Queen's Drive Primary School Primary School

Complaints Procedure

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 Queen's Drive 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.

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 opportunity. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaint's procedure.

Queen's Drive 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, the School Business Manager in the school office will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, the School Business Manager will refer you to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior, but that does not have to be the case. 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, Queen's Drive Primary School will attempt to resolve the issue through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

How to raise a concern or make a complaint

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf on a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

Concerns should be raised with either the class teacher or headteacher. The school will seek to resolve complaints informally by email, telephone call, brief meeting as appropriate.

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.

If the complaint is unable to be resolved at this stage, the school will ask you to put your concerns or complaint in writing and the 'Formal Stage' the procedures will commence from the date that the letter is received by the school.

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. Alternatively, they can be emailed to chairofgovernors@queensdrive.lancs.sch.uk

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.

Anonymous complaints

The school will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the headteacher or chair of governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

Time scales

You must raise the complaint within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

Complaints received outside of term time

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

Scope of this complaints procedure

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

Exceptions	Who to contact
• Admissions to schools • Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs • The school's reorganisation proposals.	You should raise concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of special educational needs or the school's reorganisation proposals with Pupil Access – Area Education Office South, Room C37, County Hall, Preston, PR1 0LD, 01772 532109 southadmissions@lancashire.gov.uk Concerns about Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, should be raised with Lancashire County Council Tel: 0300 123 6706 Email: enquiries@lancashire.gov.uk

• Matters that are 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). Email: MASHeducation@lancashire.gov.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. Please refer to the school's behaviour policy which is located on the school website.
• 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 directly with their employer. Referrals can be made at www.education.gov.uk/contactus Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain directly to the local authority or the Department for Education (DfE) (see link above), 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 others who use the school's 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 DfE at www.education.gov.uk/contactus

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example, the police, local authority (LA) safeguarding teams or tribunals, this may impact on our ability to adhere to the timescales in this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations.

If a complainant commences legal action against Queen's Drive 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.

Withdrawal of a complaint

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

Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, Queen's Drive Primary School wants to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or 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 it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales in which any changes will be made
- An undertaking to review the school's policies in light of the complaint
- An apology

Formal Stage 1

This stage will commence when the:

• Informal complaint has not been resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant.

Or

• Complainant has indicated they wish to go straight to the formal stage.

Or

• School feels that the complaint is inappropriate for an informal resolution.

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 5 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.

Note: 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:

- if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
- keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the headteacher will provide a formal written response within 20 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 Queen's Drive 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. This would be to write to the Chair of Governors within 20 school days to escalate to Stage 2.

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.

If the complaint is:

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

then you should write to the Clerk of the Governing Body, via the school office, who will advise next steps.

Stage 1 will be considered by an independent investigator appointed by the governing body. At the conclusion of their investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response.

A Complaints Form (see below) can be used. In addition to contact details, the complainant is asked to outline:

- Details of the complaint
- What action you have already taken to try to resolve your complaint
- What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?
- Details of any attached paperwork

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 Queen's Drive Primary School will take to resolve the complaint.

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Formal 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 10 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 5 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 25 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 on the basis of 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 Queen's Drive 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.

Note: Complaints about staff conduct will not generally be handled under this complaints procedure. Complainants will be advised that any staff conduct complaints will be considered under staff disciplinary procedures, if appropriate, but outcomes will not be shared with them.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

At least 10 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 7 school days before the meeting.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 5 school days before the date of the meeting. The committee will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

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 Queen's Drive Primary School with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 15 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 Queen's Drive 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 Queen's Drive 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.

Next Steps

If the complainant believes the school did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact the Department for Education after they have completed Stage 2.

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

Complaints Form

Please complete and return to (*either headteacher / Clerk / complaints co-ordinator / designated governor – school to delete as appropriate*) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken

Your name:
Pupil's name (if relevant):
Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):
Address: **Postcode:** **Day time telephone number:** **Evening telephone number:**
Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it.

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?
Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.
Signature: **Date:**
Official use
Date acknowledgement sent:
By who:
Complaint referred to:
Date:

Roles and responsibilities

Complainant The complainant will receive a more effective response to the complaint if they do the following:

- Explain the complaint in full as early as possible
- Cooperate with the school in seeking a solution to the complaint

Respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing on 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.

Investigator

The investigator's role is to establish the facts relevant to the complaint by doing the following:

- 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 and analysis of records and other relevant information.
- Liaising with the complainant and the complaint's coordinator 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 head teacher or complaints committee that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.

The headteacher or complaints committee will then determine whether to uphold or dismiss the complaint and communicate that decision to the complainant, providing the appropriate escalation details.

Complaints coordinator (This could be the headteacher/designated complaints governor or other staff member providing administrative support)

The complaints coordinator should:

- Ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure
- Liaise with staff members, the headteacher, chair of governors, clerk and local authorities (if appropriate) to ensure the smooth running of the complaint's procedure
- Be aware of issues regarding the following:
  - Sharing third-party information

- Additional support – this may be needed by complainants when making a complaint, including interpretation support
- 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 one 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
- 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 allow everyone to consider and comment on it; this may require a short adjournment of the meeting

Both the complainant and the school are allowed 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 coordinator if the school has one)

Committee Member

Committee members should be aware that:

- The meeting must be independent and impartial, and it should be seen to be so.
  No governor may sit on the committee if they have had 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 if a child/young person is present during all or part of the meeting.
  Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings should ensure that any child/young person present 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.

Approved by Governors: November 2025,
reviewed December 2025 (change of name of CoG),
reviewed November 2026 – all names deleted, just states job title and some formatting

To be reviewed: November 2028