



Complaints Policy

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1. Aims and Application

The aims of having a complaints procedure is to deal with complaints and concerns about a school, the trust (“trust”) or any individual connected with it by following the correct procedure thoroughly and in an open, honest and fair manner.

This complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children who are registered at one of the schools within the trust. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to an individual school within the trust, or the trust itself, about any provision of facilities or services that are provided.

Part 1 of this policy outlines how **parents / carers of registered pupils currently attending a school 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.

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

Anonymous concerns or complaints will not normally be investigated under this procedure. The Headteacher / Head of School / Principal, or the Chief Executive Officer (as appropriate), will determine whether there are exceptional circumstances to justify conducting an investigation into the issues raised.

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 the procedure of dealing with complaints and can be of assistance when an issue is brought to their attention.

In this procedure:

- **‘Complainant’** means a person raising a concern (under Stage 1) or a complaint (under Stage 2)
- **‘Concern’** means an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought (Managed under Stage 1 of this procedure)
- **‘Complaint’** means an expression of dissatisfaction, about actions taken or a lack of action (Managed under Stage 2 – 4 of this procedure)
- **‘Meeting’** and **‘hearing’** means an in person or virtual meeting or hearing (i.e. telephone or video conference where all parties can participate verbally), virtual meetings / hearings will only be held if all parties have access to appropriate equipment to attend and are happy to do so
- **‘Parent’** means a biological parent, carer or anyone who has parental responsibility or care for a child
- **‘School days’** excludes weekends and school holidays and periods of partial or total school closure
- **‘Trust’** means Peterborough Diocese Education Trust (PDET).

The timeframes referred to in this policy are our usual timeframes and the school / trust will seek to adhere to these timeframes where possible.

Reasonable adjustments will be made to this procedure where required to ensure that all complainants can access and complete this complaints procedure, for example, providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

The appendices to this policy include useful information as follows:

- Appendix 1: Matters Excluded from the Scope of this Policy
- Appendix 2: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ’s)
- Appendix 3: Complaints Form

- Appendix 4a: Summary of Complaints Procedure for Parents and Carers (Part 1)
- Appendix 4b: Flowchart of Concerns and Complaints Procedure for Parents and Carers – Current Pupils
- Appendix 4c: Summary of the Procedure at a Stage 3 Hearing

2. Key Principles

The trust acknowledges that raising concerns or complaints can be a difficult, emotional and stressful time, particularly for parents and carers. It is expected that staff will always be respectful and courteous when dealing with complainants. We also expect complainants to treat staff with the same respect and courtesy. Abusive and threatening behaviour towards staff is not acceptable from anybody at any time. In circumstances where this happens the trust will take the action outlined in [Part 3](#) of this policy. The procedure under [Part 3](#) will be used to deal with complaints pursued in an otherwise unreasonable manner or will be used to deal with repetitive and / or vexatious complaints.

The trust expects all complainants to make reasonable attempts to seek an informal resolution. This will usually be the most effective way to swiftly resolve such matters.

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

To investigate a concern / complaint properly and fairly, a staged approach has been implemented. It is anticipated that almost all concerns / complaints that arise will be resolved at Stage 1 or Stage 2 outlined below.

Concerns or complaints should be brought to the attention of the school / trust 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 three calendar months of the last of these incidents) will not be considered unless the Headteacher / Head of School / Principal, or the Chief Executive Officer (as appropriate) accepts that there are exceptional circumstances to justify accepting the complaint out of time.

Where a complaint is received outside of term time, it will be considered to have been received on the first school day following the holiday period.

On rare occasions a school or the trust may receive complaints from a number of individuals relating to the same issue. In order to deal with these complaints efficiently the school / trust will follow the procedure set out in [Part 4](#).

If it becomes necessary to alter the time limits and deadlines set out within this procedure, the complainant 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 the ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations. Where a complaint is raised but it lacks clarity from the complainant on the issues and / or desired outcomes, the complainant will be informed regarding what information is needed to progress the complaint and this procedure will be paused until reasonable clarity is achieved.

Complainants should not approach individual school forum representatives or directors 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.

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

If a complainant wishes to withdraw their complaint, they will be asked 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 the action taken 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
- Disclosure is required in the course of a school / trust inspection
- An individual has a legal right to access their own personal data contained within such documentation, or
- Under other legal authority.

The findings and recommendations of the Complaints Committee will be made available for inspection on the school premises by the trust and the Headteacher / Head of School / Principal.

Part 1: Concerns / Complaints Procedure for Parents

Stage 1: Informal Concerns

An informal concern can be raised in person, by email or by phone. Concerns may also be raised by a third party acting on behalf of a parent if 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. Informal meetings and discussions are valued and parents will be encouraged to approach staff with any concerns they may have; the aim is to resolve all issues with open dialogue and mutual understanding.

It is always helpful if the complainant can fully explain the nature of the concern and identify the outcome they are looking for. Where appropriate, they 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 the complainant is clear on what action (if any) has been agreed. This may be put in writing if appropriate.

If the matter is brought to the attention of the Headteacher / Head of School / Principal they may decide to deal with the concerns directly at this stage. If the concerns are about the Headteacher / Head of School / Principal, these should be referred directly to the trust's Operations Team (Operations Team) under Stage 2.

The school will respect the views of a parent who indicates that they would have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff. In this case, the Headteacher / Head of School / Principal will refer the parent to another designated member of staff. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved in the circumstances leading to the concern feels the same, the Headteacher / Head of School / Principal may consider referring the parent to another member of staff.

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

Stage 2: Formal Written Complaints

If concerns are not resolved under Stage 1, the complainant is entitled to put their complaint in writing and send this to the Headteacher / Head of School / Principal of the relevant school. This should be marked as 'complaint' in the subject of the email or the title of the letter. This will ensure that the correspondence gets the priority it deserves from a large volume of communications the school receives each day.

It is very important that the complaint is described clearly and includes a clear statement of the actions that the complainant would like to be taken to resolve the complaint. The Complaint Form should be used - provided at [Appendix 2](#) of this procedure. If help is required to complete the form, the school office should be contacted. Third party organisations can also be asked to help e.g. Citizens Advice. In all cases the 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 the complainant would like to be taken to resolve the complaint.

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

If appropriate, the Headteacher / Head of School / Principal (or someone appointed by them) may invite the complainant to a meeting to clarify their complaint and to explore a possible resolution. If that invitation is accepted, one other person, such as a friend, relative or interpreter can accompany to assist. Where possible, this meeting will take place **within 10 school days of receipt of the written complaint**.

If necessary, witnesses will be interviewed and statements taken from those involved. If the complaint centres on a pupil, the pupil may be interviewed. If the matter includes a complaint relating to a member of staff, the member of staff will have the opportunity to respond to the complaint.

Once the relevant facts have been established as far as possible, a written response to the complaint will be provided, 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). The complainant will be advised that if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaint, they may request that the complaint is heard by a Complaints Committee under Stage 3 of this procedure.

If the concerns / complaint(s) are about the Headteacher / Head of School / Principal these should be referred directly to the Operations Team – governance@pdet.org.uk who will arrange for a chair of one of the trust's school forums or another appropriate individual to carry out the investigation under Stage 2.

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 or involves legal issues.

Stage 3: Referral to the Complaints Committee

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the decision under Stage 2, they may request that a Complaints Committee be convened to consider the complaint. The Complaints Committee will principally consider how the complaint was handled at the previous stages but has discretion to review other aspects of the complaint as it sees fit. The Complaints 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.

To request a hearing held by a Complaints Committee, the complainant should write to the Operations Team – governance@pdet.org.uk or Unit 2 Bouverie Court, 6 The Lakes Northampton NN4 7YD **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. Copies of all relevant documents should be provided and all the grounds stated for the complaint and the outcome that is being sought.

The complainant's written request will be acknowledged **within 5 school days of receipt**.

The Operations Team will appoint a clerk ("Clerk") and will arrange for a Complaints Committee to be convened, made up of at least three committee members, including:

- Chairs of school forums (the chairs can be from any school forum within the trust) and / or directors of the trust (as appropriate) with no prior involvement in the matter, and
- One person who is independent of the management and running of the school / trust (as appropriate) (for example, this might be a chair of a school forum or headteacher from another school within the trust, a governor from another local school or an educational professional who has no link to the school).

The Clerk will appoint one of these committee members to be the Chair of the Complaints Committee.

Every effort will be made to enable the hearing to take place **within 20 school days of the receipt of the request**. As soon as reasonably practicable and in any event **at least 5 school days before the hearing**, written notification of the date, time and place of the hearing will be sent, 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 Complaints Committee. The complainant will also be informed of the name of the person who will be presenting the case on behalf of the school / trust (referred to in this policy as the 'school representative'). This may be the person who is the subject of the complaint, the person who undertook the investigation at Stage 2 and / or another person with sufficient knowledge of the matter.

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.

The complainant has the right to be accompanied to the hearing by a friend, relative or interpreter. They should notify the Clerk in advance if they intend to bring anyone to the hearing. It is not encouraged for either party to bring legal representatives to the Complaints Committee hearing. Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend. The Complaints Committee itself may take legal advice and / or be supported by a legal advisor at the hearing on matters of law and procedure.

A copy of the complaint and any other documents provided by the complainant in support of their 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 will also be provided to the complainant 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 presented by either party less than three school days prior to the hearing. The Complaints Committee is under no obligation to hear verbal evidence from those other than the parties (e.g. witnesses) but may do so and / or may take written statements into account. The Complaints Committee will not normally accept recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

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.

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

- The parent and school representative will enter the hearing together
- The Chair of the Complaints Committee will introduce the committee members and outline the process
- The parent will explain the complaint
- The school representative and committee members will have the opportunity to put questions to the parent
- The school representative will explain the school's / trust's actions
- The parent and the committee members will have the opportunity to put questions to the school representative
- The parent will sum up their complaint
- The school representative will sum up the school's / trust's actions
- The Chair of the Complaints Committee will explain that both parties will hear from the committee **within 5 school days**
- Both parties will leave together while the Complaints Committee decides
- The Clerk, and any legal advisor assisting the Complaints Committee (if applicable), will stay to assist the Complaints Committee with its decision making.

The Clerk and / or Complaints Committee reserves the right to modify the above procedure at their sole discretion, for example requiring the parent and the school representative to present their complaint / actions separately to the Complaints Committee.

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 essential to the proceedings). The adjourned date must be as soon as possible.

After the hearing, the Complaints Committee will consider their decision and inform the complainant 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 Complaints Committee together with the reasons underpinning that decision. The Complaints 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 school or trust systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not happen again.

Stage 4: Referral of Complaint to the Department for Education (DfE)

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the decision of the Complaints Committee, they are entitled to refer the complaint to the Department for Education (DfE). The DfE will only investigate the complaint in limited circumstances.

For more information on the DfE's remit in relation to academy complaints visit the website below.

At the time of writing this procedure, details about the DfE's procedure and the DfE's academy complaints form are available at:

[How DfE handles complaints about academies - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-dfe-handles-complaints-about-academies)

Or the DfE can be written to at the following address:

Department for Education
Academy Complaints Compliance Unit
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

Section 5: Roles and Responsibilities

The Role of the Operations Team

- Arrange for a chair of one of the trust's school forums or another appropriate individual to carry out the investigation under Stage 2 if the complaint is about the Headteacher / Principal / Head of School
- Arrange for a Complaints Committee to be convened in relation to Stage 3 of the Complaints process
- Appoint a Clerk for Stage 3 of the Complaints process

The Role of the Clerk

The Clerk, once appointed by the Operations Team, 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, Headteacher / Head of School / Principal, the Chief Executive Officer, Chairs of school forums and Chair of the board of directors (as applicable) 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 complaints process 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 advice, where appropriate
- Set the date, time and venue of the hearing, 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 hearing within an agreed timescale
- Appoint one of the committee members to be Chair of the Complaints Committee
- Minute the hearing
- Notify all parties of the Complaints Committee's decision
- Assist the school / trust in issuing a summary letter to the complainant.

The Role of the Headteacher / Head of School / Principal (or other party investigating as applicable in accordance with the procedure) is:

- To ensure that the complainant is fully updated throughout the Stage 2 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
- If the complaint is being referred to Stage 3, notify the trust Operations Team for them to appoint a Clerk and to arrange a Complaints Committee.

The Role of the Chair of the Complaints Committee is to ensure that:

- The hearing 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 hearing are put at ease.
- 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 hearing and, if they are mentioned at the hearing, 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 hearing, or verbally in the hearing itself
- The Complaints Committee is open-minded, acts independently and no Committee member has an external interest in the outcome or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure
- The hearing 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 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, the complainant will be kept informed of the progress of the investigation.

2. **Stage 2** - where a concern is not resolved at Stage 1, or the complainant wishes their concerns to be dealt with immediately as a formal complaint, they should put the complaint in writing and send this to the Headteacher / Head of School / Principal of the relevant school to investigate. The Headteacher / Head of School / Principal may delegate the task of investigation and / or responding to the complaint to a member of SLT or another appropriate individual. A formal response to the complaint will usually be provided **within 15 school days of receipt of the letter of complaint** although if a longer period is required to respond, the complainant will be kept updated.
3. **Stage 3** - if the complainant is not satisfied with the response at Stage 2, they may request a review by writing to the trust's Operations Team – governance@pdet.org.uk or Unit 2 Bouverie Court, 6 The Lakes Northampton NN4 7YD. They should write to the Operations Team **within 15 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 Operations Team will usually arrange for a chair of one of the school forums within the trust to consider the complaint alone or may convene a Complaints Committee or refer the matter to the trust's Governance Professional to convene a Complaints Committee (as appropriate) in either case on the same terms as set out in **Part 1** of this complaints policy. The decision at this stage will usually be sent to the complainant **within 15 school days of receipt of the request for a review or within 5 school days of the Complaints Committee hearing** (as applicable).
4. **Stage 4** - if the complainant is dissatisfied with the decision at Stage 3, they are entitled to refer the complaint to the Department for Education as outlined in **Part 1** of this complaints policy.

Concerns or complaints regarding the Headteacher / Head of School / Principal should be referred to the Operations Team – governance@pdet.org.uk or Unit 2 Bouverie Court, 6 The Lakes Northampton NN4 7YD. Concerns or complaints about the trust should be referred direct to the trust's Governance Professional c/o Unit 2 Bouverie Court, 6 The Lakes Northampton NN4 7YD. The Operations Team or Governance Professional, as appropriate, will arrange for the stages above to be considered by an appropriate person.

Part 3: Repetitious and Vexatious Complaints and Complaints Pursued in an Otherwise Unreasonable Manner

There are rare circumstances where the Complaints Procedure set out in **Parts 1 and 2** will be deviated from. These include, but are not necessarily limited to:

1. Repetitious, including Serial and / or Persistent, Complaints

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 and:

- Every reasonable step has been taken to address the complainant's concerns, and
- The complainant has been given a clear statement of the school / trust's position and their options

The complainant will be written to in order to advise that the complaints procedure has been exhausted and that there will be no further response to any further correspondence in relation to these matters. The complainant will be referred to Stage 4.

2. Vexatious Complaints

The Office of the Independent Adjudicator defines the characteristics of a ‘frivolous’ or ‘vexatious’ complaint as:

- Complaints which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific or 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, and
- Demands for redress that lack any serious purpose or value.

Examples include but are not limited to:

- Refusal to articulate the complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
- Refusal to co-operate with the complaints investigation process
- Refusal to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure
- Insistence on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice
- Introducing trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant expects to be taken into account and commented on
- Raising large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insisting they are fully answered, often immediately and to the complainant’s own timescales
- Making unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeking to have them replaced
- Changing the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds
- Seeking an unrealistic outcome, such as the inappropriate dismissal of staff
- Making excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by phone while the complaint is being dealt with
- Knowingly providing falsified information
- Publishing unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

3. Complaints Pursued in an Otherwise Unreasonable Manner

A complainant’s manner will be regarded as unreasonable where the complainant’s behaviour or language towards staff, school forum representatives, directors or members is aggressive, abusive, offensive, discriminatory or threatening or insulting personal comments are made about, or threats are made towards, staff, school forum representatives / directors / members.

In the circumstances outlined in 2 and 3 above, the school / trust may:

- Inform the complainant that their complaint is considered to be vexatious or the manner in which they are pursuing their complaint to be unreasonable and why, and ask them to desist
- Conduct the Complaints Committee on the papers only i.e. not hold a hearing
- Refuse to consider the complaint any further and refer the complainant directly to Stage 4.

The complainant’s access to the school may also be restricted, 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 number of contacts or banning the complainant from the school’s premises.

Where the complainant's behaviour is so extreme that it threatens the immediate safety and welfare of staff, school forum representatives, directors or members other options will be considered - for example, reporting the matter to the police or taking legal action. In such cases, prior warning of that action may not be given.

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 the school) which are all based on the same subject.

Depending on the subject in question, deviation from the procedure set out in this policy may occur and instead the school / trust may:

- Send a template response to all complainants, and / or
- Publish a single response on the school's website (as applicable).

4. Monitoring Arrangements of the Policy

This document will be reviewed annually but may be reviewed and updated more frequently if necessary.

Appendix 1 - Matters Excluded from the Scope of this Policy

Excluded Matters	Signposting
Admissions	The process for challenging admissions decisions is set out in the trust's admissions policy in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.
Child protection matters	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under the child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance. If there are serious concerns about an adult's behaviour, the local authority designated officer (LADO) can be contacted or if there are serious concerns about a child, the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) can be contacted.
Exclusions	The process for challenging exclusions decisions is set out in 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
School re-organisation proposals	Where concerns are not adequately addressed by the school, complaints can be raised directly with the Department for Education.
Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities	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 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 directly with the local authority.
Whistleblowing	The trust has an internal whistleblowing procedure for all 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. Depending on the substance of the complaint, it may be made directly to the Department for Education (see link above).

Appendix 2 - Frequently Asked Questions

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

In these cases, the complaint should be sent to the trust's Operations Team – governance@pdet.org.uk or Unit 2 Bouverie Court, 6 The Lakes, Northampton, NN4 7YD who will arrange for an appropriate person to carry out the Stage 2 procedure.

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, the complaint should be sent to the trust's Governance Professional c/o Unit 2 Bouverie Court, 6 The Lakes Northampton NN4 7YD who will arrange for a director to carry out all the Stage 2 procedures.

Q. What if the complaint is about a Director or a Member of the trust (i.e. Board / Member level)?

The trust's Governance Professional should be contacted c/o Unit 2 Bouverie Court, 6 The Lakes Northampton NN4 7YD who will arrange for another director to investigate the concerns in accordance with Stage 2.

Q. What if the complaint is about the Board of Directors as a whole?

If the complaint is about the Board of Directors as a whole, the complaint should be sent to the trust's Governance Professional c/o Unit 2 Bouverie Court, 6 The Lakes Northampton NN4 7YD who will arrange for the matter to be independently investigated.

Q. What if the complaint is about the Trust's Governance Professional?

If the complaint is about the trust's Governance Professional, the complaint should be sent to the Chair of Directors c/o Unit 2 Bouverie Court, 6 The Lakes Northampton NN4 7YD.

NB: Where a complaint relates to an employee, a copy of the complaint may be shared with them in order to investigate the issues raised.

Appendix 3 - Complaints Form

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

What would you like as an outcome from your complaint(s)?

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

Your signature:

Date:

All functions of the complaints procedure must adhere to the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Please complete and return to the school office in a sealed envelope addressed to the Headteacher / Head of School / Principal, or if the complaint is about the Headteacher / Head of School / Principal, please send to the trust's Operations Team – governance@pdet.org.uk or Unit 2 Bouverie Court, 6 The Lakes Northampton NN4 7YD, or the trust's Governance Professional c/o Unit 2 Bouverie Court, 6 The Lakes Northampton NN4 7YD (as appropriate) .

Office use

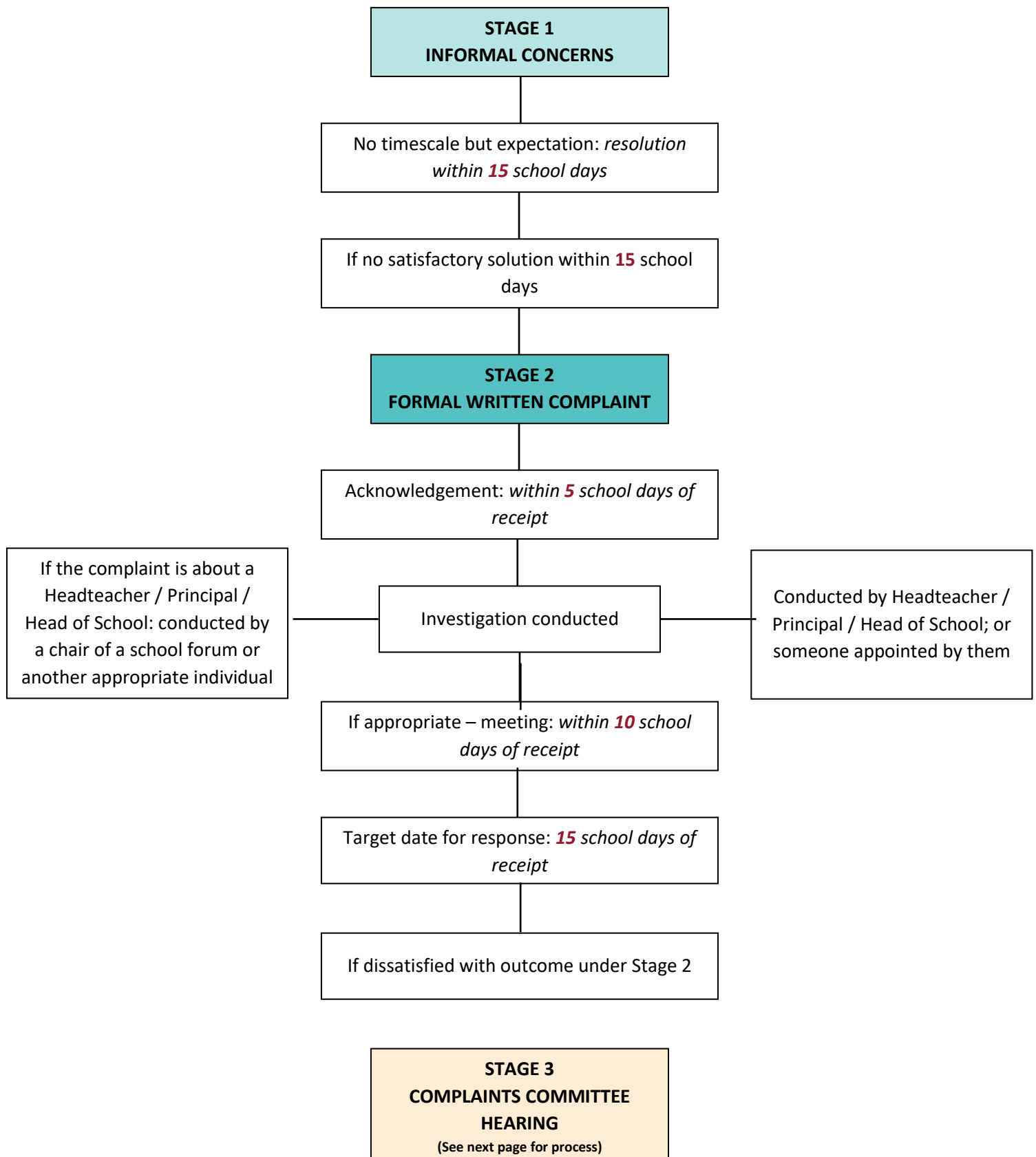
Date received	
Date acknowledgement sent	
Responsible member of staff	

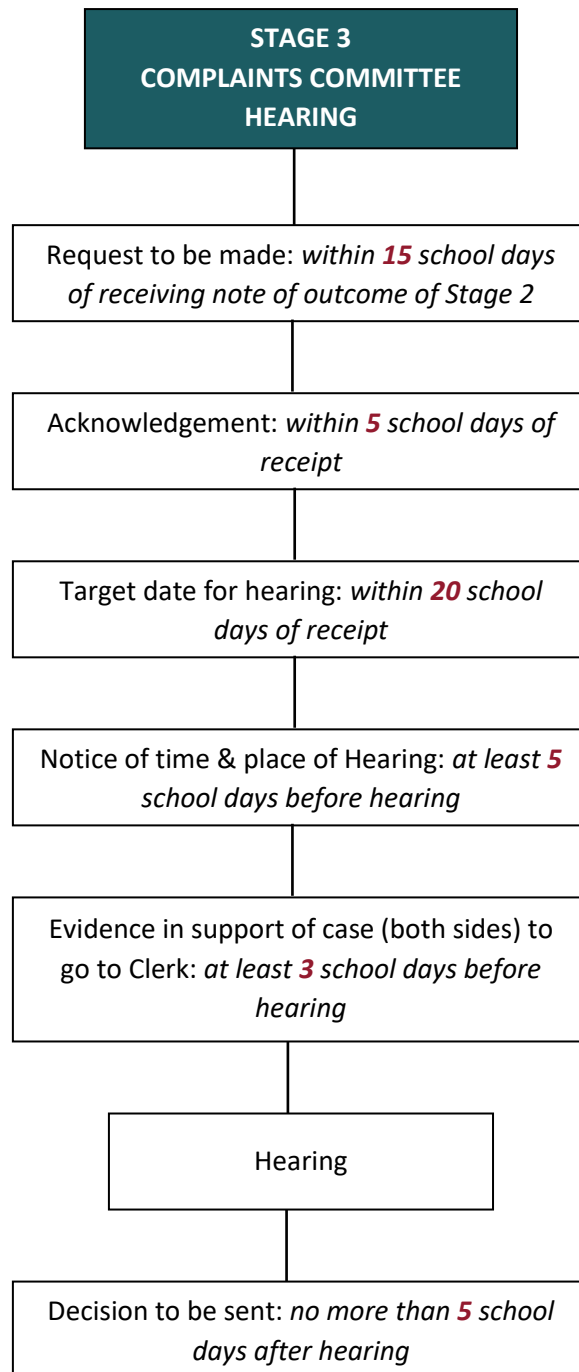
Appendix 4a - Summary of Concerns / Complaints Procedure for Parents & Carers

(This procedure does not apply to concerns and complaints relating to the matters listed in Appendix 1.)

Stage 1: Informal concerns	Parent brings complaint to attention of member of staff.
	Issue to be resolved (guide: within 15 school days).
	Where no satisfactory solution has been found, parent to be advised that they should proceed to Stage 2.
Stage 2: Formal Written Complaint	Parent to put complaint in writing using Complaint Form within 15 school days .
	Complaint to be acknowledged within 5 school days .
	Meeting with parents within 10 school days (where appropriate).
	Response to the complaint sent within 15 school days .
Stage 3: Referral to Complaints Committee	Parent to request hearing within 15 school days of receiving notice of the outcome of Stage 2 .
	Request to be acknowledged within 5 school days .
	Hearing to take place within 20 school days of receipt of request .
	Notification of date, time and place of the hearing and details of the committee members present sent at least 5 school days before the hearing .
	School representative and parents to submit evidence in support of their case to Clerk or the trust's Governance Professional at least 3 school days before the hearing .
	Complaints Committee decision sent not more than 5 school days after the hearing .

Appendix 4b – Flowchart of Concerns and Complaints Procedure for Parents & Carers – Current Pupils





Appendix 4c – Summary of the Procedure at a Stage 3 Hearing

- The parent and school representative will enter the hearing together
- The Chair of the Complaints Committee will introduce the committee members and outline the process
- The parent will explain the complaint
- The school representative and committee members will have the opportunity to put questions to the parent
- The school representative will explain the school's / trust's actions
- The parent and the committee members will have the opportunity to put questions to the school representative
- The parent will sum up their complaint
- The school representative will sum up the school's / trust's actions
- The Chair of the Complaints Committee will explain that both parties will hear from the committee **within 5 school days**
- Both parties will leave together while the Complaints Committee decides
- The Clerk, and any legal advisor assisting the Complaints Committee (if applicable), will stay to assist the Complaints Committee with its decision making.