



COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

2024-2025

Our vision

Our vision is to provide a safe, caring and nurturing environment, where everyone is given opportunities to learn, discover and grow in our changing world. We will live out our Christian values of Respect, Hope, Love, Forgiveness, Trust and Honesty and strive to guide our community into leading fruitful lives, learning from Jesus' teachings, to love themselves and one another in order to achieve success. 'Teach children how they should live, and they will remember it all their life.'

Proverbs 22:6

Purpose of this policy

This policy should be used by parents, carers, pupils and members of the wider public to raise a concern or complaint about the school, regarding the facilities or services provided by that school. Please note, certain complaints are dealt with under separate statutory policies (such as appeals relating to exclusions or admissions).

2. Definition for 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'*.

3. The management of complaints

It is the express intent of the school that all complaints are resolved at the earliest possible moment as this is in everyone's interest. We take concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve arising matters, as quickly as possible. In all cases, the school will initially seek to resolve the complaint informally, if this is at all possible, without the need to use the formal stages of the Complaints Policy.

3.1. How to Raise a Concern or Make a Complaint

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. It 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 the Head of School. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

Complainants should not approach any individual member of the *Governing* body to raise a concern or complaint. *Governing* body members have no power to act on an individual basis and any intervention or knowledge of the complaint at this time may also prevent them from considering a complaint at Stage 2 of the policy.

A complaint against a member of the school staff, (except the Head of School), should be made in the first instance to the Head of School. If this is by letter, please mark it as Private and Confidential.

A complaint that involves, or is about the Head of School, should be addressed to the Executive Headteacher via the academy office. Again, a letter of this nature needs to be marked as Private and Confidential.

A complaint about the Chair of *Governors*, any individual *Governing* body member or the whole *Governing* body should be made to the Clerk to the *Governors*. Please mark any correspondence as Private and Confidential.

For ease of use, a template Complaint Form is included at the end of this policy. If the complainant requires help in completing the form, please contact the school. Third party organisations, such as *Citizens Advice*, can also help with this.

In accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments, if required, to enable complainants to access the *Complaints Policy* and/or complete the stages involved. This could include; providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

3.2. Anonymous Complaints

An anonymous complaint will not normally be investigated. It will be the responsibility of the Head of School, Executive Headteacher or Chair of *Governors* to determine if exceptional circumstances apply and an anonymous complaint warrants an investigation.

3.3. Time Scales

To enable a proper investigation, a concern or complaint should be brought to the attention of the school as soon as possible. The complaint must be made within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. Complaints made outside of this time frame will be considered, if exceptional circumstances apply.

3.4. Complaints Received Outside of Term Time

Any complaint made during a school holiday period will be dealt with as a priority, once school resumes.

3.5. Scope of this Complaints Policy

This policy covers all complaints regarding any provision of community facilities or services by the Academy, other than that, complaints are dealt with under other statutory policies. Please see below.

Exceptions	Who to contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Admissions to schoolsStatutory Assessments of Special Educational Needs	These should be raised with the school under the Admissions Procedure.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">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).
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Exclusion of children from school	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-disciplineexclusions/exclusions .

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Whistleblowing 	<p>Please refer to the school Whistleblowing Policy for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors.</p> <p>The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for 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.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Staff conduct 	<p>Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary policies, if appropriate.</p> <p>Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being or has been addressed.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use academy premises or facilities 	<p>Providers should have their own complaints policy to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them directly.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ National Curriculum - content 	<p>Please contact the Department for Education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus</p>

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, LA safeguarding teams or Tribunals, this may impact on the school's ability to adhere to the timescales within this policy or may result in the policy being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations.

3.6. Resolving Complaints

At each stage in the complaints process, it is the intent of the school to resolve the complaint. At the end of the process, if appropriate, the school will acknowledge that the complaint has been upheld in whole or in part. In addition, the complainant may be offered one or more of the following:

- ✦ An explanation.
- ✦ An admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better.
- ✦ An assurance that the academy 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 academy policies in light of the complaint.
- ✦ An apology.

3.7. Withdrawal of a Complaint

If a complainant decides to withdraw their complaint, they will be asked to confirm this in writing.

4. THE COMPLAINTS PROCESS

Informal Stage

In the first instance any concerns should be raised with the class teacher or Head of School. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

Formal Stage 1

Formal complaints must be made to the Head of School (unless they are about the Head of School), via the school office, in writing using the complaint form.

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

The Head of School can consider whether a meeting is necessary to assist with resolving the complaint as part of the investigation. This meeting could be held face to face, by telephone or virtually.

During the investigation, the Head of School may decide to, if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish

At the conclusion of their investigation, the Head of School will provide a formal written response (decision letter) within seven school days of the date of receipt of the complaint.

If the Head of School is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.

The decision letter will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions the school will take to resolve the complaint.

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

NB:

- If the complaint is about the Head of School, the above formal stage 1 process will be carried out by the Executive Headteacher.
- If the complaint is about a member of the governing board the above formal stage 1 process will be carried out by the Chair of Governors.
- If the complaint is about the Chair of Governors, the Vice Chair or a suitably skilled governor will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 1.

- If the complaint is:
 - a. jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
 - b. the entire governing board or
 - c. the majority of the governing board

Stage 1 will be considered by an independent investigator appointed by the governing board.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response to all parties involved. 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 the recommended actions Cleeve Prior CE Primary School should take to resolve the complaint.

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

Formal Stage 2 (Governor Panel)

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

The Clerk to Governors will organise a panel of governors to hear the complaint.

The panel will be made up of the first three, impartial, governors available. The governors sitting on the panel must have no prior knowledge of the complaint or declarations of interest.

The Clerk to Governors will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within seven school days. Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

The Clerk to Governors will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting and the names of the governors sitting on the panel, allowing the complainant to raise any concerns with the panel membership before the panel hearing begins.

The Clerk to Governors will aim to convene a meeting within seven school days of receipt of the Stage 2 request. If this is not possible, the Clerk to Governors 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 to Governors 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.

Prior to the meeting, the panel members will decide amongst themselves who will act as the Chair of the panel. If there are fewer than three governors from Cleeve Prior CE Primary School available, the Clerk to Governors will source any additional, independent governors through other local schools. Alternatively, an entirely independent panel may be convened to hear the complaint at Stage 2, should there be no impartial governors available.

The panel will decide whether to investigate the complaint by inviting each party to separate meetings (again this can be held face to face or virtually), or through written representations only. In making this decision the panel will be sensitive to the complainant's needs.

The panel will ensure consistency and fairness when reaching a decision regarding the arrangements for meetings in the interests of all parties. If the complainant is invited to attend the meeting, they may bring someone along to provide moral support, this can be a relative or friend. (Please note that the accompanying person will not be able to contribute to the meeting).

Generally, we will not accept either party to bring legal representatives to the panel 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.

N.B.: 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 seven school days before the meeting, the Clerk to Governors 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
- confirm the names of the panel members and the Chair of the panel, to allow the complainant to raise any concerns about the membership of the panel if not already done so
- request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the panel at least three school days before the meeting.

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

The panel will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint. 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 panel will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented.

The panel 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 panel 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 panel will provide the complainant and Cleeve Prior CE Primary School with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within seven school days. This concludes the school's part in the school complaints process.

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 Cleeve Prior CE Primary School.

If the complaint is:

- a. jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- b. the entire governing board or
- c. the majority of the governing board

Formal Stage 2 will be conducted by a panel of independent governors organised by the Clerk to Governors. The Chair of the independent panel will write a response (decision letter) which 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 recommended actions that the school should take to resolve the complaint.

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 Cleeve Prior CE Primary School.

Next Steps

If the complainant believes the school did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints policy 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 Cleeve Prior CE Primary School. They will consider whether Cleeve Prior CE 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.

Appendix 1. Complaint Form

Please complete and return to <...Name> (either Head of School/ Clerk / complaints co-ordinator / designated governor - 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: