



Complaints Policy for Parents and Carers

Policy Aim

This policy has been written to ensure that the school's ethos, curriculum, and practices promote shared values. It also encourages staff, children and other members of the Welbourne community to understand others and to value diversity, irrespective of gender, race, belief and sexual orientation.

As a Rights Respecting School, we put the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child at the heart of our planning, policies, practice and ethos.

Policy Agreed	Reviewed by	Ratified	Approved by
Nov 2025	R Tailor	20.11.25	FGB

1. Introduction

Welbourne Primary School is committed to effective home-school partnerships. We aim to resolve all concerns at the earliest possible stage. This procedure sets out the formal process for parents and carers to follow if they have a complaint that cannot be resolved informally.

2. Principles

All complaints will be handled according to the following principles:

- **Fairness:** All parties will be treated with respect, and the process will be independent and impartial.
- **Confidentiality:** All information will be treated confidentially, with details only shared on a 'need to know' basis.
- **Promptness:** Complaints will be acknowledged and addressed within the published timescales set out in the policy.
- **Resolution:** The primary aim is to resolve the complaint and, where appropriate, learn from the experience to improve school practice.

We try to resolve concerns or complaints by informal means wherever possible. Where this is not possible, formal procedures will be followed.

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

3. Scope

This policy covers all complaints relating to the school, staff conduct, provision of education, or facilities. It does not cover:

- Staff grievance or disciplinary procedures (covered by HR policies).
- Admissions or exclusion appeals (statutory processes apply).
- Complaints relating to child protection (referred to relevant agencies).
- Data protection
- Subjective matters such as homework levels or choice of school trips, unless they breach policy or statutory requirements.

The DfE guidance explains the difference between a concern and a complaint. A concern is defined as “an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought”. The school will resolve concerns through day-to-day communication as far as possible.

A complaint is defined as “an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action”. The school intends to resolve complaints informally where possible, at the earliest possible stage. There may be occasions when complainants would like to raise their concerns formally. This policy outlines the procedure relating to handling such complaints.

4. Complaints Procedure

Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure the school wants to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, the school will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, the school 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

The complaints procedure is divided into three formal stages, following an initial informal stage. Parents/carers are expected to follow the stages in order.

Stage 1: Informal Resolution

· The concern should first be raised with the member of staff most directly involved (e.g., class teacher, subject leader, office staff).

· If the matter is not resolved, or if the complaint is about this staff member, the parent/carer should arrange to discuss the matter with a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT).

· The aim is to resolve the issue within 5 school days.

-If the staff member is unable to immediately resolve the complaint, s/he will contact the complainant within 3 school days of receipt to offer them a further appointment to address matters.

- If the staff member needs to investigate the issue before responding, s/he will inform the complainant of this along with a timescale of when investigations are expected to be completed and s/he can expect a response. At the conclusion of his/her investigation, the appropriate person investigating the complaint will provide an informal written response within 15 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint.

- If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

Stage 2: Formal Complaint

· If the matter remains unresolved after Stage 1, the parent/carer should submit the complaint in writing (using the school's complaint form) to the Headteacher.

-The Headteacher will acknowledge receipt within 4 school days.

The Headteacher may delegate the investigation to be conducted by another member of the school's senior leadership team (or other suitably experienced person e.g. an independent and/or external investigator). However, in such cases any decisions regarding the findings and outcomes of the investigation will remain with the headteacher.

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; and

- 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 to the complainant within 20 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint. Where appropriate, the response will include details of actions the school proposes to take to resolve the matter. However, in some cases, it may be more appropriate to first respond verbally (via telephone or face-to-face), followed by a written confirmation of the conversation and outcome. If the Headteacher is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.

The response will also advise that if the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome or the way the complaint has been handled, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 3.

Stage 3: Formal Complaint to the Chair of Governors

- If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2, they may appeal in writing to the Chair of Governors within 10 school days of receiving the Stage 2 decision.
- The Chair of Governors will arrange for the complaint to be heard by impartial governor(s) to review the complaint.
- Governors will meet/be in communication within 20 school days and will invite the complainant to attend and present their case.
- The governor will provide the final written outcome on behalf of the Full Governing Board within 15 school days of the conclusion of the complainant presenting their case, which concludes the school's internal complaints procedure.

4. Timescales

The complainant must raise the complaint within 3 months of the incident. If the complaint is about a series of related incidents, they must raise the complaint within 3 months of the last incident.

We will consider exceptions to this time frame in circumstances where there were valid reasons for not making a complaint at that time and the complaint can still be investigated in a fair manner for all involved. When complaints are made out of term time, we will consider them to have been received on the next school day.

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 at any point we cannot meet the time scales we have set out in this policy, we will:

- Set new time limits with the complainant
- Send the complainant details of the new deadline and explain the delay

Complainants should limit the number of communications with the 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.

If a complainant has difficulty in writing their complaint, for example where English is not their first language or they have a disability which prevents them from submitting a complaint in writing, assistance will be provided.

Where the grounds for a complaint are unclear the timescales set out in this document will commence once the grounds of the complaint have been established and all information is

available.

5. Unreasonable Complaints

The school is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain. It is understood that people may act out of character in times of trouble or distress. There may have been upsetting or distressing circumstances leading up to a complaint being made to the school.

This school does not view behaviour as unacceptable just because a complainant is forceful or determined, but the actions of complainants who are angry, demanding or persistent may result in unreasonable demands on the school and unacceptable behaviour towards the school's staff.

The school will not normally limit the contact complainants have with the school.

However, it does not expect staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including where it is abusive, offensive or threatening. In exceptional circumstances, the school has the right to specify how the individual complaint will be handled and how future contact from the complainant will be permitted.

The school defines unreasonable complainants as 'those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with the school, hinder 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 cooperate 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 complaint 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/or by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with.
- uses threats to intimidate
- uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence
- knowingly provides falsified information
- publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums

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.

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

If the behaviour continues, the headteacher (or relevant person, as appropriate) 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, specific methods of communication may be required and the number of contacts limited through a communication plan. This will usually be reviewed after six months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from school premises and ensuring appropriate measures of support are provided to staff where they are the subject of aggression and/or violence and/or vexatious complaints.

Serial or persistent complainants

Most complaints raised will be valid, and therefore we will treat them seriously. However, a complaint may become unreasonable if the person:

- Has made the same complaint before, and it's already been resolved by following the school's complaints procedure
- Makes a complaint that is obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, defamatory or repetitive
- Knowingly provides false information
- Insists on pursuing a complaint that is unfounded, or out of scope of the complaints procedure
- Pursues a valid complaint, but in an unreasonable manner e.g. refuses to articulate the complaint, refused to cooperate with this complaints procedure, or insists that the complaint is dealt with in ways that are incompatible with this procedure and the time frames it sets out
- Changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation goes on
- Makes a complaint designed to cause disruption, annoyance or excessive demands on school time
- Seeks unrealistic outcomes, or a solution that lacks any serious purpose or value

The school will take every reasonable step to address the complainant's concerns, and give them a clear statement of the position and their options. The school will maintain its role as an objective arbiter throughout the process, including when meeting with individuals.

If the complainant continues to contact the school in a disruptive way, communications strategies may be put in place, by:

- Giving the complainant a single point of contact via an email address
- Limiting the number of times the complainant can make contact, such as a fixed number per term
- Asking the complainant to engage a third party to act on their behalf, such as Citizens Advice
- Putting any other strategy in place as necessary

Stopping responding

The school may stop responding to the complainant when all of these factors are met:

- It is felt that all reasonable steps have been taken to help address their concerns

- A clear statement of the position and their options has been provided
- The complainant contacts the school repeatedly, and it is believed their intention is to cause disruption or inconvenience

Where the school stops responding, the individual will be informed that this is the intention. The school will also explain that it will still consider any new complaints they make.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the school will immediately inform the police and communicate its actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from the school site.

Duplicate complaints

If the school has resolved a complaint under this procedure and receives a duplicate complaint on the same subject from a partner, family member or other individual, it will assess whether there are aspects that it hadn't previously considered, or any new information that needs to be taken into account.

If it are satisfied that there are no new aspects, the school will:

- Tell the new complainant that it has already investigated and responded to this issue, and the local process is complete

- Direct them to the DfE if they are dissatisfied with the original handling of the complaint

If there are new aspects, this procedure will be followed again.

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.

Anonymous complaints

Anonymous complaints will not normally be investigated. However, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

Withdrawal of a complaint

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

6. Monitoring and Review

· The Headteacher will report to the full governing body annually on the number and nature of formal complaints received and the outcomes, ensuring anonymity for all individuals.

· Lessons learned from the complaints process will be used to inform school self-evaluation and policy development.