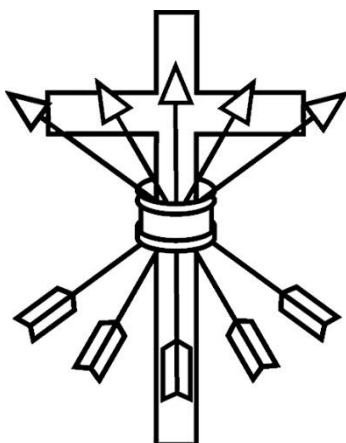


WADDESDON CHURCH OF ENGLAND SCHOOL



COMPLAINTS & RESOLUTIONS POLICY & PROCEDURE

STATUS OF PROCEDURE:	Statutory
BASED ON LA PROCEDURE DATED:	Bucks Learning Trust Policy April 2016
COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE:	Personnel & Staff Wellbeing
GOVERNING BODY APPROVAL:	21.02.24
REVIEW DATE:	Spring Term 2025

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1. Introduction

Our governing body has adopted this procedure to deal with concerns or complaints from members of the school community or public.

2. Aims and Objectives

Our school will be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaint and aims to resolve it through open dialogue and mutual understanding.

All concerns and complaints will be carefully considered and dealt with as swiftly as possible. Sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed will be provided.

In all cases the interests of the child will be placed above all other issues.

This procedure is underpinned by the following **framework of principles**: -

- encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible
- be easily accessible and publicised
- be simple to use and understand
- be impartial
- be non-adversarial
- allow swift handling with established time-limits for action and keeping all parties informed of the progress
- ensure a full and fair investigation by an independent person where necessary
- respect confidentiality wherever possible (some information sharing may be necessary to carry out a thorough investigation)
- address all points of issue, providing an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary
- provide information to the school's senior management team so that services can be improved.

3. Areas not covered by this procedure

This procedure does not apply to issues concerning admissions, exclusion appeals, statutory assessments of special educational needs, or grievances by school staff. These are the subject of separate complaints procedures; more information can be obtained from the school.

In addition, the Education Skills and Funding Agency (ESFA) can investigate complaints about academies. Full details about the role of the ESFA can be found on the Department for Education (DfE) website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/education-and-skillsfunding-agency/about>

All other complaints are handled by the school according to the arrangements set out below, unless stated otherwise.

4. Stage 1 – initial concerns

Concerns about the school, or the education it provides should be discussed with the child's class teacher/Head of Year at the earliest opportunity.

It is **not** appropriate to publicise any concerns on social networking sites. Please speak, or write, to the appropriate person at the school in the first instance, at the earliest opportunity. If it is not clear who to contact, the concern should be raised with office@waddesdonschool.com, rather than using any other means.

The school considers any concerns very seriously and most problems are resolved following discussion and a shared understanding of the issues. All members of staff work very hard to ensure that each child is happy at school and able to make good progress. They always want to know if there is a problem so they can help to resolve it.

Most concerns are resolved at this level. Should this not be the case and concerns remain, the matter should be discussed with the Headteacher.

5. Stage 2 – formal procedure

Any concerns not resolved at Stage 1 may be taken further in person, by telephone or in writing.

The complaint form (Appendix 1) should be completed. This will give the school as clear an understanding as possible of the complaint and includes a section on what actions the Complainant believes could resolve the issue.

The school can be requested to provide support in completing the form from someone unconnected with the complaint and would be happy to do so.

Written complaints should be returned to the headteacher. Complaints about the headteacher or a governor should be returned to the chair of the governing body at the school address, marking the envelope 'FOR IMMEDIATE ATTENTION'. Complaints about the chair of the governing body should be returned to the clerk of the governing body at the school address.

An acknowledgement of a complaint is issued within 5 school days of its receipt.

6. Investigation

An investigation will be undertaken into the complaint as well as how it was originally handled by the school. This will include a review of relevant documentation and information and seeking the views of relevant people. The investigator will normally write to the complainant with the outcome of this process within 15 school days of receiving the complaint. Where this is not possible, the investigator or Headteacher will keep the complainant informed as to progress.

A complaint determined to be a disciplinary or capability issue will be dealt with by following the appropriate procedure rather than this Complaints & Resolution procedure. The complainant will be notified if this is the case but is not entitled to know which procedure, or the outcome, because of the right to confidentiality of the member of staff involved.

A concern not resolved at Stage 2 can be escalated to Stage 3 of this procedure, including allegations of malpractice or administration (see Section 9 below). The school must be advised within 15 school days of the completion of Stage 2 should this be the case.

7. Stage 3

At this stage the complaint will be considered at a panel hearing which will make a final decision about it on behalf of the governing body.

Panel members will have no detailed prior knowledge of the complaint, nor connection with the complainant. One panel member will be independent of the management and running of the school. The hearing normally takes place within 15 school days of the request to escalate to Stage 3.

The Complainant may submit evidence prior to the hearing and attend, accompanied by a friend/partner if they wish, to put their case. The headteacher will be given the same opportunities. Appendix 2 outlines the process that will be followed at a panel hearing.

The clerk to the panel will minute the hearing. The minutes will not be a verbatim account but will record the important elements of the case, e.g. the nature of the complaint, any action taken and any agreed outcome or solutions. The minutes will be signed off by the panel chair and a copy given to the parties as soon as possible after the meeting.

8. Outcome of the Panel Hearing

The panel will issue a written report with its decision within 5 school days of the hearing. The panel's decision is final.

A complaint that remains unresolved following Stage 3 can be referred to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). The ESFA will check whether the complaint has been dealt with properly by the school. The ESFA will not overturn a school's decision about a complaint. However, it will investigate:

- Whether there was undue delay, or the school did not comply with its own Complaints & Resolutions procedure
- Whether the school was in breach of its funding agreement with the secretary of state
- Whether the school has failed to comply with any other legal obligation

If the school did not deal with the complaint properly, it will be asked to re-investigate the complaint. If the school's Complaints & Resolution procedure is found not to meet regulations, the school will be asked to correct its procedure accordingly.

The complaint can be made, or referred, online. For more information, please see the following webpage: <https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school>

9. Serial or Unreasonable Complaints

In a small minority of cases complaints are pursued in a way which can either impede the investigation of the complaint or can have significant resource issues for the school.

These actions can occur either while the complaint is being investigated, or once the school has concluded the complaint investigation.

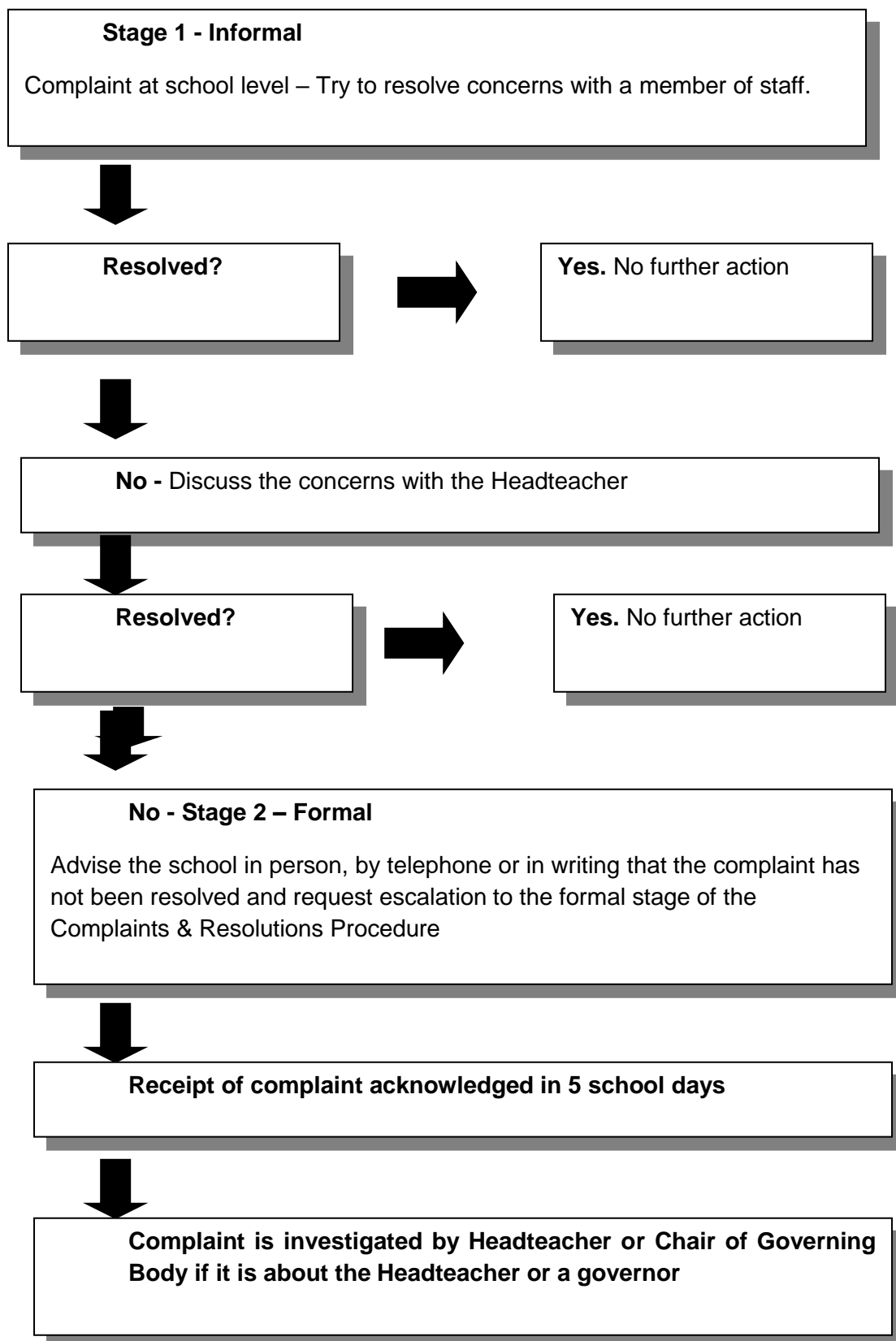
In such cases, the school will follow advice from the Department for Education and the Local Government Ombudsman and follow its policy and procedures for managing unreasonable complaints/behaviour.

10. Monitoring and Review

The governing body audits the processing of complaints against this procedure to ensure compliance. The headteacher logs all formal complaints received by the school and records how they were resolved. Governors examine this log on an annual basis and consider the need for any changes to the procedure.

11. Flowchart Summary*

* Please refer to the procedure for more detailed information





The outcome of the investigation is issued, in writing, within 15 school days of receiving the complaint.



Resolved?



Yes. No further action



No - Request escalation to Stage 3 of the procedure within 15 school days of the completion of Stage 2.



Governor Complaints Panel meets to consider the complaint within 15 school days. Evidence may be submitted to the panel in advance of the meeting. The Complainant will be invited to attend the panel meeting to explain the nature of the complaint



Panel makes a final decision on behalf of the Governing Body and writes to the Complainant within 5 school days

Resolved?



Yes. No further action



No - Write to the Secretary of State of Education and Skills if it is felt the school has acted unreasonably or not followed the correct procedures.

Appendix One - Complaint form

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

Your Name.....

Pupil's Name.....

Your relationship to the pupil.....

Address.....

.....

.....

Please give concise details of your complaint, including dates, names of witnesses, to allow the matter to be fully investigated

What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint.

(Who did you speak to/write to and what was the response)?

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

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

Signature:.....

Date.....

Office Use:

Date acknowledgement sent.....

By whom.....

Complaint referred to.....

Date.....

Appendix Two - At the panel hearing

- After introductions, the complainant will be invited to explain their complaint, and be followed by their witnesses (if any).
- The headteacher/Chair of Governors may question both the complainant and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The headteacher/Chair of Governors is invited to explain the school's actions and be followed by the school's witnesses (if any).
- The complainant may question both the headteacher/Chair of Governors and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The panel may ask questions at any point.
- The complainant is invited to sum up their complaint.
- The headteacher/Chair of Governors is invited to sum up the school's actions and response to the complaint.
- The Chair of the panel explains that both parties will hear from the panel within five school days.
- Both parties leave together while the panel decides on the issues.
- The clerk remains to support the panel and minute the Hearing.