
- Insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice.
- Introduces trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant expects to be taken into account and commented on, or 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 complaints procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the DfE.
- Seeks an unrealistic outcome.
- Makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with.

A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if the person making the complaint does so either face-to-face, by telephone or in writing or electronically:

- Maliciously
- Aggressively
- Using threats, intimidation or violence
- Using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language

- Knowing it to be false, using falsified information
- 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 the 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 six months.

12. Complaints campaigns

For the purposes of this policy, "complaints campaigns" are where the school receives large volumes of complaints that are all based on the same subject from complainants that are not connected to the school.

Where the school becomes the subject of a complaints campaign, a standard, single response will be published on the school's website.

If complainants remain dissatisfied with the school's response, they will be directed to the DfE.

Reviewing the procedure

The complaints procedure will be reviewed every two years, taking into account the latest guidance issued by the DfE. Should any changes arise before this date, as a result of a change in school practice or through the use of the policy as outline above, then these will be noted in an addendum document and written fully into the policy during the review.

Responsibility for reviewing the procedure belongs to a committee of the Governing Body, an individual Governor or the Head Teacher.

All projected review dates will be adhered to.

Information gathered through reviewing the complaints procedure will be used to continuously improve and develop the process.

The monitoring and reviewing of complaints will be used to help evaluate the school's performance.

Appendix 1:**Complaints Procedure Form**

If you have tried unsuccessfully to resolve your complaint and wish to take the matter further, please complete this form and send it to the Head Teacher. (If your complaint is against the Head Teacher, you will need to send the form to the Chair of the governing body).

| | |
|--|------------------|
| Name: | Address: |
| Pupil's name: | |
| Pupil's date of birth: | |
| Daytime telephone number: | |
| Evening telephone number: | |
| Email: | Postcode: |
| What is your complaint concerning, and what action would you like the Head Teacher to take? | |
| When did you discuss your concern/complaint with the appropriate member of staff? | |
| What was the result of the discussion? | |
| Signed: | Date: |

