



Old Park Primary School & Nursery

Complaints policy

Reviewed: October 2026

Next Planned Review: October 2027

Person responsible: J Foster

1. Purpose

Old Park Primary School & Nursery is committed to handling concerns and complaints fairly, proportionately, transparently, respectfully and in a way that supports constructive relationships while maintaining appropriate accountability.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- ensure concerns and complaints are heard and acknowledged appropriately;
- promote early resolution wherever appropriate;
- support constructive communication between parents/carers, pupils, staff, leaders and governors;
- ensure formal complaints are investigated fairly, objectively and without unnecessary delay;
- maintain confidence in leadership and governance processes;
- reduce unnecessary escalation where concerns can reasonably be resolved informally or restoratively;
- protect the wellbeing, dignity, confidentiality and rights of all parties;
- identify learning and improvements arising from complaints.

The school recognises that formal complaints procedures are important, but not every concern requires immediate formal escalation. Equally, informal resolution must not become a barrier to making or progressing a formal complaint.

2. Definitions and principles

2.1 Concern and complaint

A **concern** is an expression of worry or doubt about an issue for which reassurance or clarification is sought.

A **complaint** is an expression or statement of dissatisfaction, however made, about actions taken or a lack of action.

In many cases a concern can be resolved informally. A complaint will follow the formal procedure where informal resolution is unsuccessful, inappropriate, or the complainant wishes to use the formal process.

2.2 Principles

- Fairness
- Proportionality
- Transparency
- Respect and courtesy
- Early resolution
- Restorative practice where appropriate
- Objectivity and impartiality
- Confidentiality
- Accessibility and reasonable adjustment
- Accountability
- Learning and continuous improvement

Decisions under this policy should be lawful, rational, reasonable, fair and proportionate. The school will keep complainants appropriately informed.

3. Scope and matters dealt with elsewhere

This policy covers complaints about the school's provision of facilities or services and other matters for which the school is responsible, except where a separate statutory or school procedure applies.

Separate procedures may apply to:

- admissions;
- statutory assessments of special educational needs (SEN);
- safeguarding matters likely to require a child protection investigation;
- suspension and permanent exclusion;
- whistleblowing;
- staff grievances;
- staff discipline and conduct;
- school reorganisation proposals;
- collective worship.

Complaints about services provided by a third party using school premises should normally be directed to that provider. The final published policy should signpost relevant separate procedures.

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 The complainant should:

- follow the school's complaints procedure;
- explain the concern or complaint as fully and as early as possible;
- identify, where possible, what outcome or resolution is sought;
- co-operate with reasonable requests for information and meetings;
- treat those involved with respect and maintain appropriate confidentiality;
- avoid approaching individual governors about the substance of a live complaint, as this may compromise their impartiality;
- avoid publishing confidential details of a complaint on social media while the process is ongoing.

4.2 Complaints co-ordinator

The school will identify a **complaints co-ordinator**, who may be the headteacher, a designated governor or an appropriate member of administrative staff. The co-ordinator will support communication, records, timescales and liaison between relevant parties. Old Park Primary School has appointed **James Foster** (Headteacher) and **Kelsey Ahrbaab** (School Business Manager).

4.3 Investigator

An investigator will consider relevant records and evidence, interview or obtain accounts from relevant people where necessary, and provide a fair, open and proportionate consideration of the complaint. The investigator should establish the facts and may identify possible solutions or actions.

4.4 Clerk/governance professional and panel chair

The clerk/governance professional supports the administration and independence of Stage 2. The panel chair is responsible for ensuring that the hearing is fair, respectful, non-adversarial, accessible and appropriately focused on the complaint.

Contacting the clerk to governors

Where this policy refers to contacting the Clerk to Governors, correspondence should be sent via:

Clerk to Governors

c/o Old Park Primary School

Brunel Road

Malinslee

Telford

TF3 2BF

Email: oldparkprimary@telford.gov.uk

Telephone: 01952 387250

Correspondence marked for the Clerk to Governors will be forwarded promptly and confidentially.

5. Accessibility, support and reasonable adjustments

The school will make the procedure accessible. Reasonable adjustments will be considered throughout for disabled complainants and others who need support to access the process. This may include help to put a complaint in writing, accessible formats, interpretation, communication adjustments, support at meetings or other appropriate arrangements.

Children and young people raising concerns should be supported in a way appropriate to their age and needs.

6. General timescales

Complaints should normally be raised within three months of the incident or, where a series of related incidents has occurred, within three months of the last incident. The school may consider complaints outside this period where there are good reasons for the delay and it remains possible to investigate fairly.

School-day timescales apply during term time unless the policy states otherwise.

If the school cannot meet an agreed timescale, it will explain the reason and provide a revised timescale.

Written complaints about the school's fulfilment of Early Years Foundation Stage requirements are subject to the applicable Early Years complaints requirements, including the required response period and record-keeping arrangements.

7. Informal concerns and restorative early resolution

Old Park will take informal concerns seriously and make every reasonable effort to resolve matters promptly where informal resolution is appropriate. Providing information or clarification may itself resolve a concern.

A concern may be raised with the relevant member of staff or the headteacher in person, by telephone, email or letter.

A third party may raise it with the complainant's consent. If the complainant is unsure whom to contact, the school office will assist.

7.1 Early-resolution approach

1. Listen and acknowledge - provide an appropriate opportunity for the concern to be heard.
2. Understand and clarify - establish what happened, who was involved and what the complainant feels would put matters right.
3. Meet where helpful - offer an appropriate conversation or meeting with the relevant staff member or leader.
4. Agree a way forward - where possible, identify actions, responsibilities and a clear follow-up point.
5. Restore where appropriate - consider a restorative conversation, facilitated meeting, mediation, reassurance meeting or other constructive approach where suitable and agreed.
6. Follow up - complete agreed actions, communicate progress and check whether the concern has been resolved.

Some concerns will be unsuitable for informal or restorative resolution and should move directly to the appropriate formal, safeguarding, staff, statutory or other procedure.

7.2 Informal meeting and response

Where appropriate, the informal stage will include a meeting between the complainant and the relevant staff member, headteacher and/or subject of the concern. A short-written record or response should confirm the issue, any agreed actions and the next step.

Informal concerns will be acknowledged within 5 working days and a meeting/response provided within 15 working school days.

8. Formal complaints procedure

The formal procedure has two stages:

- Stage 1 - Formal investigation
- Stage 2 - Complaints panel hearing.

9. Stage 1 - Formal investigation

Formal complaints may be made in writing or by email and, where necessary to ensure accessibility, by telephone, in person or through a third party acting with the complainant's consent. Written complaints should normally be addressed to the headteacher via the school office and marked private and confidential.

The complaint should, where possible, identify relevant dates, events, witnesses or documents and state what the complainant considers would resolve the matter.

At Stage 1 the headteacher, or a suitably designated senior leader/investigator, will:

- acknowledge the complaint;
- clarify the complaint, unresolved issues and outcome sought;
- consider whether a face-to-face meeting would assist clarification or resolution;
- investigate fairly and proportionately, considering relevant evidence and accounts;
- keep an appropriate written record;
- provide a written conclusion setting out the decision, reasons and any actions considered appropriate;
- explain how the complainant may request Stage 2 if dissatisfied.

Stage 1 – formal complaints will be acknowledged within 5 working days and a response provided within 20 working school days.

10. Stage 2 - Complaints Panel Hearing

If the complainant remains dissatisfied following the Stage 1 outcome, they may request a Stage 2 review by a complaints panel. Requests should be made in writing within 10 school days of receiving the Stage 1 outcome and sent to the Clerk to Governors using the contact details provided in Section 4 of this policy.

The panel will normally comprise the first three available suitably skilled governing-body members who have no direct knowledge of, or prior involvement in, the complaint. If sufficient impartial governors are not available, suitably skilled and independent governors or panel members should be sourced in accordance with the adopted procedure.

The panel hearing should be informal in tone, non-adversarial, respectful and accessible. The chair should ensure that all parties have a fair opportunity to explain their position, ask for clarification and respond to relevant information.

The panel may:

- uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
- dismiss/not uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
- where a complaint is upheld in whole or in part, decide what action is appropriate to resolve it;
- where appropriate, recommend changes to systems, procedures, communication or practice to help prevent a similar issue recurring.

The panel's decision, reasons and any recommendations will be provided in writing.

For stage 2 complaints (panel hearings) the following timescale is adopted:

	Timescale
Stage 2 request acknowledged	Within 5 school days
Panel hearing convened	Within 20 school days
Submission of evidence	At least 5 school days before the hearing
Circulation of papers	At least 5 school days before the hearing
Outcome letter issued	Within 5 school days of the hearing

11.1 Headteacher

A complaint about the headteacher should be addressed to the clerk/governance professional through the school office. Stage 1 should be handled by a suitably skilled governor, normally the chair unless the chair is conflicted. If escalated, Stage 2 must be heard by an impartial panel with no prior involvement.

11.2 Chair or individual governor

A complaint about the chair or an individual governor should be considered at Stage 1 by a suitably skilled governor who is not the subject of the complaint, followed, if necessary, by an impartial Stage 2 panel.

11.3 Whole or majority of the governing body

Where a complaint concerns the whole governing body, a majority of governors, or both the chair and vice-chair, the clerk/governance professional should determine an appropriately independent route. This may include an independent Stage 1 investigator and independent governors or suitably independent panel members at Stage 2.

12. Stage 2 outcome and external escalation

Stage 2 completes the school's internal complaints procedure. Information about referral to the Department for Education can be found in Section 13.

13. Referring a Complaint to the Department for Education (DfE)

If a complainant remains dissatisfied after the completion of the school's complaints procedure, they may refer their complaint to the **Department for Education (DfE)**. The DfE will not normally reinvestigate the substance of the complaint or overturn decisions made by the school. Instead, it will consider whether the school has handled the complaint in accordance with its published complaints procedure and any legal requirements. [\[gov.uk\]](#), [\[gov.uk\]](#)

Complaints can be submitted to the DfE using the online service available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/complain-to-dfe> [\[gov.uk\]](#)

Further information about the DfE's complaints procedures can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education/about/complaints-procedure>

14. Early Years complaints

Parents and carers may make complaints about the school's fulfilment of the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The school will investigate all written complaints relating to EYFS provision and notify the complainant of the outcome within 28 days. Parents and carers may notify **Ofsted** if they believe the provider is not meeting the EYFS requirements.

Ofsted

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

Telephone: 0300 123 1231

Website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted

The school will maintain a written record of all complaints relating to the EYFS and their outcome. These records will be made available to **Ofsted** on request.

15. Records, confidentiality and data protection

The school will maintain secure records showing the progress of a complaint, actions taken, the stage at which it was resolved and the final outcome. Complaint records will be retained in accordance with the school's Records Management Policy and the Information and Records Management Toolkit for Schools.

Complaint records are confidential except where disclosure is required by law or reasonably necessary for the procedure.

The whole governing body should not ordinarily receive details of a live complaint where doing so could compromise the availability of impartial governors for a Stage 2 panel. Where prior knowledge creates a reasonable concern about impartiality, the school should consider an independent panel in accordance with the adopted procedure.

16 Unreasonable or vexatious complaints

Most complaints raised will be valid, and therefore we will treat them seriously. However, a complaint may become unreasonable or vexatious 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 procedures
- Insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedures, or with good practice
- Introduces trivial or irrelevant information that they expect to be considered 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 that complaint where the school's complaints procedures have 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 and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person (either in writing, by email, phone or text) 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 communication with the school while the complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either in writing, by email, phone 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 comments 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 policy 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. For complainants who excessively contact the school causing a significant level of disruption, 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

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.

16.1 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 threats towards staff
- We have reason to believe the individual is contacting the school with the intention of causing disruption or inconvenience

The schools will not refuse to accept further correspondence or complaints from an individual they have had repeat or excessive contact with. The application of a 'serial or persistent' marking will be against the subject or complaint itself rather than the complainant.

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.

16.2 Duplicate complaints

If we have resolved a complaint under this policy 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 a duplicate complaint is raised which, in the view of the school, warrants further consideration, the procedures outlined in section 6, 7 or 8 (as appropriate) will be repeated.

16.3 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, we 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 our handling of the situation, they can contact the DfE as per section 12 of this policy.

17. Support, wellbeing and conduct throughout the process

All parties should be treated respectfully, professionally and fairly. The school will seek to maintain constructive communication while recognising that complaints may involve strongly held views or distressing circumstances. Support and reasonable adjustments should be considered throughout.

18. Learning, governance oversight and school improvement

Complaints are an important source of organisational learning. Without compromising individual complaint confidentiality or panel independence, the governing body or an appropriate committee/role should periodically review the underlying issues arising from complaints. The Governing Body will receive an anonymised annual report summarising complaints received, outcomes, patterns and lessons learned.

Monitoring should consider:

- the number and nature of complaints;
- the stage at which matters are resolved;
- recurring themes or underlying issues;
- communication effectiveness;
- opportunities for earlier resolution;
- whether agreed timescales are being met;
- whether systems, procedures or practice should change;
- whether previous recommendations have reduced recurrence.

Governance monitoring should be anonymised and proportionate wherever possible so that governors who may later be required to hear an individual complaint do not become unnecessarily conflicted.

19. Review of the policy

The governing body will review this policy annually, or sooner where required, including following legislative or statutory updates, changes to external guidance, emerging complaint trends, significant outcomes, lessons from complaint handling, governance review or feedback from parents/carers, staff or governors.

This policy has been developed with regard to the Department for Education's Best Practice Guidance for School Complaints Procedures (2020).

20. Publication and visual guide

The policy will be published on the school website and provided free of charge upon request. Old Park should also publish a short visual guide for parents/carers, pupils and staff. The visual is a summary only and does not replace this policy.

Suggested visual pathway:

1. Concern raised Listen & acknowledge	2. Early conversation Understand & clarify	3. Agree a way forward Act, restore & follow up
4. Stage 1 Formal investigation	5. Stage 2 Panel hearing	6. After school procedure DfE where applicable

After early resolution: if resolved, confirm agreed actions, follow up and close. If unresolved, explain the formal process and proceed to Stage 1. Some matters may need to move directly to another appropriate procedure.

21. Links with other policies

Policies dealing with other forms of complaints include:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures
- Admissions policy
- Suspension and permanent exclusion (Behaviour policy)
- Staff grievance procedures
- Staff disciplinary procedures
- Special educational needs policy and information report
- Privacy notices