



**Grayshott CE Primary School**

**Complaints Procedure**

**Statutory Policy**

**Ratified at FGB: February 2025**

**Review date: Spring 2027 (every two years)**

## Grayshott CE Primary School Complaints Procedure

### Rationale

This policy is intended to set out how the school will deal with concerns and complaints. It is not intended to cover those aspects of school life where the law sets specific complaints procedures.

Exceptions	Who to contact
Admissions to schools, Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs and School re-organisation proposals	Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with Hampshire 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, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).
Exclusion of children from school*	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: <a href="http://www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions">www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions</a> . <i>*complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.</i>
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 whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus">www.education.gov.uk/contactus</a> . 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, depending on the substance of your complaint.
Staff grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.
Staff conduct	Complaints about staff will be 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, 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: <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus">www.education.gov.uk/contactus</a>

## **Our Vision**

### **'Acorns to Mighty Oaks'**

We are acorns growing to mighty oaks.

Our roots are in Christian teachings and in a loving, supportive village and church family.

Our branches are strong moral character and a love of learning.

Our fruit will be fulfilling lives that make a positive difference in the world.

**“They will be called the oaks of righteousness.” Isaiah 61: v1-3**

### **Aims**

- An accessible and easily understood procedure for complaints.
- Encourage parents to express their views at the earliest opportunity, through the appropriate channels.
- To aid communication between parents and school.
- to ensure that concerns and complaints are dealt with thoroughly, objectively & impartially and where possible agree a mutually satisfactory solution

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

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone.

Whether a complaint is made informally or formally, all parties should ensure details are only known to those involved in investigating the complaint. Parents should be assured that making a complaint will not adversely affect their child. Parents should feel able to express their views in the full knowledge that they will be dealt with fairly.

An anonymous concern or complaint will not be investigated under this procedure unless there are exceptional circumstances.

To enable a proper investigation, concerns or complaints should be brought to the attention of the school as soon as possible. In general, any matter raised more than three months after the event being complained of will not be considered, unless there are exceptional circumstances. We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

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 Grayshott CE Primary School in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure in relation to their complaint until those legal proceedings have concluded.

### **Resolving Complaints**

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

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

### **Withdrawal of a Complaint**

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

## **Guidelines**

### **Stage 1: The First Contact: Dealing with Concerns and Complaints Informally**

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 through the class teacher, Key Stage leader, SENCO or school secretary depending on the nature of the complaint, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. Grayshott CE Primary School takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

If the person first contacted cannot deal with the matter, s/he makes a clear note of the date, name, contact address or phone number (if the complainant is not a parent at the school) and the issue raised and will pass this on to the most appropriate person to deal with the complaint.

On certain major issues, the Headteacher may decide to deal with concerns directly at this stage.

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.

If the complaint relates to the Headteacher, the parent is advised to contact the Chair of the Governing Body, 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.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire governing body or
- the majority of the governing body

The complaint will be heard by a committee of independent governors.

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 and concerns made informally to governors will be referred to the school's complaints policy. The chair will be advised that this procedure has been followed without providing details of the substance of the potential complaint. This ensures the governor concerned does not play any part in any subsequent investigation.

It can be helpful to identify at this point what sort of outcome the parent is looking for. The person dealing with a concern may explain to the parent how the situation happened and makes sure that the parent is clear what action (if any) or monitoring of the situation has been agreed, putting this in writing only if this seems the best way of making things clear.

## **Stage 2: Formal Complaint to the Headteacher**

Where no satisfactory solution has been found parents are asked if they wish their concern to be considered further. If so, they are given clear information, both orally and in writing, about how to make a formal complaint.

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.

The Headteacher acknowledges the complaint orally or in writing within 3 working days of receiving the written complaint. The acknowledgment gives a brief explanation of the school's complaints procedure and a target date for providing a response to the complaint. This should normally be within 10 working days: if this proves impossible, a letter is sent explaining the reason for the delay and giving a revised target date.

The Headteacher provides an opportunity for the complainant to meet with them to supplement any information provided previously. It is made clear to the complainant that if they wish they may be accompanied to any meeting by a friend, relative, representative, or advocate who can speak on their behalf, and asked if they have any special requirements the school needs to be aware of e.g. wheelchair access, signing etc.

If necessary, the Headteacher will interview witnesses and take statements from those involved. In the case of serious complaints (e.g. where the possibility of criminal investigation exists) children may be interviewed in the presence of their parents/carers. The Headteacher keeps written records of meetings, telephone conversations, and other documentation.

Once all the relevant facts have been established, the Headteacher will produce a written response to the complainant, or may wish to meet the complainant to discuss /resolve the matter directly. A written response includes a full explanation of the decisions and the reasons for it. Where appropriate, this includes what action the school will take to resolve the complaint.

The complainant will be advised that should s/he wish to take the complaint further s/he should notify the Chair of the Governing Body within 5 weeks of receiving the outcome letter.

If the complaint is against the action of a Headteacher, or if the Headteacher has been very closely involved at stage 1, the Chair of Governors will carry out all the stage 2 procedures.

## **Stage 3: Formal Complaint to Governors**

Upon receipt of a written request by the complainant for the complaint to proceed to stage 3, the procedures outlined below will be followed.

The Clerk to the Governing Body will write to the complainant to acknowledge receipt of the written request within 5 working days. The acknowledgement will inform the complainant that the complaint is to be heard by three members of the school's Governing Body within 20 working days of receiving the complaint. The letter will also explain that the complainant has the right to submit any further documents relevant to the complaint. These must be received in time for the documents to be received by the panel and all parties involved.

The Clerk to the Governors will arrange to convene a Governors' Complaints Panel elected from members of the Governing Body. The complaints committee will consist of at least three governors with no prior involvement or knowledge of the complaint. If a concern has been shared inappropriately with the entire governing body, arrangements will be made to convene an independent panel via the local authority.

The Chair/Vice-Chair will write and inform the complainant, Headteacher, any relevant witnesses, and members of the Panel at least 5 working days in advance, of the date, time and place of the meeting. The notification to the complainant will also inform him/her of the right to be accompanied to the meeting by a friend/advocate/interpreter. Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend. The letter will also explain how the meeting will be conducted and the complainant's right to submit further written evidence to the Panel.

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.

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.

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.

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.

If either party wishes to introduce previously undisclosed evidence or witnesses, it is in the interests of natural justice to adjourn the meeting so that the other side has time to consider and respond to the new evidence.

The meeting will allow for the complainant to explain their complaint and the Headteacher to explain the school's response. Panel members to have the opportunity to question both the complainant and the Headteacher any party to have the right to call witnesses (subject to the approval of the Chair). The involvement of staff other than the Headteacher is subject to the discretion of the Chair of the Panel. The Chair of the Panel will ensure that proceedings are as informal as possible.

The Chair of the Panel will explain to the complainant and the Headteacher that the panel will now consider its decision, and a written decision will be sent to both parties within 15 working days. The complainant, Headteacher, other members of staff and witnesses will then leave.

The panel will then consider the complaint and all the evidence presented and (a) reach a unanimous, or at least a majority, decision on the complaint and (b) and decide upon the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint and (c) where appropriate, suggest recommended changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not happen again.

A written statement outlining the decision of the Panel must be sent to the complainant and Headteacher. The letter to the complainant should explain whether a further appeal can be made, and if so, to whom.

The aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. However, it has to be recognised that sometimes it may only be possible to establish facts and make recommendations which will satisfy the complainant that his or her complaint has at least been taken seriously.

### **Beyond Stage 3**

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 3.

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by Grayshott CE Primary 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](http://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.

### **Serial or Unreasonable Complainants**

Grayshott 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 the 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.

Grayshott CE Primary School defines unreasonable complainants as 'those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with the school, hinder our consideration of their or other people's complaints'.

A complaint may be regarded as unreasonable when the person making the complaint:

- 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 while still wishing their complaint to be resolved;
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaints procedure;
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice;
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant expects to be taken into account and commented on, or 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, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with.

If a duplicate complaint is made by a new complainant after the school's complaints process has been followed, the complainant will be informed that the school has already considered that complaint and the local process is complete.

A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if the person making the complaint does so either face-to-face, by telephone or in writing or electronically:

- maliciously
- aggressively
- using threats, intimidation or violence
- using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language
- knowing it to be false
- using falsified information
- publishing unacceptable information in a variety of media such as in social media websites and newspapers.

Complainants should limit the numbers of communications with a school while a complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (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 asking them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact Grayshott CE Primary School causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will usually be reviewed after 6 months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the concerns and actions taken will be put in writing immediately and the police informed. This may include banning an individual from Grayshott CE Primary School.

### **Barring from the School Premises**

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

If a parent's behaviour is a cause for concern, the Headteacher (or designate) can ask him/her to leave school premises. In serious cases, the Headteacher or the local authority can notify them in writing that their implied licence to be on school premises has been temporarily revoked subject to any representations that the parent may wish to make. Parents may formally express their views on the decision to bar in writing.

The decision to bar will then be reviewed by the Chair of Governors, or another appropriate governor, taking into account any representations made by the parent, and either confirmed or lifted. If the decision is confirmed, the parent will be notified in writing, explaining how long the bar will be in place.

Anyone wishing to complain about being barred can do so, by letter or email, to the Headteacher or Chair of Governors. However, complaints about barring cannot be escalated to the Department for Education. Once the school's own complaints procedure has been completed, the only remaining avenue of appeal is through the Courts; independent legal advice must therefore be sought.

### **Complaint Campaigns**

If the school receives large volumes of complaints:

- all based on the same subject
- from complainants unconnected with the school
- the school may respond by sending a template response to all complainants and/or publishing a single response on the school's website.

### **Responsibilities**

This policy is to be monitored by the Headteacher and Governing Body.

## Appendix 1: Complaint Form

### Complaint Form

Please complete and return to the Headteacher who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

<b>Your name (please print):</b>	
<b>Pupil's name (if relevant):</b>	
<b>Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):</b>	
<b>Address:</b>	<b>Daytime telephone number:</b>
<b>Postcode:</b>	<b>Evening telephone number:</b>
<b>Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it</b>	

**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:**