

Complaints Procedure Policy

Scholar Green Primary School



Confirmation that the in respect of Scholar Green Primary School has been discussed and approved by the Governing Body.

Date: Autumn 2025

Committee: FGB

Date for review: Autumn 2027

1. Introduction

Scholar Green Primary School is committed to providing a transparent, fair, and efficient process for handling complaints. Our Complaints Procedure aligns with the GOV.UK model policy, ensuring consistency with national standards and best practices.

All maintained schools and academies are required to establish a complaints procedure and to publicise that procedure. This includes clear signposting to the procedure in any appropriate school publications, indicating that a copy of the full procedure is available on the school website and on request from the school office.

We believe in the importance of clear communication and accessibility. Therefore, this procedure is prominently displayed on our school website and included in all major school publications. A QR code is provided in printed materials for easy access.

This procedure has been developed in collaboration with various educational bodies, including the Cheshire East Association of Primary Heads, Secondary Heads, Special School Heads, Governing Bodies, school workforce Trade Unions, and the Diocese of Chester and Shrewsbury. We are committed to regularly reviewing and improving this procedure based on feedback from our school community.

Our Complaints Procedure is designed to ensure that all concerns and complaints are addressed promptly and respectfully, in accordance with current Department for Education guidance and relevant legal frameworks.

2. Scope of This Complaints Procedure

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

Exceptions:

- **Admissions to schools:** Concerns about admissions should be raised with Cheshire East Council.
- **Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs:** Concerns should be raised with Cheshire East Council.
- **School re-organisation proposals:** Concerns about admissions should be raised with Cheshire East 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. Contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) for serious concerns.
- **Exclusion of children from school:** Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions.Complaints
- **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 directly with their employer. Referrals can be made at www.education.gov.uk/contactus.
- **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 use school premises or facilities:** Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them directly.
- **National Curriculum – Content:** Please contact the Department for Education at www.education.gov.uk/contactus.

This procedure does not cover complaints from employees of the school (and ex-employees who wish to raise an issue relating to their former employment). Such complaints should be raised via the appropriate

staffing procedure, full details of which are available from the school.

3. 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. Scholar Green Primary School 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 or the complaints administrator 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, Scholar Green Primary School will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

4. How to Raise a Concern or Make a Complaint

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.

Concerns should be raised with either the class teacher 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 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.

5. Anonymous Complaints

Scholar Green Primary School will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an

investigation.

The decision to investigate an anonymous complaint will be based on the seriousness of the issues raised and the likelihood of obtaining sufficient information to conduct a fair investigation.

6. Timescales

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. Scholar Green Primary School will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

Complaints received outside of term time will be considered to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

Definition of School Days: For the purposes of this complaints procedure, “school days” refer to the days when the school is open to pupils and for staff training, excluding weekend, public holidays, and school holidays.

7. Complaints Received Outside of Term Time

Complaints received outside of term time will be considered to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

8. Resolving Complaints

At each stage in the procedure, Scholar Green 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

At each stage, complainants should be asked to state what actions they feel might resolve the issue. An admission that the school could have handled the situation better is not the same as an admission of negligence.

Frivolous or Vexatious Complaints

The Office of the Independent Adjudicator defines frivolous or vexatious complaints as those which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious; involve pursuing unmeritorious complaints and/or unrealistic outcomes beyond all reason; or are designed to cause disruption or annoyance. An ‘unreasonable manner’ may include situations where the complainant’s frequency of contact with the school hinders consideration of the complaint and/or impedes the ability of the Headteacher and the school to meet the needs of all pupils equitably.

Examples of unreasonable behaviour include:

- Refusing to articulate the complaint or specify the grounds/outcomes sought, despite offers of assistance.
- Refusing to co-operate with the investigation process.
- Insisting on the complaint being dealt with in ways incompatible with the procedure or good practice.
- Introducing trivial or irrelevant information and expecting it to be considered.
- Raising large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions and insisting on immediate responses.
- Making unjustified complaints about staff and seeking their removal.
- Changing the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds.
- Repeatedly making the same complaint despite previous investigations concluding it is groundless.
- Refusing to accept findings where the procedure has been fully implemented.

- Seeking unrealistic outcomes.
- Making excessive demands on school time through frequent, lengthy, and complicated contact.
- Using threats, abusive, offensive, or discriminatory language or violence.
- Knowingly providing falsified information.
- Publishing unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

Escalation process for unreasonable behaviour:

- The Headteacher or Chair of Governors will, wherever possible, discuss concerns informally before applying an “unreasonable” marking.
- If behaviour continues, the Headteacher will write to the complainant explaining why it is unreasonable and request change.
- For complainants causing significant disruption, the school may implement a communication plan specifying methods and limiting contact frequency. This will be reviewed after six months.
- In cases of aggression or violence, the school will immediately inform the police and confirm actions in writing, which may include barring the individual from the premises.

For full details on managing unreasonable behaviour, see the *Managing Serial & Unreasonable Complaints Policy*.

9. Withdrawal of a Complaint

If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, Scholar Green Primary School will ask them to confirm this in writing.

The written confirmation should include the complainant's name, the date, and a brief statement indicating their decision to withdraw the complaint.

10. Stages of the Procedure

Informal Resolution

Many concerns and minor complaints can be resolved quickly and informally. There are many occasions where issues are resolved immediately through the class teacher or another member of staff, depending upon the nature of the complaint. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, every effort should be made by the school to have a full discussion with the complainant before moving into the formal stages of this procedure.

Stage 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.

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

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

- 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.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the Headteacher will provide a formal written response within ten school days of the date of receipt of the complaint.

If the Headteacher is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and

revised response date.

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 Scholar Green Primary School will take to resolve the complaint.

The Headteacher will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1.

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.

Complaints about the Headteacher or a member of the governing body must be made to the Clerk, via the school office.

Stage 2

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.

A request to escalate to Stage 2 must be made to the Clerk, via the school office, within ten school days of receipt of the Stage 1 response.

The Clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within five school days.

Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

The Clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within twenty 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.

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 based on written submissions from both parties.

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 Scholar Green Primary School 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.

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.

If the complainant is invited to attend the meeting, they may bring someone along to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. Generally, we do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the committee meeting. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate.

For instance, if a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by union and/or legal representation.

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.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

At least five 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 five school days before the meeting.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least five 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.

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. 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.

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.

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 Chair of the Committee will provide the complainant and Scholar Green Primary School with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within five school days.

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 Scholar Green Primary School.

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.

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 Scholar Green Primary School will take to resolve the complaint.

The response will also advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied.

11. Next Steps

If the complainant believes that Scholar Green Primary School did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or 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.

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by Scholar Green Primary School. They will consider whether Scholar Green Primary 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

12. Roles & Responsibilities

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.
- Refrain from posting unacceptable or defamatory information about the complaint or school on social media or public forums.

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.

Complaints Co-ordinator

The complaints co-ordinator (this could be the Headteacher, designated complaints governor, or other staff member providing administrative support) 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.

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.

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).

Committee Member

Committee members should be aware that:

- The meeting must be independent and impartial, and should be seen to be so.
- No governor may sit on the committee if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it.
- The aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant.
- 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.

13. Complaints Log & Monitoring

Scholar Green Primary School maintains a confidential Complaints Log to record the nature, progress and outcome of all formal complaints. This log is reviewed periodically by the Headteacher and the Governing Body to monitor trends, ensure procedural compliance and identify any areas for improvement. Entries include the date received, summary of the complaint, stage reached, outcome, along with any follow-up actions taken.

14. Complaint Form

Please complete and return to the Headteacher 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

Complaint Reference:

Date acknowledgement sent:

By who:

Complaint referred to:

Date: