

# THE STOKE POGES SCHOOL

## Complaints and Resolutions Policy and Procedure

Date Approved	March 2026
Recommended Review Period	Annual
Date for Review	March 2027
Person Responsible for the Policy	Headteacher

### 1. Introduction

The Governing Board of The Stoke Poges School has adopted this procedure to deal with concerns or complaints.

The complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children that are registered at the school. Any person, including a member of the public, may raise a concern or make a complaint to the school about a provision of facilities or services that the school provides.

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

### 2. Definitions

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

In most cases, a concern can be resolved through informal means. A complaint will follow formal procedures.

### 3. Aims

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

Careful consideration will be given to all concerns and complaints. 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. The school takes concerns and complaints seriously and will make every effort to deal with them as swiftly as possible. We will provide sufficient opportunity for any concern or complaint to be fully discussed.

In all cases we will put the interests of the child above all other issues.

Our 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 people informed of the progress
- Ensure a full and fair investigation by an independent person where necessary
- Respect people's desire for 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
- Consider how the complaint can feed into school improvement evaluation processes
- Make sure that any decisions we make are lawful, rational, reasonable, fair and proportionate, in line with the principles of administrative law

Mediation may be useful in resolving a concern or complaint and may be offered at any point during the complaints procedure. Mediation will only be entered into with the agreement of all parties.

The school will aim to give the complainant the opportunity to complete the complaints procedure in full.

To support this, we will make sure we 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.

#### 4. Legislation and guidance

This document meets the requirements of section 29 of the [Education Act 2002](#), which states that schools must have and make available a procedure to deal with all complaints relating to their school and to any community facilities or services that the school provides.

It is also based on [guidance for schools on complaints procedures](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), including the model procedure, and model procedure for dealing with serial and unreasonable complaints.

In addition, it addresses duties set out in the [Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework](#) with regards to dealing with complaints about the school's fulfilment of Early Years Foundation Stage requirements.

#### 5. Scope

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by The Stoke Poges School, other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

	<b>Who to contact</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Admissions to schools</li> <li>• Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs</li> <li>• School re-organisation proposals</li> </ul>	Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with the Local Authority
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation</li> </ul>	<p>Complaints about child protection matters are handled under the child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.</p> <p>If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exclusion of children from school*</li> </ul>	<p>Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: <a href="http://www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions">www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions</a>.</p> <p><i>*complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whistleblowing</li> </ul>	<p>We have an internal whistle-blowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors.</p> <p>The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistle-blowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus">www.education.gov.uk/contactus</a>.</p> <p>Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the Local Authority or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff grievances</li> </ul>	<p>Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff conduct</li> </ul>	<p>Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities</li> </ul>	<p>Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National curriculum - content</li> </ul>	<p>Please contact the Department for Education at: <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus">www.education.gov.uk/contactus</a></p>

Please see our separate policies for procedures relating to these types of complaint.

Complaints about services provided by other providers who use school premises or facilities should be directed to the provider concerned.

If a complainant commences legal action against The Stoke Poges 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.

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

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

## 7. Principles for investigation

When investigating a complaint, we will try to clarify:

- What has happened
- Who was involved
- What the complainant feels would put things right

The school will not normally investigate anonymous statements as part of the concern or complaint.

### 7.1 Timescales

A concern or complaint must be raised within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents.

The school will consider exceptions to this timeframe 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.

Concerns or complaints raised outside of term time will be considered to have been raised on the first school day after the holiday period.

At any point we cannot meet the timescales 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

## **8. Raising informal concerns**

If you have any concerns about the school, or the education we are providing at any time, please discuss the matter with your child's teacher / phase leader / headteacher at the earliest opportunity either in person or by letter, telephone or office email, with the timescales set out in this policy.

The informal stage will involve a meeting between the parent and the member of staff and phase leader / headteacher (as appropriate). A written response will be provided by the school within 5 school days following the informal meeting.

Parents and carers must not use social media or other public platforms to raise or discuss concerns about the school, staff, pupils, or families. All concerns must be brought directly to the school, in person or in writing, so they can be addressed promptly and confidentially.

Concerns or complaints should not be raised with individual governors. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may prevent them from considering a formal complaint in the future.

The school considers any concerns very seriously and most problems can be resolved following discussion and a shared understanding of the issues.

## **9. Resolving formal complaints**

If the concern is not resolved informally, it will be escalated to a formal complaint.

At each stage in the formal procedure, The Stoke Poges 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 reoccur
- 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

## **10. Withdrawal of a complaint**

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

## 11. Stages of complaint

We have adopted a 2-stage process for dealing with complaints:

- Stage 1 – formal investigation
- Stage 2 – review panel

### 11.1 Stage 1

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 Complaints 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 5 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 15 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 a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions The Stoke Poges School will take to resolve the 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, or a member of the governing board (including the Chair or Vice-Chair), a suitably skilled governor (or independent investigator) will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 1.

Complaints about the headteacher or member of the governing board must be made to the Clerk, via the school office.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair or Vice Chair or
- the entire governing board or
- the majority of the governing board

Stage 1 will be considered by an independent investigator appointed by the governing board. At the conclusion of their investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response.

### 11.2 Stage 2

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1 and wishes to take the matter further, they may escalate the complaint to Stage 2 – a meeting with members of the governing board's complaints committee. A panel will be formed from the first three impartial governors who are available. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.

A request to escalate to Stage 2 must be made to the Clerk, via the school office, within 15 school days of receipt of the Stage 1 response.

The Clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 5 school days.

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

The Clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the Stage 2 meeting with the complaints committee. They will aim to convene a meeting within 15 school days of receipt of the Stage 2 request. If this is not possible, the Clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

If the complainant rejects the offer of 3 proposed dates, without good reason, the Clerk 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.

The complaints committee will consist of at least 3 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 Complaints Committee. If there are fewer than 3 governors from The Stoke Poges School available, the Clerk will source any additional, independent governors through another local school or through their LA's Governor Services team, in order to make up the committee. Alternatively, an entirely independent committee may be convened to hear the complaint at Stage 2.

The committee will decide whether to deal with the complaint by inviting parties to a meeting or through written representations, but in making their decision they will be sensitive to the complainant's needs.

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

For instance, if a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by union and/or legal representation.

*Note: Complaints about staff conduct will not generally be handled under this complaints procedure. Complainants will be advised that any staff conduct complaints will be considered under staff disciplinary procedures, if appropriate, but outcomes will not be shared with them.*

At least 15 school days before the meeting, the Clerk will:

- confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that, if the complainant is invited, 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 5 School days before the meeting. Date will be provided at the time by the clerk when setting the committee date.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 5 school days before the date of the meeting. The committee will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded. They will also not usually accept anonymous statements - all statements need to be signed and dated.

The committee 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. 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 committee will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The committee 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 committee 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 Committee will provide the complainant and The Stoke Poges School with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 5 school days.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair or Vice Chair or
- the entire governing board or
- the majority of the governing board

Stage 2 will be heard by a committee of independent governors.

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 The Stoke Poges School will take to resolve the complaint.

The response will also advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied.

## **12. 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 2.

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by The Stoke Poges School. They will consider whether The Stoke Poges 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](http://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

## **13. Unreasonable or persistent complaints**

### **13.1 Unreasonably persistent complaints**

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

- 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
- Refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure
- Insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice
- Introduces trivial or irrelevant information that they expect to be taken into account and commented on

- 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 the complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed, including referral to the Department of Education
- Seeks an unrealistic outcome
- Makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff or governors regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and 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.

**Please note:** the above list is not intended to be exhaustive and is for guidance purposes only. It is at the discretion of the school what is deemed to be unreasonable.

Complainants should try to limit their communications with the school while the 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.

### **Steps we will take**

We will take every reasonable step to address the complainant's concerns, and give them a clear statement of our position and their options. We will maintain our role as an objective arbiter throughout the process, including when we meet with individuals. We will follow our complaints procedure as normal (as outlined above) wherever possible.

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 will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable, refer them to this policy and remind them to act in accordance with it.

If the complainant continues to contact the school in a disruptive way, we may put communications strategies in place. We may:

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

### **Stopping responding**

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

- We believe we have taken all reasonable steps to help address their concerns
- We have provided a clear statement of our position and their options
- The complainant contacts us repeatedly, and we believe their intention is to cause disruption or inconvenience

When we stop responding, we will inform the individual that we intend to do so. We will also explain that we will still consider any new complaints they make.

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 our school site.

## **13.2 Serial/persistent complaints**

If the complainant contacts the school again on the same issue, the correspondence may then be viewed as 'serial' or 'persistent'. We may stop responding to the complainant when the following conditions are met:

- We have taken every reasonable step to address the complainant's concerns
- The complainant has been given a clear statement of our position and their options
- The complainant contacts the school repeatedly, making substantially the same points each time

The case to stop responding is stronger if:

- The complainant's communications are often or always abusive or aggressive
- The complainant makes insulting personal comments about or threat towards staff
- We have reason to believe the individual is contacting the school with the intention of causing disruption or inconvenience

Where we decide to stop responding, we will inform the individual that we intend to do so. We will also explain that we will consider any new complaints they make provided the concerns raised are materially different to those raised previously and/or are unconnected to the previous concern.

## **13.3 Duplicate complaints**

If we have resolved a complaint under this procedure and receive a duplicate complaint on the same subject from a partner, family member or other individual, we will assess whether there are aspects that we hadn't previously considered, or any new information we need to take into account.

If we are satisfied that there are no new aspects, we will:

- Tell the new complainant that we have already investigated and responded to this issue, and that the local process is complete
- Direct them to the DfE if they are dissatisfied with our original handling of the complaint

If there are new aspects, we will follow this procedure again.

## **13.4 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.

## **14. Record keeping and confidentiality**

The school will record the progress of all complaints, including information about actions taken at all stages, the stage at which the complaint was resolved, and the final outcome. The records will also include copies of letters, emails, and notes relating to meetings and phone calls.

This material will be treated as confidential and held centrally, and will be viewed only by those involved in investigating the complaint or on the Stage 2 committee.

This is except where the secretary of state (or someone acting on their behalf) or the complainant requests access to records of a complaint through a freedom of information (FOI) request or through a subject access request under the terms of the Data Protection Act, or where the material must be made available during a school inspection.

Records of complaints will be retained securely, only for as long as necessary and in line with data protection law, our privacy notices and record retention schedule.

The details of the complaint, including the names of individuals involved, will not be shared with the whole governing board in case a Complaints committee needs to be organised at a later point.

Where the governing board is aware of the substance of the complaint before the Stage 2 committee, the school will (where reasonably practicable) arrange for an independent panel to hear the complaint.

Complainants also have the right to request an independent panel if they believe there is likely to be bias in the proceedings. The decision to approve this request is made by the governing board, who will not unreasonably withhold consent.

### **15. Learning lessons**

The Chair of Governors will review any underlying issues raised by complaints with the Headteacher, where appropriate, and respecting confidentiality, to determine whether there are any improvements that the school can make to its procedures or practice to help prevent similar events in the future.

### **16. Monitoring and Review**

The Chair of Governors will monitor the effectiveness of the complaints procedure in making sure that complaints are handled properly. The Chair of Governors will track the number and nature of complaints, and review underlying issues as stated in section 13.

The complaints records are logged and managed by the Headteacher.

The policy will be reviewed by the Headteacher annually.

At every review, the policy will be approved by the Chair of Governors.

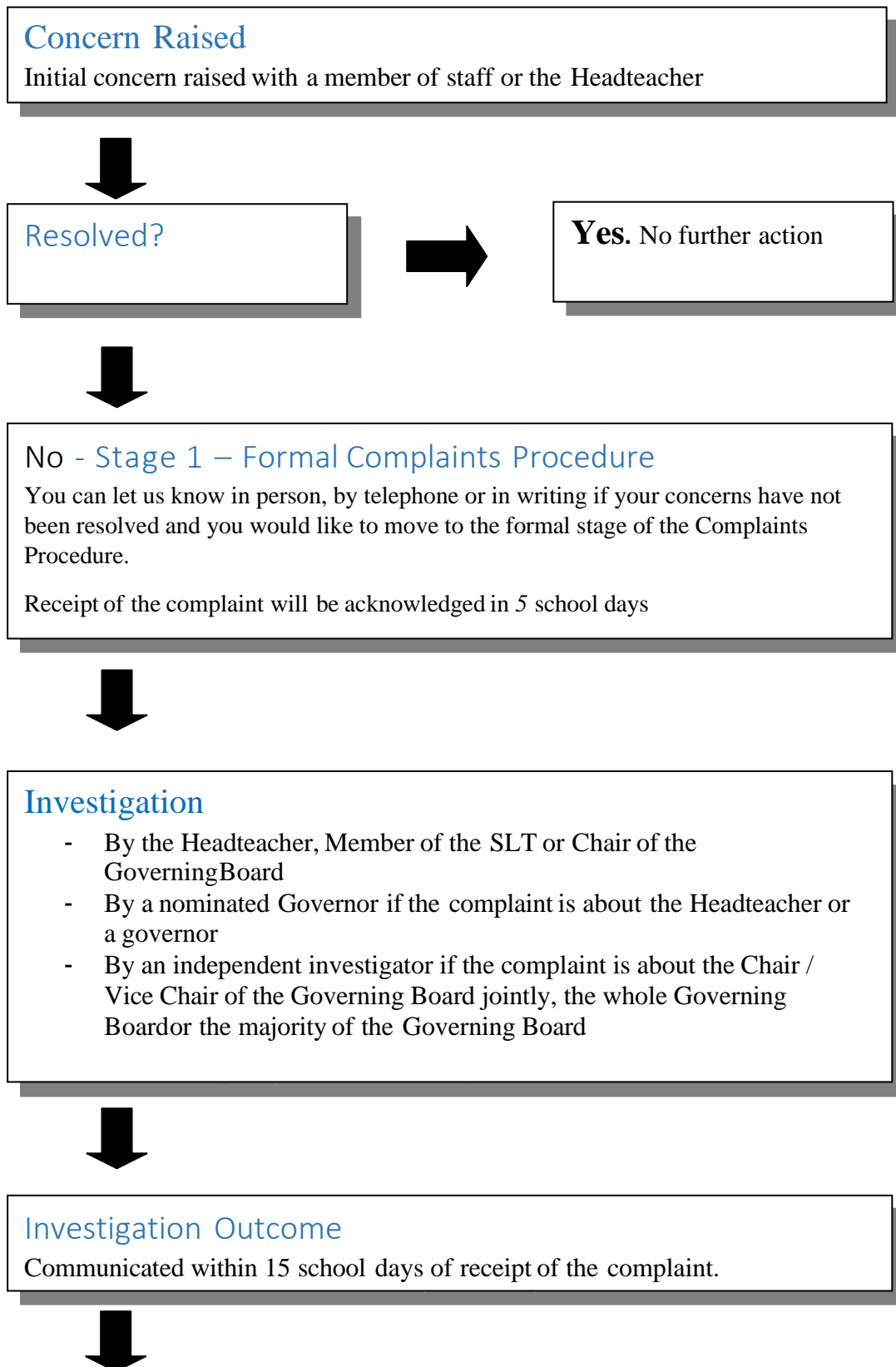
### **17. Links with other policies**

Policies dealing with other forms of complaints include:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures
- Exclusion policy
- Staff grievance procedures
- Staff disciplinary procedures
- SEN policy and information report
- Privacy notices
- Parent Code of Conduct
- Managing aggressive behaviour from parent and visitors

<b>Headteacher</b>		<b>Date</b>	
<b>Chair of Governing Board</b>		<b>Date</b>	

## Appendix 1: Complaints Procedure - Flowchart Summary



Resolved?



**Yes.** No further action



### **No** - Stage 2 – Formal Complaints Procedure

If you wish to take your complaint to Stage 2 of the procedure you will be asked to confirm this within 15 school days of the completion of Stage 1, addressed to the clerk to the governing board.



### Governing Board Complaints Committee Meeting

A panel of three governors will meet to consider your complaint within 15 school days. The committee meeting will be independently clerked.

If you wish to submit evidence to the panel you will be invited to do so in advance of the meeting.



### Complaints Committee Decision

The panel will make a final decision on behalf of the Governing Board and will write to you within 5 school days.

You will be told whether the complaint has been upheld or dismissed and whether the panel have agreed any actions or made any recommendations.



Resolved?



**Yes.** No further action



**No** - You can contact the Department for Education if you feel the school has acted unreasonably or not followed the correct procedures.

## Appendix 2: Complaint Form

Please complete and return to ..... (Headteacher/Clerk/complaints co-ordinator/designated governor) 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 concise details of your complaint, including any relevant dates, names of witnesses etc, 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:

**Official use**

Date acknowledgement sent:

By whom:

**Complaint referred**

**to:Date:**

### **Appendix 3: Example of an in-person meeting (the committee may adjust this to meet particular circumstances)**

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- After introductions, the complainant will be invited to explain their complaint, and be followed by their witnesses (if any).
- The Headteacher/Chair of Governors / Investigating Officer may question both the complainant and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The Headteacher/Chair of Governors will then be 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 committee may request questions in advance of the meeting for their consideration rather than direct questions.
- The panel may ask questions at any point.
- The complainant is then invited to sum up their complaint.
- The Headteacher/Chair of Governors is then invited to sum up the school's actions and respond to the complaint.
- The Chair of the panel explains that both parties will hear from the panel within 5 school days.
- Both parties leave together while the panel decides on the issues.
- The Clerk remains to support the panel.