Complaints Policy

Responsible Person	Governing Board
Dated	September 2026
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Aims and Principles of the Policy

This policy aims to:

- Encourage the resolution of concerns and complaints by informal means wherever possible
- Ensure that concerns are dealt with quickly, fully and fairly within defined time limits wherever possible
- Provide effective and appropriate responses to concerns and complaints
- Maintain good relationships between the school and all those involved

Where concerns are raised, the school intends for these to be dealt with fairly, openly and promptly. The school has approved the following procedure which explains what you should do if you have any concerns about the school.

Where appropriate, the school may offer mediation to resolve a concern or complaint at any stage of the process. The school may also use someone independent from the school to investigate a complex issue and to report back to the Headteacher, Chair of Governors or Governor Review Panel (depending on which stage of the process the complaint is being dealt with).

Raising Concerns or Complaints

The majority of concerns can be dealt with without resorting to the Complaints Procedure. Where you have a concern or query about any aspect of the school or your child's education or wellbeing, raise this with your child's Class Teacher in the first instance. Ideally, they will be able to address your concerns immediately or can arrange a meeting with you to discuss the issue.

Issues should not be taken to governors in the first instance, either verbally or in writing, as this can prejudice any subsequent investigation. Governors will advise complainants that the correct process must be followed and will report any occurrences to the Chair of Governors, without revealing any details of the issue mentioned. This will ensure such governors play no further part in any future investigation or review.

However, should a concern be shared with the entire governing board an independent Review Panel will be convened via the Local Authority.

Safeguarding

Wherever a complaint indicates that a child's wellbeing or safety is at risk, the school is under a duty to report this immediately to the Local Authority. Any action taken will be in accordance with the school's Safeguarding Policy.

Confidentiality and Social Media

In order for complaints to be resolved as quickly and fairly as possible, we ask that complainants do not raise concerns or discuss them publicly, including via social media. All concerns and complaints will be dealt with confidentially by the school and we expect complainants to observe confidentiality during and after the process, and to abide by the contents of the Home School Agreement document. It may be necessary to take notes where the matter may need to be taken further or may arise again in the future.

Complaints that result in staff capability or disciplinary

If at any formal stage of a complaint it is determined that staff disciplinary or capability proceedings are necessary, the details of any action will remain confidential to the Headteacher and/or the individual's line manager. The complainant is not entitled to participate in the process or receive any detail about the proceedings.

Complaints about the Headteacher or the Governors

Where a complaint concerns the Headteacher, the complainant should first approach the Headteacher in an attempt to resolve the issue informally. If the complainant is not satisfied with this outcome, they should notify the Chair of Governors that they wish to take a complaint forward. The Stage 3 process will then commence, and the Chair of Governors will take the process forward.

Where a complaint concerns a governor, the same process applies as for the Headteacher. Where a complaint concerns the Chair of Governors the procedure at Stage 3 will apply but the Vice Chair of Governors or an independent investigator will take the process forward.

The Stages of the Complaints Process

A flowchart of the full Complaint Process is included as Appendix 2.

Stage 1 – Informal Stage

Please start by telling the Class Teacher about your concern. This is usually the best and quickest way of resolving issues. In some cases, the Class Teacher may feel it more appropriate to refer you to a more senior or experienced member of staff who will try to resolve the concern informally.

- It is recommended that you make an appointment to speak to the Class Teacher as soon as possible as this will give both parties the opportunity to talk about the issue without being interrupted.
- It is important to recognise that schools are busy organisations and may not be able to offer an appointment straight away.
- The purpose of this meeting will be to establish the nature of the concern and to seek a resolution to the problem.
- It is good practice for the Class Teacher to make a brief written record of the concerns raised and any actions agreed.
- They may need to carry out an investigation or talk to others before they can respond to you. You will be given a timescale for a response.

Stage 2 – Formal Written Complaint

(non-parental complaints are likely to go straight to this stage)

If you feel dissatisfied with the outcome of discussions with the Class Teacher, you should then contact the Headteacher in writing by submitting the Complaint Form in Appendix 1. The Headteacher will then arrange

an appointment to see you and discuss your concerns, why you feel the issue has not been resolved through informal channels and what resolution you are seeking.

- The Headteacher will consider the complaint and in doing so will:
    - Establish what has happened so far, and who has been involved;
    - Meet or contact you if they need further information;
    - Clarify what you feel would put things right if this has not been set out in your letter or included on your form;
    - Interview those involved in the matter and those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
    - Conduct any interviews with an open mind;
    - Keep notes of any interview for the record.

- The Headteacher will keep in mind ways in which the complaint can be resolved. It may be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:
    - an apology
    - an explanation
    - an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better (please note this is not an admission of negligence)
    - an assurance that the event complained of will not recur
    - an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again
    - an undertaking to review policies and practice in light of the complaint

- For complaints specifically about the Headteacher, the Chair of Governors will arrange for the complaint to be investigated, either by themselves or by an appropriate independent investigator.

It may also be the case that the complaint may not have any substance and is therefore considered to be unfounded or unsubstantiated.

The Headteacher will discuss the outcome with you and will send a detailed response within a maximum of 20 school days. Where this proves to be unrealistic, you will be informed in writing and given an estimate of how long it will take to provide a detailed response.

Where you are unhappy about the decision the Headteacher has made about your complaint, this does not become a complaint about the Headteacher or staff member concerned. However, you will be advised of your entitlement to take your original complaint to the next stage by writing to the Chair of Governors as soon as possible after receiving the decision, briefly outlining the content of the complaint and requesting that a Governor Review Panel is convened.

Stage 3 – Governor Review

If you are not satisfied with the response of the Headteacher, or you have a concern or complaint that is specifically about the Headteacher which has not been resolved informally, then you must write to the Chair of Governors within 10 school days of receiving the decision or incident date. Briefly outline the content of the complaint and request that a Governor Review Panel is convened; marking any envelope or email “urgent, private and confidential”. Contact details for the school office and Chair of Governors are available on the website at www.madginfordprimaryschool.co.uk

- The Chair of Governors will acknowledge receipt of the letter within 5 school days. The acknowledgement will inform the complainant that three members of the school’s governing board will hear the complaint within 20 school days of receiving the complaint. The letter will explain that

the complainant has the right to submit any further documentation relevant to the complaint.

- The review will normally be conducted through a consideration of written submissions, but reasonable requests to make oral representations will be considered in extenuating circumstances.

- A meeting of the Governor Review Panel will be convened. No governors with prior involvement in the issues complained about will be included on the panel and it may be necessary to use reserves to ensure the Panel can meet within the set time. An experienced governor will chair the panel meeting and minutes will be taken by the Clerk. The Chair or Clerk of the Governor Review Panel will advise the complainant of the arrangements.

- The complainant will be requested to submit written evidence to the panel. The panel may also have access to the records kept of the process followed during previous stages of the process.

- In situations where the complainant has been invited to the meeting by the Governor Review Panel there will not be an opportunity to question staff or the Headteacher. This discussion takes place during Stage 2 of this process and the review meeting will be non-confrontational and resolution focussed.

- The panel will then invite representatives of the school that have considered the matter, usually the Headteacher or the Chair of Governors (as appropriate) to make a response to the complaint. These representatives are not obliged to attend the review meeting, although it is often helpful.

- Once the Governor Review Panel has been held, the complainant and the school will be informed of their decision within 5 school days. If it is not possible to meet these timescales, then the Chair of the Panel will contact both parties to discuss a mutually convenient date.

- The matter will then be closed as far as the school is concerned.

Stage 4 – Escalation to Secretary of State for Education

If the complainant remains unsatisfied by the outcome of the Governor Review Panel, they will be advised to contact the Secretary of State for Education. The Secretary of State has a duty to consider all complaints raised but will only intervene where the governing board has acted unlawfully or unreasonably.
The School Complaints Unit considers complaints relating to Local Authority maintained schools in England on behalf of the Secretary of State. They will look at whether the school's Complaints Policy and other relevant statutory policies were adhered to. They will also check whether the school's policy adheres to education legislation. However, the unit will not re-investigate the substance of the complaint. This remains the responsibility of the school. If the Schools Complaints Unit finds that the school has not handled a complaint in accordance with its procedure, the unit may request that the complaint is looked at again.

The School Complaints Unit can be contacted by calling the national helpline on 0370 000 2288 or by going online at: www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus or by writing to:

Department for Education
School Complaints Unit
2nd Floor, Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester M1 2WD

Policy for Unreasonable Complainants

Our school is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with the school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

The school defines unreasonable complainants as:

> '*those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with the school, hinder our consideration of their or other people's complaints*'.

A complaint may be regarded as unreasonable when the person making the complaint:

- does not to provide their true identity, as anonymous complaints will not be investigated under this procedure;
- fails to raise the issue within three months of the event being complained of;
- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance;
- refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved;
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaint procedure;
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice;
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant expects to be taken into account and commented on, or raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales;
- makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced;
- changes the basis or extent of the complaint as the investigation proceeds;
- repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed);
- refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education;
- seeks an unrealistic outcome;
- makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with.

A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if the person making the complaint does so either face-to-face, by telephone or in writing or electronically:

- maliciously;
- aggressively;
- using threats, intimidation or violence;
- using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language;
- knowing it to be false;
- using falsified information;
- publishing unacceptable information in a variety of media such as on social media websites and newspapers.

Complainants should limit the numbers of communications with a school while a complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text) as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking.

If the behaviour continues the Headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and asking them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact the school causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan, which will be reviewed after 6 months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the concerns and actions taken will be put in writing immediately and the police informed. This may include banning an individual from school premises.

Barring from the School Premises

Although fulfilling a public function, schools are private places. The public has no automatic right of entry. Schools will therefore act to ensure they remain a safe place for pupils, staff and other members of their community.
If a parent's behaviour is a cause for concern, a school can ask them to leave school premises. In serious cases, the Headteacher or the Local Authority can notify them in writing that their implied licence to be on school premises has been temporarily revoked, subject to any representations that the parent may wish to make.

The schools will give the parent the opportunity to formally express their views on the decision to bar in writing. The decision to bar will then be reviewed, taking into account any representations made by the parent, and either confirmed or lifted. If the decision is confirmed the parent will be notified in writing, explaining how long the bar will be in place.

Anyone wishing to complain about being barred can do so, by letter or email, to the Headteacher or Chair of Governors. However, complaints about barring cannot be escalated to the Department for Education. Once the school's own Complaints Procedure has been completed, the only remaining avenue of appeal is through the Courts; independent legal advice must therefore be sought.

_____	_____	_____
(Signature)	(Role)	(Date)

Appendix 1

Complaint Form

Please complete and return the form to Madginford Primary School Office in an envelope, marked for the Confidential Attention of the Headteacher or Chair of Governors (as appropriate).

Your name:	Name of pupil:
Home address:	Relationship to pupil:
	Daytime telephone number:
Postcode:	Mobile telephone number:
Preferred method of contact:	Email address:

Please give details of your complaint?
What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint. (Who did you speak to and what was the response)?
What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?
Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.

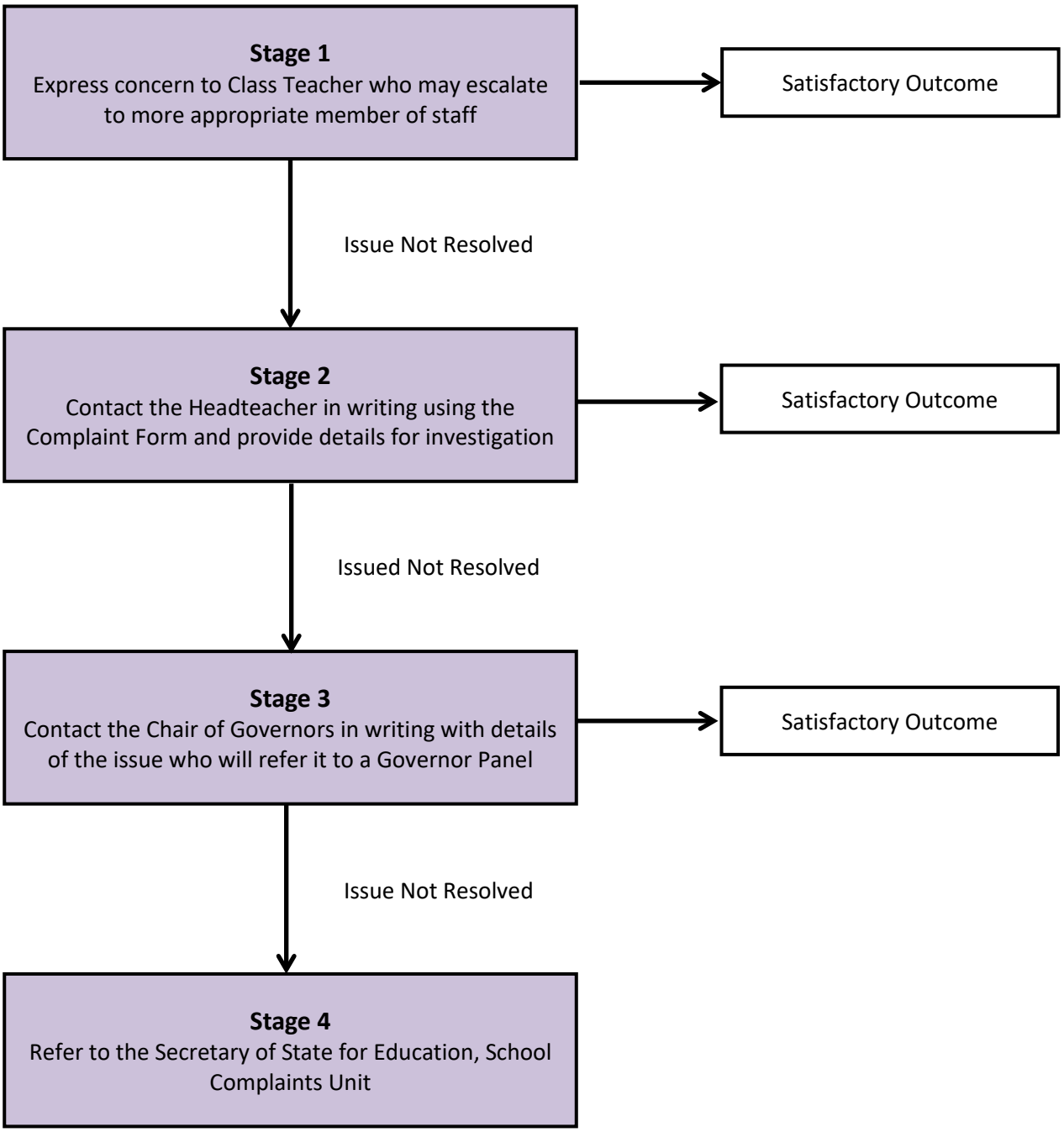
Signature:	Date:

School Use Only

Date acknowledgement sent:	By whom:
Complaint referred to:	Date of referral:

Appendix 2

Flowchart of Complaints



Appendix 3

How to raise concerns or to make a complaint about the school

If you have a concern or complaint, we would like you to tell us about it. We welcome suggestions for improving our work in school. Be assured that no matter what the problem is, our support and respect for you and your child in school will not be affected in any way. Please tell us of your concern as soon as possible. It is difficult for us to investigate properly an incident or problem that happened some time ago, so there is a time limit of three months on any issues being raised.

What to do first

Most concerns and complaints can be sorted out quickly by speaking with your child's class teacher.

If you have a complaint that you feel should be looked at by the Headteacher in the first instance you can contact them straightaway if you prefer. It is usually best to discuss the problem face to face. You may need an appointment to do this, and can make one by ringing or calling into the school office. You can take a friend or relation to the appointment with you if you would like to.

All staff will make every effort to resolve your problem informally. They will make sure that they understand what you feel went wrong, and they will explain their own actions to you. They will ask what you would like the school to do to put things right. Of course, this does not mean that in every case they will come around to your point of view, but it will help both you and the school to understand both sides of the question. It may also help to prevent a similar problem arising again.

What to do next

If you are dissatisfied with the initial response, or if you do not want to discuss the matter informally, you can make a complaint to the Headteacher. This will need to be in writing using the Compliant Form in Appendix 1. Contact the school office if you would like some help putting your complaint in writing on the form.

If your complaint is about an action of the Headteacher personally, then you should refer it to the Chair of Governors now. Contact details can be obtained from the school office or from the school website.

You will be offered a meeting to discuss the problem. You may bring a friend or someone else for support. The Headteacher (or Chair of Governors where appropriate) will conduct a full investigation of the complaint and may interview any members of staff or pupils involved. You will receive a written response to your complaint.

If you are still unhappy

The problem will normally be solved at this stage. However, if you are still not satisfied you may wish to contact the Chair of Governors to ask for a referral of your complaint to a Governor Review Panel. It will then be heard by a group of three governors who have no previous knowledge of the problem, who will give a fresh assessment on how the matter has been dealt with. The Complaints Policy sets out in more detail how these review meetings operate.

Further action

Complaints about school problems are almost always settled within schools but if they remain unresolved, they can be referred to the Secretary of State for Education. The Department for Education will expect the complaint to have been considered by the school governors first.

There is more detail in the full Complaints Policy, on the school's website or on the Department for Education website: www.education.gov.uk/schoolcomplaints