

Lavington Park Federation

***Complaints Policy
and Procedures***

Based on WSCC Model documents



Reviewed by

Marie Bracey, Chair of Governors, May 2019
(Updated by Kathie Gyles November 2019)

Signature

Reviewed

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Next Review

May 2020

Complaints Policy

Lavington Park Federation's policy is formed from two key elements :

1. We follow West Sussex County Council's published model procedures
2. We pay due regard to the Department for Education's 'Best Practice Guidance for School Complaints Procedures 2019'.

The remainder of this document is based entirely on these two documents.

General advice - school complaints and concerns

- School staff need to be clear about the difference between a concern and a complaint. Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage will reduce the numbers that develop into formal complaints.
- A complaint can be brought by a parent of a registered child at the school, any person who has been provided with a service by the school, or a member of the public from the wider community. This person becomes known as the complainant.
- Where there are communication difficulties, schools may wish to use recording devices to ensure the complainant is able to access and review the discussions at a later point.
- At first it may be unclear as to whether the individual is raising a question or expressing an opinion rather than making a complaint. An initial discussion about the issue may help to clarify and decide what may need to happen next.
- If the issue remains unresolved after an informal process of clarifying and attempting to resolve the issue, the initial stage of the formal complaints procedure would follow.
- The requirement to have a complaints procedure need not undermine efforts to resolve a concern informally. In most cases the class teacher will receive the first approach. It is helpful if staff are able to resolve issues immediately, including the issuing of an apology if appropriate.
- Once a complaint has been made the complainant can withdraw it at any time during the complaints process if resolved satisfactorily.
- Within Lavington Park Federation the Complaints Co-ordinator is Kathie Gyles (Administrative Assistant and Governor). This person is responsible for overseeing the school records the progress of each complaint, and the final outcome.
- A complaint may be made in person, by telephone, or in writing. A brief note of meetings and telephone calls should always be kept and a copy of any written response added to the record. They should be held centrally (and securely) in school.
- At each stage in the complaints procedure LPF will consider ways in which it might be resolved at the earliest opportunity.
- Complainants should be encouraged to state what school actions they feel might resolve their problem. An admission by the school that the matter could have been better handled is not an admission of fault or negligence.
- An effective complaints procedure will identify areas of agreement between the parties. It is equally important to clarify misunderstandings at an early opportunity to create a positive atmosphere in which to discuss any outstanding issues.
- Complaints should not be shared with the whole governing body, except in very general terms, in case a panel of governors without prior knowledge needs to be organised to investigate the complaint.
- This document will be reviewed annually by the Chair of Governors and will take into account new guidance or legislative changes as set out by the DfE.

Lavington Park Federation has added this note :

Parents discussing children with staff, and the use of social media

- Parents may make judgements about other people's children and then go on to voice their opinions with other parents or members of staff. This 'finger pointing' can be very damaging, particularly when school staff might already be working very hard to support the positive behaviour of a pupil with complex issues.
- The sharing of unfounded opinions can also be based on personal prejudices that lie beyond the school gate. Behaviour outside of school (of both children and adults) is often very different to that which takes place within school, making these situations all the more difficult to manage.
- In dealing with these situations staff may be put in a very awkward position, as refuting a parent's allegation (for instance about another child's behaviour) is likely to involve divulging information about another child or third party.
- Staff must ensure they behave even-handedly and not allow themselves to collude with a parent expressing an opinion about another child.
- Evidence suggests there is a growing trend of parents bullying staff and other pupils. This has been exacerbated by the use of social networking. It is very easy to damage a teacher's career, tarnish the reputation of a school or stigmatise a pupil through unsubstantiated cyber gossip. It could also compromise the safeguarding of children if information about them is shared online.
- Research shows that people are much less guarded about what they say online, but slander or defamation of character that takes place online is subject to the same laws and repercussions as things that might be said or written elsewhere. It must be understood that such postings can constitute a criminal offence. We will treat any such occurrences very seriously, and assist members of staff in pursuing such incidents through appropriate legal channels.

The following pages 5-15 are based on West Sussex County Council's published model Complaints Procedures

1.1 Who can make a complaint?

This complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children that are registered at the school. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to the Lavington Park Federation 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.

1.2 The difference between a concern and a complaint

A concern may be defined as '*an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought*'.

A complaint may be defined as '*an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action*'.

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. The Lavington Park Federation takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

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.

We understand however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, the Lavington Park Federation will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

1.3 How to raise a concern or make a complaint

A concern or complaint can be 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 they have appropriate consent to do so.

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

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.

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.

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.

Complaints about the Chair of Governors, 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.

For ease of use, a template complaint form is included 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.

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.

1.4 Anonymous complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

1.5 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.

1.6 Complaints received outside of term time

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

1.7 Scope of this Complaints Procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by the Lavington Park Federation 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 the appropriate team within West Sussex 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 child protection and safeguarding 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> <p>The WSCC LADO is Claire Coles - Tel: 0330 222 3339 - Email: claire.coles@westsussex.gov.uk</p> <p><u>Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub</u> MASH@westsussex.gov.uk Telephone: 01403 229 900 Out of Hours: 0330 222 6664</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><i>*complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whistleblowing/Confidential Reporting 	<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:</p>

	<p>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 	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.
<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 may use school premises or facilities 	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Curriculum - content 	Please contact the Department for Education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus

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.

If a complainant commences legal action against the Lavington Park Federation 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.

1.8 Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, the Lavington Park Federation 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
- an apology.

1.9 Withdrawal of a Complaint

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

2 Stage 1

- 2.1 Formal complaints must be made to the Headteacher (unless they are about the Headteacher), via the school office. This may be done in person, in writing (preferably on the Complaint Form), or by telephone.
- 2.2 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.
- 2.3 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.

Note: The Headteacher may delegate the investigation to another member of the school's senior leadership team but not the decision to be taken.

- 2.4 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
 - keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.
- 2.5 At the conclusion of their investigation, the Headteacher will provide a formal written response within 15 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint.
- 2.6 If the Headteacher is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.
- 2.7 The 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 the Lavington Park Federation will take to resolve the complaint.
- 2.8 The Headteacher will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1.
- 2.9 If the complaint is about the Headteacher, or a member of the governing body (including the Chair or Vice-Chair), a suitably skilled governor will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 1.
- 2.10 Complaints about the chair, vice chair or member of the governing body must be made to the Clerk, via the school office.
- 2.11 If the complaint is:
- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
 - the entire governing body or
 - the majority of the governing body

an independent investigator appointed by the governing body or the Chichester Diocese will consider stage 1. At the conclusion of their investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response.

3 Stage 2

- 3.1 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 with 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.

- 3.2 A request to escalate to Stage 2 must be made to the Clerk, via the school office, within 20 school days of receipt of the Stage 1 response.
- 3.3 The Clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 5 school days.
- 3.4 Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.
- 3.5 The Clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within 15 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.
- 3.6 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.
- 3.7 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 the Lavington Park Federation available, the Clerk will source any additional, independent governors through another local school or through their LA'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.
- 3.8 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.
- 3.9 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.
- 3.10 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.
Note: Complaints about staff conduct will not generally be handled under this complaints procedure. Complainants will be advised that any staff conduct complaints will be considered under staff disciplinary procedures, if appropriate, but outcomes will not be shared with them.
- 3.11 Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.
- 3.12 At least 5 school days before the meeting, the Clerk will:
 - confirm and notify the complainant 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
 - request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the committee at least 2 school days before the meeting.
- 3.13 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.
- 3.14 The committee will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.
- 3.15 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 take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

- 3.16** The committee will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The committee can:
- uphold the complaint in whole or in part
 - dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.
- 3.17** 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
 - where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.
- 3.18** The Chair of the Committee will provide the complainant and the Lavington Park Federation with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 10 school days.
- 3.19** 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 the Lavington Park Federation.
- 3.20** If the complaint is:
- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
 - the entire governing body or
 - the majority of the governing body
- Stage 2 will be heard by a committee of independent governors.
- 3.21** The 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 the Lavington Park Federation will take to resolve the complaint.
- 3.22** The response will also advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied.

4 Next Steps

- 4.1** 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.
- 4.2** The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by the Lavington Park Federation. They will consider whether the Lavington Park Federation has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint.
- 4.3** 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

5 Complaint Form

Please complete and return to the Headteacher / Chair of Governors (as appropriate) who 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: Day time telephone number: Evening telephone number:
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 who:

Complaint referred to:

Date:

6 Roles and Responsibilities

6.1 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
- refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality.

6.2 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 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
 - 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.

6.3 Complaints Co-ordinator

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 records.

6.4 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
- record the proceedings
- circulate the minutes of the meeting
- notify all parties of the committee's decision.

6.5 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. This is particularly important if the complainant is a child/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 GDPR.

If a new issue arises it would be useful to give everyone the opportunity to consider and comment upon it; this may require a short adjournment of the meeting

- 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
- they liaise with the Clerk (and complaints co-ordinator, if the school has one).

6.6 Committee Members

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

We recognise 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.

However, 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.

The following pages 16-32 are a reproduction of the DfE Best Practice Guidance 2019

Introduction

In accordance with [Section 29\(1\) of the Education Act 2002](#), all maintained schools and maintained nursery schools must have and publish procedures to deal with all complaints relating to their school and to any community facilities or services that the school provides, for which there are no separate (statutory) procedures.

We have produced this guidance to:

- share and encourage best practice
- help schools avoid common pitfalls

There is a difference between 'legal requirement' and 'good practice'. In this guidance, we use:

- must - where a school has a legal duty to do (or not do) something
- can - where a school has a legal power (not a duty) to do something
- should - for guidance on best practice

Under section 29(2) of the Education Act 2002, governing bodies of maintained schools must 'have regard to any guidance given from time to time (in relation to England) by the Secretary of State' when establishing and publishing complaints procedures relating to their school and any facilities or services the school provides.

The phrase 'must have regard', when used in this context, does not mean that DfE's guidance has to be followed in every detail. While DfE's expectations are that schools will adopt our best practice recommendations, schools can apply alternative processes if they have good reason to.

Model policies

We have published [non-statutory model policies](#) you may find helpful.

The duty to establish procedures for dealing with complaints lies with the governing body. If you choose to adopt our model policies, you must tailor them to your school.

We recommend that you incorporate a serial complaints policy into your complaints procedure.

The difference between a concern and a complaint

A 'concern' may be treated as 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'.

A complaint may be generally recognised as 'an expression or statement of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'.

It's in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to follow formal procedures. Schools should take informal concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

However, there will be occasions when complainants want to raise their concerns formally. In those cases, your complaints procedure should be followed.

Who can make a complaint?

You must not limit complaints to parents or carers of children that are registered at the school. Anyone can make a complaint about any provision of facilities or services that a school provides, unless separate statutory procedures apply (such as exclusions or admissions). This includes:

- parents or carers of children no longer at the school
- members of the public

In accordance with [administrative law principles](#), complainants should be given the opportunity to complete the complaints procedure in full, unless you possess clear evidence that the complaint meets the [serial complaint criteria](#).

If the complainant contacts you again on the same issue, the correspondence may then be viewed as 'serial' or 'persistent' and you may choose not to respond.

You should not mark a complaint as 'serial' before the complainant has completed the procedure.

Your complaints procedure

You must have your own distinct complaints procedures in place. A guidance document for parents on making complaints does not satisfy the legal requirement to have in place a procedure to deal with all complaints.

You're free to adopt your local authority's model policy if one is provided. However, as the duty to establish procedures for dealing with complaints lies with governing bodies, you must tailor the policy to your individual school.

You should make sure that your complaints procedure:

- is simple to understand and use
- is impartial
- is non-adversarial
- enables a full and fair investigation
- where necessary respects confidentiality
- addresses all the points at issue and provides an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary
- provides information to the school's senior management team so that services can be improved

To make sure your complaints procedures are effective, we recommend that:

- you ask the complainant at the earliest stage what they think might resolve the issue - an acknowledgement that the school could have handled the situation better is not the same as an admission of unlawful or negligent action
- when responding to a complaint, you advise the complainant of any escalation options at each stage of the procedure - for example, when communicating the outcome of the stage 1 process, include the details of the stage 2 process
- wherever possible, procedures state what you 'will' do rather than what you 'should' or 'may' do

Try to avoid using ambiguous language in your complaints procedures, as not doing something the procedure states the school should or may do, can lead to further complaints.

Complaints outside of this policy

Some complaints fall outside the school's complaints procedure, for example:

- exclusions
- staff grievances
- disciplinary procedures

[Complaints not in scope](#) lists complaints that are not covered by this procedure.

Duplicate complaints

After closing a complaint at the end of the complaints procedure, you may receive a duplicate complaint from:

- a spouse
- a partner
- a grandparent
- a child

If the complaint is about the same subject, you can inform the new complainant that the school has already considered that complaint and the local process is complete. You should advise the new complainant to contact the department if they are dissatisfied with the school's handling of the original complaint.

Take care not to overlook any new aspects to the complaint that you may not have previously considered. You will need to ensure these are investigated and dealt with to the full extent of the complaints procedure.

Complaint campaigns

Occasionally, you may become the focus of a campaign and receive large volumes of complaints:

- all based on the same subject
- from complainants unconnected with the school

We recommend you include a separate procedure in your complaints policy to handle complaints of this nature. This could include:

- sending a template response to all complainants
- publishing a single response on the school's website

In accordance with the duty on schools to publish their complaints procedures online under the School Information (England) Regulations 2008, any alternative process must be included in the complaints procedure published on the school's website.

You can continue to signpost complainants to us if they're dissatisfied with your response.

Third parties

You should make sure that any third party providers have their own complaints procedures in place if they are using school premises or facilities to offer:

- community facilities
- services

Parental responsibility

Conflict between estranged parents over the application of parental responsibility is a common cause of complaints made to schools.

[Understanding and dealing with issues relating to parental responsibility](#) contains specific advice about how to approach issues concerning parental responsibility.

Complaints about the headteacher or governing body

The complaints procedure must also set out the steps to follow if the subject of the complaint is:

- the headteacher
- a member of the governing body
- the entire governing body

There may be occasions when it's necessary or reasonable to deviate from the published complaints procedure. This includes not doing something the procedure states you will, should or may do. We recommend that you document any deviation from the published procedure.

If the complaint is escalated to us for consideration and complaint is about any deviation from the published policy, we will ask you for an explanation for doing this, unless one is already included in the evidence provided. If we do not consider the explanation reasonable, or the deviation justified, we may ask you to revisit the complaint and comply with the published complaints procedure.

Publishing your procedure

Under [Section 29\(1\)\(b\) of the Education Act 2002](#), you must publicise your complaints procedures.

Following changes to the School Information (England) Regulations 2008, since 1 September 2016, maintained schools must publish their complaints procedures on their websites. This does not apply to community or foundation special schools that are established in hospitals or maintained nursery schools.

If you do not have your own website, it must still be published online. This may be through your local authority's website or other hosting platform, for example, the diocesan or federation's websites.

In the case of federation schools, the federation's governing body is responsible for creating a suitable complaints procedure. The federation's governing body must also ensure that each school in the federation publishes the complaint procedure on their school's website. It is not sufficient for a federation complaint procedure to only be published on the federation's website, unless member schools do not have websites of their own.

Timeliness

Complaints need to be considered and resolved as quickly, and efficiently as possible.

When reviewing schools' complaints procedures or the handling of a complaint, we may recommend that schools amend their time limits if they are unreasonably excessive or restrictive.

Give realistic and reasonable time limits

Your procedure should set realistic and reasonable time limits for each action within each stage.

Where further investigations are necessary and it's clear published timescales cannot be met, we recommend you:

- set new time limits
- send the complainant details of the new deadline and explain the delay
- allow a reasonable timeframe for complaints to be raised after an incident arises

We consider 3 months to be an acceptable time frame in which to lodge a complaint. Additional time can be given in exceptional circumstances.

You can include a cut-off time frame for:

- raising a complaint
- escalating a complaint

If your procedure includes a cut-off time frame, you should make it clear that you'll take exceptional circumstances into account when deciding whether to accept or progress a complaint.

Any decision made by a school, must also be made in line with the principles of administrative law. This means a decision is:

- lawful - it complies with education and other law, including human rights and equality law, such as the [Human Rights Act 1998](#) and the [Equality Act 2010](#)
- rational
- reasonable
- fair
- proportionate

Decision-makers should also be mindful of [The 7 Principles of Public Life](#).

You must not have 'blanket' policies of refusing to consider any complaints not lodged, or escalated, within the stated period.

Blanket policies are where all cases are treated in the same way, with no allowances made for individual circumstances – this also goes against the principle of 'objectivity' as set out in the [The 7 Principles of Public Life](#).

It is for schools to determine what constitutes exceptional circumstances.

Stages

You're free to choose how many stages your procedure will include. However, we recommend 2 stages, where the second, an appeal stage, is heard by members of the governing body who'll consider the complaint afresh.

This makes sure that:

- decisions are not taken in isolation
- there is always a mechanism by which decisions are considered independently

We do not recommend that the second stage only considers the handling of the complaint at earlier stages. One of DfE's roles in considering school complaints is to review a school's handling of a complaint. Schools should be mindful of this when establishing their complaints procedures.

Your complaints procedure must not state that a complaint can only be escalated to the next stage if the school permits it. Complainants should be given the opportunity to complete the complaints procedure in full, unless you possess clear evidence that the complaint meets your published [serial complaint criteria](#).

Informal resolutions

We recommend that complainants and schools attempt informal resolution before making a formal complaint, if it's appropriate to do so.

If the complainant wishes to raise a formal complaint, you should not attempt to prevent this by insisting on informal resolution first.

Legal representation

In the event that a complaint progresses to a committee of members of the school governors, we recommend that neither the complainant nor the school bring legal representation. These committees are not a form of legal proceedings. The aim of the governors committee should be:

- reconciliation
- to put right things that may have gone wrong

We recognise there are occasions where legal representation may be appropriate.

Example

If a school employee is a witness in a complaint, they may be entitled to bring union or legal representation.

If a complainant commences legal action against the school in relation to their complaint, you should consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure, until those legal proceedings have concluded.

Mediation

Some schools choose to include a mediation stage in their complaints procedures. While this can be useful in helping you and complainants reach an agreement and move forward, there are times when it may not be the most appropriate course of action.

Mediation can:

- provide a helpful mechanism for discussion when a concern is raised
- help to rebuild the relationship between parties once all of the investigative stages of the complaints procedure have been completed

It should not be used as a substitute for an investigation during the formal stages of the complaints procedure.

If neither the complainant nor the school considers that mediation will serve any practical purpose at this point, the complainant should not be prevented from moving to the next investigative stage of the complaints procedure.

Complaints about school staff

We recommend that:

- complaints against school staff are dealt with by the headteacher (stage 1), then a committee of members of the governing body (stage 2)
- complaints against the headteacher are dealt with by a suitably skilled member of the governing body (stage 1) and then a committee of members of the governing body (stage 2)

Complaint about governors

We recommend that:

- complaints against the chair of governors or any individual governors are made to the clerk to the governing body (the clerk), the clerk should then arrange for the complaint to be heard. This can be done by a suitably skilled and impartial member of the governing body (stage 1) and then a committee of members of the governing body (stage 2)
- complaints against the entire governing body or complaints involving both the chair and vice chair should also be sent to the clerk, who should then determine the most appropriate course of action. This will depend on the nature of the complaint

This may involve sourcing an independent investigator to complete stage 1 and co-opted governors from other schools to hear the complaint at stage 2.

Independent complaint panels

To appoint a governor from another school onto a complaints panel a maintained schools' governing body does not have to enter into, or already be in, a formal arrangement under the School Governance (Collaboration) (England) Regulations 2003.

If you arrange complaint panel meetings on an ad-hoc, informal basis, you only need to source governors who are:

- suitably skilled
- can demonstrate their independence

You can approach governors from any:

- category of governor
- associate member of another governing body

Maintained schools can ask governors in academies to serve on a complaints panel and vice versa.

The exception to this is when a maintained school wishes to appoint a standing committee to hear all the complaints they receive under the committee's tenure. To appoint governors from another school onto the complaints committee, you must enter into a formal collaborative arrangement with another maintained school.

If appropriate, the clerk could ask for support from the:

- governor services team at the local authority
- diocese

Recording complaints

The process of listening to and resolving complaints can contribute to school improvement. Governing bodies can use learning identified from across the spectrum of complaint investigations to:

- inform improvements within the school
- improve the effectiveness of the complaints procedure.

You must comply with your obligations under the [Equality Act 2010](#). It's common practice to ask for complaints to be made using a complaint form or in writing. However, complainants may have communication preferences due to:

- disability
- learning difficulties
- difficulties using English

You should therefore allow alternative methods of contact. Below are some recommendations on how complaint information can be processed.

How can a complaint be raised

A complaint may be made:

- in person, by telephone or in writing
- by a third party acting on behalf of the complainant

You should make sure you have written consent from the complainant before disclosing information to a third party.

Take brief notes

To prevent any later challenge or disagreement over what was said, brief notes of meetings and telephone calls should be taken. These should be:

- kept securely
- encrypted where appropriate

A copy of any written response should be added to the complaint record.

Recording meetings

Where there are communication difficulties, you may wish to use recording devices to ensure the complainant is able to access and review the discussions at a later point. All parties should agree in advance to being recorded.

Schools are data controllers in their own right and you have the discretion via your policies to decide for yourselves whether to allow complainants to record meetings, if it's not required for the purposes of a reasonable adjustment.

You're also responsible for ensuring there is a fair and reasonable purpose for allowing complainants to record meetings, as there may be various levels of identifiable personal information recorded. We recommend you consider:

- how any decision to allow recordings may affect any third parties called to act as witnesses
- the impact and consequences on the individuals involved in the complaint in the event recordings are lost or leaked

Audio or video evidence

Complainants should make sure they obtain informed consent from all parties present before recording conversations or meetings.

We do not normally accept electronic recordings as evidence when we are asked to consider a complaint. However, we may accept independently notarised transcriptions of recordings. We may also ask for the written consent of all recorded parties.

Unless exceptional circumstances apply, we'll support schools who refuse to accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without informed consent of all parties being recorded. We recommend this is made clear in complaints procedures.

Recording complaint progress

You should:

- record the progress of the complaint and the final outcome
- determine who is responsible for these records and make sure the data is kept secure

As schools are data controllers in their own right, governing bodies must decide for themselves how long they keep records, unless statutory regulations apply. For example, copies of attendance registers must be retained for 3 years.

Under the General Data Protection Regulations (EU) 2016/679 (GDPR), data must not be kept longer than is necessary.

You should consider that complainants may have a right to copies of these records under the [Freedom of Information Act 2000](#), the [Data Protection Act 2018](#) and GDPR.

Refer to our [Data protection: toolkit for schools](#) or the Information Commissioner's [Guide to GDPR](#) for more information.

Role of the clerk

A complaints co-ordinator can provide administrative support in place of a clerk to the governing body, if that is more suitable to the school's needs. However, governance and regulatory advice should be sought from a clerk.

Transferring data

There may be occasions where complaints are made or continue to be escalated after a child has left the school. On changing schools, the pupil's educational record is transferred to the new school and copies may not be retained. Schools can consider holding records of complaints separate to their pupil records (while a complaint is ongoing) so that access to them can be maintained. As information generated by a complaint may not form part of the pupil record, you should consider how best to store this information.

Personal data should only be kept for as long as is necessary for the immediate purpose of processing. The data should be stored securely and, where appropriate, encrypted to maximise security.

Governing body review

We're confident that governing bodies will deal with complaints impartially. However, details of complaints should not be shared with the whole governing body at any stage while they are still being considered, in case a complaints committee needs to be organised.

The exception to this is when a complaint is made against the whole governing body and they need to be aware of the allegations made against them, to respond to any independent investigation.

If the whole governing body is aware of the significant detail of a complaint (that is not collectively against them) before the final stage has been completed, you can consider arranging an independent committee to hear the complaint. You may want to ask for help sourcing governors to serve on a complaints committee from:

- another school
- the local authority's governor services team
- the diocese, if appropriate

Handling complaints fairly

You should make sure that complainants are treated fairly and offered a chance to state their case either in person or in writing, at each stage of the procedure.

Complainants can request an independent complaints committee if they believe there is likely to be [bias in the proceedings](#). They should provide you with evidence of bias in support of their request, as it's your decision whether to agree to it. If the appearance of bias is sufficient to taint the decision reached, then we recommend that you grant such requests.

If you've made reasonable attempts to accommodate complainants with dates for complaint meetings and they refuse or are unable to attend you can:

- convene meetings in their absence
- reach a conclusion in the interests of drawing the complaint to a close

Communicating the outcome

We recommend that you inform the complainant of:

- the conclusion and reasons for any decisions in writing
- any further rights of appeal

We also recommend that copies of the minutes are issued to the complainant. Failure to do so may lead to a further complaint. They may also be entitled to them, subject to any necessary redactions, under the [Data Protection Act 2018](#) and [GDPR](#).

Reviewing your procedure

You should determine how often to review the complaints procedure. We recommend at least every 2 to 3 years, as this should enable you to take into account any:

- legislative changes

- new guidance issued by us

You may delegate responsibility for reviewing the complaints procedure to:

- a committee of the governing body
- an individual governor
- the headteacher

You should adhere to projected review dates set out in the complaints procedure. Failure to do so could constitute a failure to adhere to the procedure.

Bias in the proceedings

Complainants are entitled to a fair meeting or review. Persons who have a conflict of interest should not take part in the complaints process, including proceedings of governing body meetings and committees. If there's any reasonable doubt as to a person's ability to act impartially, they should withdraw from considering the complaint. Where a governor has a financial interest in any related matter, they should also withdraw.

When making decisions, you must not act in a way that is biased. The appearance of bias may be sufficient to taint a decision even if there is no actual bias. This concept derives from the principle that justice must not only be done, but be seen to be done.

Occasionally, complainants contact DfE because they do not believe the school's headteacher or governors will consider their complaint impartially.

We generally consider that governors with no prior exposure to the complaint are suitably impartial, unless the complainant provides us with evidence to the contrary.

We require complainants to submit evidence of bias if they escalate their complaint to DfE.

Complaints not in scope

A complaints procedure should cover all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services that a school provides other than complaints for which there are separate (statutory) procedures, including those listed below.

Admissions to schools

For school admissions, it will depend on who the admission authority is (either the school or the local authority).

Complaints about admission appeals for local authority maintained schools are dealt with by the appropriate ombudsman.

School re-organisation proposals

Contact the local authority or diocese, as appropriate, in the first instance and then escalate to us, if dissatisfied.

Statutory assessments of special educational needs

Concerns about statutory assessments of special educational needs should be raised direct with local authorities.

Matters likely to require a child protection investigation

Complaints about child protection matters should be handled:

- under the school's child protection and safeguarding policy
- in accordance with relevant statutory guidance

Refer to your local authority designated officer (LADO) or the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH).

Exclusion of children from school

Further information about raising concerns about exclusions is available in the [School discipline and exclusion](#) guidance.

Complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.

Whistleblowing

You must have an internal [whistleblowing procedure](#) for your employees, including temporary staff and contractors.

The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistleblowers who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Concerns can be raised with DfE using our [contact form](#).

Volunteers who have concerns about schools should complain through the school's complaints procedure. Depending on the substance of the complaint they may also be able to complain to:

- the local authority
- DfE using our [contact form](#)

Staff grievances

Complaints from staff must be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.

Staff conduct complaints

Complaints about staff are dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate.

Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, you should notify complainants that the matter is being addressed.

Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities

Schools should direct complainants to follow the external provider's own complaints procedure.

Complaints about the curriculum

Complaints about the content of the national curriculum should be sent to DfE using our [contact form](#).

Complaints about the delivery of the curriculum are for schools to resolve through their complaints procedure. This includes:

- religious education (RE)
- sex and relationships education

The duty on local authorities to consider complaints of this nature was removed under section 45 of the Education Act 2011.

If a school's complaint procedure signposts complainants to the local authority to resolve these and other types of complaints, then governing bodies should seek confirmation from the local authority that they can include these details in their complaint procedure.

Complaints about collective worship

Complainants who are dissatisfied with the content of the daily act of collective worship (DACW) should be signposted to:

- the local authority
- the local Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education
- any other relevant body

Withdrawal from the curriculum

Parents and carers can withdraw their child from any aspect of RE, including the DACW. They do not have to explain why.

If parents or carers are not satisfied with the handling of a request to withdraw their child from RE or the DACW, schools should advise them to follow their complaints procedure.

The right of withdrawal does not apply to other areas of the curriculum where religious matters may be spontaneously raised by pupils or arise in other subjects such as history or citizenship.

Our role in relation to complaints about maintained schools

Anyone can raise a complaint about a maintained school or a member of maintained school staff to us. We expect that complaints will have completed local complaints procedures first. DfE's [contact form](#) clearly explains this and advises complainants to complete local procedures before submitting their complaint.

The exceptions to this include when:

- children are at risk of harm
- children are missing education
- a complainant is being prevented from having their complaint progress through the published complaints procedure
- we have evidence that the school is proposing to act or is acting unlawfully or unreasonably

Intervention

We'll usually only intervene when it is expedient or practical to do so and a governing body or local authority has:

- failed to act in accordance with its duties under education law
- acted (or is proposing to act) unreasonably when exercising education related functions

Any such intervention will usually be in accordance with the Secretary of State's powers under Sections 496 and 497 (and 497A in relation to LAs) of the Education Act 1996.

When considering a complaint, we review all the evidence provided to us, including the school's published policies, to determine whether it is appropriate to take any action. Action taken by us, where appropriate, typically involves explaining the legislative framework and what it means in practice at the school level or recommending improvements to statutory school policies. However, in some instances it may be appropriate for the Secretary of State to intervene.

We do not take punitive action against schools when breaches of legislation or failures to adhere to statutory policies are identified. However, if serious failings are identified, we may share information about the complaint and our findings with relevant bodies, such as local authorities and Ofsted, to make sure that appropriate safeguarding, remedial or preventative action is taken.

General assistance

Schools and local authorities can contact us for general assistance on complaint handling by:

- calling the National Helpline on 0370 000 2288
- using DfE's [contact form](#)
- writing to us at the address below

Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

We will not provide explicit advice on what a school should do, unless we are asked to provide a view on any relevant legislative underpinning, but we can explain what options may be open to a school to choose from.

We can also consider complaints about the actions of local authorities in relation to the exercise of their functions under education law if they are brought to our attention.

Managing serial and persistent complaints

You should do your best to be helpful to people who contact you with a:

- complaint or concern
- request for information

However, there will be occasions when, despite all stages of the complaint procedure having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If a complainant tries to re-open

the same issue, you can inform them that the procedure has been completed and that the matter is now closed.

If the complainant contacts you again on the same issue, the correspondence may then be viewed as 'serial' or 'persistent' and you may choose not to respond. However, you should not mark a complaint as 'serial' before the complainant has completed the procedure, unless your published serial complaint criteria applies.

Under no circumstances should a complainant be marked as 'serial' for exercising their right to refer their complaint to their MP, regardless of which stage the complaint has reached.

You may receive complaints you consider to be vexatious. The [Office of the Independent Adjudicator](#) defines the characteristics of a 'frivolous' or 'vexatious' complaint as:

- complaints which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious
- insistence upon pursuing unmeritorious complaints and/or unrealistic outcomes beyond all reason
- insistence upon pursuing meritorious complaints in an unreasonable manner
- complaints which are designed to cause disruption or annoyance
- demands for redress that lack any serious purpose or value

Schools should not refuse to accept further correspondence or complaints from an individual they have had repeat or excessive contact with. The application of a 'serial or persistent' marking should be against the subject or complaint itself rather than the complainant.

Schools may find it useful to establish a policy for managing serial and unreasonable complaints, which we recommend is included in the school's published procedure. We have published [non-statutory model policies](#) that you can use.

When to stop responding

The decision to stop responding should never be taken lightly. You need to be able to say yes to all of the following:

- you have taken every reasonable step to address the complainant's concerns
- the complainant has been given a clear statement of your position and their options
- the complainant contacts you repeatedly, making substantially the same points each time

The case to stop responding is stronger if you agree with one or more of these statements:

- their letters, emails, or telephone calls are often or always abusive or aggressive
- they make insulting personal comments about or threats towards staff
- you have reason to believe the individual is contacting you with the intention of causing disruption or inconvenience

You should not stop responding just because an individual is difficult to deal with or asks complex questions.

Communication strategy for persistent correspondents

If an individual's behaviour is causing a significant level of disruption, regardless of whether or not they have raised a complaint, schools can implement a tailored communication strategy. For example, they can:

- restrict the individual to a single point of contact via an email address
- limit the number of times they can make contact, such as a fixed number of contacts per term

However, regardless of the application of any communication strategy, you must provide parents and carers with the information they are entitled to under The Education (Pupil Information) (England) Regulations 2005, within the statutory time frame.

Different procedures apply to freedom of information (FOI) and data protection (DP) correspondence. You should talk to your FOI and DP advisor about those or approach the [Information Commissioner's Office](#) for further advice.

You need to make sure that you act reasonably and consider any new complaint. Anyone has the right to raise a new complaint at any time and failure to respond could result in the school failing to act reasonably. If you find it difficult to deal with a person who is behaving unreasonably and other strategies are not working, you can approach your local governor services team to ask for assistance.

You can also suggest that the complainant asks a third party to act on their behalf, such as the local Citizen's Advice.

If an individual persists to the point that may constitute harassment, you should seek legal advice. In some cases, injunctions and other court orders have been issued to individuals preventing them from contacting schools direct.

Once you've decided that it's appropriate to stop responding, you will need to inform the individual.

Barring from school premises

Although fulfilling a public function, schools are private places. The public has no automatic right of entry. Headteachers and governing bodies will therefore need to act to ensure they remain a safe place for pupils, staff and other members of their community.

If an individual's behaviour is a cause for concern, they can be asked to leave school premises. In some cases, individuals can be barred from entering school premises. You should always give the individual the opportunity to formally express their views on a decision to bar.

The headteacher's decision to bar should then be reviewed by either:

- the chair of governors
- a committee of governors

They should take into account any representations made by the individual and decide whether to either confirm or lift the bar. If the decision is confirmed, the individual should be notified in writing, explaining:

- how long the bar will be in place
- when the decision will be reviewed

Once the school's appeal process has been completed, individuals who remain barred may be able to apply to the Courts for a review of the schools decision. Individuals wishing to exercise this option should seek independent legal advice.

[Controlling access to school premises](#) provides more guidance on access to school premises.

Further information

Useful resources and external organisations

There are a number of different organisations that schools can approach if they require further advice on complaints handling. However, some of these organisations charge schools a fee to access information and advice.

The [Information Commissioner's Office](#) can provide advice to schools on data processing and retention.

Other resources

- [Governance handbook](#)
- [How to complain about a school](#) - advice for complainants
- [Understanding and dealing with issues relating to parental responsibility](#)
- [Controlling access to school premises](#) - guidance on access to, and barring of individuals from, school premises