



# Clapgate Primary School Complaints Policy & Procedures

Approved by: Headteacher

Date: September 2025

Review date: September 2026



Knowledge



Spark



Humanity



Grit



Team

This policy sets out the school's approach to dealing with concerns and complaints.

We value good home/school relations and will, therefore, do everything we can to establish and maintain them. This includes seeking to resolve any concerns or complaints promptly, and to the satisfaction of all concerned.

We welcome feedback on what parents feel we do well, or not so well, as a school. We will consider carefully all feedback, whether positive or negative, and will review our policies and practices accordingly.

We will treat all concerns and complaints seriously and courteously and will advise parents and others of the school's procedures for dealing with their concerns. In return, we expect parents and other complainants to behave respectfully towards all members of the school community. In particular, any disagreement with the school should not be expressed inappropriately or in front of pupils.

All school staff and members of the governing body will receive a copy of this policy statement and will be familiar with the school's procedures for dealing with concerns and complaints, to which they will have access as required. The policy is available on request and also on the school's website.

The school's procedures will be reviewed regularly and updated as necessary.

Staff and governors will receive training in handling parental concerns and complaints as appropriate. This may be on an individual basis, or as a group activity for all staff, or for specific groups, such as the office staff or members of the governing body.

Whilst we will seek to resolve concerns and complaints to the satisfaction of all parties, it may not be possible to achieve this in every case. We will, therefore, use our option to close a complaint once all the stages of the school's procedures have been exhausted, if this appears to be appropriate.

The government and the local authority advocate resolution of concerns and complaints at school level wherever possible, in the interests of maintaining good home/school relations. The role of the local authority in advising parents (other complainants) and schools on the handling of concerns and complaints is set out in the school's procedures.

## 1. Who can make a complaint?

This complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children registered at Clapgate Primary School. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to us about any provision of facilities or services that we provide.

Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as appeals relating to exclusions or admissions), we will use this complaints procedure.

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## 2. The difference between a concern and a complaint

- A **concern** is an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered important, for which you are seeking reassurance.
- A **complaint** is 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 settled informally, without the need to go through the formal stages of this procedure. We take concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve matters as quickly as possible.

If you find it difficult to raise a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views and refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with the concern, they will refer you to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be, what matters most is that they can consider the concern objectively and fairly.

We also understand there may be occasions when you want to raise your concern formally. In these cases, we will use the stages outlined in this complaints procedure to resolve the issue internally.

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

You can make a concern or complaint:

- in person,
- in writing, or
- by telephone.

You may also ask a third party to act on your behalf if you give them consent.

In the first instance, you should raise your concern with either your child's class teacher or the headteacher. If the issue is not resolved, you can make a formal complaint.

Please do not approach individual governors. They cannot act on an individual basis and doing so may prevent them from being part of the complaints process at Stage 2.

- **Complaints about school staff (except the headteacher):** make these to the headteacher via the school office. Mark them as *Private and Confidential*.
- **Complaints about the headteacher:** address these to the Chair of Governors, via the school office. Mark them as *Private and Confidential*.
- **Complaints about the Chair of Governors:** address these to the Vice Chair.
- **Complaints about an individual governor:** address these to the Chair of Governors.
- **Complaints about the whole governing body:** address these to the Complaints Coordinator via the school office. They will enlist support from another governing body to investigate.

A template complaint form is included at the end of this policy (appendix 1). If you need help filling it out, please contact the school office.

In line with equality law, we will make reasonable adjustments if needed, for example, providing information in different formats, helping you complete the form, or holding meetings in accessible locations.

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#### 4. Anonymous complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the headteacher or Chair of Governors will decide if a complaint warrants investigation.

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#### 5. Timescales

You must raise a complaint within three months of the incident, or within three months of the last in a series of related incidents. We may consider complaints outside of this timeframe if there are exceptional circumstances.

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#### 6. Complaints received outside of term time

If you make a complaint outside of term time, we will treat it as received on the first school day after the holiday period.

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#### 7. Scope of this complaints procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by Clapgate Primary School, except for those covered by separate statutory procedures, including:

- **Admissions to schools**
- **Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs**
- **School reorganisation proposals** → Raise with: [complaints.children@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:complaints.children@leeds.gov.uk)
- **Child Protection matters** → These are handled under our safeguarding policy. You may also contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) at [lado@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:lado@leeds.gov.uk) or Duty and Advice.
- **Exclusions** → Guidance: [www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions](http://www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions)
- **Whistleblowing** → Our internal whistleblowing procedure applies to staff. You may also contact the Secretary of State for Education: [www.education.gov.uk/contactus](http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus)
- **Staff grievances or conduct issues** → Dealt with through internal grievance or disciplinary procedures.
- **Complaints about third-party providers using school facilities** → Contact the provider directly.
- **National Curriculum content** → Contact the Department for Education: [www.education.gov.uk/contactus](http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus)

If other bodies (e.g., police, LA safeguarding, tribunals) are investigating, our timescales may be delayed or suspended until their work is complete.

If you take legal action against Clapgate Primary School regarding your complaint, we may suspend this procedure until proceedings have finished.

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## 8. General Procedures for Handling Concerns and Complaints

The majority of concerns from parents, carers, and others are resolved through the school's general procedures.

To help us provide an effective response to your complaint, it will be helpful if you:

- co-operate with the school in seeking a solution,
- express your complaint in full as early as possible (complaints must normally be raised within three months of the incident, although exceptional circumstances will be considered),
- respond promptly to requests for information, meetings, or clarifying details of the complaint,
- ask for assistance if needed (we will make reasonable adjustments to ensure the complaints process is accessible to you — for example, providing information in alternative formats or supporting you to make your complaint),
- treat all those involved in the process with courtesy and respect.

At each stage of the procedure, Clapgate Primary School aims to resolve complaints fairly and promptly. Where appropriate, we may acknowledge that a 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 steps will be taken to prevent a recurrence,
- an explanation of the actions that have been or will be taken, including timescales,
- a review of relevant school policies in light of the complaint,
- an apology.

The complaints procedure is divided into three stages:

1. **Informal Stage** – aims to resolve the concern through informal contact at the appropriate level in school.
2. **Stage One** – the first formal stage, where written complaints are considered by the headteacher (or a designated governor if the complaint is about the headteacher).
3. **Stage Two** – the appeal stage, where a panel of governors reviews the complaint if it remains unresolved after Stage One.

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## 9. Withdrawal of a complaint

If you wish to withdraw your complaint, we will ask you to confirm this in writing.

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## 10. Stage 1 – Formal Consideration of Your Complaint

This stage applies where you are not satisfied with the informal approach to dealing with your concern.

### Submitting a complaint

- Normally, your written complaint should be addressed to the **headteacher**.
- If your complaint concerns the headteacher personally, it should be marked “**for the attention of the Chair of Governors**” and sent via the school office.
- A written complaint form is available (see Appendix 1).
- You should not approach individual governors to raise complaints. Governors have no power to act individually and doing so may prevent them from considering your complaint impartially at Stage 2.

- Complaints made outside of term time will be recorded as received on the first school day after the holiday period.

### Acknowledgement and investigation

- We will record the date your complaint is received and acknowledge it in writing (by letter or email) within **three school days**.
- In this initial response, the headteacher will clarify the nature of your complaint, ask what remains unresolved, and confirm the outcome you are seeking. A face-to-face meeting may be suggested if appropriate.
- The headteacher may delegate the investigation to a senior member of staff, but the **final decision will remain with the headteacher**.
- If the complaint is about the headteacher, the Chair of Governors (or another designated governor) will investigate. In cases where the complaint is:
  - jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair,
  - about the entire governing body, or
  - about the majority of the governing body,
 the investigation will be carried out by an **independent investigator** appointed by the governing body (or the Diocese, if appropriate). This will usually be a governor from another school.

### During the investigation

The investigating officer (headteacher, Chair, or designated governor) will:

- interview those involved, including staff and pupils if necessary,
- ensure that pupils are supported appropriately (normally with a parent/carer present, or with a trusted member of staff if this is not possible),
- allow anyone interviewed to be accompanied if they wish,
- keep dated written records of meetings, conversations, telephone calls, and statements,
- ensure that accurate notes of meetings are agreed by all parties,
- deal with complaints about the conduct of staff members under the school's **confidential internal procedures**, as required by law.

Where appropriate, we may also contact external individuals who can assist with our enquiries.

### Timescales

- We will normally provide a full written response within **15 school days** of receiving the complaint.
- If we cannot meet this deadline, we will write to explain the reason for the delay and provide a revised timescale.

### Outcome

The written response will:

- explain the actions taken during the investigation,
- provide the decision and the reasons for it,
- outline any actions the school will take to resolve the complaint (with timescales where relevant),
- indicate any follow-up steps to be taken, and
- advise you how to escalate your complaint to **Stage 2** if you remain dissatisfied.

As part of our commitment to fairness and equality, we will make **reasonable adjustments** to ensure accessibility to the complaints process. This may include providing information in alternative formats, supporting you to put your complaint in writing, or holding meetings in accessible locations.

If you wish to escalate your complaint to Stage 2, you should notify the school within **10 school days** of receiving our written response.

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## **12. Stage 2 – Consideration by the Governing Body's Complaints Committee**

If you remain dissatisfied after Stage 1, you may ask us to consider your complaint at **Stage 2**, which is heard by the governing body's complaints committee (the governors' appeal panel). This is the school's final internal stage. The purpose of the panel is **not** to reinvestigate the complaint but to review whether Stage 1 was handled fairly and properly, to establish the facts and to make recommendations where appropriate so you can be satisfied the matter has been taken seriously.

### **How to escalate to Stage 2**

- You must request escalation to Stage 2 by contacting the school office within **10 school days** of receiving the Stage 1 response.
- When we receive your request we will record the date and acknowledge it in writing (by letter or email) within **three school days**.
- Requests outside the 10-day deadline will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

### **Convening the panel**

- We will aim to convene the panel within **20 school days** of receiving your Stage 2 request. If that is not possible we will give you an anticipated date and keep you updated.
- The panel will consist of at least **three governors** who have had no prior involvement or knowledge of your complaint; they will choose a Chair. If fewer than three governors are available we will source independent governors through another local school or the Local Authority's Governor Support Services, or convene an entirely independent panel.

### **Preparation and paperwork**

- The headteacher (or the person who carried out the Stage 1 investigation) will prepare a pack of documentation relating to the investigation and the Stage 1 outcome for the panel. The panel may request additional information from other sources if necessary.
- At least **10 school days** before the meeting we will confirm the date, time and venue with you.
- We will ask you to submit any further written material at least **5 school days** before the meeting.
- All written material will be circulated to all parties at least **3 school days** before the meeting.

If you reject **three** proposed dates without good reason, we will decide when to hold the meeting and may proceed in your absence on the basis of written submissions.

### **Attendance, representation and conduct at the meeting**

- The meeting will be held in private. You may bring someone to support you (a friend or relative). The person you bring should not be directly connected with the school.
- Legal representation is not normally appropriate because this is not a legal process. However, there may be exceptions (for example, where a school employee is called as a witness and wishes to be accompanied by union or legal representation).
- Representatives from the media are not permitted.
- Electronic recordings are not normally permitted unless required because of a disability or special needs, and then only with the prior consent of all parties. Any agreed recordings remain private and further sharing is subject to Data Protection law.
- In exceptional circumstances, and with the agreement of the Chair of the panel, the headteacher/investigating officer may invite relevant witnesses directly involved in the matters you raise to attend.

## Procedure at the meeting

The Chair will make every effort to put you at ease. As a general rule, no new evidence or witnesses previously undisclosed should be introduced at the meeting; if new evidence is presented, the panel may adjourn so the other party has a fair opportunity to consider and respond.

During the meeting you can expect opportunities for:

- you to explain your case and why you are asking for a Stage 2 review;
- the headteacher/investigating officer to present their response;
- questions to be asked by the Chair on behalf of the panel;
- questions from the panel to you and to the headteacher/investigating officer;
- final statements from you and from the headteacher/investigating officer.

The Chair will ensure the meeting is properly minuted. You may request a copy of the minutes at the start of the proceedings.

## Decision and outcome

- After the meeting the panel will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The panel may: uphold the complaint in whole or in part, or dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.
- If the complaint is upheld (in whole or in part), the panel will decide what action is necessary to resolve the complaint and may recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues.
- The panel will aim to reach a unanimous or, at least, a majority decision.
- The Chair will send you and Clapgate Primary School a written explanation of the panel's decision and the reasons for it. We will normally send this written outcome **within five school days** of the meeting (and will endeavour to issue it as soon as possible, often within three school days).
- The letter will explain that if you remain dissatisfied you have the right to contact the Secretary of State for Education (details will be included).

The panel's response will set out any actions taken to investigate the complaint, the decision reached and the reasons for it, and, where appropriate, any steps Clapgate Primary School will take to resolve the complaint.

## Record keeping and confidentiality

- We will keep a copy of all correspondence, minutes and notes on file in the school's records, but separate from pupils' personal records.
- Electronic recordings of the meeting (if agreed) remain private and their further use is restricted under the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.

## Complaints about the governing body

If your complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair, or
- about the entire governing body, or
- about the majority of the governing body,

then Stage 2 will be heard by a committee of **independent governors**. The independent committee's decision and the school's response will follow the same process described above and will include details of how to escalate the matter externally should you remain dissatisfied.



### 13. Closing a Complaint

Very occasionally, we may need, regretfully, to close a complaint even if the complainant remains dissatisfied.

We will always do everything we can to resolve complaints against the school, but sometimes it is simply not possible to meet all of a complainant's wishes. In such cases, it may be a matter of "agreeing to disagree."

If a complainant continues to raise the same issues repeatedly — whether with the headteacher, a designated governor, the Chair of Governors, or others — this can be very time-consuming and can detract from our responsibility to care for and educate all the children at Clapgate Primary School.

For this reason, we are entitled to close correspondence (including letters, emails, telephone calls, and personal approaches) once we have taken all reasonable steps to resolve the matter and the complaint has been through our official process. The local authority will support us in this position, particularly if the complainant's actions are causing distress to staff or pupils.

If you have completed the school's internal complaints procedure and are still unhappy with the outcome, you may contact the Secretary of State for Education via the Department for Education (DfE):

- Online: [www.education.gov.uk/contactus](http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus)
- Telephone: 0370 000 2288
- By post:

**Department for Education**

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

Please include a copy of the school's final complaint outcome when writing to the DfE. This will help avoid delays, as the DfE will not need to request the school's view separately.

We advise parents and carers that, unless it can be shown that the school has acted unreasonably or has not followed its own procedures (or relevant statutory procedures), there is likely to be little further action the DfE can take. Governing bodies are empowered to deal with many issues without reference to either the local authority or the Secretary of State.

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### 14. Managing serial and unreasonable complaints

Clapgate Primary School is committed to dealing with complaints fairly and providing a high-quality service. However, we will not tolerate behaviour that is abusive, offensive or threatening, and we will protect our staff from such behaviour.

We define unreasonable behaviour as that which makes it difficult for us to deal with a complaint effectively, such as:

- refusing to explain the complaint clearly,
- refusing to co-operate with the investigation,
- introducing trivial or irrelevant information,
- repeatedly making the same complaint after it has been addressed,
- using threats, abusive language or violence,
- publishing unacceptable information on social media.

If behaviour becomes unreasonable, we may limit communication through a communication plan (reviewed after six months). In serious cases of aggression or violence, we will involve the police and may bar the individual from our premises.

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## **15. Campaigns**

If we receive a large number of complaints from parents, carers, and/or individuals unconnected with the school about a particular issue, we will treat these as part of a campaign.

Campaigns usually arise around a high-profile issue that motivates a number of people to contact the school to express their dissatisfaction.

We will not investigate such matters under the school's complaints policy. Instead, we will produce a single response to the issue, which will either:

- be sent directly to all correspondents, or
  - be published on the school's website with directions for people to access it.
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## **16. Other sources of information and advice**

If your concern relates to special educational needs (SEN) provision, you may wish to contact:

**Leeds SEND Information Advice Service (Leeds Special Educational Needs and Disability Advice Support Service)**  
Helpline: **0113 3951222**

They can also provide details of relevant voluntary organisations and support groups in Leeds.

**Appendix 1**

**School Complaints- Written Record Form**

**Stage One**

*Please complete and return to the headteacher who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.*

Your Name .....

Address .....

.....

Postcode .....

Telephone number(s) .....

E-mail address .....

Your relationship to the school, e.g. parent, carer, neighbour, member of the public, student:

.....

Pupil Name (if applicable) .....

Please\ give details of your complaint:

What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint? Who did you speak to, when and what was the response?

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

Signature .....

Date .....

**Official Use:**

Date of acknowledgment .....

By whom .....

Complaint referred to .....

Date .....

## **Appendix 2- Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Complainant**

The complainant will receive a more effective response to the complaint if they:

- explain the complaint in full as early as possible
- co-operate with the school in seeking a solution to the complaint
- respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint
- ask for assistance as needed
- treat all those involved in the complaint with respect
- refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality.

### **Investigator**

The investigator's role is to establish the facts relevant to the complaint by:

- providing a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint through:
  - sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved
  - interviewing staff and children/young people and other people relevant to the complaint
  - consideration of records and other relevant information
  - analysing information
- liaising with the complainant and the complaints co-ordinator as appropriate to clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.

The investigator should:

- conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning
- keep notes of interviews or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of the meeting
- ensure that any papers produced during the investigation are kept securely pending any appeal
- be mindful of the timescales to respond
- prepare a comprehensive report for the headteacher or complaints committee that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.

The headteacher or complaints committee will then determine whether to uphold or dismiss the complaint and communicate that decision to the complainant, providing the appropriate escalation details.

**Complaints Co-ordinator (this could be the headteacher / designated complaints governor or other staff member providing administrative support for complaints against governors/ the clerk to governing body if this service is not provided through the Local Authority)**

The Complaints co-ordinator is the contact point for the complainant and the committee and should:

- ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure
- liaise with staff members, headteacher, Chair of Governors, Clerk and LAs (if appropriate) to ensure the smooth running of the complaints procedure
- be aware of issues regarding:

- sharing third party information
- additional support. This may be needed by complainants when making a complaint including interpretation support or where the complainant is a child or young person
- keep records
- set the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties (if they are invited to attend) and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- collate any written material relevant to the complaint (for example; stage 1 paperwork, school and complainant submissions) and send it to the parties in advance of the meeting within the agreed timescale
- notify all parties of the committee's decision
- circulate the minutes of the meeting if requested.

### **Clerk to the Governing Body**

The Clerk can be appointed to provide procedural advice and take minutes of the meeting:

- ensure that all people involved in the complaint procedure are aware of their legal rights and duties, including any under legislation relating to school complaints, education law, the Equality Act 2010, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)
- record the proceedings

### **Committee Chair**

The committee's chair, who is nominated in advance of the complaint meeting, should ensure that:

- both parties are asked (via the school complaints coordinator) to provide any additional information relating to the complaint by a specified date in advance of the meeting
- the meeting is conducted in an informal manner, is not adversarial, and that, if all parties are invited to attend, everyone is treated with respect and courtesy
- complainants who may not be used to speaking at such a meeting are put at ease. This is particularly important if the complainant is a child/young person
- the remit of the committee is explained to the complainant
- written material is seen by everyone in attendance, provided it does not breach confidentiality or any individual's rights to privacy under the DPA 2018 or GDPR.

If a new issue arises it would be useful to give everyone the opportunity to consider and comment upon it; this may require a short adjournment of the meeting

- both the complainant and the school are given the opportunity to make their case and seek clarity, either through written submissions ahead of the meeting or verbally in the meeting itself
- the issues are addressed
- key findings of fact are made
- the committee is open-minded and acts independently
- no member of the committee has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure
- the meeting is minuted

- they liaise with the Clerk (and complaints co-ordinator, if the school has one).

### **Committee Member**

Committee members should be aware that:

- the meeting must be independent and impartial, and should be seen to be so
  - No governor may sit on the committee if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it.
- the aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant
  - We recognise that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the meeting does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations.
- many complainants will feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting
  - Parents/carers often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child.
- extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child/young person and present during all or part of the meeting
  - Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings should ensure that the child/young person does not feel intimidated.
  - The committee should respect the views of the child/young person and give them equal consideration to those of adults.
  - If the child/young person is the complainant, the committee should ask in advance if any support is needed to help them present their complaint.
  - Where the child/young person's parent is the complainant, the committee should give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the meeting, if any, the child/young person needs to attend.
  - However, the parent should be advised that agreement might not always be possible if the parent wishes the child/young person to attend a part of the meeting that the committee considers is not in the child/young person's best interests.
- the welfare of the child/young person is paramount.



## Appendix 3- Flowchart

### Dealing with complaints about schools – flowchart

