



FAIRFORD CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

Isaiah 49:16 'I have written your name on the palms of my hands'.

Actively learning together in a safe, happy environment shaped by the certainty that each individual is loved and known by God.

Fairford C of E Primary School



Complaints Procedure

Approved by the Curriculum and Standards Committee 21 January 2025

Next Review Date: January 2026

FAIRFORD C OF E PRIMARY SCHOOL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Our school vision is:

Actively learning together in a safe, happy environment shaped by the certainty that each individual is known and loved by God

At Fairford Primary School we have chosen those values that best reflect our thoughts as a school and community:

Perseverance

Friendship

Respect

Forgiveness

Trust

Thankfulness

1. General Principles:

- 1.1 This procedure is intended to allow you to raise a concern or complaint relating to the school, or the services that it provides.
- 1.2 An anonymous concern or complaint will not be investigated under this procedure, unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- 1.3 To allow for a proper investigation, concerns or complaints should be brought to the attention of the school as soon as possible. In general, the school may not consider any complaint that is raised more than 3 months after the event.

2. Who can make a complaint?

This complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children who are registered at the school. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to Fairford C of E Primary School about any provision of facilities or services that we provide. Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as appeals relating to exclusions or admissions), we will use this complaints procedure.

3. The difference between a concern and a complaint

- 3.1 A concern may be defined as 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'.
- 3.2 A complaint may be defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'.
- 3.3 It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. Fairford C of E Primary School takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.
- 3.4 If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, the headteacher, will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, the headteacher

will refer you to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important.

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

4. How to raise a concern or make a complaint

4.1 Concerns or complaints can be raised or made in person, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf on a complainant, as long as the third party has appropriate consent to do so.

4.2 Concerns should be raised with either the class teacher or headteacher. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

4.3 Complainants should not approach individual governors to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at Stage 2 of the procedure.

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

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

4.6 Complaints about the chair of governors or, when the school has co-chairs of governors, one of the co-chairs, any individual governor or the whole governing body should be addressed to the Clerk to the Governing Body via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

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

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

5. Anonymous complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the headteacher, the chair of governors or one of the co-chairs of governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

6. Time scales

You must raise the complaint within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

7. Complaints received outside term time

We will consider complaints made outside term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

8. Scope of this Complaints Procedure

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

Exceptions	Who to contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Admissions to schools Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs School re-organisation proposals 	<p>Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with Gloucestershire County Council.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation 	<p>Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.</p> <p>If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exclusion of children from school* 	<p>Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions.</p> <p>*complaints about the application of the school's Positive Relationship and Behaviour Policy can be made through this complaints procedure.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whistleblowing 	<p>We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors.</p> <p>The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus.</p> <p>Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the LA or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff grievances 	<p>Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff conduct 	<p>Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate.</p> <p>Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complaints about services provided by other providers who 	<p>Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.</p>

may use school premises or facilities	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Curriculum - content 	Please contact the Department for Education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus

8.2 If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, Local Authority (LA) safeguarding teams or Tribunals, this may impact on our ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations.

8.3 If a complainant commences legal action against Fairford C of E Primary School in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure in relation to their complaint until those legal proceedings have concluded.

9. Resolving complaints

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

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

10. Withdrawal of a Complaint

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

11. Complaints procedure Stage 1

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

11.2 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.

11.3 Within this response, the headteacher will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The headteacher can consider whether a face to face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this. The head teacher may delegate the investigation to another member of the school's senior leadership team but not the decision to be taken.

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

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

- 11.5 At the conclusion of the investigation, the headteacher will provide a formal written response within 28 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint.
- 11.6 If the headteacher is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.
- 11.7 The head teacher's response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions Fairford C of E Primary School will take to resolve the complaint.
- 11.8 The response will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1.
- 11.9 If the complaint is about the headteacher or a member of the governing body a suitably skilled governor will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 1.
- 11.10 Complaints about the headteacher or member of the governing body must be made to the Clerk, via the school office.
- 11.11 If the complaint is about:
- the chair or one or both of the co-chairs when the school has co-chairs or
 - the entire governing body; or
 - the majority of the governing body

Stage 1 will be considered by an independent investigator appointed by the governing body or the Diocese of Gloucester. At the conclusion of the investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response.

12. Complaints procedure Stage 2

- 12.1 If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 1 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 2 – a meeting of members of the governing body's complaints committee, which will be formed of the first three, impartial, governors available. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.
- 12.2 A request to escalate to Stage 2 must be made to the Clerk, via the school office, within 5 school days of receipt of the Stage 1 response.
- 12.3 The Clerk will record the date the request is received and acknowledge receipt of the request in writing (either by letter or email) within 5 school days.
- 12.4 Requests received outside this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.
- 12.5 The Clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within 25 school days of receipt of the Stage 2 request. If this is not possible, the Clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.
- 12.6 If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates, without good reason, the Clerk will decide when to hold the meeting. It will then proceed in the complainant's absence on the basis of written submissions from both parties.
- 12.7 The complaints committee will consist of at least three governors with no prior involvement or knowledge of the complaint. Prior to the meeting, they will decide amongst themselves who will act as the Chair of the Complaints Committee. If there are fewer than three governors from Fairford C of E Primary School available, the Clerk will source any additional, independent governors through another local school or through the Local Authority's Governor Services

team, in order to make up the committee. Alternatively, an entirely independent committee may be convened to hear the complaint at Stage 2 and must be convened if the complaint is:

- about the the chair or one or both of the co-chairs when the school has co-chairs of governors ; or
- the entire governing body; or
- the majority of the governing body

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

12.9 If the complainant is invited to attend the meeting, they may bring someone along to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. Generally, we do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the committee meeting. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate; for instance, if a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by union and/or legal representation.

12.10 Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

12.11 At least 15 school days before the meeting, the Clerk will:

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

12.12 Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 5 school days before the date of the meeting. The committee will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

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

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

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

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

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

decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint; and

- where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent

similar issues in the future.

12.17 The Chair of the Committee will provide the complainant and Fairford C of E Primary School with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 5 school days of the committee meeting.

12.18 The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the Department for Education if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by Fairford C of E Primary School.

13. Next Steps

13.1 If the complainant believes the school did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact the Department for Education after they have completed Stage 2.

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

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

www.education.gov.uk/contactus, by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:

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

14. Annexes

Annex A (Complaint Form), Annex B (Roles and Responsibilities) and Annex C (Procedure for Managing Serial and Unreasonable Complaints and Unreasonable or Persistent Contact) are incorporated into and form part of this complaints procedure as if set out in full in this document.

14. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Curriculum and Standards Committee. The next review will be in January 2026.

Annex A

Complaint Form

Please complete and return to the headteacher, or if the complaint relates to the headteacher or a governor return the form to the Clerk to the Governing Body through the school office, the headteacher (or, when appropriate, the Clerk) will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:
Pupil's name (if relevant):
Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):
Address: Postcode: Telephone number: Email address:

Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it.

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

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.

Signature:

Date:

Official use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By whom:

Complaint referred to:

Annex B

Roles and Responsibilities

1. 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; and
- refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality.

2. Investigator

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

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

2.2 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.

3. Complaints Co-ordinator

3.1 In this school the headteacher or, when appropriate, the Clerk to the Governing Body is the Complaints Co-ordinator.

3.2 The complaints co-ordinator should:

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

4. Clerk to the Governing Body

The Clerk is the contact point for the complainant and the committee at Stage 2 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 UK General Data Protection Regulations (UKGDPR);
- 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;
- ensure minutes are taken to record the proceedings;
- circulate the minutes of the meeting; and
- notify all parties of the committee's decision.

5. Committee Chair

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

- both parties are asked (via the Clerk) to provide any additional information relating to the complaint by a specified date in advance of the meeting;
- the meeting is conducted in an informal manner, is not adversarial, and that, if all parties are invited to attend, everyone is treated with respect and courtesy;
- complainants who may not be used to speaking at such a meeting are put at ease which is particularly important if the complainant is a child or young person;
- 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 UKGDPR;
- ensure that if a new issue arises which it would be useful to give everyone the opportunity to consider and comment upon the possibility of a short adjournment of the meeting is considered ;
- both the complainant and the school are given the opportunity to make their case and seek clarity, either through written submissions ahead of the meeting or verbally in the meeting itself;
- the issues are addressed;
- key findings of fact are made;
- the committee is open-minded and acts independently;
- no member of the committee has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure;
- the meeting is minuted; and
- they liaise with the Clerk (and complaints co-ordinator, if the school has one).

6. 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, recognising that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the meeting does not find in their favour and that therefore it may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations;
- many complainants will feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting and that parents and carers often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child;
- extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child or young person and present during all or part of the meeting and that careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings should ensure that the child or 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 or young person is the complainant, the committee should ask in advance if any support is needed to help them present their complaint and where the child or young person's parent or carer is the complainant, the committee should give the parent or carer the opportunity to say which parts of the meeting, if any, the child or young person needs to attend, advising the parent that agreement might not always be possible if the parent wishes the child or young person to attend a part of the meeting that the committee considers is not in the child or young person's best interests;
- the welfare of the child or young person is paramount.

Annex C

Policy for Managing Serial and Unreasonable Complaints and Unreasonable or Persistent Contact

1. Policy Statement

Fairford C of E Primary 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 or others 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 or threatening.

2. Definition of unreasonable behaviour

2.1 Fairford C of E Primary School defines unreasonable behaviour with regard to complaints as that which hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the school, such as, if the complainant:

- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
- refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on
- 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 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
- making excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff in person, in writing, by email or by telephone;

- using threats to intimidate;
- using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence;
- knowingly providing false information; and
- publishing unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

2.2 Unreasonable behaviour or unreasonably persistent contact in connection with dealings with the school not related to or arising out of a formal complaint include:

- repeatedly raising the same issue despite previous investigations or responses concluding that there is no issue to be addressed or that the issue has been addressed);
- raising large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insisting they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales;
- making excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff in person, in writing, by email or by telephone;
- using threats to intimidate;
- using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence;
- knowingly providing false information; and
- publishing unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

3. Complainants contact with the school

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school that relates to their complaint, while the complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, telephone, email or text), as it could delay the outcome being reached.

4. Dealing with unreasonable behaviour

4.1 Whenever possible, the headteacher, the chair of governors or one of the co-chairs of governors when the school has co-chairs will discuss any concerns arising from the conduct of complainants or others in contact with the school with the person concerned informally before applying an '*unreasonable*' marking.

4.2 If the behaviour continues, the headteacher will write to the person concerned explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants and others who excessively contact Fairford C of E Primary School causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will be reviewed after six months.

4.3 In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and notify the person concerned of our intended actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from Fairford C of E Primary School.