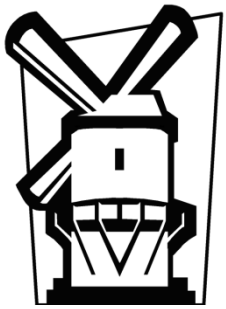
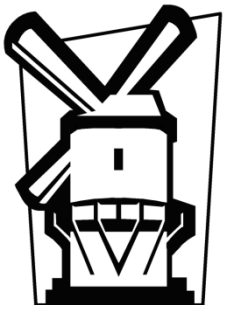
Great Paxton CE Primary School
Policy Statement on



School Complaints Policy



Mission Statement

We build upon strong foundations of excellent teaching, with high expectations of children's achievements, encouraging all pupils to aspire to be the very best that they can be in the future.

We do this by:

- being generous and visible people of Jesus Christ, helping our local community to discover together the transforming presence of God in our lives.
- striving to provide and maintain for our pupils an education that provides opportunities so that they can explore and develop their own values and beliefs, spiritual awareness, high standards of personal behaviour, a positive caring attitude towards other people, an understanding of their social and cultural traditions and an appreciation of the diversity and richness of other cultures.
- promoting the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

Policy agreed: **19th June 2023**

Leader: **Full Governing Body**

Date for review: **June 2026**

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Introduction to the Complaints Policy

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.

1. 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. Great Paxton CE Primary School takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

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

2. 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 school about any provision of facilities or services that we provide. Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as appeals relating to exclusions or admissions), we will use this complaints procedure.

In accordance with administrative law principles, complainants will be given the opportunity to complete the complaints procedure in full, unless the school possess clear evidence that the complainant meets our serial and unreasonable complaints criteria.

If that is the case and the complainant contacts us again on the same issue, the correspondence may then be viewed as 'serial' or 'persistent' and we may choose not to respond. We will not mark a complainant as 'serial' before the complainant has completed the procedure.

Our approach to responding to serial and unreasonable complaints is detailed in our Serial and Persistent Complaints policy, which is included as Appendix 2 of this policy.

Anonymous complaints will not normally be investigated. However, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

In the event that the school receives a large volume of complaints all based on the same subject and/or from complainants unconnected with the school, we may choose to send a template response to all complainants or publish a single response on the school's website.

The Governing Body will ensure that any third party providers have their own complaints procedures in place if they are using school premises to offer services.

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 of a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so. Where a person is not able to make a complaint himself or herself, a friend or other family member may do so on their behalf, but that person does not become the complainant.

Whilst the school acknowledges that, on rare occasions, parents may wish to contact solicitors, the school will not accept a complaint from a legal representative. The school will not use legal representation within the complaint resolution process but nor will parents' legal representative be permitted to attend relevant meetings. We recognise, however, there are occasions where legal representation may be appropriate.

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

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.

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 3 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 clarity, a template complaint form is included at the end of this procedure which complainants are advised to use. If complainants require help in completing the form, please contact the school office.

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.

4. Purpose of the Complaints Procedure

The purpose of our Complaints Procedure is to provide a comprehensive, open, transparent, fair and timely vehicle through which:

- something that may have gone wrong can be identified, acknowledged and, where necessary, put right;
- an apology may be made where appropriate;
- the school and its senior management can, where appropriate, learn from the process, making it less likely that a similar complaint will be brought in the future.

At each stage in the procedure, we want 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 timeframe within which any changes will be made;
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint;
- an apology;
- a decision that no action is necessary or justified with a full explanation.

A written record will be kept of all complaints along with details of how they were resolved following a formal investigation or progression to a panel hearing. The Governing Body will not normally award financial compensation unless required to do so by virtue of legislation. If a complainant wishes to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

5. Timeframes for complaints

We will aim to consider complaints as quickly and efficiently as possible and any deviation from our published procedure will be recorded and communicated to the complainant.

Complainants 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 only consider complaints made outside of this timeframe if exceptional circumstances apply. This time limit has been established because investigation is more difficult after a period of time: memories may not be as clear as they would have been earlier, records may not be as readily available, and witnesses may no longer be employed at the school. A delay in making a complaint may also disadvantage any person who is the subject of it, making it more challenging for them to defend themselves for the same reasons.

In exceptional circumstances, the Chair of Governors, acting on behalf of the Governing Body, will consider complaints submitted outside this timeframe. In such instances the complainant will need to offer an explanation as to why there has been a delay in making a complaint. Any decision made in this respect will aim to be lawful, rational, reasonable, fair and proportionate. It is for the Chair of Governors to consider whether the circumstances might be deemed exceptional.

Where a number of complaints are made in one letter of complaint, some of which lie outside the timeframe, the Chair of Governors will determine which complaints can be considered, taking account of their relevance to the substantive complaint or complaints made within the timescale.

If the complaint is received outside of term time, the calendar day timings for managing the complaint will start on the first school day after the holiday period.

Where it is clear that published timescales cannot be met, new time limits will be set, and the complainant will be sent details of the new deadline and an explanation for the delay. If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint (eg the police), there may be an impact on the school's ability to adhere to timescales, or the procedure may have to be suspended until those investigations are complete. If a complainant commences legal action in relation to their complaint, the procedure may have to be suspended until those proceedings have concluded.

Preliminary stage – Dealing with concerns informally

Before the formal processes are invoked every effort should be made to resolve matters informally. This is in line with Department for Education guidance. The Governing Body will ensure parents are made aware of how they can raise a concern. The school will aim to acknowledge an informal concern or complaint within 3 school days and resolve the informal concern or complaint within 10 school days.

Some issues are likely to be best resolved through discussion with a class teacher/other member of staff below the level of a school leader. In some cases, though, a person may feel the need to escalate the matter to a member of the leadership team or the Headteacher.

Initially school staff below the level of Headteacher will seek to resolve matters through the provision of information and clarification. Where it is clear that there is a significant level of concern, staff will refer the matter to the Headteacher or another senior member of staff, who will then seek to resolve the matter through discussion with those expressing concerns.

Whether attempts to resolve concerns at an informal stage are by telephone conversation or through meetings, school staff may take a note of any agreed action points and summarise these at the end of the conversation. The agreed action points will be circulated to those involved in the discussion if that was agreed at the meeting.

Where the Headteacher is unable to resolve matters through discussion, the complainant may be asked if they wish to make a formal complaint.

Stage 1 – Making a formal complaint to the Headteacher

The Procedure

If matters are not resolved through discussion, the complainant or Headteacher may determine to address the complaint more formally.

1.1 There are a number of procedures for making a formal complaint – this may be done in person, in writing (preferably on the complaint form) or by telephone. The complainant is asked to be concise and clear about the issue(s) and to state what would, for them, provide a reasonable and acceptable resolution to the complaint.

1.2 The Headteacher will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint form in writing within **3 school days.** Within this response, the Headteacher will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The Headteacher can consider whether a face-to-face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this. The Headteacher will investigate the matter so that the complainant receives a formal written response within **10 school days** of receipt of the complaint.

1.3 During the investigation, the Headteacher (or investigator) will:

- investigate the matters raised thoroughly;
- if necessary, interview those involved 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.

1.4 On occasion, the complaint may be too complex to investigate within this timeframe and, in these circumstances, the Headteacher will write to the complainant explaining why it is not possible to work within the timescales laid down and to advise when a response will be issued. The Headteacher may delegate the investigation into the complaint to another member of the senior leadership team, but not the decision to be taken.

1.5 If the complaint is against the Headteacher, the complaint form should be sent directly to the Chair of Governors, c/o the school office**.** The procedures set out in Stage 2 of this document should then apply.

Arranging Help for the Complainant to Articulate Concerns and Understand Procedure

1.6 The Governing Body is aware of its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and understands that a complainant may have communication preferences due to disability, learning difficulties or difficulties using English. In such circumstances the complainant will be appropriately supported to make their complaint or alternative arrangements made and alternative methods of contact will be accepted.

1.7 If the complainant contacts the Local Authority, then they will be directed to the school complaints procedure on the school's website. The Local Authority has no statutory powers of intervention in school complaints.

Stage 2 – Referring a formal complaint to the Chair of Governors

2.1 Where the complainant considers that the Headteacher's formal written response does not resolve the complaint, the complainant may ask the Chair of Governors to consider the matter. This request must be made within **10 school days** of receiving the Headteacher's response. The Chair of Governors may delegate the investigation into the complaint to another member of the Governing Body, but not the decision to be taken.

2.2 If the complaint is about the Headteacher then the complaint form will be submitted direct to the Chair of Governors. Unless the complaint is about the Headteacher, the Chair of Governors will not consider the complaint unless the Headteacher has had the opportunity to seek to resolve the matter first.

2.3 If the complaint is against the Chair of Governors or an individual governor, the complaint should be addressed to the Clerk to the Governing Body via the school office, who will arrange for the complaint to be heard by the Vice Chair or another governor, and then a committee of members of the Governing Body if it progresses to the next stage. If the complaint is jointly about the Chair of Governors and Vice Chair, or the entire Governing Body, or the majority of the Governing Body, then the issue will be considered by an independent investigator. At the conclusion of their investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response.

The procedure

2.4 If emailing the complaint, the complainant should only use the official email address for the Chair of Governors, available from the school office and not use their personal email address. In the subject field of the email, the complainant should write, 'Formal Complaint'. If delivering or posting a letter, the complainant must address it to the Chair of Governors at the school address and should write 'Formal Complaint' on the envelope. This will ensure that the complaint is dealt with promptly and enable the school to comply with the timeframe set out in the policy.

2.5 The complainant should not share details of the complaint with other governors. A detailed knowledge of the complaint will preclude governors from serving on a review panel if the complaint is not resolved by the Chair of Governors. Governors receiving a complaint in this way should immediately refer it back to the Chair of Governors without considering the content.

2.6 The Chair of Governors will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing **within 3 school days of receiving it personally** and investigate the matter so that the complainant receives a response within **10 school days** of receipt of the complaint. On rare occasions, the complaint may be too complex to investigate within this timeframe and, in these circumstances, the Chair of Governors will write to the complainant explaining why it is not possible to work within the timeframe laid down and to advise when a response may be issued.

2.7 As part of the investigation, the Chair of Governors may contact the complainant via a telephone call or propose a meeting to consider the issues raised. If telephoning, the Chair of

Governors should determine whether it is necessary to withhold any number that is not the school's telephone number.
The focus of that conversation (if held) would be to:

- consider any gaps on the complaint form;
- consider any aspects of the complaint where additional clarification is required;
- consider the extent to which any evidence is available that has not been mentioned on the complaint form;
- establish the complainant's view as to witnesses who might need to be interviewed;
- explore what might represent an acceptable resolution to the complaint;
- discuss with the complainant whether there is anything that might help resolve matters outside the complaints procedure.

2.8 Complainants must make sure they do not covertly record any conversations about complaints. Unless exceptional circumstances apply, the Department for Education will support schools who refuse to accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without informed consent of all parties being recorded.

2.9 The key elements of the Chair of Governor's investigation are likely to include:

- achievement of a shared understanding with the complainant of the nature of the complaint and of what it is that remains unresolved;
- establishing what has happened and who was involved;
- written statements from and/or interviews with those adults and children whose information and views need to be considered. It is expected that the voice of children will be appropriately heard and be given sufficient weight;
- a detailed report that will provide a clear record that will be helpful for any subsequent review;
- a clear analysis of the information and conclusions reached;
- an authoritative outcome that is based on the evidence and does not merely state acceptance of evidence;
- recommendations to resolve the complaint.

The conclusions and the reasons for decision making should be communicated in writing to the complainant.

Expected Outcomes

2.10 The Chair of Governors will report in writing on the extent to which s/he considers the complaint should be:

- upheld in whole or in part;
- dismissed in whole or in part.

Role of the Clerk to the Governors

2.11 The Chair of Governors may appoint the Clerk to the Governing Body to:

- act in a 'progress chasing' role to track the complaint and to ensure that timeframes set out within the policy are being adhered to wherever possible;
- ensure that the complainant is kept up to date, including where timeframes have not been met and the reasons why;
- inform the Governing Body of any shortcomings in the delivery of its complaints procedure, both during the process and subsequently;

- arrange for the outcome of the investigation to be communicated to all parties (the complainant and where relevant the person complained about) so they receive it at the same time. This will be in the form of an email or letter from the Chair of Governors;
- ensure that a written record of the complaint is kept, along with details or whether they were resolved following the formal procedure or progressed to a panel hearing;

The Clerk will ensure that correspondence statements and records relating to individual complaints are stored confidentially. Complaint documentation does not form part of the child's educational record.

2.12 The letter from the Chair of Governors represents the conclusion of Stage 2 of this process. Neither the Chair of Governors, nor any member of staff should respond to the complainant after this point about the issues raised in the complaint. The Clerk should thereafter handle all correspondence.

Stage 3 – Referring a formal complaint to a Governors' Panel

The procedure

3.1 Where the complainant considers that the Chair of Governors' written response does not resolve the complaint, the complainant may ask the Clerk to convene a panel of governors who have had no prior involvement with the complaint (or the issues which led to the complaint) to consider the complaint. The complainant should complete, and submit to the Clerk, a Governor Panel Review request form (available from the Clerk or the school office). S/he should do this within **10 school days** of the date of issue of the letter giving the decision on the complaint.

3.2 If emailing, the complainant should take care to ensure that s/he has the official email address for the Clerk. In the subject field of the email, the complainant should write, 'Governor Panel Review'. If delivering or posting a letter, the complainant must address it to the Clerk at the school address and write 'Governor Panel Review' on the envelope'. The Clerk should record the date the request for review is received and acknowledge the request for review within **3 school days**.

3.3 If the complainant requires assistance in completing the paperwork then support may be provided. Again, it is not for those supporting the complainant to comment on the merits or otherwise of review, but rather to help the complainant articulate their position to the governors' panel through the Governor Panel Review form.

3.4 The governors' panel will only consider requests for review outside the 10 school days timeframe in exceptional circumstances. These might include:

- the reasons for a review not being known to the complainant within 10 school days;
- the complainant needing to delay making their request for review because they needed the time to collect evidence that could not have been gathered during the first 10 school days;
- the complainant not having been able to request a review within 10 school days because of being abroad or being incapacitated.

3.5 In cases where requests for review are received outside of the 10 school days and the exceptional circumstances are unclear, the Clerk may convene a short meeting of the governors' review panel in order to consider whether the review should take place.

3.6 The committee will consider afresh the complaint and the evidence presented. The committee can:

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

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.

The review will not review any new complaints at this stage. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.

3.7 The review process cannot be used to consider cases where the complaint was not dealt with in accordance with published timeframes. That would require a fresh complaint to be made.

3.8 The Governing Body has decided that any review should only be conducted in writing. This is because:

- face-to-face hearings can be emotive and stressful for both complainants and staff;
- a face-to-face meeting may become more adversarial in nature;
- there should be no new evidence in support of the complaint that cannot be aired in writing.

Convening the Review Panel

3.9 The Clerk will convene a review panel comprising 3 or 5 members who have had no prior involvement with the complaint or the causes of the complaint. Members of the review panel will elect a chair from among themselves. If there are fewer than 3 school governors available the Clerk will source any suitably skilled and independent governors from another school's Governing Body.

3.10 A Local Authority adviser may be invited to the meeting, at the discretion of the governors, to give procedural advice only.

3.11 The Clerk will liaise with all the review panel members to propose, and to agree, a date, time and venue for the review. This is most likely to be at the school, but the Clerk should ensure that the meeting will be held in an appropriate environment.

3.12 The Clerk will confirm the date, time and venue of the meeting. Any written material relating to the complaint will be circulated to all participants in the panel meeting at least 5 school days before 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.

3.13 The Governing Body is mindful of the challenges that volunteer governors can encounter in finding time to prepare for a review and in finding a date and time when all members are available.

The Governing Body has decided that it is more preferable to allow sufficient time for the process than it is to set a deadline that may be all too easy to miss. The Governing Body therefore has decided that a review panel should meet within, what the Governing Body considers to be **the reasonable timeframe of 20 school days**, starting from the day when the request for a review was received, or the next school day if that was not a school day. If there are exceptional reasons why there is slippage to the timeframes laid down, the Clerk will explain the reasons for this to the complainant in writing.

3.14 When the Governor Panel Review form is received, the Chair of Governors will be invited, by the Clerk, to provide any further written representations to the panel in response. The panel should have 5 clear school days to consider all the information supplied in advance of the meeting.

3.15 The information to be sent by the Clerk to the review panel should comprise the following:

- The original completed complaints form;
- The response to the complaint from the Headteacher and/or the Chair of Governors;
- The completed Governor Panel Review Form;
- Any additional written representations from the Chair of Governors
- The panel should also have access to relevant additional documents which may have been used as evidence for the original investigation, either by the Headteacher or the Chair of Governors. Such documents might comprise key evidence statements, incident logs, letters, external reports etc.

The panel are also able to request any other documents that they believe may help with their decision making.

The Review Panel meeting

3.16 The review panel meeting will normally be clerked by the Clerk to the Governing Body. Where this is not possible the Chair of Governors will ensure that an alternative suitable person is responsible for the clerking function. The meeting will be held in private.

3.17 At the start of the meeting the panel will elect a chair who will be responsible for the conduct of the meeting and for liaising with the Clerk subsequently to ensure that all parties receive timely notification of the outcome within 5 school days of the date of the review meeting.

3.18 The review panel must take care to ensure that it does not favour one side or the other for any reasons other than those arrived at through an objective assessment of all the evidence.

Communicating the Outcome

3.19 The issues should remain confidential. The Clerk will promptly communicate the outcome, and set out the reasons for it, in a letter to the complainant, the outline of which will have been formulated by the review panel in the meeting. The final version will be agreed and signed by the chair of the panel. The review decision letter will be sent to the complainant and where relevant the person complained about and the Chair of Governors at the same time. This will be in the form of an email or letter. Whilst the letter should avoid unnecessary detail, there should be sufficient information to demonstrate that the issues were considered in full, provide an explanation of the decisions taken and include details of any actions or recommendations that will be taken to resolve the complaint.

3.20 A written record will be kept of the complaint together with the outcomes. Correspondence, statements and records relating to the complaint will be filed confidentially.

3.21 The review decision letter concludes the school complaints process, and the school will not enter into any further correspondence with the complainant about the issues raised. The information in paragraph 3.22 about redress beyond the school will be included in the panel response letter.

3.22 If the complainant believes the school has not handled 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 3.

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by the school. They will consider whether the school has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint.

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.

The Department for Education will usually only intervene when it is expedient or practical to do so and a Governing Body has:

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

APPENDIX 1

Issues outside of the scope of the complaints policy

Exceptions	Who to contact
• Admissions to schools • Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs • School re-organisation proposals	Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with Childrens Services representation and complaint procedure - Cambridgeshire County Council
• Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our Child Protection and Safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance. If you have serious concerns about the safety or welfare of a child, then you may contact the local safeguarding board: Making a Referral | Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Safeguarding Partnership Board (safeguardingcambspeterborough.org.uk)
• Exclusion of children from school*	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions. **Complaints about the application of the Behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.*
• Whistleblowing	We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors. The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistle blowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus. Volunteer staff who have concerns about a school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the Local Authority or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.
• Staff grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under a school's internal grievance procedures.
• Staff conduct	Complaints about staff will be dealt with under a 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, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.
• 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.
• National Curriculum - content	Please contact the Department for Education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus

APPENDIX 2

Serial and persistent complaints policy

This policy outlines how the school will respond to serial and persistent complaints, which may be deemed unreasonable in nature.

Great Paxton CE Primary School is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with our school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

We define unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the school, such as, if the complainant:

- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance;
- refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process;
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure;
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice;
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on;
- raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales;
- makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced;
- changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds;
- repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed);
- refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education;
- seeks an unrealistic outcome;
- makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with;
- uses threats to intimidate;
- uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence;
- knowingly provides falsified information;
- publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

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

Whenever possible, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking.

If the behaviour continues, the Headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact the school causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will be reviewed after six months.

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

APPENDIX 3

Summary of Complaints Process with Timelines

INFORMAL STAGE

School staff seek to resolve the complaint informally through discussion with the complainant. If required, the complainant should submit a formal complaint within **three months** of the cause for complaint. If the complaint is received outside of term time, the calendar day timings for managing the complaint will start on the first school day after the holiday period.

FORMAL PROCEDURE

Stage 1

Formal complaint to the Headteacher:

- Complaint received by the Headteacher*
- Acknowledgement – 3 school days;
- Investigation (including any discussion with the complainant);
- Formal written response (from the Headteacher – within 10 school days from receipt).

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

Stage 2

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

- Received by Chair of Governors (within 10 school days of the Headteacher's response);
- Acknowledgement – 3 school days;
- Investigation (including any discussion with the complainant);
- Formal written response (from the Chair of Governors or Clerk) – within 10 school days from receipt.

Stage 3

Request for a meeting of a Governors' Review Panel:

- Received by Clerk to the Governors (within 10 school days of the Chair of Governor's response);
- Acknowledgement – 3 school days;
- Review panel meet - 20 school days from receipt of request;
- Formal written response – within 5 school days of review meeting.

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

APPENDIX 4

Complaint Form

Please provide your details	
Full name	
Address (including postcode)	
Email address	
Phone number	
Details of Complaint. Please provide below details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it already. If you are completing this form electronically, this box will expand as required. If you are completing by hand, please use a continuation sheet if required.	
Resolution: What would represent for you an acceptable resolution to the complaint?	
Further Information: Do you have any further relevant information to add?	
Signed: Date:	