Complaints Procedure

Statutory Policy	Yes	
Published on Website	Yes	
Policy Ownership	Head Teacher	Yes
	Full Governing Board	Yes
Implementation Date	February 2023	
Review Frequency	Every 3 years	
Date of Last Review	September 2026	
Next Review Date	September 2029	

Introduction

The Headteacher, staff and governors at Greatworth Primary School work hard to build positive relationships with all parents. Under **Section 29 of the Education Act 2002**, the governing board is required to have in place a procedure to deal with complaints relating to the school and to any community facilities or services that the school provides.

Aims

This procedure is designed to:

- provide parents with an easily accessible and simple to understand procedure to express concerns or complaints
- be impartial
- be non-adversarial
- provide a consistent and effective response and appropriate redress where necessary
- respect confidentiality
- provide a structure for parents and staff to work together for the benefit of pupils
- provide information to the School's Staff and Governing board to improve services

Concern or Complaint?

A 'concern' may be defined as a worry or doubt regarding an issue where reassurance is required. A complaint may be generally defined as an expression of dissatisfaction about actions, an event or possibly a lack of action.

Parents from time to time express concerns that would usually be expected to be dealt with informally as a matter of routine without the need to invoke formal procedures. The school will take informal concerns seriously and confidentially and make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

There are occasions when complainants would like to raise their concerns formally. In those cases the school's formal process should be followed through the stages outlined within this procedure. This document follows guidance published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and sets out the staged procedures that the school follows if a complaint is made by a parent.

Please express any concern as soon as possible, it is more difficult to investigate an incident or problem which is more than a few days old. The concern will be acted upon confidentially and quickly.

Investigating Complaints

The following formal procedure will be invoked when attempts to resolve an issue informally are unsuccessful, and the person raising the concern wishes to take the matter further. The Headteacher will have responsibility for the operation and the management of the school complaints procedure. Where the complaint concerns the Headteacher or a governor, the chair of governors will carry out this role.

At each stage of the complaints procedure, the person investigating the complaint will make sure they:

- establish what has happened so far, and who has been involved
- clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved
- meet with the complainant or contact them
- clarify what the complainant feels would put things right
- interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
- respect confidentiality
- conduct any interview with an open mind
- keep notes of the interview.

Individual complaints will not be heard by the whole governing board at any stage, as this could compromise the impartiality of any panel set up for a disciplinary hearing against the member of staff following a serious complaint.

Stage One: Complaint heard by a member of staff

If a parent is concerned about anything they should, in the first instance, discuss the matter with the child's teacher immediately. Most matters can be dealt with in this way. Teachers work very hard to ensure that each child is happy at school, and is making good progress. They will always want to know if there is a problem so that they can take action before a child's progress is affected.

Where possible, the school will respect the views of a complainant who feels unable to discuss a complaint with a particular member of staff and, in such cases, will refer to the Headteacher. In circumstances where the complaint concerns the Headteacher, the complainant will be referred to the chair of governors and move immediately to Stage 3, Complaint heard by the Chair of Governors.

Stage Two: Complaint heard by the Headteacher

Where a complainant is dissatisfied with the way the complaint has been dealt with at Stage One, the complainant will be referred to the Headteacher. The Headteacher will try to resolve the complaint by meeting with parents and the child's class teacher. The Headteacher will carry out a thorough investigation of all complaints referred at this stage.

Stage Three: Complaint heard by the Chair of Governors

Where a complainant is dissatisfied with the way the complaint has been dealt with at Stage One and Two, the complainant will be referred to the Chair of Governors.

Complaints at this stage will be heard within ten (10) working days.

Stage Four: Complaint heard by the Governing board Complaints Appeal Panel

Where a complainant is dissatisfied with the way the complaint has been dealt with at Stages One, Two and Three, they must write, ideally using the structure and format detailed in Appendix 1, giving details of the complaint, to the Chair of Governors.

The Chair of Governors will then convene a governing board complaints appeal panel hearing to which the complainant will be invited. The governors' appeal panel is the final stage of the school-based process.

Complaints at this stage of the procedure will be heard within ten (10) working days. Complainants will be given three (3) days' notice of the date of the appeal hearing and advised , in writing, of the outcome of the panel hearing within ten (10) working days.

The Governing Board Complaints Appeal Panel

The Chair of Governors will nominate three members with delegated powers to hear complaints at Stage Four of the Complaints Procedure. The governing board will also appoint a clerk to the Complaints Appeal Panel. The panel will choose their own chair. The appeal panel's terms of reference are to:

- hear individual appeals;
- follow the procedures set out in this document
- make recommendations on school policy and/or practice as a result of complaints

The governors will do all that they can at this stage to resolve the complaint to the complainant's satisfaction. The panel can:

- Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;
- Uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
- Decide the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
- Recommend changes to the school policies or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not occur.

If the governing board complaints appeal panel is unable to resolve the complaint, it may be referred to the Local Authority (LA) for investigation of how the complaint was handled.

Complaints can be referred to the Department for Education once all other routes have been followed.

An online schools complaint form is available on the Department for Education for parents to use if the schools procedure has not provided a fair outcome.

Managing and Recording Complaints

The Headteacher will have responsibility for the operation and management of the school complaints procedure and will hold records centrally (Appendix 3).

The Headteacher will log all complaints received by the school and record how they are resolved. Staff will keep brief notes of meetings and telephone calls.

Monitoring and Review

The governing board will monitor the level and nature of complaints and review the outcomes on an annual basis to ensure the effectiveness of the procedure and make changes where necessary.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Complaints and Queries

While we understand that parents and carers may find digital tools helpful, the school strongly discourages the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools(such as ChatGPT) to auto-generate formal complaint correspondence. Effective communication relies on a genuine partnership, and AI-generated letters often obscure the core issues, use overly legalistic or aggressive language, and lack the personal context necessary for us to understand your specific concerns. Please be advised that if correspondence is identified as being substantially AI-generated, the school reserves the right to ask you to re-submit your concerns in your own words, which may delay our formal response times.

To help us resolve your concerns quickly and effectively, we recommend the following practical tips:

- Focus on the facts: Clearly state what happened, when it happened, and who was involved using simple, direct language.
- Keep it child-centred: Explain the direct impact the situation has had on your child's learning or well-being.
- Suggest a solution: Let us know what positive outcome or resolution you are hoping to achieve.
- Talk to us first: Many issues can be resolved immediately through an informal conversation with your child's class teacher or a member of the leadership team.

Please note: If your request relates to accessing personal data or school records, this is handled under our separate Data Protection and Freedom of Information Policy, rather than our standard complaints procedures.

Dealing with Persistent or Unreasonable Complaints

Greatworth Primary School and Governing board are committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially. There may be occasions when despite all stages of the complaints procedure having been followed, the complainant still remains dissatisfied.

Whilst we would not normally limit the contact that complainants have with the school, time and resources are finite and it would not therefore be fair or reasonable to expect resources to be utilised responding to repeated or persistent communications essentially making the same substantive points or complaint.

A persistent complainant is for the purposes of this policy, an individual who complains about issues, either formally or informally, or frequently raises issues that the complainant considers to be within the remit of the school and whose behaviour is unreasonable.

Persistent representations to the school can be extremely time consuming and can detract from the school's primary responsibility to look after the interests of all the children in its care.

The school is entitled to close correspondence on a complaint where it feels that it has taken all reasonable action to resolve the complaint. Before closing a complaint against the complainant's wishes the Headteacher and Chair of Governors will ensure that:

- the School has taken every reasonable step to address the complainant's needs, and
- the complainant has been given a clear statement of the school's position and their options

In all matters the School and Governing board do not expect staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and all necessary action will be taken to protect staff from behaviour that is considered abusive, offensive, intimidating or threatening.

A complaint may be regarded as unreasonable when the complainant:

- refuses to articulate the nature of the complaint or outcomes sought
- refuses to co-operate with the investigation process
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in a manner incompatible with this complaints procedure
- repeatedly makes the same complaint
- seeks an unrealistic outcome
- makes excessive demands on the school through frequent, lengthy, complex or stressful contact with staff

A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if the complainant does so:

- maliciously
- aggressively, or using threats, intimidation or violence
- using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language
- knowing it to be false
- publishing unacceptable information in the media, including social media websites

Whenever possible, the Headteacher and/or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' classification to the complaint.

In the event of any serious incident of aggression or violence, the concerns and actions taken will be put in writing immediately and the police informed. In extreme cases this may include the banning of an individual from the school grounds.

Publication of the Complaints Procedure

A link to this complaints procedure is included on the school website.

List of Appendices

Appendix 1 - The Complaint form

Appendix 2- Complaint Recording Form

Appendix 3 - Complaint Monitoring Form

Appendix 1 - Complaint Form

Notes

This can be used by any person making a complaint about the operation of the school which is not covered by an alternative specific procedure. Complaints will most often come from parents or carers but may also come from pupils/students or members of the public, e.g. school neighbours.
If it is appropriate for a member of staff to look into this complaint, it should be returned to the Headteacher.

Complaint form

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

Your name: .....

Address: .....

……..

Postcode: .....

Daytime telephone number: .....

Evening telephone number: .....

If applicable, name of child(ren) at school: ……

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 and what was the response?)

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

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 of acknowledgement sent: .....

By Whom: .....

Complaint referred to: .....

Date: .....

Appendix 2 - Complaint Recording Forms

1. Complaint File - Header Sheet *(to be completed by HT for every formal complaint - see stage 2 of complaint process and to be filed with supporting paperwork)*

Date formal complaint made to Head Teacher	
Name of Complainant	
Nature of Complaint *(complaint form/letter attached)*	
Actions taken to resolve *(resolution letter to complainant attached)*	
Outcome of stage 2 resolution - with date *(closed/escalated)*	
Date escalated to stage 3 and passed to Chair of Governors	
Date of Complaint Panel agreed?	
Outcome of complaint panel *(outcome letter attached)*	
Date complaint closed	

2. **Record of complaint communication** *(to be kept for all formal complaints)*

Complainant Name;

Date	Communication type	Summary of Communication

Appendix 3 - Complaints monitoring form

Anonymised data to be shared with the Governing board in the HTs report 3 times a year.

Summary of formal complaints received this year.
(definition of a formal complaint - where attempts to resolve a complaint informally have been unsuccessful and the complaint has been escalated to the Head Teacher)

Date formal complaint received	Nature of complaint	Outcome *(resolved by HT/Complaint panel)*	Date complaint closed	Any procedure/policy recommendations made by HT or complaint panel?