



Complaints Policy

Date of approval: July 2025

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Staff lead: Headteacher

Approved by: FGB

Purpose

The main purpose of this policy is to help resolve problems and provide a means for issues of concern to be raised and addressed. All complainants will be treated respectfully during and after the course of any complaints investigation.

The difference between a concern and a complaint

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

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

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

We understand however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, Chancel Primary School will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints' procedure.

Aims

Our school aims to meet its statutory obligations when responding to complaints from parents/carers of pupils at the school, and others. When responding to complaints, we aim to:

- > Be impartial and non-adversarial;
- > Facilitate a full and fair investigation by an independent person or panel, where necessary;
- > Address all the points at issue and provide an effective and prompt response;
- > Respect complainants' desire for confidentiality;
- > Treat complainants with respect and courtesy;
- > Make sure that any decisions we make are lawful, rational, reasonable, fair and proportionate, in line with the principles of administrative law;
- > Keep complainants informed of the progress of the complaints process;
- > Consider how the complaint can feed into school improvement evaluation processes.
- > Give the complainant the opportunity to complete the complaints procedure in full.

To support this, we will publicise the existence of this policy and make it available on the school website.

Throughout the process, we will be sensitive to the needs of all parties involved, and make any reasonable adjustments needed to accommodate individuals.

How to raise a concern or make a complaint

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone.

Concerns should be raised firstly with either the class teacher or Headteacher. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint at **Stage 1**.

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

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

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

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

In accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure. For instance, providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

Time scales

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

Complaints received outside of term time

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

Scope of this Complaints Procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by Chancel Primary School other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures.

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

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

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

Serial, unreasonable and duplicate complaints will be handled in line with our Managing Serial and Unreasonable Complaints Policy.

Resolving Complaints

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

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

Withdrawal of a Complaint

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

Stage 1 (Headteacher)

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

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

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

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

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

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

At the conclusion of their investigation, the Headteacher will provide a formal written response **within twenty**

school days of the date of receipt of the complaint.

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

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

Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate. Complainants will **NOT** be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint.

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

If the complaint is about the Headteacher, a suitably skilled governor will be appointed to complete all the actions at **Stage 1**.

Stage 2 (Chair/Vice Chair of Governors)

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at **Stage 1** and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to **Stage 2**, by writing to the Chair/Vice Chair of Governors, via the school office, within 5 school days of receipt of the **Stage 1** response. Correspondence should be marked Private and Confidential.

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

They will then conduct a full investigation and endeavour to provide a full and final response to the **Stage 2** complaint, in writing, within **14 days of receipt**.

Where concerns cannot be resolved by the Chair/Vice Chair then you will be advised that details of your continuing concerns will be accepted in writing and referred to the Governing Board Complaints Committee at **Stage 3**.

Stage 3 (Governing Board Complaints Committee – The Panel)

A request to escalate to **Stage 3** must be made to the Chair/Vice Chair, via the school office, within **5 school days** of receipt of the **Stage 2** response. Correspondence should be marked Private and Confidential.

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

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

Stage 3 of the complaints process is a meeting with members of the Governing Board Complaints Committee - The Panel, which will be formed of three impartial governors. This is the final stage of the complaints' procedure.

The Panel will consist of at least three governors with no prior involvement or knowledge of the complaint. Prior to the meeting, they will decide amongst themselves who will act as the Chair of The Panel. If there are fewer than three governors from Chancel Primary School available, The Panel will source any additional,

independent governors through another local school or through their LA's Governor Services team, in order to make up The Panel. Alternatively, an entirely independent committee may be convened to hear the complaint at **Stage 3**.

The Chair of The Panel will write to the complainant of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within **twenty school days** of receipt of the **Stage 3** complaint. If this is not possible, the Chair will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

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

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

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

At least **ten school days before the meeting**, the Chair will:

- confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible;
- request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the committee at least **five school days before the meeting**.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least **three school days** before the date of the meeting. The Panel will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

The Panel will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from **Stage 1** of the procedure.

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

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

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

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

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

The Chair of The Panel will provide the complainant and Chancel Primary School with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, **within five school days of the meeting**.

The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the Department for Education if they are

dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by Chancel Primary School.

Next Steps

If the complainant believes the school did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact the Department for Education after they have completed **Stage 3**.

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

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

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

Complaint campaigns

Where the school receives a large volume of complaints about the same topic or subject, especially if these come from complainants unconnected with the school, the school may respond to these complaints by:

- > Publishing a single response on the school website;
- > Sending a template response to all of the complainants.

If complainants are not satisfied with the school's response, or wish to pursue the complaint further, the normal procedures will apply.

Complaint Form

Please complete and return to the Headteacher or the Chair/Vice Chair of Governors who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:
Pupil's name (if relevant):
Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):
Address:
Postcode:
Day time telephone number:
Evening telephone number:
Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it.

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

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

Signature:

Date:

Official use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By who:

Complaint referred to:

Date: