



Name of Policy	Complaints Policy <i>(adopted from The Key model policy)</i>
Approved	January 2023
Date to be reviewed	November 2025 or as advised by Cambridgeshire LA
Governor Committee	FGB
Key Member of staff	Headteacher
Statutory	Yes

Duxford Church of England Community Primary School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and requires all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

Contents

1. Aims	3
2. Legislation and guidance	3
3. Definition and scope	3
4. Roles and Responsibilities	4
5. Principles for Investigation	5
6. Stages of complaint (not complaints against the Headteacher or governors)	6
7. Complaints against the Headteacher, a governor or the governing board	8
8. Referring complaints on completion of the school's procedure	9
9. Persistent complaints	9
10. Record Keeping	10
11. Learning Lessons	11
12. Monitoring Arrangements	11
Appendix 1 - Complaints procedure (summary)	12
Appendix 2 – Frequently asked questions (FAQs)	13
Appendix 3 - Issues outside of the scope of the complaints policy	16
Appendix 4 - Acknowledgement letter from Head/Chair of Governors	17
Appendix 5 – Helpful advice from the DFE	18
Appendix 6 – Duxford CofE Community Primary School complaint form	21
Appendix 7 - Duxford CofE Community Primary School complaint review form	22

1. Aims

Our school aims to meet its statutory obligations when responding to complaints from parents of pupils at the school, and others.

When responding to complaints, we aim to:

- Be impartial and non-adversarial
- Facilitate a full and fair investigation by an independent person or panel, where necessary
- Address all the points at issue and provide an effective and prompt response
- Respect complainants' desire for confidentiality
- Treat complainants with respect and courtesy
- Make sure that any decisions we make are lawful, rational, reasonable, fair and proportionate, in line with the principles of administrative law
- Keep complainants informed of the progress of the complaints process
- Consider how the complaint can feed into school improvement evaluation processes

We try to resolve concerns or complaints by informal means wherever possible. Where this is not possible, formal procedures will be followed.

The school will aim to give the complainant the opportunity to complete the complaints procedure in full.

To support this, we will make sure we publicise the existence of this policy and make it available on the school website.

Throughout the process, we will be sensitive to the needs of all parties involved, and make any reasonable adjustments needed to accommodate individuals.

2. Legislation and guidance

This document meets the requirements of section 29 of the [Education Act 2002](#), which states that schools must have and make available a procedure to deal with all complaints relating to their school and to any community facilities or services that the school provides.

It is also based on [guidance for schools on complaints procedures](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), including the model procedure, and model procedure for dealing with serial and unreasonable complaints. In addition, it addresses duties set out in the [Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework](#) with regards to dealing with complaints about the school's fulfilment of Early Years Foundation Stage requirements.

3. Definitions and scope

3.1 Definitions

The DfE guidance explains the difference between a concern and a complaint:

- A **concern** is defined as "an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought"
- A **complaint** is defined as "an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action"

3.2 Scope

The school intends to resolve complaints informally where possible, at the earliest possible stage.

There may be occasions when complainants would like to raise their concerns formally. This policy outlines the procedure relating to handling such complaints.

This policy does **not** cover complaints procedures relating to:

- Admissions
- Collective worship
- Curriculum
- Safeguarding matters
- School re-organisation proposals
- Staff discipline
- Staff grievances
- Statutory assessments of special educational needs (SEN)
- Suspension and permanent exclusion
- Whistle-blowing

Please see our separate policies for procedures relating to these types of complaint.

Complaints about services provided by other providers who use school premises or facilities should be directed to the provider concerned.

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 The complainant

The complainant will get a more effective and timely response to their complaint if they:

- Follow these procedures
- Co-operate with the school throughout the process, and respond to deadlines and communication promptly
- Ask for assistance as needed
- Treat all those involved with respect
- Do not publish details about the complaint on social media

4.2 The investigator

- An individual will be appointed to look into the complaint and establish the facts. They will:
- Interview all relevant parties, keeping notes
- Consider records and any written evidence and keep these securely
- Prepare a comprehensive report to the Headteacher or complaints committee, which includes the facts and potential solutions

4.3 The complaints co-ordinator

The complaints co-ordinator can be:

- The Headteacher [or CEO in multi-academy trusts]
- The designated complaints governor
- Any other staff member providing administrative support
-

The complaints co-ordinator will:

- Keep the complainant up to date at each stage in the procedure
- Make sure the process runs smoothly by liaising with staff members, the Headteacher, chair of governors, clerk and local authority.
- Keep records

- Be aware of issues relating to:
 - Sharing third party information
 - Additional support needed by complainants, for example interpretation support or where the complainant is a child or young person

4.4 Clerk to the governing board

The clerk will:

- Be the contact point for the complainant and the complaints committee, including circulating the relevant papers and evidence before complaints committee meetings
- Arrange the complaints hearing
- Record and circulate the minutes and outcome of the hearing

4.5 Committee chair

The committee chair will:

- Chair the meeting, ensuring that everyone is treated with respect throughout
- Make sure all parties see the relevant information, understand the purpose of the committee, and are allowed to present their case

5. Principles for investigation

When investigating a complaint, we will try to clarify:

- What has happened
- Who was involved
- What the complainant feels would put things right

5.1 Time scales

The complainant must raise the complaint within 3 months of the incident. If the complaint is about a series of related incidents, they must raise the complaint within 3 months of the last incident.

We will consider exceptions to this timeframe in circumstances where there were valid reasons for not making a complaint at that time and the complaint can still be investigated in a fair manner for all involved.

When complaints are made out of term time, we will consider them to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

If at any point we cannot meet the timescales we have set out in this policy, we will:

- Set new time limits with the complainant
- Send the complainant details of the new deadline and explain the delay

5.2 Complaints about our fulfilment of early years requirements

We will investigate all written complaints relating to the school's fulfilment of the Early Years Foundation Stage requirements, and notify the complainant of the outcome within 28 days of receiving the complaint. The school will keep a record of the complaint (see section 10) and make this available to Ofsted on request.

Parents and carers can notify Ofsted if they believe that the school is not meeting Early Years Foundation Stage requirements, by calling 0300 123 4666, or by emailing enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk. An online contact form is also available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted#org-contacts>.

We will notify parents and carers if we become aware that the school is to be inspected by Ofsted. We will also supply a copy of the inspection report to parents and carers of children attending the setting on a regular basis.

6. Stages of complaint (not complaints against the Headteacher or governors)

6.1 Stage 1: Informal

The school will take informal concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve the matter quickly. It may be the case that the provision or clarification of information will resolve the issue.

The complainant should raise the complaint as soon as possible with the relevant member of staff or the Headteacher via the school office.

The school will acknowledge informal complaints within 5 school days, and investigate and provide a response within 10 school days.

The informal stage will involve a meeting between the complainant and the Headteacher and/or the appropriate member of staff.

If the complaint is not resolved informally, it will be escalated to a formal complaint.

6.2 Stage 2: Formal

Formal complaints can be raised:

- Using the Duxford CofE County Primary School Complaints form (Appendix 7)
- By letter or email
- Over the phone
- In person
- By a third party acting on behalf of the complainant

The complainant should provide details such as relevant dates, times, and the names of witnesses of events, alongside copies of any relevant documents, and what they feel would resolve the complaint.

If complainants need assistance raising a formal complaint, they can contact the school office.

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. (Appendix 4)

The Headteacher (or designated member of the senior leadership team) will call a meeting to clarify concerns, and seek a resolution. The complainant may be accompanied to this meeting, and should inform the school of the identity of their companion in advance.

In certain circumstances, the school may need to refuse a request for a particular individual to attend any such meeting – for example, if there is a conflict of interest. If this is the case, the school will notify the complainant as soon as they are aware, so that the complainant has the opportunity to arrange alternative accompaniment.

The Headteacher (or other person appointed by the Headteacher for this purpose) will then conduct their own investigation. The written conclusion of this investigation will be sent to the complainant within 10 school days.

If the complainant wishes to proceed to the next stage of the procedure, they should inform the clerk to the governing board within 5 school days.

How to escalate a complaint

Complaints can be escalated by contacting the clerk to the governing board:

- By letter or email
- Over the phone
- In person
- Through a third party acting on behalf of the complainant

The clerk will need the details of the complaint as set out above, as well as details from the complainant on how they feel the previous stage of the procedure has not addressed their complaint sufficiently, and what they feel would resolve the complaint.

The written conclusion of this investigation will be sent to the complainant within 5 school days.

If the complainant wishes to proceed to the next stage of the procedure, they should inform the clerk to the governing board in writing within 5 school days. Requests received outside of this timeframe will be considered in exceptional circumstances.

The clerk will acknowledge receipt of the request within 5 school days.

6.3 Stage 3: submit the complaint to the review panel

Convening the panel

The review panel consists of the first 3 members of the governing board available, who don't have direct knowledge of the complaint. These individuals will have access to the existing record of the complaint's progress (see section 10). The governors will select a panel chair from among themselves.

If not enough impartial governors are available, we will seek panel members from other schools, the local authority or the diocese. We will make sure the governors we source are suitably skilled and can demonstrate that they are independent and impartial.

The complainant must have reasonable notice of the date of the review panel. The clerk will aim to find a date within 5 school days of the request, where possible.

If the complainant rejects the offer of 3 proposed dates without good reason, the clerk will set a date. The hearing will go ahead using written submissions from both parties.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 10 school days before the date of the meeting.

At the meeting

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 will be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

At the review panel meeting, the complainant and representatives from the school, as appropriate, will be present. Each will have an opportunity to set out written or oral submissions prior to the meeting.

The complainant must be allowed to attend the panel hearing and be accompanied by a suitable companion if they wish. Legal representation is not encouraged, but will be considered on a case-by-case basis. For instance, if a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by their union.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

At the meeting, each individual will have the opportunity to give statements and present their evidence, and witnesses will be called as appropriate to present their evidence.

The panel, the complainant and the school representative will be given the chance to ask and reply to questions. Once the complainant and school representatives have completed presenting their cases, they will be asked to leave and evidence will then be considered.

After the meeting the panel will put together its findings and recommendations from the case. The panel will also provide copies of the minutes of the hearing and the findings and recommendations to the complainant and, where relevant, the subject of the complaint, and make a copy of the findings and recommendations available for inspection by the Headteacher.

The outcome

The committee can:

- Uphold the complaint, in whole or in part
- Dismiss the complaint, in whole or in part

If the complaint is upheld, the committee will:

- Decide the appropriate action to resolve the complaint
- Where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future

The school will inform those involved of the decision in writing within 10 school days.

7. Complaints against the Headteacher, a governor or the governing board

The information below is taken from the DfE and ESFA model complaints procedures for maintained schools, single academies and multi-academy trusts.

7.1 Stage 1: informal

Complaints made against the Headteacher or any member of the governing board should be directed to the clerk to the governing board in the first instance.

If the complaint is about the Headteacher or 1 member of the governing board (including the chair or vice-chair), a suitably skilled and impartial governor will carry out the steps at stage 1 (set out in section 6 above).

7.2 Stage 2: formal

If the complaint is:

- Jointly about the chair and vice-chair or
- The entire governing board or
- The majority of the governing board

An independent investigator will carry out the steps in stage 2 (set out in section 6 above). They will be appointed by the governing board or diocese, and will write a formal response at the end of their investigation.

7.3 Stage 3: review panel

If the complaint is:

- Jointly about the chair and vice-chair or
- The entire governing board or
- The majority of the governing board

A committee of independent governors will hear the complaint. They will be sourced from local schools, the local authority or diocese and will carry out the steps at stage 3 (set out in section 6 above).

8. Referring complaints on completion of the school's procedure

If the complainant is unsatisfied with the outcome of the school's complaints procedure, they should complete a complaint review form. (Appendix 8)

If, following this review, the complainant is still unsatisfied they can refer their complaint to the DfE.

The DfE will not re-investigate the matter of the complaint. It will look at whether the school's complaints policy and any other relevant statutory policies that the school holds were adhered to. The DfE also looks at whether the school's statutory policies adhere to education legislation.

The DfE will intervene where a school has:

- Failed to act in line with its duties under education law
- Acted (or is proposing to act) unreasonably when exercising its functions

If the complaints procedure is found to not meet regulations, the school will be asked to correct its procedure accordingly.

For more information or to refer a complaint, see the following webpage:

<https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school>

We will include this information in the outcome letter to complainants.

9. Persistent complaints

9.1 Unreasonably persistent complaints

Many complaints raised will be valid, and we therefore treat them all seriously. However, a complaint may become unreasonable if the person:

- Has made the same complaint before, and it's already been resolved by following the school's complaints procedure
- Makes a complaint that is obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, defamatory or repetitive
- Insists on pursuing a complaint that is unfounded, or out of scope of the complaints procedure, beyond all reason
- Pursues a valid complaint, but in an unreasonable manner e.g. refuses to articulate the complaint, refuses to co-operate with this complaints procedure, or insists that the complaint is dealt with in ways that are incompatible with this procedure and the timeframes it sets out
- Makes a complaint designed to cause disruption, annoyance or excessive demands on school time
- Seeks unrealistic outcomes, or a solution that lacks any serious purpose or value

Steps we will take

We will take every reasonable step to address the complainant's concerns, and give them a clear statement of our position and their options. We will maintain our role as an objective arbiter throughout the process, including when we meet with individuals. We will follow our complaints procedure as normal (as outlined above) wherever possible.

If the complainant continues to contact the school in a disruptive way, we may put communications strategies in place. We may:

- Give the complainant a single point of contact via an email address
- Limit the number of times the complainant can make contact, such as a fixed number per term
- Ask the complainant to engage a third party to act on their behalf, such as [Citizens Advice](#)

- Put any other strategy in place as necessary

Stopping responding

We may stop responding to the complainant when all of these factors are met:

- We believe we have taken all reasonable steps to help address their concerns
- We have provided a clear statement of our position and their options
- The complainant contacts us repeatedly, and we believe their intention is to cause disruption or inconvenience

Where we stop responding, we will inform the individual that we intend to do so. We will also explain that we will still consider any new complaints they make.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from our school site.

9.2 Duplicate complaints

If we have resolved a complaint under this procedure and receive a duplicate complaint on the same subject from a partner, family member or other individual, we will assess whether there are aspects that we hadn't previously considered, or any new information we need to take into account.

If we are satisfied that there are no new aspects, we will:

- Tell the new complainant that we have already investigated and responded to this issue, and that the local process is complete
- Direct them to the DfE if they are dissatisfied with our original handling of the complaint

If there are new aspects, we will follow this procedure again.

9.3 Complaint campaigns

Where the school receives a large volume of complaints about the same topic or subject, especially if these come from complainants unconnected with the school, the school may respond to these complaints by:

- Publishing a single response on the school website
- Sending a template response to all of the complainants

If complainants are not satisfied with the school's response, or wish to pursue the complaint further, the normal procedures will apply.

10. Record keeping

The school will record the progress of all complaints, including information about actions taken at all stages, the stage at which the complaint was resolved, and the final outcome. The records will also include copies of letters and emails, and notes relating to meetings and phone calls.

This material will be treated as confidential and held centrally, and will be viewed only by those involved in investigating the complaint or on the review panel.

This is except where the secretary of state (or someone acting on their behalf) or the complainant requests access to records of a complaint through a freedom of information (FOI) request or through a subject access request under the terms of the Data Protection Act, or where the material must be made available during a school inspection.

Records of complaints will be kept securely, only for as long as necessary and in line with data protection law, our privacy notices and our record retention schedule.

The details of the complaint, including the names of individuals involved, will not be shared with the whole governing board in case a review panel needs to be organised at a later point.

Where the governing board is aware of the substance of the complaint before the review panel stage, the school will (where reasonably practicable) arrange for an independent panel to hear the complaint.

Complainants also have the right to request an independent panel if they believe there is likely to be bias in the proceedings. The decision to approve this request is made by the governing board, who will not unreasonably withhold consent.

11. Learning lessons

The Governing body will review any underlying issues raised by complaints with the Headteacher, where appropriate and respecting confidentiality, in order to determine whether there are any improvements that the school can make to its procedures or practice to help prevent similar events in the future.

12. Monitoring arrangements

The Governing body will monitor the effectiveness of the complaints procedure in making sure that complaints are handled properly. The Governing body will track the number and nature of complaints, and review underlying issues as stated in section 11.

The complaints records are logged and managed by the School Business Manager.

This policy will be reviewed by the governing body every 2 years.

Appendix 1 - Complaints procedure (summary)

INFORMAL STAGE (up to 10 school working days in total)

School staff seek to resolve the complaint informally through discussion with the complainant. A complaint will not normally be considered unless the complainant has first raised the matter informally with the relevant school leader.

The complainant should submit a formal complaint within 90 calendar days of the cause for complaint. If the complaint is received outside of term time, the calendar day timings for managing the complaint will start on the first school day after the holiday period.

FORMAL PROCEDURE – Stage 1* (up to 10 school working days in total)

Written complaint to the Headteacher

Received by Headteacher;

Acknowledgement – 3 school days;

Investigation (including any discussion with the complainant);

Formal written response (from the Headteacher – 10 school days from receipt).

*If the complaint is about the Headteacher then the complaint will be directed to the Chair of Governors and considered as a Stage 2 complaint.

FORMAL PROCEDURE – Stage 2 (up to 10 school working days in total)

Complaint to the Chair of Governors requesting review of the Headteacher's decision or a complaint about the Headteacher

Received by Chair of Governors (within 10 school days of the Headteacher's response);

Acknowledgement – 3 school days;

Investigation (including any discussion with the complainant);

Formal written response (from the Chair of Governors or Clerk) – 10 school days from receipt.

FORMAL PROCEDURE – Stage 3 (up to 20 school days total)

Request for review of Chair's Decision – Governors' Complaint Panel

Received by Clerk to the Governors (within 10 school days of the Chair of Governor's response);

Acknowledgement – 3 school days;

Meeting;

Formal written response (from the Clerk) – 20 school days from receipt of request.

The conclusion of Stage 3 brings to an end the governors' role in considering the complaint. Complainants who remain dissatisfied may wish to contact the Department for Education.

Appendix 2 - Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What if a formal complaint is made about a governor or the chair? The complaint should be passed through to the clerk who will arrange for an investigation. There is opportunity for the complainant to refer the matter to a Review Panel where the complainant is dissatisfied with the investigation response.

What if the complainant seeks support from a governor or governors? Governors must not involve themselves in matters that are likely to lead to formal complaint. Where a complainant raises their complaint with a governor who is not the Chair (or the Vice-Chair if the complaint is about the Chair), that governor must decline to discuss it and direct the complainant to the Chair, Vice Chair or the Clerk. A governor receiving written material about a complaint must forward it to the Chair, Vice-Chair or Clerk without comment.

What if the complainant wants to make a complaint on behalf of other people's children? The Governing Body will not accept complaints about other people's children since to do so may well compromise the position of the parents/carers of those children who may have a different view of the matter complained of.

What if the complainant makes reference to the complaint on social media? The Chair of Governors should contact the complainant to advise him/her that the complaint is a confidential matter and neither those investigating the issues, nor those who may be investigated would use social media in this way. Comments published on social media may be prejudicial to the fair investigation of the issues under consideration, and the Governing Body may decline to progress a complaint while unhelpful comments remain on social media.

What if the complainant contacts the Press while the complaint is being investigated? Similarly, the Chair of Governors should contact the complainant to remind him/her of the confidential nature of the process and the potential prejudice to fair investigation that can result from media involvement.

What if the complainant contacts their MP? The school will not conclude the complaints procedure just because a complainant contacts their MP. MPs are normally conversant with school complaint policies and will usually point the complainant in that direction. Where the MP contacts the school they will be advised of the relevant process and, if the complainant wishes, of the outcome of the complaint at the end of the process.

What if the parent or school asks for the support of the Local Authority? The Local Authority has no formal or statutory role in responding to complaints which must be directed to the school. The Local Authority may be involved in a complaint only in the following ways:

In providing impartial procedural advice to Headteachers, Governors and complainants, as necessary, including attendance at Review Panel Meetings when requested by the school;

Assisting in a mediation role where both parties agree that this offers a possible way forward as an alternative to more formal procedures;

In investigating a complaint on behalf of the Governing Body where there is a need for an independent investigator, either in response to a governor view that it is necessary in a particular case to demonstrate the impartiality of the process, or because the subject matter is sufficiently complex or technical to require a higher level of experience or expertise. The governing body will consider requesting an independent review if the complainant provides sufficient evidence that there would be bias in the proceedings if the review was carried out by a governor.

What if the complainant refers the complaint to Ofsted? Ofsted does not investigate individual complaints, though will record the complaint for information for the lead inspector when the school is next inspected. If there is a safeguarding component to the complaint then Ofsted will usually refer the matter to the Local Authority where it will be reviewed by a Leadership Adviser and/or the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), as appropriate.

How should records be kept through the complaints process? There are a number of aspects to this:

- The complainant may wish to take an audio recording of meetings, including a recording of the Review Meeting where governors have agreed to a face-to-face review. It should be made clear to complainants that audio recordings are not permitted without the prior consent of everyone who is present. Audio recordings change the character of a meeting and usually increase tension between the parties. Participants in meetings should be aware that modern technology facilitates concealed recording.
- The clerk should record any action points, and decisions, and the reasons for them, should be recorded in a brief and self-explanatory way. These records should be accessible to the complainant if requested. There is no reason why the complainant should not make notes during the meeting if s/he wishes.
- Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential. No one should share a complaint beyond those who have a role in handling it. In particular, any disciplinary action that might follow the investigation of a complaint is a matter of employment law for employees and of conduct for governors and volunteers. Subsequent action will not be revealed to the complainant. Individuals have certain rights under the Data Protection Act to see their personal data, including records about them.
- A written record will be kept of all complaints made about the school, along with details of whether they resolved following a formal procedure, or progression to a panel hearing.
- The school will record the actions it takes as a result of complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).

What if the Chair of Governors considers the complaint to be vexatious? These would be cases where the complainant persists unreasonably with complaints, or who deliberately seeks to make life difficult for school leaders/governors, rather than genuinely trying to resolve the complaint. The school should refer to the Managing Serial and Unreasonable Complaints Policy. This is a difficult area, particularly where harassment might be disguised as complaint, and it is recommended that the Chair discuss this with the LA's Leadership Adviser before taking an action.

What if the school receives duplicate complaints? If a duplicate complaint is received at the end of the complaints procedure from a spouse, a partner, a child or a grandparent for example and the complaint is on the same subject, the new complainant will be informed that the complaint and the local school process is concluded. If any new aspects are introduced, these will be investigated.

What if the school perceives there is a complaint campaigns? If the school becomes the focus of a complaint campaign and receives large volumes of complaints based on the same subject or from complainants unconnected with the school, the school will either send a template response to all complainants or publish a single response on the school website that is signposted in writing to all complainants involved.

Serial and unreasonable complaints

The school is committed to dealing with all complaints and requests for information fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with our 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 and threatening.

If, despite all stages of the complaint procedure having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied and attempts to reopen the same issue, they will be informed that the procedure has been completed and that the matter is now closed. Correspondence about a complaint will not be viewed as 'serial' or 'persistent' until the complaint process has concluded, unless our published serial complaint criteria applies.

The school has adopted the model DFE policy for Managing Serial and Unreasonable Complaints. This is published on our website and is available on request from the school office.

The school will never take the decision to stop responding lightly and will only do so in the following circumstances:

- Every reasonable step has been taken to address the complaint;
- The complainant has been given a clear statement of the school's position and aims;
- The complainant contacts us repeatedly, making substantially the same points each time;
- The complainant's emails, letters or telephone calls are often or always abusive or aggressive;
- They make insulting personal comments about or threats towards staff;
- The school has reason to believe the individual is contacting the school with the intention of causing disruption or inconvenience.

The school will not stop responding just because the complainant is difficult to deal with or asks complex questions. The school will act reasonably and consider any new complaint and we recognise that anybody has the right to raise a new complaint at any time.

Communication Strategy

In exceptional circumstances the school reserves the right to implement a tailored communication strategy if an individual's behaviour is causing a significant level of disruption. For example we can:

- restrict the individual to a single point of contact via an email address;
- limit the number of times they can make contact.

Regardless of any communication strategy, the school will provide parents and carers with the information they are entitled to under The Education (Pupil Information) Regulations 2005.

Barring from school premises

In additional exceptional circumstances the Headteacher may make the decision to bar an individual from entering school premises. In such circumstances advice from the Local Authority will be taken before implementing a ban.

Appendix 3 - Issues outside of the scope of the complaints policy

Issue	Who to contact	Legislation, policy/procedure (references are generic and may not match the title of the school's own documents)
Complaint about an admission to school School re-organisation proposals	Chair/Clerk in Foundation and Voluntary Aided schools Local Authority in community and voluntary controlled schools Local Authority or Diocese	Admissions and Admissions Appeal Procedure For information, view the Local Authority website
Complaint about a Pupil Exclusion	Clerk to the Governing Body if the exclusion is over 5 days Local Authority Inclusion Officer or relevant member of the Specialist Teaching Service	Rights to make representations to the Governors' Discipline Committee about a fixed period exclusion vary according to the length of the exclusion. There is a right of appeal to governors if the pupil is permanently excluded with a further right of review by an Independent Panel.
Allegation that a child has been harmed	Principal/Headteacher or Chair if the complaint relates to the Principal/Headteacher Local Authority Leadership Adviser. Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)	DFE procedures – 'Keeping Children Safe in Education'
Special Educational Needs, content of or failure to maintain an Education, Health and Care Plan	Principal/Headteacher Local Authority The Local Authority Statutory Assessment and Resources Team	Local Authority procedures, with appeals made to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal.
Services provided by an external contractor	Service Manager	Service provider's procedure
Staff capability (competence) Staff conduct Staff grievances	Headteacher, or Chair of Governors if the complaint relates to the Headteacher	Staff Capability Procedure Staff Disciplinary Procedure. Complainants will not be told the details of any disciplinary action taken against staff, but will be informed that the matter is being addressed Staff Grievance Procedure
Whistleblowing	Designated staff	School Whistleblowing Procedure

Appendix 4 - Acknowledgement letter from Head/Chair of Governors

LETTER WILL BE ISSUED ON SCHOOL HEADED PAPER

[DATE/HEADER etc.]

Dear (NAME)

I am writing to acknowledge receipt of your complaint dated [INSERT DATE] that was received on [INSERT DATE]. I will be investigating this complaint and will write to let you know the outcome. You should expect me to have issued my response to you by [INSERT DATE THAT IS 10 SCHOOL DAYS FROM DATE OF RECEIPT].

As a first step, I will be making contact to arrange a meeting with you to:

- check my understanding of what the complaint is about;
- check whether anything in the Complaint Form can be withdrawn;
- check whether anything might be added to what is written in the Complaint Form;
- check whether any evidence is available that was not referred to in the Complaint Form;
- establish what would be an acceptable outcome for you;
- discuss whether there is anything that might help resolve matters without recourse to the Complaints Procedure, for example, through mediation.

Wherever possible, I am committed to ensuring the timescales within the Governing Body's Complaints Procedure are adhered to. The person responsible for the administration of the complaint is.....who is clerk to the governors. His/her role is to ensure that the timescales are being followed and to update you on the progress of your complaint.

This is a confidential matter and I want to reassure you that I will not be discussing this with anyone other than you and those I need to see as part of the investigation. Please could I ask you likewise to keep this matter confidential, so the investigation is not prejudiced in any way (for example through the use of social media)? If the complaint requires more time to consider than the standard 10 school days laid out in the policy, I will let you know, indicating when you can expect to hear from me.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Suzanne Blackburne-Maze

Headteacher

Appendix 5 - The DFE have published the following helpful advice about the roles and responsibilities of all involved.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-complaints-procedures>

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 appropriate interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved;
- interviewing staff and children/young people (or reviewing records of staff interviews with children) and other people relevant to the complaint;
- consideration of appropriate written 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 (this could be the Headteacher / designated complaints governor or other staff member providing administrative support)

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 careful records.

Clerk to the Governing Body

The Clerk is the contact point for the complainant and the committee and 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 (for example; stage 1 paperwork, school and complainant submissions) and send it to the parties in advance of the meeting within an agreed timescale;
- make a written record of the proceedings;
- circulate the minutes of the meeting;
- notify all parties involved 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;
- If the complainant is invited to the meeting, that it is conducted in an informal manner, is not adversarial, and that, everyone is treated with respect and courtesy;
- complainants who may not be used to speaking at such a meeting are put at ease.
- the remit of the committee is explained to the complainant;
- 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;
- 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;

- minutes of the meeting are taken;
- they liaise with the Clerk

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;
- It is recognised 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;
- 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

Appendix 6 – Duxford CofE Community Primary School Complaints form

Section A – Your details

Title – Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms/Dr/Other

Full name

Address

Home Telephone Number

Mobile Telephone Number

Email address

Preferred method of contact?

Section B

Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it (please use a continuation sheet if necessary)

What would constitute a satisfactory resolution of your complaint?

Appendix 7 – Duxford CofE Primary School Complaint Review request form

Section A – Your details

Title – Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms/Dr/Other

Full name

Address

Home Telephone Number

Mobile Telephone Number

Email address

Preferred method of Contact

Section B

Please give reasons why you consider the response to your complaint from the Chair of Governors should be reviewed. A continuation sheet can be used if necessary.

What would constitute a satisfactory outcome by way of a resolution to your complaint?

If at the end of the process you are not satisfied with the handling of your complaint and are seeking redress beyond the school you can contact the DfE. See page 17 of this policy for more details.