Henry Chichele
Primary School

Complaints Policy and Procedure

September 2025

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Introduction

At Henry Chichele Primary School, we are committed to maintaining the highest standards of professional conduct and ethical practice in all aspects of our work. We strive to ensure a school environment that is safe, respectful, and free from discrimination, victimisation, harassment, or bullying. The Equality Act 2010 provides us with a clear framework to support our commitment to valuing diversity, tackling discrimination, promoting equality of opportunity, and fostering positive relationships between individuals. All concerns and complaints are treated with the utmost confidentiality and sensitivity. We take our responsibilities seriously, under the Data Protection Act 2018, ensuring that any personal data involved in the complaints process is handled securely, accurately, and lawfully, in accordance with statutory requirements and school policies.

The Governing Board of Henry Chichele Primary School has formally approved and adopted this policy to provide parents and carers with a clear and structured process for raising concerns or making a complaint regarding any aspect of the school's provision.

While concerns or complaints are not common, when they do arise, we see them as valuable opportunities to reflect, strengthen our school practices and further enhance the partnership between families and the school.

Aims

The aims of the procedure are:

- To deal with any complaint against the school or any individual connected with it by following the correct procedure.
- To deal with all complaints thoroughly and by being open, honest and fair when dealing with the complainant.
- To ensure all staff and are familiar with our process of dealing with complaints and fully understand their role within it

Scope, Definitions and Legal Framework

We will follow this procedure when dealing with complaints from others but reserve the right to substitute this procedure for an alternative process where it is appropriate to do so. This procedure does not apply to concerns and complaints relating to the following, which are dealt with under separate policies:

In accordance with Section 29(1) of the Education Act 2002, all maintained schools must have and publish procedures to deal with all complaints relating to their school. This procedure is written in line with, and utilises advice from, the DfE 'Best Practice Advice for School Complaints Procedures (2019)' and the DfE 'Model Complaints Procedure (2019).'

For the purposes of this policy the following definitions will apply:

- **Parent** means a current parent, carer or having legal responsibility for a child
- **Complainant** means the individual raising a concern or making a complaint
- **Concerns** are defined as 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'.
- **Complaints** are defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'.
- **Working or School Days** refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday – 08:00 – 17:00) but excludes weekends and school holidays when the school is open during term time for school concerns / complaints.

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by Henry Chichele Primary School, other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

This procedure does not apply to concerns and complaints relating to:

Exceptions	Who to contact
Admissions to schools Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs School re-organisation proposals	Please refer to the school's admission arrangements on the school website here or contact North Northamptonshire Council
Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance. If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding Designated Officer / LADO - Northamptonshire SCP or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). Report a concern or request support | Northampton Children's Trust
Exclusion of children from school*	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions. **Complaints about the application of the and relationships policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.*
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 matters relating to education 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
Staff grievances/conduct	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures and/or disciplinary procedures, if appropriate.
Staff conduct	Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal if appropriate. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.
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.
National Curriculum - content	Please contact the Department for Education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus

Part 1

Complaints Procedure

At Henry Chichele Primary School, we want to sort out any concerns or complaints as quickly and easily as possible. Many issues can be solved informally by talking things through, without needing to follow a formal process. We take all concerns seriously and will do our best to resolve them quickly. However, if you feel your concern hasn't been resolved, you can raise it formally by following our complaints procedure.

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, the headteacher will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, the headteacher will refer you to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important.

We understand however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, Henry Chichele Primary School will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

Most concerns can be resolved quickly at the first stage without needing to go further. Please raise any concerns promptly following the incident in question. Generally, complaints submitted more than three months after the event will not be considered.

We ask that everyone communicates respectfully with our staff. In very rare cases where someone behaves unreasonably or keeps complaining without good reason, we may refer to the school's persistent complainants or unreasonable complainant behaviour, to manage the situation.

Complainants should not contact individual governors with concerns or complaints. They cannot act on complaints by themselves and contacting them might stop them from being involved later if needed. Additionally, governors are not permitted to act as advocates for parents or complainants.

This complaints procedure is not limited to parents, carers or families of children that are registered at the school. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to Henry Chichele Primary School about any provision of facilities or services that we provide. Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as appeals relating to exclusions or admissions): see page 9.

Anonymous Complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the headteacher or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

Time Scales

Should it be necessary to extend or adjust any deadlines within this procedure, the complainant will be promptly informed of the reasons for the change and provided with updated timescales.

Additionally, if external agencies such as the police, local authority safeguarding teams, or legal bodies are involved in investigating any part of the complaint, this may affect our

ability to meet the established deadlines or may require pausing the complaints process until those investigations are concluded.

Henry Chichele Primary School will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

Please raise any concerns promptly following the incident in question. Generally, complaints submitted more than three months after the event will not be considered.

Raising a Concern or a Complaint

Complaints against school staff (except the headteacher) should be made in the first instance, to the headteacher via the school office**.** Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints that involve or are about the headteacher should be addressed to the Chair of Governors, via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor or the whole governing body should be addressed to the Clerk to the Governing Body, via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential. The Vice Chair of Governors will mediate any proceedings.

For ease of use, a template complaint form is included at the end of this procedure. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office. You can also ask third party organisations like the Citizens Advice to help you.

In accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure. For instance, providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

Resolving Complaints

At each stage in the procedure, Henry Chichele Primary School wants to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- an explanation
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- an assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur
- an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made
- an undertaking to review school policies considering the complaint
- an apology.

Withdrawal of a Complaint

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

Confidentiality

- A written record will be kept of all complaints and whether they were resolved at Stage 1, Stage 2, or proceeded to a Stage 3 Governor Panel hearing.

- The number of formal complaints registered during the preceding school year is to be reported to the Governing Body at the first Full Governors meeting held in September.
- Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where access is requested by the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under 'Section 109 of the 2008 Act' requests access to them under legal authority.
- In accordance with General Data Protection Regulation (GPDR) principles, no personal details relating to complaints will be passed on as part of the complaints reports to the Governing Board. Personal details will only be shared internally where it essential for responding to and resolving the complaint and details of individual complaints will be kept only for as long as is reasonably necessary in the circumstances.
- For complaints to be resolved as quickly and fairly as possible to all, Henry Chichele Primary School requests that complainants do not discuss complaints publicly via social media such as Facebook, X (formerly known as Twitter), WhatsApp etc. It is imperative that complaints are dealt with confidentially for all involved, and we expect complainants to observe confidentiality also.

Roles and Responsibilities

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

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

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

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

The investigator should:

- conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning
- keep notes of interviews or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of

the meeting

- ensure that any papers produced during the investigation are kept securely pending any appeal
- be mindful of the timescales to respond
- prepare a comprehensive report for the headteacher or complaints committee that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.

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

Complaints Co-ordinator (headteacher/designated complaints governor/ staff member providing administrative support)

The Headteacher generally serves as the Complaints Coordinator; however, if this is not appropriate in a particular case, the appointed investigator will assume the role instead.

The complaints co-ordinator should:

- ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure
- liaise with staff members, headteacher, Chair of Governors, Clerk and LAs (if appropriate) to ensure the smooth running of the complaints procedure
- be aware of issues regarding:
  - sharing third party information
  - additional support. This may be needed by complainants when making a complaint including interpretation support or where the complainant is a child or young person
- keep records

Clerk to the Governing Body
The Clerk becomes involved at Stage Three of the process, serving as the main point of contact for both the complainant and the committee. At this stage, the Clerk is responsible for organising a committee hearing or a complaint meeting. The clerk should:

- 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)
- set the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties (if they are invited to attend) and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- collate any written material relevant to the complaint (e.g. Stage 1 paperwork, school and complainant submissions) and send it to the parties in advance of the meeting within an agreed timescale

- record the proceedings
- circulate the minutes of the meeting
- notify all parties of the committee's decision.

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

- both parties are asked (via the Clerk) to provide any additional information relating to the complaint by a specified date in advance of the meeting
- the meeting is conducted in an informal manner, is not adversarial, and that, if all parties are invited to attend, everyone is treated with respect and courtesy
- complainants who may not be used to speaking at such a meeting are put at ease. This is particularly important if the complainant is a child/young person
- the remit of the committee is explained to the complainant
- the meeting format is clearly established and consistently adhered to.
- written material is seen by everyone in attendance, provided it does not breach confidentiality or any individual's rights to privacy under the DPA 2018 or GDPR.
- If a new issue arises it would be useful to give everyone the opportunity to consider and comment upon it; this may require a short adjournment of the meeting
- both the complainant and the school are given the opportunity to make their case and seek clarity, either through written submissions ahead of the meeting or verbally in the meeting itself
- the issues are addressed
- key findings of fact are made
- the committee is open-minded and acts independently
- no member of the committee has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure
- the meeting is minuted
- they liaise with the Clerk (and complaints co-ordinator, if the school has one).

Committee Member
Committee members should be aware that:

- the meeting must be independent and impartial, and should be seen to be so

  No governor may sit on the committee if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it.

- the aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant

  We recognise that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the meeting does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations.

- many complainants will feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting

  Parents/carers often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child.

- extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child/young person and

present during all or part of the meeting

Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings should ensure that the child/young person does not feel intimidated.

The committee should respect the views of the child/young person and give them equal consideration to those of adults.

If the child/young person is the complainant, the committee should ask in advance if any support is needed to help them present their complaint. Where the child/young person's parent is the complainant, the committee should give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the meeting, if any, the child/young person needs to attend.

However, the parent should be advised that agreement might not always be possible if the parent wishes the child/young person to attend a part of the meeting that the committee considers is not in the child/young person's best interests.

- the welfare of the child/young person is paramount.

Concerns or Complaints from persons other than parents/carers of currently registered pupils

The school wishes to work closely with other members of the local community and will deal with concerns and complaints as follows:

1. A concern regarding the school and/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 10 school days. If a longer period is required, you will be kept informed of the progress of the investigation.

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. See Appendix A for guidance on how to put your complaint in writing. The headteacher may delegate the task of investigation and/or responding to the complaint to a member of the Senior Leadership Team or may escalate the complaint straight to stage 3. 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, you will be kept updated.

3. If you are not satisfied with the response at stage 2, you may request a review by writing to the Clerk. You should write to the Clerk within 15 school days of receipt of the letter at stage 2. Requests received outside this timeframe will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply. The Clerk will convene a complaints committee on the same terms as set out in Part 1 of this policy. The decision at this stage will usually be sent to you within 15 school days of receipt of the request for a review. The decision at stage 3 exhausts the school's complaints procedure.
Concerns or complaints regarding the Executive Head Teacher or the school should be referred directly to the Clerk (via an email to the office) who will arrange for the stages above to be considered by an appropriate person.

Unreasonably persistent complainants and unreasonable complainant behaviour

Although unusual, there may be exceptional circumstances where we depart from the standard Complaints Procedure. Any decision to do so will be made jointly by the Head Teacher and the Chair of Governors.

These include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- The complainant's behaviour or language towards staff, members of the full governing body is unacceptable, for example, is abusive, offensive, discriminatory or threatening
- The complainant's behaviour is hindering the consideration of their or other people's complaints
- The complainant's behaviour is hindering the proper running of the school because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact, such as if the complainant:
- The complainant insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice
- The complainant introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be considered and commented upon
- The complainant makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues and seeks to have them replaced
- The complainant's 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
- 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
- The complainant refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process
- The complainant refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure
- The complainant changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds
- The complainant seeks an unrealistic outcome, such as the inappropriate dismissal of staff
- The complainant knowingly provides falsified information
- The complainant publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums

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 a six-month time frame, the complaint will be considered and the complainant possibly referred directly to Stage 4.

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 communication 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 premises.

In all cases we will write to tell the complainant why we believe their 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 or members of the governing body, we will take appropriate action, for example reporting the matter to the police or taking legal action. In such cases, we may not give the complainant warning of that action.

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 school) 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, as deemed applicable.

Duplicate Complaints

If, after closing a complaint at the end of the Complaints Procedure, we receive a duplicate complaint from a spouse, a partner, a grandparent, a child not attending this school or a friend, we will remind them that we have already considered the complaint and the local process is complete.

Complainants will be advised to contact the DfE if they are dissatisfied with our handling of the complaint.

Complaint Stages

The school's complaints procedure has four key stages to ensure that any concern or formal complaint is considered in depth within a timely manner and that any necessary investigation being conducted is done so at an appropriate, and where necessary, at an independent level: involve

Stage 1 –Informal Concern
An informal raising of a concern or difficulty with a member of staff either orally, email or in writing.

Stage 2 – Formal Complaint: A formal complaint which must be submitted in writing (See Appendix A)

Stage 3 – Appeal to The Governing Board: An appeal to members of the Governing Board Complaint Committee, following a Stage 2 complaint outcome not being accepted by the complainant.

Stage 4 – Escalation to the Department for Education if it is felt that the school has acted unreasonably or not followed the correct procedures.

If at any stage of the complaint it is determined that staff disciplinary or capability proceedings are necessary in order to resolve the issue, the details of this action will remain confidential to the headteacher and/or the individual's line manager. The complainant is entitled to be informed that action has been / is being taken, but they are not entitled to participate in the proceedings or receive any detail about them.

Stage 1

Many enquiries and concerns can be dealt with satisfactorily and informally in the first instance, 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.

Informal concerns and complaints may be made in person or in writing. The process for the Informal stage of this policy is to address your concerns in the following order:

Class Teacher – they always aim to build strong relationships and they know your child best.

Member of the SLT (Phase Leader) – they line manage and strategically oversee staff in all Key Stage.

It is advisable to fully explain the nature of the concern and identify the outcome you are looking for. You may be invited to an informal meeting or called over the phone by 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. More than one member of staff may need to attend the meeting if appropriate.

If the matter is brought to the attention of the phase leader, they may deal with your concerns directly at this stage or direct the matter to the appropriate staff member as per the process above.

If the concerns are about the phase leader/s, these should be referred to the Head Teacher.

If the concerns are about the Head Teacher, these should be referred directly to the Clerk to Governors in writing to the school office under Stage 2.

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 Head Teacher (Stage 2), within 15 school days.

Stage 2

Formal complaints must be made to the headteacher (unless they are about the headteacher), via the school office. This may be done in person, in writing (preferably on the Complaint Form), or by telephone.

The headteacher will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 5 school days.

Within this response, the headteacher will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The headteacher can consider whether a face-to-face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

Note: The headteacher may delegate the investigation to another member of the school's senior management team but not the decision to be taken.

During the investigation, the headteacher (or investigator) will:

- if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
- keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the headteacher will provide a formal written response within 15 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint.

If the headteacher is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason/s for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions Henry Chichele Primary School will take to resolve the complaint.

The headteacher will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2.

Complaints about the Headteacher, Chair, Vice Chair and/or the entire governing body, must be made to the Clerk, via the school office. Stage 2 will be considered by an independent investigator appointed by the clerk. At the conclusion of the investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response.

Stage 3

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 2 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 3 (a meeting with members of the governing body's complaints committee, which will be formed of the first three, impartial, governors available). This is the final internal stage of the complaints procedure.

A request to escalate to Stage 3 must be made to the Clerk, via the school office, within 5 school days of receipt of the Stage 2 response. The Clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 10 school days.

Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

The Clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within 10 school days of receipt of the Stage 3 request. If this is not possible, the Clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates, without good reason, the Clerk will decide when to hold the meeting. It will then proceed in the complainant's absence based on written submissions from both parties.

The complaints committee will consist of at least three governors with no prior involvement or knowledge of the complaint. Prior to the meeting, they will decide amongst themselves who will act as the Chair of the Complaints Committee. If there are fewer than three governors from Henry Chichele Primary School available, the Clerk will source any additional, independent governors through another local school or through their LA's Governor Services team, to make up the committee. Alternatively, an entirely independent committee may be convened to hear the complaint at Stage 3.

The committee will decide whether to deal with the complaint by inviting parties to a meeting or through written representations, but in making their decision they will be sensitive to the complainant's needs.

If the complainant is invited to attend the meeting, they may bring someone along to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. Generally, we do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the committee meeting. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate.

For instance, if a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by union and/or legal representation.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

At least 10 school days before the meeting, the Clerk will:

- confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that, if the complainant is invited, the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the committee at least 10 school days before the meeting.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 10 school days before the date of the meeting. The committee will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

The committee will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

The committee will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The committee can:

- uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part

If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the committee will:

- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

The Chair of the Committee will provide the complainant and Henry Chichele Primary School with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 10 school days.

The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the Department for Education if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by the school.

If the complaint is jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair and/or the entire governing body and/or the majority of the governing body, Stage 3 will be heard by a committee of independent governors, appointed by the clerk.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason/s for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions Henry Chichele Primary School will take to resolve the complaint.

The response will also advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied.

Stage 4

If the complainant believes the school did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact the Department for Education after they have completed Stage 3.

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by Henry Chichele Primary School. They will consider whether Henry Chichele Primary School has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint.

The complainant can refer their complaint to the Department for Education:

Online at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus

By telephone on 0370 000 2288

By writing to:

Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD.

Appendix A

If a concern or issue cannot be resolved at Stage 1 then a Formal Complaint may be submitted in line with this procedure with the following information required.

When expressing your complaint in writing, try to do it in a way that helps an investigator quickly understand the following things:

- What the key aspects of your complaint are, as opposed to every single example (which will be captured in your timeline - see the next point). It often helps to articulate what you think the school should have done differently or better and why
- Capture a timeline of relevant events; a table with dates/times in the first column and then the second column outlines what happened. Where possible, include details that will help the investigator such as which members of staff might have been involved. This can help an investigator quickly understand the context and sequence of events that your complaint is about and identify the best way to investigate
- Gather, and subsequently share, any evidence that you have that the investigator can look at. Often this will take the form of emails (which you can cross-reference in your timeline) you've exchanged with the school, or perhaps other documents

Appendix B

Procedures, including Timescales for Concerns and Complaints

Informal Concern raised (Stage 1)

Initial concern raised with member of staff or headteacher

Resolved?

Yes

No further action

No

Formal Complaint Procedure (Stage 2)

Complete the Complaint's form (Appendix A) and send this to the headteacher.

(Acknowledgement from headteacher within 5 school days)

Investigation

Conducted by:

- the headteacher, senior management team or Chair of Governors
- a nominated governor if about the headteacher
- an independent investigator if about the Chair, Vice Chair, the majority or whole of the Governing Board

Investigation Outcome

A formal written response will be communicated within 15 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint

Resolved?

Yes

No further action

No

Formal Complaint Procedure (Stage 3)

A request to escalate to Stage 3 must be made to the Clerk, via the school office, within 5 school days of receipt of the Stage 2 response.

Governing Board Complaints Committee Meeting

A panel of 3 governors will meet to consider your complaint within 15 school days. The committee will independently clerked. Evidence should be submitted 10 days in advance

Complaints Committee Decision

The panel will make a final decision on behalf of the Governing Board and will inform the complainant within 10 working days.

The complaint can be:

- uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part

Actions or recommendations will also be shared.

Resolved?

Yes

No further action

No

Escalation to the Department for Education (Stage 4)

Contact the Department for Education, if you feel the school has acted unreasonably or not followed the correct procedure.