



Wood Ley Community Primary School

COMPLAINTS POLICY 2026-2027

Policy Owner:	Mrs S Renwick
Date:	September 2026
Review Date:	September 2027
Approved by:	Full Governing Body

WOOD LEY COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Complaints Procedure Policy

2026–2027

Policy Title	Complaints Procedure Policy
School	Wood Ley Community Primary School
Policy Owner	Headteacher
Responsible Committee	Full Governing Body
Approved By	Full Governing Body
Date Approved	
Review Cycle	Annual
Next Review	September 2027
Related Policies	Safeguarding, Behaviour, SEND, Equality, Data Protection, Online Safety, Whistleblowing, Staff Code of Conduct

Our Vision

At Wood Ley Community Primary School we believe that positive relationships between school and home are fundamental to providing the very best education for every child.

We value open communication, mutual respect and a genuine partnership with parents, carers and the wider community. We recognise that, occasionally, concerns may arise and, when they do, we are committed to listening carefully, investigating fairly and resolving issues promptly wherever possible.

Our aim is always to resolve concerns at the earliest opportunity through respectful dialogue. Where this is not possible, this policy provides a clear, transparent and fair complaints procedure which reflects the principles of natural justice and complies with the Department for Education's guidance for maintained schools.

Throughout every stage of this procedure we will treat all parties with dignity, professionalism and respect.

1. Policy Statement

Wood Ley Community Primary School is committed to providing a high-quality education in a safe, caring and inclusive environment where every child can flourish.

We recognise that parents and carers have every right to raise concerns when they believe something has gone wrong or where they feel improvements could be made.

We welcome feedback because it helps us to:

- improve the quality of education;
- strengthen relationships with families;
- identify areas for improvement;
- celebrate effective practice;
- maintain high standards of accountability.

The Governing Body expects complaints to be handled:

- fairly;
- consistently;
- objectively;
- confidentially;
- without prejudice;
- in accordance with current legislation.

No person raising a genuine concern will be treated less favourably because they have made a complaint.

2. Legal Framework

This policy has been developed with reference to:

- Department for Education – Best Practice Advice for School Complaints Procedures (Maintained Schools)
- Education Act 2002
- Education Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- Data Protection Act 2018
- UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (current edition)

This policy should be read alongside the school's:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- SEND Policy
- Equality Information and Objectives
- Behaviour Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Staff Grievance Procedure
- Data Protection Policy
- Online Safety Policy

3. Aims of the Complaints Procedure

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure that concerns and complaints are:

- listened to respectfully;
- acknowledged promptly;
- investigated thoroughly;
- resolved fairly;
- recorded appropriately;
- used to improve school practice where appropriate.

The school will endeavour to:

- resolve concerns as quickly as possible;
- maintain positive relationships wherever possible;
- communicate clearly throughout the process;
- keep complainants informed of progress;
- explain decisions fully;
- identify any lessons learned following investigations.

4. Guiding Principles

Every complaint received by Wood Ley Community Primary School will be considered in accordance with the following principles.

Fairness

All complaints will be considered objectively and without bias.

All parties will have the opportunity to explain their perspective before decisions are made.

Respect

Everyone involved in the complaints process is expected to communicate respectfully.

The school expects the same courtesy from complainants as they receive from staff.

Confidentiality

Information will only be shared with those who need it in order to investigate and resolve the complaint.

Records will be stored securely in accordance with GDPR.

Timeliness

The school recognises that complaints should be resolved as quickly as possible.

Where delays occur, the complainant will receive regular updates explaining the reason.

Proportionality

Investigations will be proportionate to the nature and seriousness of the complaint.

Natural Justice

Anyone who is the subject of a complaint will:

- be informed of the complaint;
- have the opportunity to respond;
- be treated fairly throughout the investigation.

5. Equality and Accessibility

Wood Ley Community Primary School is committed to ensuring that everyone has equal access to this complaints procedure.

Reasonable adjustments will be made where required under the Equality Act 2010.

This may include:

- providing translated documents;
- arranging interpreters;
- providing information in accessible formats;
- allowing additional support or advocacy;
- adapting meetings to meet individual needs.

No complainant will be disadvantaged because of disability, language, literacy or additional needs.

6. Scope of this Policy

This policy applies to complaints about:

- the education provided by the school;
- school policies;
- the behaviour of staff;
- actions of the Headteacher;
- actions of governors;
- decisions made by the school;
- the use of school facilities;
- services provided directly by the school.

Matters Covered by Other Procedures

Some concerns have separate statutory procedures and therefore fall outside this policy.

These include:

- child protection and safeguarding matters;
- allegations against members of staff;
- staff disciplinary matters;

- whistleblowing;
- admissions;
- exclusions;
- SEND statutory assessment and EHCP appeals;
- Freedom of Information requests;
- Subject Access Requests;
- National Curriculum issues;
- employment matters;
- complaints relating to third-party providers using school premises.

Where another procedure applies, the complainant will be advised accordingly and directed to the appropriate process.

7. Who Can Make a Complaint?

Any person may make a complaint about any provision of facilities or services provided by the school, unless a separate statutory procedure applies. This includes:

- parents and carers of current pupils;
- members of the local community;
- people acting on behalf of parents with written consent.

Where someone is acting on behalf of another person, written authority may be requested before the complaint is investigated.

Anonymous complaints will not normally be investigated unless there is an overriding safeguarding or public interest reason to do so.

8. Time Limits

Complaints should normally be made within three months of the incident occurring, or within three months of the complainant becoming aware of the matter.

The Headteacher (or Chair of Governors where appropriate) may exercise discretion where exceptional circumstances exist, including where:

- there is a continuing safeguarding concern;
- new evidence has come to light;
- there has been a genuine reason for the delay.

9. Raising a Concern

At Wood Ley Community Primary School we encourage concerns to be raised at the earliest opportunity.

Many concerns can be resolved quickly through an informal discussion and without the need to invoke the formal complaints procedure.

Parents and carers are encouraged, wherever appropriate, to speak initially with the member of staff most directly involved.

This may include:

- the class teacher;
- the SENDCo;
- a Phase Leader;
- the Office Manager (for administrative matters);
- the Headteacher.

We recognise that some matters may be sensitive. Where appropriate, concerns may be raised directly with the Headteacher.

The school will always seek to resolve concerns through open, honest and respectful communication.

10. Informal Resolution

The majority of concerns are resolved successfully through informal discussion.

During this stage the school will:

- listen carefully to the concern;
- clarify the issues raised;
- gather relevant information;
- speak with appropriate members of staff;
- explain decisions made;
- agree actions where appropriate;
- seek a mutually acceptable resolution.

The Headteacher (or delegated senior leader) will determine who is best placed to respond.

Although no formal investigation is required at this stage, brief records may be kept where appropriate.

Where the concern cannot be resolved informally, the complainant will be advised how to submit a formal complaint.

11. Stage One – Formal Complaint

If the complainant remains dissatisfied following informal discussions, or where the matter is sufficiently serious, a formal complaint should be submitted.

Formal complaints may be made in person, by telephone or in writing, including by email. The school provides a Complaint Form (Appendix B) for convenience, but use of the form is not compulsory. Where correspondence clearly states that the complainant wishes to make a formal complaint, it will be accepted as such without requiring the complainant to resubmit it on the school form.

The complaint should include:

- the nature of the complaint;
- the relevant dates;
- who has been involved;
- what action has already been taken;
- what outcome the complainant is seeking.

Where a complainant is unable to submit a written complaint because of disability, language or literacy needs, the school will provide reasonable assistance.

Complaints should normally be addressed to:

The Headteacher

Wood Ley Community Primary School

Acknowledgement

The school will normally acknowledge receipt of the complaint within five school days.

The acknowledgement will include:

- confirmation that the complaint has been received;
- an outline of the investigation process;
- the anticipated timescale;
- the name of the person investigating the complaint.

Investigation

The Headteacher (or nominated investigator where appropriate) will:

- read the complaint carefully;
- identify the issues to be investigated;
- review relevant records;
- interview staff involved;
- meet with the complainant where appropriate;
- gather witness statements if required;
- consider relevant policies and statutory guidance;
- reach findings based on the available evidence.

Investigations will always be:

- proportionate;
- impartial;
- evidence-based.

Where new issues emerge during the investigation, these may require a separate complaint.

Meetings

Where appropriate, the Headteacher may invite the complainant to attend a meeting.

The purpose of the meeting is to:

- clarify concerns;
- establish the facts;

- explore possible resolutions.

The complainant may be accompanied by:

- a friend;
- a relative;
- an advocate.

Legal representatives should not normally attend unless exceptional circumstances apply.

Outcome

Following completion of the investigation, the Headteacher will provide a written response.

The response will include:

- a summary of the complaint;
- the investigation undertaken;
- findings;
- whether the complaint is upheld in full, upheld in part or not upheld;
- any actions the school intends to take;
- information about progressing to Stage Two if the complainant remains dissatisfied.

Where actions relate to individual members of staff, confidentiality obligations may limit the information that can be shared.

12. Stage Two – Governing Body Complaints Panel

If the complainant remains dissatisfied following the Stage One outcome, they may request consideration by a Governing Body Complaints Panel. This is the final stage of the school's complaints procedure.

- **Requesting a Stage Two Hearing**
 - The request should normally be made within ten school days of receiving the Stage One outcome.
 - The request should explain:
 - why the complainant remains dissatisfied;
 - which aspects of the complaint they wish the panel to consider;
 - any relevant evidence they believe should be taken into account.
- A complainant will not be prevented from progressing to Stage Two simply because the school disagrees with their reasons for escalation.
- **Purpose of the Panel**

The panel will consider the complaint afresh. It will consider the original complaint, the Stage One investigation and outcome, the complainant's reasons for escalation and any relevant evidence submitted by the parties. Its role is not limited to reviewing whether Stage One procedures were followed.

- The panel will consider whether:
 - the complaint is upheld in full, upheld in part or not upheld;

- the evidence supports the findings reached;
- any further action or remedy is appropriate;
 - any changes to school practice, policy or procedure should be recommended.
- **Panel Membership**
 - The Complaints Panel will normally consist of three suitably skilled and impartial governors who:
 - have had no prior involvement in the complaint;
 - have no conflict of interest;
 - can consider the complaint fairly and impartially.

One governor will act as Chair. Where it is not possible to form a suitably impartial panel from the school's Governing Body, governors from another school may be approached.

The Clerk to Governors will administer the process.

Before the Hearing

The Clerk will:

- arrange a suitable date;
 - confirm the membership of the panel;
 - circulate relevant papers to the parties and panel;
 - advise all parties of the hearing arrangements and procedure.
 - Evidence should normally be submitted no later than five school days before the hearing. Late evidence may be accepted where the Chair considers there is a reasonable justification and it can be considered fairly.

The complainant may request an independent panel if they believe there is likely to be bias. Any such request should explain the reasons and provide relevant evidence. The school will consider the request fairly and will arrange an independent panel where appropriate.

Attendance and Representation

- The complainant will be given a fair opportunity to state their case either in person or in writing. If they attend, they may be accompanied by a friend, relative or advocate. Legal representation will not normally be necessary but may be permitted in exceptional circumstances.
- The Headteacher or Stage One investigator will also have the opportunity to present the school's response.
- Either party may:
 - provide relevant written evidence;
 - identify relevant witnesses;
 - ask reasonable questions through the Chair.

Witnesses will normally attend only for the part of the hearing relevant to their evidence.

If reasonable attempts have been made to agree a hearing date and a party is unable or unwilling to attend, the panel may proceed in their absence and reach a decision on the available evidence.

- **Conduct of the Hearing**
- The hearing is not intended to be adversarial. The Chair will ensure that:
 - everyone is treated respectfully;
 - all parties have a fair opportunity to speak and respond;
- questioning remains appropriate and relevant;
- confidentiality is maintained;
- the panel considers the complaint objectively and without bias.

The panel may adjourn if additional relevant information is required or if this is necessary to ensure a fair hearing.

The Decision

Following the hearing, the panel will deliberate in private and reach its findings on the balance of the available evidence.

- The panel may decide to:
 - not uphold the complaint;
 - uphold the complaint in full;
- uphold the complaint in part;
- recommend appropriate action to resolve the complaint;
- recommend changes to school practice, policies or procedures;
 - identify learning or training arising from the complaint.
- The panel cannot:
 - discipline members of staff;
 - overturn lawful employment decisions;
- award financial compensation.

Written Outcome

The Clerk will write to the complainant and the school normally within five school days of the hearing.

The written outcome will include:

- the panel's findings and decision;
 - the reasons for the decision;
 - any recommendations or actions arising;

- confirmation that this concludes the school's complaints procedure;
- information about how the complainant may refer the matter to the Department for Education if they believe the school has not followed its published procedure correctly, has acted unlawfully or unreasonably in exercising education-related functions, or has prevented them from completing the procedure.
- Where appropriate and subject to necessary redactions, the complainant will be provided with a copy of the panel meeting minutes.

The Governing Body will monitor implementation of any recommendations arising from the panel while maintaining appropriate confidentiality.

- 13. Conclusion of the School Complaints Procedure
- Once the Governing Body Complaints Panel has issued its written decision, the school's internal complaints procedure is complete. If the complainant believes the school has not followed its published procedure correctly, has acted unlawfully or unreasonably in exercising education-related functions, or has prevented them from completing the procedure, they may refer the matter to the Department for Education.

14. Withdrawal of a Complaint

A complainant may withdraw a complaint at any stage.

The school will normally ask for confirmation in writing.

The Headteacher may decide to continue investigating where safeguarding, health and safety or other significant public interest issues remain.

15. Extending Timescales

Occasionally investigations may take longer than anticipated.

Examples include:

- school holidays;
- staff absence;
- witness availability;
- complex safeguarding considerations;
- receipt of additional evidence.

Where timescales cannot be met, the complainant will be informed:

- why additional time is needed;
- the revised expected completion date;
- who to contact for updates.

The school will always aim to conclude complaints as promptly as possible while ensuring a thorough and fair investigation.

16. Complaints About the Headteacher

Where a complaint concerns the Headteacher, it should not be investigated by the Headteacher.

The complaint should be submitted in writing to the Chair of Governors, via the Clerk to the Governing Body.

The Chair of Governors will:

- acknowledge receipt of the complaint;
- determine whether the complaint falls within the scope of this procedure;
- appoint an appropriate investigating officer where necessary;
- ensure the complaint is investigated fairly and impartially;
- provide a written outcome.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied following the Stage One investigation, they may request consideration by a Governing Body Complaints Panel at Stage Two. The panel will comprise impartial governors with no prior involvement and will consider the complaint afresh.

Should the Chair of Governors have had prior involvement in the matter, another suitably impartial governor will be appointed to undertake the investigation.

17. Complaints About the Chair of Governors

Where a complaint concerns the Chair of Governors, it should be submitted in writing to the Clerk to the Governing Body.

The Clerk will arrange for the complaint to be considered by an impartial panel of governors who have had no previous involvement.

The Chair of Governors will take no part in the investigation or decision-making process.

The complaint will be considered at Stage One by a suitably skilled and impartial governor with no prior involvement. If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they may request a Stage Two Governing Body Complaints Panel, whose decision concludes the school's procedure.

18. Complaints About Individual Governors

Complaints concerning an individual governor acting in their role as a governor should be submitted to the Chair of Governors.

A suitably skilled and impartial governor with no prior involvement will investigate the complaint at Stage One. If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they may request a Stage Two Governing Body Complaints Panel.

Where the complaint concerns the Chair, the arrangements set out in Section 17 will apply.

19. Complaints About the Governing Body

Complaints regarding decisions or actions of the Governing Body should be addressed to the Clerk to Governors.

The Clerk will determine an appropriate impartial process. This may include appointing an independent investigator for Stage One and sourcing suitably independent governors, including governors from another school where appropriate, for the Stage Two Complaints Panel.

Members of the panel must have had no previous involvement in the matter.

20. Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints will not normally be investigated.

However, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors may decide to investigate where there are exceptional circumstances, including:

- safeguarding concerns;
- allegations of criminal activity;
- serious health and safety concerns;
- matters affecting the wider school community.

The decision whether to investigate an anonymous complaint rests solely with the Headteacher or Chair of Governors.

21. Complaints Involving Safeguarding

Complaints involving child protection, safeguarding or allegations that a child is at risk of harm will always take precedence over this complaints procedure.

Such matters will be managed in accordance with:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education;
- Working Together to Safeguard Children;
- the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy;
- statutory guidance relating to allegations against adults working with children.

Where necessary, referrals will be made immediately to:

- Children's Social Care;
- the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO);
- the Police;
- other appropriate agencies.

The complaints procedure may be suspended whilst safeguarding investigations are ongoing.

22. Complaints Covered by Other Statutory Procedures

The following matters are not dealt with through this complaints procedure because separate legal processes apply:

- admissions;
- exclusions;
- statutory SEND assessments and EHCP appeals;
- whistleblowing;
- staff grievances and disciplinary matters;
- Freedom of Information requests;
- Subject Access Requests;
- National Curriculum assessment appeals;
- employment matters.

Where appropriate, complainants will be directed to the relevant procedure.

23. Persistent, Unreasonable or Unacceptable Behaviour

Wood Ley Community Primary School is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and respectfully.

Equally, the school expects everyone engaging with the complaints process to behave in a reasonable and respectful manner.

Examples of unacceptable behaviour include:

- aggressive or threatening language;
- offensive or discriminatory comments;
- harassment of staff;
- repeated telephone calls after responses have been provided;
- excessive emails or correspondence;
- refusal to accept properly evidenced decisions;
- recording meetings without permission;
- publishing misleading or defamatory information on social media;
- contacting multiple members of staff regarding the same complaint after a response has been issued.

Where behaviour becomes unreasonable, the school may:

- limit methods of communication;
- require communication in writing only;
- nominate a single point of contact;
- limit the frequency of responses;
- decline to respond to repetitive issues that have already been addressed;
- end meetings where behaviour becomes abusive.

These measures will only be implemented after careful consideration and will be proportionate to the circumstances.

The complainant will be informed in writing of any restrictions and advised when they will be reviewed.

The school will continue to consider any new complaints or significant new evidence.

24. Social Media

The school encourages parents and carers to raise concerns directly with us so that they can be investigated fairly.

Complaints should not be pursued through social media.

Posting allegations, confidential information or inaccurate statements online rarely assists in resolving concerns and may cause unnecessary distress to children, families and staff.

Where concerns are raised publicly, the school will generally invite the complainant to use this formal complaints procedure instead.

The school reserves the right to take appropriate action where social media content is abusive, defamatory or breaches confidentiality.

25. Confidentiality

All complaints will be handled with appropriate confidentiality.

Information will only be shared with individuals who need access in order to investigate or resolve the complaint.

Members of staff, governors and complainants are expected to respect the confidential nature of the process.

Information relating to individual members of staff cannot normally be shared because of employment law and data protection requirements.

26. Record Keeping

The school will maintain accurate records of all formal complaints.

Records will include:

- the complaint received;
- investigation notes;
- correspondence;
- evidence considered;
- meeting notes;
- decisions reached;
- actions taken.

Complaint records will be stored securely in accordance with the school's Data Protection Policy and Records Management procedures.

Access will be restricted to authorised personnel only.

Complaint records will be retained in accordance with the school's approved retention schedule.

27. Learning from Complaints

Complaints provide valuable opportunities for reflection and improvement.

Following the conclusion of complaints, the Headteacher will consider whether:

- policies require amendment;
- procedures require improvement;
- staff training is needed;
- communication with parents could be strengthened;
- additional support for pupils is required.

Lessons learned will be shared with governors where appropriate while maintaining confidentiality.

28. Monitoring and Review

The Governing Body has overall responsibility for monitoring the effectiveness of this procedure.

Each year governors will receive anonymised information regarding:

- the number of formal complaints;
- broad themes arising;
- lessons learned;
- improvements implemented.

No confidential or personally identifiable information will be shared.

The Governing Body will review this policy annually, or sooner if legislation or Department for Education guidance changes.

29. Further Information

If, after completing all stages of this procedure, a complainant believes the school has not followed its published complaints procedure correctly or has failed to comply with legal requirements, they may refer the matter to the Department for Education (DfE).

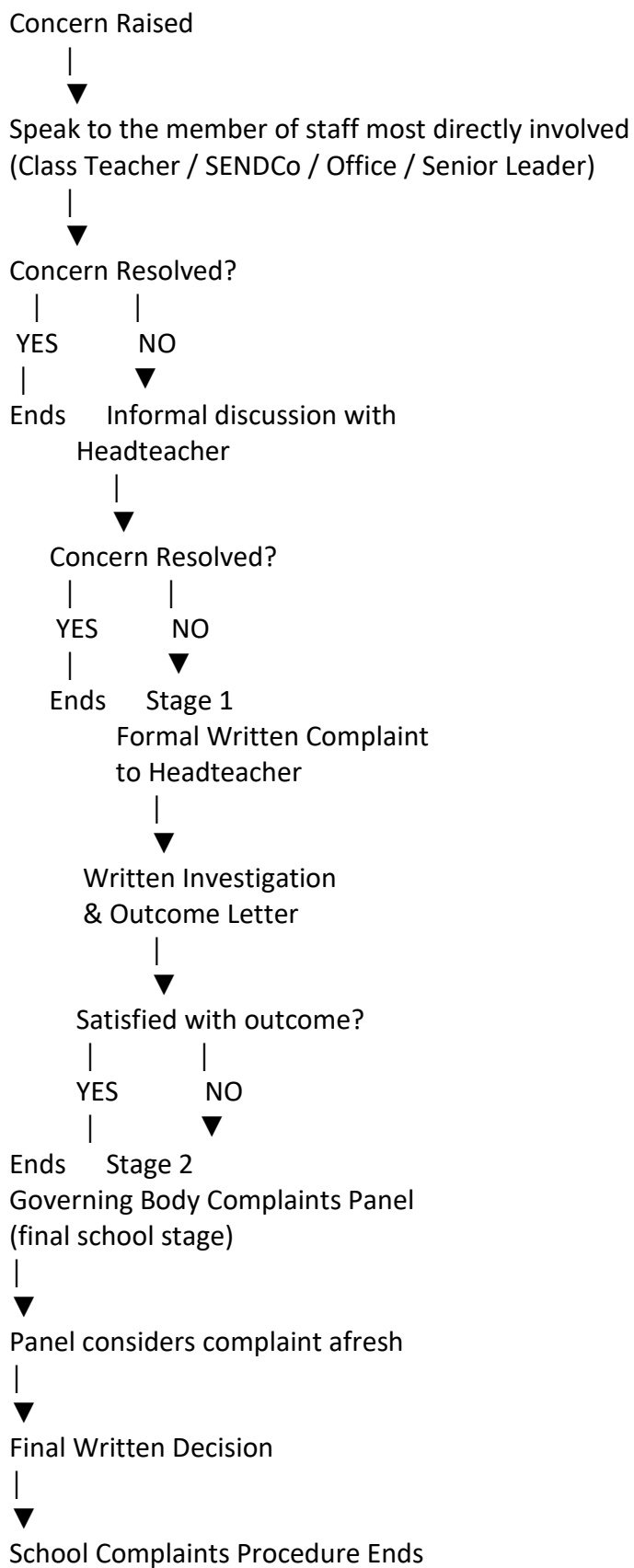
The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of a complaint or overturn decisions made by the school. Its role is to consider whether the school has acted lawfully, reasonably and in accordance with its published procedures.

Policy Approval

This policy was approved by the Full Governing Body of Wood Ley Community Primary School.

APPENDIX A

Complaints Procedure Flowchart



APPENDIX B

Complaint Form

WOOD LEY COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Formal Complaint Form

Your Details

Name:

Address:

Telephone:

Email:

Relationship to child (if applicable):

Child's Name:

Class:

Details of Complaint

Please describe your complaint as clearly as possible.

Include:

- dates
- people involved
- what happened

- any relevant background information

Steps Already Taken

Who have you spoken to?

When?

What was discussed?

What outcome are you seeking?

Supporting Evidence

Please list any documents you have attached.

☐ Emails

☐ Letters

☐ Photographs

☐ Other

Declaration

I confirm that the information provided is accurate to the best of my knowledge.

Signed

Date:

APPENDIX C

Roles and Responsibilities

The Complainant

Should:

- explain the complaint clearly
- provide relevant evidence
- cooperate with investigations
- treat staff respectfully
- avoid discussing complaints on social media

The Headteacher

Will:

- acknowledge complaints promptly
- investigate fairly
- remain impartial
- keep accurate records
- communicate outcomes clearly
- identify lessons learned

Chair of Governors

Will:

- ensure complaints about the Headteacher are allocated to a suitably skilled and impartial governor at Stage One
- support the Clerk in ensuring an impartial Stage Two panel can be constituted where required
- avoid prior involvement in complaints where this could prevent participation in a later panel

Clerk to Governors

Will:

- arrange Complaints Panel hearings
- circulate papers
- record decisions
- issue outcome letters
- maintain complaint records

Complaints Panel

Will:

- consider the complaint afresh
- consider all relevant evidence fairly
- remain impartial and free from prior involvement
- make findings and recommendations based on the evidence
- provide reasons for its decision

APPENDIX D

Complaints Panel Hearing Procedure

The hearing will normally follow the format below.

1

Welcome and introductions

Chair explains procedure.

2

Complainant presents complaint.

3

Panel questions complainant.

4

School presents investigation.

5

Panel questions school representatives.

6

Both parties summarise.

(No new evidence introduced.)

7

Both parties withdraw.

8

Panel deliberates in private.

9

Decision issued in writing within five school days.

APPENDIX E

Complaint Record Log

Date	Complainant	Nature of Complaint	Stage	Outcome	Date Closed
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Complaint records are confidential and stored securely in accordance with GDPR.

APPENDIX F

Template Outcome Letter

Dear [Name],

Thank you for taking the time to raise your concerns.

Following a thorough investigation, I have carefully considered all of the evidence available.

Having completed the investigation, I have concluded that your complaint is:

☐ Upheld

☐ Partially Upheld

☐ Not Upheld

Summary of Findings

Actions Taken

If you remain dissatisfied with this decision, you may request that the complaint progresses to Stage Two - a Governing Body Complaints Panel - within 10 school days of receiving this letter.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher

Wood Ley Community Primary School

APPENDIX G

Managing Serial and Unreasonable Complaints

The Governing Body recognises that everyone has the right to raise concerns.

Occasionally, however, the behaviour of a complainant may become unreasonable.

Examples include:

- refusing to accept evidence-based decisions;
- repeatedly raising the same issues without new evidence;
- excessive telephone calls or emails;
- abusive or threatening behaviour;
- offensive language;
- personal attacks on staff or governors;
- recording meetings without consent;
- publishing defamatory or misleading information online.

Where this occurs, the school may:

- nominate a single point of contact;
- limit communication to written correspondence;
- respond only to new issues;
- decline to respond to repetitive correspondence that raises no new matters;
- end meetings where behaviour becomes abusive.

Any restrictions will:

- be proportionate;
- be confirmed in writing;
- explain the reasons for the restriction;
- explain how long the restriction will remain in place;
- be reviewed regularly.

The school will continue to consider any new complaint or any complaint supported by significant new evidence.