

Complaints Policy

Last Reviewed	September 2026
Next Review Date	September 2027
Review Calendar	Every year

1. Purpose and legal framework

Norbury Manor Primary School is committed to resolving concerns fairly, promptly and proportionately. This policy is established under section 29 of the Education Act 2002. As a local-authority-maintained school, the Governing Board must establish and publicise procedures for complaints about the school and services it provides where no separate statutory procedure applies, and must have regard to Department for Education (DfE) guidance.

The policy is designed to be simple to understand and use, impartial, non-adversarial, accessible, and capable of providing a full and fair consideration of the issues raised.

The school will publish this policy on its website and provide a paper copy free of charge on request.

2. Key principles

- Concerns should be resolved informally wherever this is appropriate and the complainant wishes to do so.
- A complainant is not required to complete an informal process before making a formal complaint.
- The school will treat complainants fairly and will not disadvantage a pupil because a concern or complaint has been raised.
- People involved in investigating or reviewing a complaint must be impartial and must not have a conflict of interest or prior involvement that could call their independence into question.
- The school will make reasonable adjustments in accordance with the Equality Act 2010, including accepting complaints in an alternative format where needed because of disability, learning difficulty, communication need or difficulty using English.
- Information will be shared only with those who need it for the proper consideration of the complaint, subject to safeguarding, data protection and other legal duties.
- The school will keep an appropriate record of the progress and outcome of formal complaints.

3. Who can complain and what this policy covers

Any person, including a parent/carer or member of the public, may raise a complaint about the school or about community facilities or services provided by the school, unless the matter is subject to a separate statutory or other established procedure.

Where a third-party provider uses the school premises to provide a service, complaints about that provider's service should normally be made under the provider's own complaints procedure.

4. Matters outside this procedure

This procedure is not used where another statutory or specific procedure applies. Examples include:

- school admissions and admission appeals;
- statutory assessment of special educational needs and Education, Health and Care Plan processes administered by the local authority;
- school reorganisation proposals;

- matters likely to require a child protection investigation, which will be handled under safeguarding procedures and relevant statutory guidance;
- suspension and permanent exclusion decisions, except that complaints about the application of the school's behaviour policy may fall within this procedure;
- staff grievances, which are dealt with under the school's staff grievance procedure;
- staff disciplinary or capability matters. A complaint may lead to consideration under an internal staffing procedure, but confidential employment action will not be disclosed to the complainant;
- whistleblowing by employees, which is dealt with under the school's whistleblowing procedure;
- complaints about the content of the National Curriculum.

If another public body, the police, a local authority safeguarding service, a tribunal or a court is considering a related matter, the school may need to pause or adjust its complaints process. The complainant will be told if this happens and why.

5. Roles and responsibilities

Complaints Co-ordinator

The school will designate a Complaints Co-ordinator. This is an administrative role and is not the same as the Clerk/Governance Professional to the Governing Board. The Complaints Co-ordinator will:

- receive and log formal complaints sent to the school;
- acknowledge correspondence and explain the next stage and timescale;
- identify the appropriate person to consider the complaint and securely forward the papers;
- maintain the complaints record and monitor deadlines;
- support reasonable adjustments and accessible communication;
- coordinate practical arrangements for a Stage 2 panel where this forms part of the school's agreed service arrangements.

The Complaints Co-ordinator does not decide the outcome of a complaint unless separately appointed as an impartial investigator.

Clerk/Governance Professional

The Clerk/Governance Professional provides governance and regulatory advice to the Governing Board. The school's clerking service is not responsible for the day-to-day receipt, logging, investigation or escalation of complaints unless this has been expressly agreed as part of the service arrangement. Where governance support is required for a complaint about governors or for a review panel, the Complaints Co-ordinator will liaise with the Chair of Governors and/or the governance service as appropriate.

Governing Board

The Governing Board is responsible for establishing and reviewing this procedure. Governors who may be required to sit on a review panel must not become involved in the detail of an individual complaint beforehand. Complaint information shared with the Board for assurance purposes will be anonymised and will not include case detail that could prejudice future involvement.

6. How to raise a concern or complaint

A concern or complaint may be raised in person, by telephone, by email or in writing. A third party may act for a complainant where the school has appropriate consent. Formal complaints should normally be made in writing, but the school will provide assistance or accept an alternative format where a reasonable adjustment is required.

Complainants should not approach individual governors about a live complaint. Doing so may prevent that governor from taking part in a later review panel.

7. Time limit for raising a complaint

A complaint should normally be raised within 3 months of the incident, action, decision or omission complained about. This is a deadline for lodging the complaint; it is not the time within which the school will resolve it.

The school will consider complaints raised outside the 3-month period where there are exceptional circumstances. It will not operate a blanket refusal of late complaints. In deciding whether to accept a late complaint, the school will act lawfully, rationally, reasonably, fairly and proportionately.

A complaint received during a school holiday will normally be treated as received on the first school day after the holiday.

8. Overview of the procedure

Step	What happens	Lead	Indicative timescale
Informal concern	Discussion, clarification, meeting or other proportionate action to try to resolve the matter.	Relevant member of staff / senior leader	Acknowledge within 2 school days where acknowledgement is needed; response or meeting normally within 10 school days.
Stage 1 - Formal complaint	A fair investigation and written decision on the complaint.	Headteacher, Chair/suitable governor, or independent investigator depending on who is complained about.	Acknowledge within 5 school days; written outcome normally within 20 school days of receipt.
Stage 2 - Governors' Complaints Review Panel	An impartial panel considers the complaint afresh, including the substance of the complaint and the handling at Stage 1.	Panel of 3 impartial governors or other suitably independent governors.	Request within 10 school days of Stage 1 outcome; acknowledge within 5 school days; panel normally within 20 school days; decision within 7 school days.

Where a published timescale cannot reasonably be met, the school will explain the reason for the delay, give a revised deadline and keep the complainant informed.

9. Informal concern

Most concerns can be resolved quickly through discussion. The complainant should normally contact the class teacher or the member of staff most closely connected with the matter. Where this is inappropriate, the school office/Complaints Co-ordinator will identify a suitable senior member of staff.

Where acknowledgement is needed, the school will normally acknowledge an informal concern within 2 school days. A response, discussion or meeting will normally take place within 10 school days. If more time is required, the complainant will be told why and when they can expect a response.

The person dealing with the concern should establish what the complainant believes would resolve the matter and should make a brief record of significant discussions and any agreed actions.

Informal resolution is encouraged but is not compulsory. A complainant may ask to move to the formal stage at any time.

10. Stage 1 - Formal complaint and investigation

A formal complaint should set out what happened, why the complainant is dissatisfied and, where possible, what outcome they are seeking. The school's complaint form may be used but is not compulsory.

Length and format of a formal complaint

To help the school identify the issues clearly and deal with complaints fairly and efficiently, a formal complaint should normally be no more than 1,500 words. This is approximately three pages of typed text. The word limit applies to the complainant's explanation of the complaint and does not include copies of relevant supporting evidence, such as letters, emails, reports or other documents.

The complaint should identify the key events, relevant dates, the people involved where known, the issues the complainant wants the school to consider, and the outcome sought. Complainants are asked not to reproduce lengthy email chains within the body of the complaint where those documents can instead be attached as evidence.

The 1,500-word limit is an administrative measure intended to support a focused and proportionate process. It will not be applied inflexibly. The school may accept a longer complaint where this is reasonably necessary because of the complexity or seriousness of the issues, a safeguarding matter, or a reasonable adjustment under the Equality Act 2010. A complainant who believes they need to exceed the limit should explain why.

Where a complaint is substantially over the limit without an apparent reason, the Complaints Co-ordinator may ask the complainant to provide a concise version or identify the specific issues they wish to have investigated. The school will not use the word limit to prevent a legitimate complaint from being considered.

The Complaints Co-ordinator will acknowledge a formal complaint within 5 school days and confirm who will consider it and the expected response date.

Who considers the formal complaint?

Complaint concerns	Stage 1 route
Complaint about a member of staff (other than the Headteacher)	The Headteacher or a senior leader appointed by the Headteacher, provided that person is impartial and has not had material prior involvement.
Complaint about the Headteacher	The Chair of Governors or another suitably skilled and impartial governor appointed for this purpose. An independent investigator may be appointed where appropriate.
Complaint about the Chair of Governors or an individual governor	The Complaints Co-ordinator will receive and securely route the complaint for consideration by a suitably skilled and impartial governor who has had no prior involvement, with governance advice sought as required.
Complaint about the Chair and Vice-Chair jointly, the majority of the Governing Board, or the whole Governing Board	The school will arrange an independent investigation and, if escalated, an independent review panel. Support may be sought from the local authority governor services team or another suitable governance provider.

Investigation

The investigator will consider the complaint fairly and proportionately. They may meet or speak with the complainant, the person complained about and relevant witnesses; review relevant records; and seek advice where necessary. Appropriate notes will be kept. Staff may be accompanied by a trade union representative or other appropriate companion where relevant.

The investigator will normally issue a written response within 20 school days of receipt of the formal complaint. The response will:

- identify the issues considered;
- briefly explain the steps taken to investigate;
- give the decision and reasons;
- state whether the complaint is upheld in whole, upheld in part, or not upheld;
- identify any appropriate action or learning, while preserving the confidentiality of individual employment matters;
- explain how to request Stage 2 if the complainant remains dissatisfied.

11. Stage 2 - Governors' Complaints Review Panel

If the complainant remains dissatisfied after Stage 1, they may request a Stage 2 review. The request should be made to the Complaints Co-ordinator within 10 school days of the Stage 1 decision and should explain the aspects of the complaint they wish the panel to consider. Requests outside this period will be considered where exceptional circumstances apply.

A Stage 2 review request should normally be no more than 1,000 words. It should focus on why the complainant remains dissatisfied with the Stage 1 outcome, any material evidence they believe was overlooked, and the outcome they are seeking. The complainant does not need to repeat the original

complaint or resubmit documents already provided. The same flexibility and reasonable-adjustment principles that apply to the Stage 1 word limit will also apply at Stage 2.

The request will be acknowledged within 5 school days. The school will aim to convene the panel within 20 school days. If this is not possible, the complainant will be given a revised date and an explanation.

The panel will consist of 3 suitably skilled and impartial governors who have had no prior involvement in the complaint. Governors from other schools may be used where necessary to secure independence. Where the complaint concerns the whole Governing Board, the Chair and Vice-Chair jointly, or a majority of governors, the panel will be independent of the school's Governing Board.

The panel is not limited to checking whether Stage 1 followed the correct process. It will consider the complaint afresh, including the substance of the complaint, the evidence, the Stage 1 decision and the way the complaint was handled.

The panel may consider the matter at a meeting or, where fair and appropriate, by written representations. If a meeting is held, the complainant may bring a relative or friend for support. Legal representation is not normally necessary, although there may be circumstances where it is appropriate.

The school will give reasonable notice of the panel arrangements and will circulate relevant papers to the parties in advance. New and unrelated complaints will not normally be added at this stage and should be raised separately.

Panel decision

The panel may:

- uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
- not uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
- decide what action, if any, should be taken to resolve the complaint;
- recommend changes to systems, policies or practice to reduce the risk of a similar issue arising.

The Chair of the Panel will normally issue the panel's written decision and reasons within 7 school days of the panel's consideration. The letter will confirm that the school's complaints procedure is complete and explain the complainant's right to contact the Department for Education if they believe the school has not handled the complaint in accordance with its published procedure or has acted unlawfully or unreasonably.

12. Fairness, confidentiality and evidence

All parties will be given a fair opportunity to state their case. No person with a conflict of interest, material prior involvement or reasonable appearance of bias will determine or review the complaint.

Meetings will normally be private. Audio or video recording is not normally permitted unless agreed in advance or required as a reasonable adjustment. Covert recordings will not normally be accepted as evidence, subject to exceptional circumstances and any legal obligations.

Complaint records will be stored securely and retained only for as long as necessary in accordance with the school's records management and data protection arrangements.

13. Resolving complaints

At any point the school may seek an appropriate resolution. Depending on the circumstances, this may include an explanation, acknowledgement that a situation could have been handled differently, an apology, agreed action, a review of practice or policy, or steps intended to prevent recurrence. An acknowledgement or apology does not in itself amount to an admission of legal liability.

14. Withdrawal of a complaint

If a complainant wishes to withdraw a formal complaint, the school will ask for this to be confirmed in writing where possible and will record the withdrawal.

15. Anonymous complaints

The school will not normally investigate anonymous complaints through this procedure. The Headteacher or Chair of Governors, as appropriate, will decide whether the information nevertheless warrants investigation or action, particularly where safeguarding, safety or serious misconduct concerns are raised.

16. Serial, persistent and unreasonable complaint behaviour

The school recognises the right of every person to raise a complaint and, where appropriate, to complete the published complaints procedure. A complaint will not be treated as serial, persistent or unreasonable simply because the complainant is determined, disagrees with the outcome, asks for an escalation, contacts an MP, or raises a new and materially different complaint.

At the same time, the school has a duty of care to its staff and governors and must use public resources responsibly. The complaints process must not be used in a way that subjects staff, the Headteacher, governors or other members of the school community to harassment, intimidation, excessive repetitive correspondence or unreasonable demands.

Repeated or duplicate complaints

Once a complaint has completed all stages of the school's complaints procedure, the matter will be regarded as closed. If the complainant seeks to reopen the same issue without materially new information, the school may write once to confirm that the procedure has been completed, that the matter is closed, and that no further substantive response will be provided on that issue. Further correspondence that merely repeats the same points may be logged without acknowledgement or detailed response.

If a duplicate complaint is raised by another person about the same subject and the issues have already been fully considered, the school may explain that the matter has completed the school's procedure. Any genuinely new aspect or materially new evidence will be considered to determine whether further action is required.

A serial or persistent designation will normally apply to the complaint or subject matter, rather than permanently to the individual. A person remains entitled to raise a new complaint about a different matter, which the school will consider on its own merits.

Unreasonable complaint behaviour

Behaviour may be considered unreasonable where the frequency, nature or manner of contact hinders the fair consideration of the complaint, causes significant disruption, or places an unreasonable burden on staff or governors. Examples may include:

- refusing to identify the substance of a complaint or the outcome sought despite reasonable assistance;
- refusing to cooperate with the published procedure, while still demanding that the complaint be resolved;
- insisting that the complaint is dealt with in a way that is incompatible with the published procedure or with lawful and reasonable school practice;
- repeatedly changing the basis of the complaint, raising new unrelated matters during an investigation, or seeking to restart stages that have already been completed;
- sending repeated, lengthy or substantially duplicate emails, letters, questions or attachments that add no material new information;
- raising large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions and demanding individual or immediate responses to each one;
- making excessive demands on the time of staff, the Headteacher or governors through frequent or prolonged contact while the complaint is being considered;
- making unjustified personal allegations against staff or governors involved in dealing with the complaint, or repeatedly seeking to have them replaced without evidence of a conflict of interest;
- pursuing outcomes that are outside the school's power to provide, after this has been clearly explained;
- using abusive, offensive, discriminatory, threatening, intimidating or harassing language or behaviour;
- knowingly providing false or misleading information; or
- publishing or threatening to publish personal, abusive or defamatory material about staff, governors, pupils or families in a manner that creates a safeguarding, harassment or safety concern.

Managing excessive or unreasonable contact

Where possible, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors, as appropriate, will first explain the concern about the nature or frequency of contact and ask for it to change. If the behaviour continues, the school may put in place a proportionate communication plan. Depending on the circumstances, this may:

- require communication to be made through one named point of contact or one designated email address;
- require the complainant to combine points into one communication rather than sending multiple separate messages;
- limit the frequency of non-urgent contact, for example to one consolidated written communication in a seven-day period while a complaint is live;

- state that repeated correspondence on a matter already answered will be logged but will not receive a further substantive response;
- limit meetings or telephone calls to those that are necessary for the fair consideration of the complaint; and
- require abusive or threatening contact to be made in writing only, or through a representative, where this is necessary to protect staff or governors.

Any communication restriction will be tailored to the circumstances, confirmed in writing, kept under review and will not prevent the school from responding to a genuinely new complaint, an urgent safeguarding or safety matter, or information that the complainant is legally entitled to receive. Freedom of information and data protection requests will be handled under the separate legal regimes that apply to them.

Serious incidents involving threats, harassment, aggression or violence may be referred to the police or other appropriate authorities and may result in separate action to protect staff, governors, pupils and the school community.

17. Department for Education

After the school's complaints procedure has been completed, a complainant may contact the Department for Education if they believe the school has not handled the complaint in accordance with its published procedure, has prevented them from completing it, or has acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of its education functions. The DfE does not normally reinvestigate the substance of the complaint or substitute its own decision for the school's.

Current information about escalating a school complaint is available on GOV.UK under 'Complain about a school to the Department for Education'.

18. Recording, monitoring and governance assurance

The school will maintain a secure record of formal complaints, their stage, progress, outcome and any agreed actions. Records will be managed in accordance with data protection and records-retention requirements.

At least annually, the Governing Board or an appropriate committee will receive anonymised assurance information sufficient to confirm that:

- the published complaints procedure is being followed;
- formal complaints are recorded, monitored and concluded appropriately;
- staff and governors involved in complaints understand their responsibilities and any training needs;
- themes, trends and organisational learning are identified and used to improve practice where appropriate.

Governors will not receive case-specific information that could compromise their impartiality if they are later required to serve on a review panel.

19. Review of this policy

The Governing Board will review this policy at least every 2 years and sooner where legislation, DfE guidance, local arrangements or learning from complaints makes this necessary.

Appendix 1 - Quick flowchart

Step	Action	Deadline
Informal concern	Raise with relevant staff member/senior leader. Informal resolution encouraged but not compulsory.	Acknowledge within 2 school days where needed; response/meeting normally within 10 school days.
Stage 1 formal	Send formal complaint to the school/Complaints Co-ordinator. It is routed to the correct impartial decision-maker.	Acknowledge within 5 school days; outcome normally within 20 school days.
Stage 2 review panel	If dissatisfied, request review by an impartial panel of 3 governors/independent governors.	Request within 10 school days; acknowledge within 5; panel normally within 20; decision within 7 school days.
DfE	After the school procedure is complete, complainant may contact DfE about handling, obstruction, unlawfulness or unreasonableness.	After completion of school procedure.

Appendix 2 - Complaint form

Name:

Pupil's name (if relevant):

Relationship to pupil (if relevant):

Address:

Telephone/email:

Details of complaint:

Please summarise the complaint in no more than 1,500 words where possible. Attach relevant evidence separately rather than reproducing lengthy correspondence here.

What action, if any, have you already taken to try to resolve it?

What outcome are you seeking?

Documents attached:

Signature (if submitted on paper):

Date:

Appendix 3 - Reference framework

- Education Act 2002, section 29.
- Department for Education: Best practice guidance for school complaints procedures (maintained schools).
- Department for Education: Model policy for managing serial and unreasonable complaints.
- Department for Education: School complaints procedures - guidance for maintained schools.
- Department for Education: What maintained schools must or should publish online.
- Equality Act 2010.
- UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018.
- Relevant safeguarding, admissions, suspension/permanent exclusion and employment procedures where those matters fall outside this policy.