HumberEducationTrust
Where everybody counts, every moment matters.

Adopted by Cambridge Park Academy

Complaints Policy & Procedure

Approved by:	HET Trustees March 2021
Created:	March 2021
Amended:	September 2026
New review date:	March 2029

1 Aims and application

1.1 The aims of the procedure are to deal with complaints and concerns:

- about a school, the academy trust ("trust") or any individual connected with it by following the correct procedure;
- thoroughly; and
- in an open, honest and fair manner.

1.2 This complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children who are registered at one of the academies within the trust. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to an individual academy within the trust, or the trust itself, about any provision of facilities or services that we provide. Part 1 of this policy outlines how parents/carers of registered pupils currently attending academies within the trust can raise a concern or complaint. Concerns or complaints from other persons will be dealt with in accordance with Part 2 of this policy.

1.3 This procedure does not apply to concerns and complaints relating to the matters listed in Annex 1.

1.4 Anonymous concerns or complaints will not normally be investigated under this procedure. The Principal/Head or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether there are exceptional circumstances to justify conducting an investigation into the issues raised.

1.5 All staff will be made aware of this complaints procedure and are expected to review this policy regularly in order that they are familiar with our process of dealing with complaints and can be of assistance when an issue is brought to their attention.

1.6 In this procedure:

- 'complaint' means an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action.
- 'concern' means an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought.
- 'meeting' means an in person or virtual meeting (i.e. telephone or video conference where all parties can participate verbally), virtual meetings will only be held in the event that all parties have access to appropriate equipment to attend and are happy to do so. If the parties are unable to meet virtually and the meeting must take place in person, the meeting may be postponed until it is deemed safe to hold an in person meeting, at the discretion of the trust.
- 'parent' means a parent, carer or anyone with legal responsibility for a child;
- 'school days' excludes weekends and academy holidays and periods of partial or total academy closure;
- 'trust' means the academy trust.

2 Key principles

2.1 The trust expects all complainants to make reasonable attempts to seek an informal resolution.

2.2 The trust encourages parents to approach the academy with any concerns and refrain from airing concerns about the academy and its staff on social media sites. Posting negative comments on social media can cause damage and upset and is often counter-productive to pupil education.

2.3 To investigate your complaint properly and fairly, we have implemented a staged approach. We anticipate that almost all complaints that arise will be resolved at Stage 1 or Stage 2 outlined below.

2.4 We expect our members of staff to be addressed in a respectful manner and for communication to remain calm at all times. We will not accept inappropriate, abusive or threatening behaviour towards any member of our community and refer parents to the Parental Code of Conduct for further details.

The procedure under Part 3 will only be used on very rare occasions to deal with unreasonably persistent complainants or unreasonable complainant behaviour.

2.5 Concerns or complaints should be brought to our attention as soon as possible. Any matter raised more than 3 months after the incident being complained of (or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within 3 months of the last of these incidents) will not be considered unless the trust accepts that there are good reasons to explain the delay or the complaint is about a particularly serious matter.

2.6 On rare occasions a school may receive complaints from a number of parents relating to the same issue. In order to deal with these complaints efficiently the school will follow the procedure set out in Part 4.

2.7 If it becomes necessary to alter the time limits and deadlines set out within this procedure, you will be advised accordingly and given an explanation as to why this has been the case and provided with revised timescales. If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority safeguarding teams or tribunals/courts, this may impact on our ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations.

2.8 Complainants should not approach individual governors or trustees to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may prevent them from considering complaints at later stages.

2.9 If a complainant commences legal action against the trust in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether it would be appropriate to suspend the complaints procedure until those legal proceedings have concluded.

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

3 Records of complaints

A record will be kept of all written formal complaints, including at what stage they were resolved and action taken by us as a result of those complaints regardless of whether they were upheld. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where access is requested by the Secretary of State or where disclosure is required in the course of a school inspection or under other legal authority. We will make the findings and recommendations of the panel available for inspection by the Trust and the Headteacher/Principal.

4 Raising matters effectively

4.1 When raising concerns or complaints, it is very important that you explain clearly:

- 4.1.1 What your concern/complaint is;
- 4.1.2 What has already been done to try and resolve it;
- 4.1.3 Names of any witnesses, dates and times of what happened and copies of any relevant documents; and
- 4.1.4 What you would like us to do about it to put things right.

4.2 We encourage you to:

- 4.2.1 Focus on the relevant facts - what happened, when and who was involved;
- 4.2.2 Remain objective and direct your concern towards processes or decisions rather than target individuals; and
- 4.2.3 Suggest clear and realistic outcomes so that we can see what is possible and we can try to resolve the matter constructively.

4.3 For the avoidance of doubt, certain outcomes are not available under this procedure. These include but are not limited to:

4.3.1 outcomes relating to staff disciplinary action — any disciplinary matters will be handled confidentially under our internal staff procedures and you will not be informed of any action taken; and

4.3.2 financial compensation or payments of any kind.

4.4 We ask that you keep your complaint and any supporting documents short and focused on the issues that matter. If what you send us is too long, repeats the same points or includes information that is not relevant, it may take us longer to look into and respond to your concerns. **As a guide, we would not expect a letter or email to be longer than two sides of A4 (about 1,000 words).** If you send us more than we need, we may ask you to tell us which issues and documents are most important and put the timescales in this procedure on hold until you do. If we think a concern or complaint is being pursued in a way that is unreasonable, we may deal with it under **Part 3** of this procedure.

4.5 If you choose to use artificial intelligence (AI) tools (such as ChatGPT, Microsoft Copilot, Google Gemini or similar) to help you draft or structure your concern or complaint, please read the guidance set out in **Annex 2** of this procedure before doing so. AI tools can be helpful in organising your thoughts and presenting your concern or complaint clearly, but they must be used carefully. You are responsible for the accuracy and content of anything you submit to us, regardless of whether AI was used to help prepare it.

4.6 For formal complaints, please complete all sections of the complaint form at **Annex 3**. When asking for our response to your formal complaint to be reviewed, please complete all sections of the complaints committee hearing and review request form at **Annex 4**. Put *'complaint'* in the subject line of your email or clearly on any correspondence so we can deal with it quickly.

4.7 If you need help with writing or escalating your complaint, please contact the school office and we will arrange for a member of staff to help you. You can also ask organisations like Citizens Advice to help you.

4.8 We have a duty to use our staff time and resources proportionately and in the best interests of all pupils, and we will take this into account when deciding how to manage multiple concerns or complaints raised at the same time. Where you raise more than one concern or complaint at the same time or raise a new concern or complaint while an existing matter is still being considered under this procedure, we may combine these and deal with them together. Where you raise a new concern or complaint while a complaints committee hearing or review in respect of an earlier complaint is pending, we may at our discretion pause the complaints committee hearing or review until the new matter has been investigated and responded to under this procedure.

Part 1: Complaints procedure for parents

Stage 1: Informal concerns

1.1 An informal concern can be raised in person or by telephone. Complaints may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant, as long as they have appropriate authority to do so. Most enquiries and concerns can be dealt with satisfactorily by the class teacher or other members of staff, without the need to resort to the formal procedure. We value informal meetings and discussions and encourage parents to approach staff with any concerns they may have, and aim to resolve all issues with open dialogue and mutual understanding.

1.2 It is always helpful if you can fully explain the nature of the concern and identify the outcome you are looking for. Where appropriate, you may be invited to an informal meeting with the member of staff most appropriate for dealing with that concern. The member of staff dealing with the concern will make sure that you are clear on what action (if any) has been agreed. This may be put in writing if appropriate.

1.3 You can bring someone with you to any meeting or hearing, such as a friend, relative, interpreter or advocate, provided that you let us know the name and role of the person in advance. If we have a genuine reason to object to the person you want to bring with you, we will let you know the reasons for this and ask you to choose someone else.

1.4 If the matter is brought to the attention of the Headteacher/Principal s/he may decide to deal with your concerns directly at this stage. If the concerns are about the Headteacher/Principal parents should refer these directly to the Clerk of the local governing body under Stage 2.

1.5 The school will respect the views of a complainant who indicates that they would have difficulty discussing a complaint with a particular member of staff. In this case, the Head /Principal will refer the complainant to another designated member of staff. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved in the circumstances leading to the complaint feels too compromised to deal with a complaint, the Head/Principal may consider referring the complainant to another member of staff. The member of staff may be more senior, but this is not essential.

1.6 There is no suggested timescale for resolution at this stage given the importance of dialogue through informal discussion, although it would be expected that most issues will be resolved within 15 school days. Where no satisfactory solution has been found, you will be advised that if you wish your concerns to be considered further you should write to the Headteacher/Principal under Stage 2 of this procedure within 15 school days.

Stage 2: Formal written complaints

2.1 If your concerns are not resolved under Stage 1, you should put your complaint in writing and send this to the Headteacher/Principal of the relevant school.

2.2 It is very important that you include a clear statement of the actions that you would like us to take to resolve your complaint. We strongly encourage you to use the Complaint Form provided at **Annex 3** of this procedure. In all cases your written complaint must include:

- the nature of the complaint;
- details of how the matter has been dealt with so far;
- the names of potential witnesses, dates and times of events and copies of all relevant documents; and
- a clear statement of the actions that you would like us to take to resolve your complaint.

2.3 Your complaint will normally be acknowledged in writing within 5 school days of receipt. The acknowledgement will give a brief explanation of the school's complaints procedure and a target date for providing a response to the complaint. This will normally be within 15 school days of receipt.

2.4 If appropriate, the Headteacher/Principal (or someone appointed by them) may invite you to a meeting to clarify your complaints and to explore possible resolutions. Where possible, this meeting will take place within 10 school days of receipt of the written complaint.

2.5 If necessary, witnesses will be interviewed and statements taken from those involved. If the complaint centres on a pupil/student, the pupil/student may also be interviewed. Pupils/students should normally be interviewed with their parent present, but if this would seriously delay the investigation of a serious or urgent complaint or if the pupil/student has specifically said that s/he would prefer that their parents were not involved, another member of staff with whom the pupil/student feels comfortable should be present. If the matter includes a complaint relating to a member of staff, the member of staff must have the opportunity to respond to the complaint.

2.6 Once the relevant facts have been established as far as possible, you will be provided with a written response to the complaint, including an explanation of the decision and the reasons for it. This will include what action will be taken to resolve the complaint (if any). You will be advised that if you are dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaint, you may request that your complaint be heard by the Complaints Committee under Stage 3 of this procedure.

2.7 The trust may engage an independent, external person to carry out the investigation into the Stage 2 complaint or to review the investigation and response at Stage 2. This may be appropriate where the complaint is particularly complex and involves legal issues.

Q. What if the complaint is about the Headteacher/Principal or the Headteacher/Principal has already considered your complaint under Stage 1?

In these cases, you should send your complaint to the Clerk of the local governing body at the school's address who will arrange for a governor to carry out the Stage 2 procedure.

Q. What if the complaint is about a member of the local governing body?

You should contact the Clerk of the local governing body at the school's address who will arrange for another governor to investigate the concerns in accordance with Stage 2.

If the complaint is about the Clerk of the local governing body or the local governing body as a whole, you should send your complaint to the Clerk of the trustees c/o Humber Education Trust, Bude Park Primary School, Cookbury Close, Hull, HU7 4EY.

Q. What if the complaint is about the Chief Executive Officer?

If the complaint is about the Chief Executive Officer of the trust, or if they have been closely involved at Stage 1, you should send your complaint to the Clerk of the trustees (c/o Humber Education Trust, Bude Park Primary School, Cookbury Close, Hull, HU7 4EY) who will arrange for a trustee to carry out all the Stage 2 procedures.

Q. What if the complaint is about a trustee?

You should contact the Clerk of the trustees (c/o Humber Education Trust, Bude Park Primary School, Cookbury Close, Hull, HU7 4EY) who will arrange for another trustee to investigate the concerns in accordance with Stage 2.

If the complaint is about the Clerk of the trustees, you should send your complaint to the Chair of the trustees (c/o Humber Education Trust, Bude Park Primary School, Cookbury Close, Hull, HU7 4EY).

If your complaint is about the trust board as a whole, you should send your complaint to the Clerk of the trustees who will arrange for the matter to be independently investigated.

Please be aware that where your complaint relates to an employee, a copy of the complaint may be shared with them in order to investigate the issues raised.

Stage 3: Referral to the Complaints Committee

3.1 If you are dissatisfied with the decision under Stage 2, you may request that a Complaints Committee be convened to consider your complaint. The committee will not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.

3.2 To request a hearing before the Complaints Committee, you should write to the Clerk to the trustees at Humber Education Trust, Bude Park Primary School, Cookbury Close, Hull, HU7 4EY within 15 school days of receiving notice of the outcome of Stage 2. Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply. You should ensure that you provide copies of all relevant documents and state all the grounds for your complaint and the outcome that you are looking for.

3.3 Your written request will be acknowledged within 5 school days of receipt.

3.4 The Clerk will arrange for a Complaints Committee to be convened, made up of at least three members, including:

- members of a local governing body and/or trustees of the academy trust (as appropriate) with no prior involvement in the matter; and,
- one person who is independent of the management and running of the academy.

3.5 The Clerk shall appoint one of these members to be the Chair of the Committee.

3.6 Every effort will be made to enable the hearing to take place within 20 school days of the receipt of your request. As soon as reasonably practicable and in any event at least 5 school days before the hearing, you will be sent written notification of the date, time and place of the hearing, together with brief details of the committee members who will be present. Fair consideration will be given to any bona fide objection to a particular member of the committee. You will also be informed of the name of the person or persons who will be presenting the case on behalf of the school (referred to in this policy as the 'school representative'). This may be the person who is the subject of the complaint, the Headteacher, the person who undertook the investigation at Stage 2 or another person with sufficient knowledge of the matter.

3.7 If, despite best efforts, it is not possible to find a mutually convenient date and time for a hearing within a reasonable timeframe, the Clerk may determine that the hearing proceeds on the basis of written submissions from both parties.

3.8 You have the right to be accompanied to the hearing by one friend, relative, advocate or interpreter. You should notify the Clerk in advance if you intend to bring anyone to the hearing. We do not permit either party to bring legal representatives to the Complaints Committee meeting. Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend. The Complaints Committee itself may take legal advice, or seek advice from experts, on matters of law and/or procedure in order to ensure that they have the necessary information on which to base their decision making.

3.9 A copy of the complaint and any other documents or evidence provided by you in support of your complaint, or by the school representative in defence of the complaint, will be provided to the Complaints Committee as soon as practicable upon receipt. Copies of these documents shall also be provided to you or the school representative (as applicable) at least 3 school days before the hearing. The Complaints Committee reserves the right not to consider any documentation or evidence presented by either party less than 3 school days prior to the hearing. The Complaints Committee is under no obligation to hear oral evidence from witnesses but may do so and/or may take written statements into account. The committee will not normally accept recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

3.10 The hearing will be conducted to ensure that each party has the opportunity to address the Complaints Committee. The procedure to be followed during the hearing will be explained to the parties by letter in advance of the hearing. The Clerk will ensure that sufficient notes are taken to record an accurate reflection of the points considered and any decisions taken or actions agreed. Electronic recordings of the hearing will not normally be permitted and, in any event, would require the consent of all those present.

3.11 Unless otherwise stated, the procedure for the Stage 3 hearing is as follows:

- the parent(s) and school representative(s) will enter the hearing together;
- the Chair of the Committee will introduce the committee members and outline the process;
- the parent(s) will explain the complaint;
- the school representative(s) and committee members will question the parent(s);
- the school representative(s) will explain the school/trust's actions;
- the parent(s) and the committee members will question the school representative(s);
- the parent(s) will sum up their complaint;
- the school representative(s) will sum up the school/trust's actions;

- the Chair of the Committee will explain that both parties will hear from the committee within 5 school days;
- both parties will leave together while the committee decides;
- the Clerk will stay to assist the committee with its decision making ensuring that the Complaint's Policy is adhered to

The Clerk and or Complaints Committee reserves the right to modify the above procedure at their sole discretion, for example requiring the parent(s) and the school representative(s) to present their complaint/actions separately to the Committee in the absence of the other party.

3.12 A Complaints Committee may be adjourned if the Complaints Committee require further evidence or in exceptional circumstances (for example, if clarification sought by the Complaints Committee is helpful to the proceedings). The adjourned date must be as soon as possible.

3.13 After the hearing, the Complaints Committee will consider their decision and inform you and, where relevant, the person complained about of their decision in writing within 5 school days. The letter will set out the decision of the committee together with the reasons underpinning that decision and if relevant, any recommendations. The committee can (by a majority if necessary):

- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;
- uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
- recommend changes to the academy or trust systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not happen again.

Referral of your complaint to Department for Education

4.1 If you are not happy with the complaints committee's decision, you can refer your complaint to the Department for Education (DfE) which has limited powers to consider complaints about academies. The DfE cannot change our decision about your complaint but can review whether the complaint was handled properly.

4.2 Details about the DfE procedure and the DfE complaints form are available at Complain about a school to the Department for Education - GOV.UK

Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 The role of the Clerk

The Clerk is the contact point for the complainant and the Complaints Committee, and should:

- ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure;
- liaise with staff, Head/Principal, CEO, Chair of Governors and Chair of the trustee board to ensure the smooth running of the complaints procedure;
- be mindful of the timescales to respond to complaints;
- 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);
- ensure that the Complaints Committee has access to legal and expert advice, where appropriate;
- set the date, time and venue of the meeting, taking reasonable steps to find a date that is convenient to all parties 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 an agreed timescale;
- minute the meeting;

- notify all parties of the Complaint Committee's decision;
- assist the academy/trust in issuing a summary letter to the complainant

5.2 The role of the Head/Principal (or other party investigating as applicable in accordance with the procedure) at Stage 2

- to ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure;
- to ensure that the correct procedure has been followed;
- to ensure that an investigation is carried out, and a report compiled;
- to meet the complainant, if appropriate;

5.3 The role of the Chair of the Complaints Committee

The Chair of the Complaints Committee has a key role, ensuring that:

- 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;
- the remit of the Complaints Committee is explained to the complainant;
- the 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);
- key findings of fact are made, and that any issues not previously mentioned in writing should not be raised at the meeting and, if they are mentioned at the meeting, these should not be noted or considered by the Complaints Committee;
- both the complainant and the school/trust 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 Complaints Committee is open-minded, acts independently and no Complaints Committee member has an external interest in the outcome or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure;
- the meeting is minuted.

Part 2: Concerns or complaints from other persons

Part 1 of this complaints policy applies only to complaints made by parents or carers of current registered pupils of schools within the trust. However, the trust wishes to work closely with other members of the local community and will deal with their concerns and complaints as follows:

1 **Stage 1** - a concern regarding a school or its operations may be made to any member of staff. That member of staff will attempt to resolve the matter immediately or may, if appropriate, refer the matter to their line manager or member of the senior leadership team (SLT) who is best placed to deal with the concern. It is expected that most concerns will be responded to orally or in writing within 5 school days. If a longer period is required, you will be kept informed of the progress of the investigation.

2 **Stage 2** - where a concern is not resolved at stage 1, or you wish your concerns to be dealt with immediately as a formal complaint, you should put your complaint in writing and send this to the Headteacher/Principal of the relevant school to investigate. The Headteacher/Principal may delegate the task of investigation and/or responding to the complaint to a member of SLT or may escalate the complaint straight to stage 3. A formal response to the complaint will usually be provided within 10 school days of receipt of the letter of complaint although if a longer period is required to respond, you will be kept updated.

3 **Stage 3** - if you are not satisfied with the response at stage 2, you may request a review by writing to the Clerk of the local governing body of the school. You should write to the Clerk within 10 school days of receipt of the letter at stage 2. Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply. The Clerk will arrange for a governor to consider the

complaint alone or may convene a complaints committee on the same terms as set out in Part 1 of this complaints policy. The decision at this stage will usually be sent to you within 20 school days of receipt of the request for a review. The decision at stage 3 exhausts the school's complaints procedure. If you are not happy with the outcome of the review, you can refer your complaint to the Department for Education as set out in Part 1 of this procedure.

Concerns or complaints regarding the Headteacher/Principal or the trust as a whole should be referred direct to the Clerk of the trustees (c/o Humber Education Trust, Bude Park Primary School, Cookbury Close, Hull, HU7 4EY) who will arrange for the stages above to be considered by an appropriate person.

Part 3: Unreasonably persistent complainants and unreasonable complainant behaviour

We expect complainants to behave in line with the **Parental Code of Conduct** at all times. There are rare circumstances where we will deviate from the Complaints Procedure set out in Parts 1 and 2. These include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- where the complainant's behaviour or language towards staff, members of the local governing body or trustees is abusive, offensive, discriminatory or threatening;

- where the complainant's behaviour is hindering our consideration of complaints and/or the proper running of the school because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact, such as, if the complainant:

  - 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 which 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
  - seeks an unrealistic outcome, such as the inappropriate dismissal of staff
  - makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with
  - knowingly provides falsified information
  - publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums

- where the complainant's complaint is clearly frivolous, vexatious and/or has patently insufficient grounds. The Office of the Independent Adjudicator defines the characteristics of a 'frivolous' or 'vexatious' complaint as:

  - complaints which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious
  - insistence upon pursuing unmeritorious complaints and/or unrealistic outcomes beyond all reason
  - insistence upon pursuing meritorious complaints in an unreasonable manner
  - complaints which are designed to cause disruption or annoyance
  - demands for redress that lack any serious purpose or value

- where the complainant's complaint is the same, similar to or based on the same facts of a complaint which has already been considered in full.

In these circumstances, we may:

- inform the complainant that their behaviour is unacceptable or unreasonably persistent and ask them to change it;
- restrict the complainant's access to the school e.g. requesting contact in a particular form (for example, letters only), requiring contact to take place with a named person only, restricting telephone calls to specified days and times or banning the complainant from the school's premises. Any such arrangements will be reviewed after six months;
- conduct the Complaints Committee on the papers only i.e. not hold a hearing;
- refuse to consider the complaint and, where Part 1 of this procedure applies, refer the complainant directly to Stage 4.

In all cases we will write to tell the complainant why we believe his or her behaviour is unacceptable or unreasonably persistent, what action we are taking and the duration of that action.

We may take the decision not to respond to any further correspondence where:

- 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 and
- the complainant contacts us repeatedly, making substantially the same points each time

The case for ceasing further correspondence is stronger where:

- letters, emails, or telephone calls are often or always abusive or aggressive or make insulting personal comments about or threats towards staff
- we have reason to believe the complainant is contacting us with the intention of causing disruption or inconvenience

Where the behaviour is so extreme that it threatens the immediate safety and welfare of staff, members of the local governing body or trustees, we will consider other options, for example reporting the matter to the police or taking legal action. In such cases, we may not give the complainant prior warning of that action.

Part 4: Complaint campaigns

For the purposes of this policy, a complaint campaign is defined as a complaint from three or more separate individuals (whether or not connected with a school or the trust) which are all based on the same subject.

Depending on the subject in question, we may deviate from the procedure set out in this policy and instead:

- send a template response to all complainants and/or
- publish a single response on the school's/trust's website (as applicable)

Annex 1

Matters excluded from scope of this policy

Excluded Matters	Signposting
Admissions	The process for challenging admissions decisions is set out in our **admissions policy** and the DfE's school admissions codes at: School admissions code - GOV.UK and School admission appeals code - GOV.UK. Parents who wish to challenge our decision to refuse their request for admission out of the normal age group (where there is no statutory right of appeal) may submit a complaint using this complaints procedure.
Safeguarding and child protection matters	Some complaints that relate to safeguarding or child protection matters will be handled under our **child protection and safeguarding policy** rather than under this procedure. Where that policy applies, a separate investigative process will be followed. This feedback, concerns and complaints procedure does not limit or replace any action that may be taken under our child protection and safeguarding policy, and in some cases both processes may run concurrently or one may take precedence over the other depending on the nature of the concern raised. If you have a serious concern about a child's safety or welfare, you may also wish to contact: • the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), who has local responsibility for managing allegations against people who work with children; or • the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), which coordinates safeguarding referrals across local agencies.
Collective worship	Complaints about the content of the daily act of collective worship should be directed to the local authority or the local Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE). Complaints about the handling of a request to withdraw your child from religious education or the daily act of collective worship can be raised under this procedure
Data protection matters	Complaints about data protection matters are handled under our **data protection policy** and in accordance with relevant guidance from the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the ICO directly, but the ICO will usually expect you to have raised your concerns with our Data Protection Officer in the first instance.
Freedom of information matters	Complaints about our compliance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 are handled under our **freedom of information policy** and in accordance with relevant guidance from the ICO. If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the ICO directly, but the ICO will usually expect you to have raised your concerns with us in the first instance.
Exclusions	The process for challenging exclusions decisions is set out in our **behaviour / exclusions policy** and the DfE's statutory guidance and information can be found at School suspensions and permanent exclusions - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
National Curriculum content	Please contact the Department for Education at www.education.gov.uk/contactus However, complaints about the delivery of the curriculum, including the delivery of religious education (RE) and sex and relationships education, can be raised under this procedure.
School re-organisation proposals	Where concerns are not adequately addressed by the trust, complaints can be raised direct with the Department for Education.
Complaints about services from providers who use school premises	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.

Staff grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.
Staff, governor or trustee conduct	Certain complaints about staff may need to be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate. Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.
Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN)	Concerns about statutory assessments of special educational needs should be raised direct with the local authority.
Whistleblowing	We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors. The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus. Volunteer staff who have concerns should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of the complaint

Annex 2

Guidance on using AI tools to raise concerns or complaints

Introduction

AI tools (such as ChatGPT, Microsoft Copilot, Google Gemini and similar large language model applications) can help you organise your thoughts, structure your concern or complaint clearly, and express yourself effectively. However, these tools have significant limitations and must be used with care. This Annex provides practical guidance on how to use AI tools effectively when raising a concern or complaint under this procedure, and what to avoid.

If you are unsure about how to use AI tools when raising a concern or complaint, or if you would like help preparing your concern or complaint, please contact the school office and we will arrange for a member of staff to assist you.

How AI tools can help you

AI tools can be useful for:

- Organising your thoughts and structuring your concern or complaint in a clear and logical way;
- Helping you express what happened in plain, clear language if you find writing difficult;
- Summarising a timeline of events based on information you provide;
- Suggesting what outcome you might want to ask for; and
- Checking your draft for clarity, tone and spelling before you submit it.

Important limitations and risks

You should be aware of the following limitations and risks when using AI tools:

- AI tools do not know what happened – they can only work with the information you give them, and they may fill gaps with invented details that sound convincing but are untrue (this is sometimes called 'hallucination');
- AI tools may generate references to laws, regulations, policies or legal rights that do not exist, are out of date, or do not apply to your situation;
- AI tools may produce language that is overly formal, legalistic or aggressive, which may not reflect your genuine concern and may make it harder for us to resolve the matter constructively;
- any personal data (including names, dates of birth, or other identifying information about your child, other children, staff or other individuals) that you enter into an AI tool may be stored, processed or used by the AI provider in ways that are outside your control and may breach data protection law;
- AI-generated complaints that do not accurately reflect your experience may cause delays in resolving your concern, as we may need to spend time clarifying what actually happened; and
- AI tools work by predicting the most likely answer based on the information they have been trained on. They do not check whether their output is accurate or relevant to your particular situation, and the most likely-sounding answer is not always the correct one. AI tools are also designed to make you feel helped and understood, which means they may agree with your point of view, use an overly sympathetic tone, or present your complaint in a one-sided way rather than giving a balanced account of what happened. This can wrongly reinforce your point of view and make you more fixed in your position, which may make it harder for us to work together to resolve the matter.

What to do and what to avoid

Do	Don't
Write down the key facts yourself first (what happened, when, who was involved, and what you would like us to do) before using an AI tool.	Copy and paste AI-generated text without reading and checking it thoroughly.
Use AI to help you structure and clarify what you have already written, rather than to generate the complaint from scratch.	Submit a complaint that contains facts, events or details that you have not personally verified as accurate.

Read everything the AI produces carefully and remove or correct anything that is inaccurate, exaggerated or that you did not experience.	Rely on any legal advice, references to legislation or statements about your rights generated by an AI tool without checking them independently.
Use your own words where possible – your complaint should sound like you.	Enter the names or personal data of your child, other children, staff members or any other individuals into an AI tool.
Remove all personal data before entering any information into an AI tool – you can use placeholders such as 'my child', 'the class teacher' or 'Teacher A' instead.	Use AI to generate multiple or repetitive complaints about the same issue.

Example prompts for using AI tools effectively

The following example prompts illustrate how AI tools can be used effectively to help you prepare a concern or complaint. In each case, you should replace the descriptions in square brackets with your own details, taking care not to include any personal data or names.

Example 1 Organising your thoughts:

"I want to raise a concern with my child's school about [describe the issue in general terms, e.g. 'how a bullying incident was handled']. *The key things that happened are:* [list the main events in the order they happened, using descriptions such as 'my child', 'the class teacher' etc. instead of names]. *Can you help me organise these into a clear, chronological summary that I can use when speaking to the school?"*

Why this helps: Before writing a formal complaint, it can be difficult to know where to start, particularly if a number of things have happened over a period of time. This prompt helps you to present the key events in a logical order, making it easier for us to understand your concern and for you to feel confident that nothing important has been left out.

Example 2 – Structuring a written complaint:

"I need to write a formal complaint to my child's school. The issue is [describe the issue]. *I have already tried to resolve this informally by* [describe what you did]. *The key facts are* [list the facts]. *The outcome I am looking for is* [describe what you want to happen]. *Can you help me structure this into a clear letter, using plain language and a respectful tone? Do not add any facts or details that I have not provided."*

Why this helps: A well-structured complaint is more likely to be understood and dealt with effectively. This prompt helps you to set out the issue, the steps you have already taken, the relevant facts, and the outcome you are seeking in a clear and logical way, without the AI tool adding anything you have not told it.

Example 3 – Checking tone and clarity:

"I have drafted the following complaint to my child's school: [paste your draft, with names removed]. *Can you suggest how I could make this clearer and more constructive in tone, without changing the facts or adding anything new?"*

Why this helps: When raising a concern or complaint, it is natural to feel frustrated or upset. This prompt allows you to check that your draft communicates your concern clearly and constructively, which is more likely to lead to a productive response, without altering the substance of what you have written.

Example 4 – Identifying what outcome to request:

"I am raising a complaint with my child's school about [describe the issue]. I am not sure what outcome to ask for. Based on the facts I have described, can you suggest some realistic outcomes I could request? Please do not suggest legal remedies or refer to specific laws."

Why this helps: It is not always easy to know what to ask for when raising a complaint. This prompt can help you to think through realistic and proportionate outcomes, whilst ensuring that the AI tool does not stray into providing legal advice, which it is not equipped to give.

Annex 3

Complaints Form

Your name:
Pupil's name:
Your relationship to the pupil:
Your address and postcode:
Your telephone numbers:
Your email address:
Your complaint is: (if you have more than one outcome, please number these) 1. 2.
What action have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint(s) in accordance with Stage 1 of the complaints procedure? (Who did you speak to and what was the response?)

What would you like as an outcome from your complaint?

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, give details here:

Your signature…… Date ……

Office use

Date received ……

Date acknowledgement sent ……

Responsible member of staff ……

Annex 4

Request for a complaints committee or complaints review

Before completing this form, please refer to **Section 4** ('Raising matters effectively') of this policy.

Your name:
Pupil's name (if applicable):
Your relationship to pupil (if applicable):
Your address and postcode:
Your telephone numbers:
Your email address:
What action have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint? Who did you speak to and what was the response?
Why you are not happy with our decision about your formal complaint (if you have more than one complaint, please number these): 1. 2.
What you would like the complaints committee to do to put things right (if you have more than one outcome, please number these) 1. 2.
Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, give details here:

Your signature…… Date ……

Office use

Date received ……

Date acknowledgement sent ……

Responsible member of staff ……