



# SHERSTON C OF E



## PRIMARY SCHOOL



## Complaints Procedure & Policy

Date Approved	Review Date	Signed
Sept 2024	Sept 2025	

Year	Amendments (in Yellow)
2023	Opening statement link to vision and values Link added to DfE School Complaints Procedure Complaints about the head
2024	No updates



At Sherston Primary School, we are committed to creating a nurturing and inclusive environment where our children, parents, and staff can thrive together in a spirit of unity. Our vision is embodied in the principles of 'Learning, Caring and Achieving Together.' The word 'together' is poignant as it illustrates the importance of effective communication; it is essential in realising this vision, and we welcome feedback from our school community to ensure that we continuously improve and provide the best possible educational experience for our children.

Sherston Primary School recognises that occasionally parents may have some kind of concern about their child's education. Any concern is dealt with as soon as possible in order that it may not become a complaint. The staff at the school are always willing to hear parents' concerns and in the majority of cases, an informal meeting between a parent and the child's teacher is all that is needed to reassure parents and their children.

However, occasionally a parent or child may be dissatisfied with the way in which the school responds to a concern and wishes to take the matter further as a complaint. A formal procedure will need to be invoked when initial attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful.

**Exceptions:** the following issues are not covered by this policy, but are covered in separate procedures/policies

- Matters relating to the curriculum
- Issues with exclusions
- Complaints relating to admissions

## Complaints Procedure


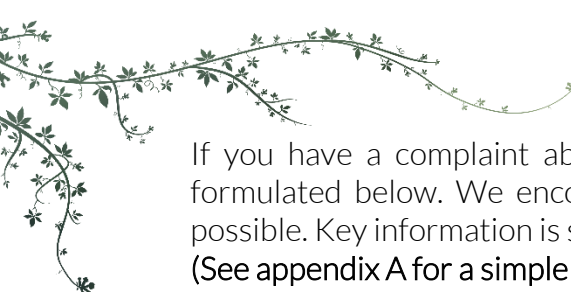
### General Principles

It is our intention that our complaints procedure will:

- encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible;
- be easily accessible and publicised;
- be simple to understand and use;
- be impartial;
- be non-adversarial;
- allow swift handling with established time-limits for action and keeping people informed of the progress;
- ensure a full and fair investigation by an independent person where necessary;
- respect people's desire for confidentiality;
- address all the points at issue and provide an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary;
- provide information to the school's senior leadership team so that services can be improved.

The following will **not** be investigated unless there are exceptional circumstances:

- An anonymous complaint
- An issue which occurred **more than three months ago**



If you have a complaint about our school please follow the procedure that has been formulated below. We encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible. Key information is summarised below:  
(See appendix A for a simple flowchart of the process)

### Why have a procedure like this?

We want a supportive Home-School relationship in which any problems are resolved as soon as possible. This is so that pupils' learning, which is of utmost importance at our school, is not damaged.

A supportive partnership is far better for pupils than divisions between home and school.

### When should you contact us?

As soon as possible if something is troubling you to do with our school.

### How?

- Telephone call if the issue is urgent
- Email
- Letter before a formal complaint
- If an approach is made to a governor, the governor will inform the parent/carer of the correct person to contact and advise them about the correct procedure.

### Who Should You Contact?

#### Stage One: Concern is heard by Staff member

It is in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. A complainant should first speak to a member of staff in order for the staff member to have the opportunity to resolve the issue. If it is something that has happened in class, at break/lunchtime or before / after school please contact your child's **class teacher** via the school office – [admin@sherston.wilts.sch.uk](mailto:admin@sherston.wilts.sch.uk)

A brief **written record** of meetings and telephone calls may be kept and a copy of any written response added to the record.

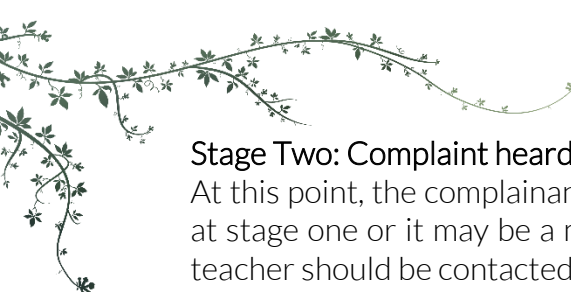
If you would have difficulty discussing the complaint with your child's class teacher please contact a **member of the senior management team**.

If the matter can be resolved to your satisfaction, then the process will halt at this point. If not, please contact the **Head teacher**.

Complaints that involve or are about the headteacher should be addressed to Belinda Robinson 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 Board should be addressed to Emel Lansdell, Clerk to the Governing Board via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential

If the complaint is about the headteacher or a member of the Governing Board, a suitably skilled governor will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 1



## Stage Two: Complaint heard by Head teacher.

At this point, the complainant may be dissatisfied with the way the complaint was handled at stage one or it may be a matter where a pupil may be at risk. In these cases, the Head teacher should be contacted.

### The Head teacher will:

1. Establish what has happened so far, and who has been involved;
2. Clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved;
3. Meet with the complainant or contact them (if unsure or further information is necessary);
4. Clarify what the complainant feels would put things right;
5. If felt necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
6. Ensure that a detailed record is kept of all actions including notes of any interview
7. Acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing within two working days.
8. Write to the complainant with the outcome within 15 working days.
9. Inform Governors in writing at the next Full Governing Body meeting.

A complaints form is attached to this policy to support those wishing to make a formal complaint. These are also available from the school office. Alternatively, the complainant may put their complaint in writing, stating 'this is a formal complaint'.

## Stage Three: Formal Complaint submitted to the chair of Governors

If the complainant is still not happy, they should put their complaint, in writing, to the Chair of Governors. This must be done *within 15 school days* of being informed by the Headteacher of his/her decision in Stage 2.

At this stage, the Chair of Governors may invite the complainant to an informal meeting with him/her or nominated governor and the Headteacher to see if the issue can be resolved without the need to convene a Governing Body complaints panel. This will be arranged *within 10 school days* or as soon as is practicable.

The Chair or nominated governor will investigate the complaint and inform the complainant of their decision *within 15 school days* of the meeting. If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome then they may write to the Chair of Governors, *within 10 school days of the date of the letter*, asking for a Governor's Appeal Panel to be convened.

## Stage Four: Complaint heard by Governing body's Complaints Appeal Panel



The Chair, or a nominated governor, will convene a Governing Body Appeals Panel *within 10 school days or as soon as is practicable*.

The Remit of the Complaints Appeal Panel

The panel can:

- 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's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

The governors' complaints panel hearing is the last school-based stage of the complaints process. Individual complaints will not be heard by the whole governing body at any stage.



as this could compromise the impartiality of any panel set up for any disciplinary hearing following a serious complaint.

**At all stages of the complaints process we will:**

- Encourage resolution of problems by informal means whenever possible.
- Ensure a full and fair investigation by an independent person where necessary.
- Ensure an accurate written record is kept of the procedure.
- Be impartial and non-adversarial.
- Respect people's desire for confidentiality.
- Attempt to address all the points at issue and provide an effective
- Respond and appropriately redress, where necessary.

The Governing Body will monitor the level and nature of complaints and review the outcomes on an annual basis, to ensure the effectiveness of the procedure and make changes where necessary. Complaints information shared with the whole Governing Body will not name individuals.

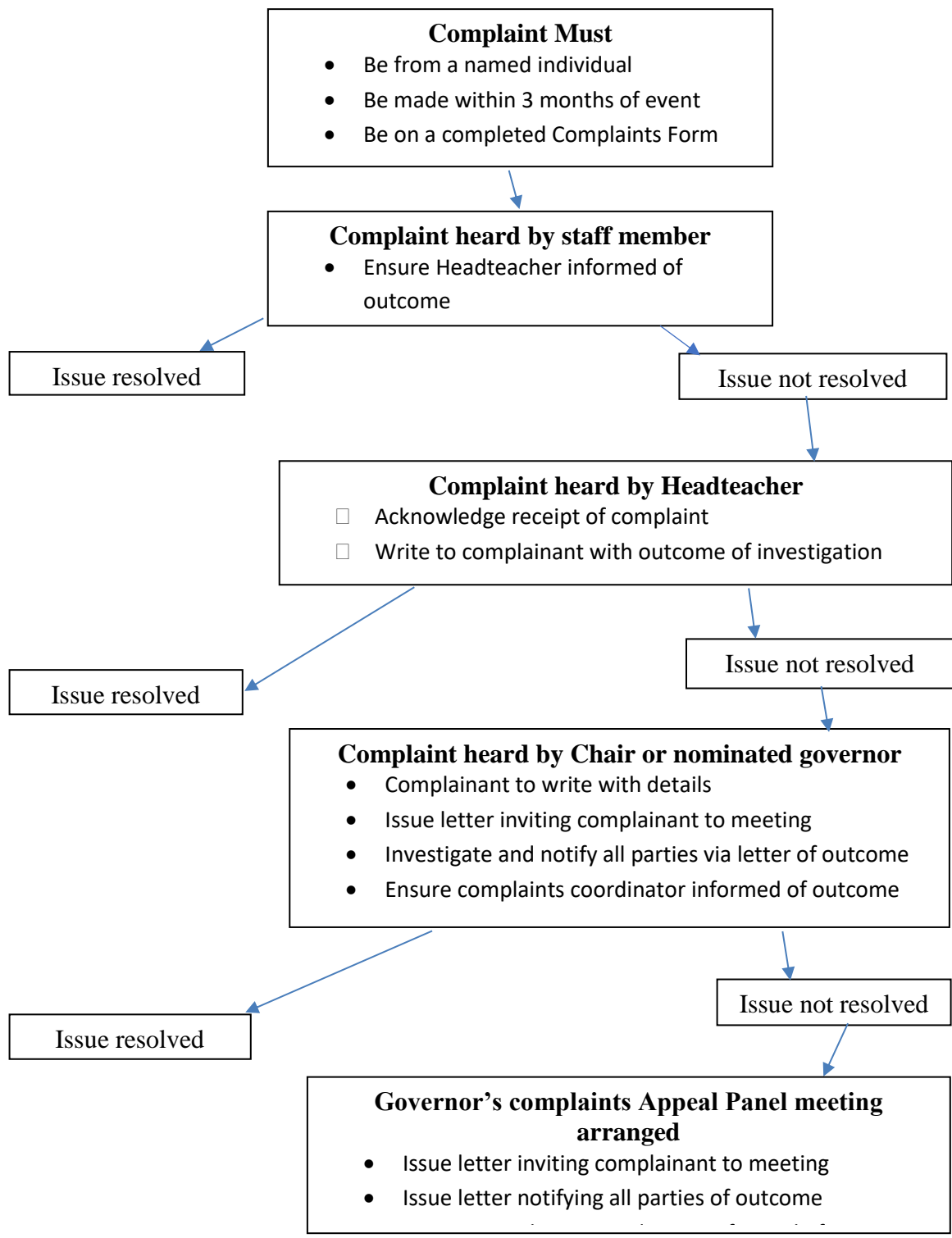
The head teacher will be the complaints co-ordinator for Sherston Primary School.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the DfE document [School Complaints Procedure](#)

Appendix A - Flow Chart of Complaints Procedure

Sherston CE VC Primary School

Complaints Procedure Flow Chart



*Please complete and return the form to the head teacher who will acknowledge receipt in writing and explain what action will be taken*

Your Name:

Pupil's name

Relationship to Pupil

Address

Telephone number

Please give as detailed an account of your complaint as possible

What action, if any, have you taken to try and resolve your complaint? Include who you have spoken with.

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Signature:

Date:

## Complaints from the Wider Community



### Stage One: Complaint Heard by Head Teacher

It is in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. A complainant should first speak to the head teacher in order for the head to resolve the issue. Where the concern concerns the Headteacher, the complainant should write to the Chair of Governors.

The Headteacher will contact and/or meet with the complainant. If the matter is still not resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant, then they may consider writing to the Chair of Governors *within 15 school days* of being informed by the Headteacher of his/her decision.

### Stage Two: Complaint Heard by Chair of Governors or nominated Governor

A complaint form is available from the school office for the complainant to write to the Chair of Governors giving details of the complaint. This must be done *within 15 school days* of being informed by the Headteacher of his/her decision in Stage one

At this stage, the Chair of Governors may invite the complainant to an informal meeting with him/her or nominated governor and the Headteacher to see if the issue can be resolved without the need to convene a Governing Body complaints panel. This will be arranged *within 10 school days* or as soon as is practicable.

The Chair or nominated governor will investigate the complaint and inform the complainant of their decision *within 15 school days* of the meeting.



## Appendix D

### Policy for Vexatious Correspondence and Complaints Raising Concerns and Resolving Complaints

The head teacher and SLT deal with specific complaints as part of their day-to-day management of the school, in accordance with the School's Complaints Policy. The majority of complaints are handled in an informal manner and are resolved quickly, sensitively and to the satisfaction of the complainant.

Sometimes, parents or carers pursuing complaints or other issues treat staff and others in a way that is unreasonable and unacceptable. The consequences are that the actions of the complainants begin to impact negatively on the day-to-day running of the school and directly or indirectly the overall wellbeing of the children or staff in the school. Whilst we recognise that some complaints may relate to serious and distressing incidents, we will not accept threatening or harassing behaviour towards any members of the school community.

In these exceptional circumstances, the school may take action in accordance with this policy.

#### Aims of the Policy

The aims of this policy are to:

- Uphold the standards of courtesy and reasonableness that should characterise all communication between the school and persons who wish to express a concern or pursue a complaint;
- Support the well-being of children, staff and anyone else who has a legitimate interest in the work of the school, including governors and parents;
- Deal fairly, honestly and transparently with those who make persistent or vexatious complaints and those who harass members of staff while ensuring that other stakeholders suffer no detriment.

#### Parents expectations of the school



Parents/carers/members of the public who raise either informal concerns or formal complaints with the school can expect the school to:

- Ensure that the Complaints policy and this policy are available on the school's website.
- Respond within a reasonable time;
- Be available for consultation within reasonable time limits bearing in mind the nature of the complaint;
- Respond with courtesy and respect;
- Attempt to resolve problems using reasonable means in line with the school's complaints policy, other policies and practice.

#### The School's Expectations of Parents/carers/members of the public.

The school expects anyone who wishes to raise concerns with the school to:

- treat all members of the school community with courtesy and respect;

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- respect the needs of pupils and staff within the school;
  - avoid the use of violence, or threats of violence, towards people or property;
  - recognise the time constraints under which members of staff in schools work and allow the school a reasonable time to respond to a complaint;
  - recognise that resolving a specific problem can sometimes take some time.
  - follow the school's complaints procedure.
  - cease to communicate with the school regarding the complaint once the process has been followed

### **What do we mean by 'an unreasonably persistent' or 'vexatious' complainant'?**

For the Purpose of this policy, an unreasonably persistent or vexatious complainant is one that complains about issues regardless of their merit, that are disproportionate to the issues, irrelevant to the running of the school and/or pursued seemingly with the intent of harassment. It also includes actions regarding the complaint which are unreasonable.

### **Unreasonable behaviour may include actions which are:**

- Actions which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious;
- Prolific correspondence or excessive e-mail or telephone contact about a concern or complaint;
- Uses Freedom of Information requests excessively and unreasonably;
- Deliberately spreading discord within the school community;

### **An insistence on:**

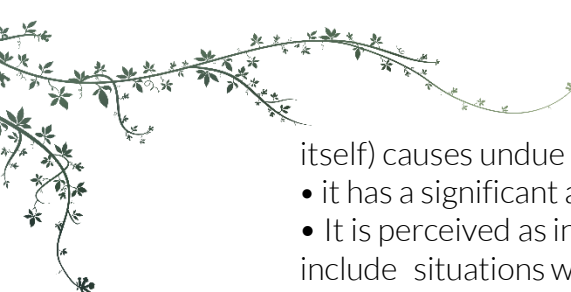

- pursuing unjustified complaints and/or
- unrealistic outcomes to justified complaints
- pursuing justifiable complaints in an unreasonable manner (e.g. using abusive or threatening language; or
- making complaints in public; or
- refusing to attend appointments to discuss the complaint.
- dealing with the head teacher or governors on all occasions irrespective of the issue and the level of delegation in the school to deal with such matters.
- Refusing to follow the school's complaints policy

### **What is 'harassment'?**

We regard harassment as the unreasonable pursuit of issues or complaints, particularly if the matter appears to be pursued in a way intended to cause personal distress rather than to seek a resolution.

### **Behaviour may fall within the scope of this policy if:**

- it appears to be deliberately targeted at one or more members of school staff or others, without good cause;
- the way in which a complaint or other issues are pursued (as opposed to the complaint

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- itself) causes undue distress to school staff or others;
- it has a significant and disproportionate adverse effect on the school community.
  - It is perceived as intimidating and oppressive by the recipient. This could include situations where persistent demands and criticisms, whilst not particularly taxing or serious when
  - It viewed in isolation, have a cumulative effect over time of undermining confidence, well-being and health.

### **Schools' responses to unreasonably persistent complaints or harassment**

We will always seek to work with parents, carers and others with a legitimate complaint to resolve a difficulty. However, in cases of unreasonably persistent complaints or harassment, the school may take some or all of the following steps, as appropriate:

- inform the complainant informally or in writing, that his/her behaviour is now considered by the school to be unreasonable or unacceptable, and request a changed approach;
- Formalise a specific procedure for communication and advise that, all communications outside these channels will not be entered in to.
- require all future meetings with a member of staff to be conducted with a second person present. In the interests of all parties, notes of these meetings may be taken;
- inform the complainant that, except in emergencies, the school will respond only to written communication and legal advice may be sought.
- In the case of physical, or verbal aggression or other forms of intimidating behaviour, take appropriate advice and if necessary the complainant will receive a temporary ban from the school site and / or the police will be contacted.
- Consider taking appropriate advice on pursuing a case under Anti-Harassment legislation;
- Consider putting in place a specific procedure for dealing with complaints from the complainant, i.e. the complainant will not be able to deal directly with the head teacher but only with a third person, to be identified by the governing body of the school, who will investigate, determine whether or not the concern / complaint is reasonable or vexatious and then advise the head teacher accordingly.

In the event of extreme situations or events, the school may take the decision to implement one of the above steps immediately. In this situation the complainant will be informed in writing.

*The CoG and Wellbeing/Safeguarding Governors will be kept informed and report to FGB without giving any details in case an appeal panel is needed at a later*