

Complaints Policy

Status	Statutory
Review cycle	Annually
Date written/last reviewed	September 2026
Date of next review	September 2027
Name of Headteacher	Jo Wreford
Name of Chair of Governors	Christina Powell / Melissa Shaw
Published on website	Yes

Page 3	Concerns procedure flow diagram
Page 4	Formal complaints procedure flow diagram
Page 5	How to raise a concern or make a complaint
Page 7	Scope of this complaint's procedure
Page 8	Formal complaints stage 1
Page 9	Formal complaints stage 2
Page 11	Unreasonable complaints
Page 13 Appendix A	Meadlands Primary School Formal Complaints form

Introduction

Meadlands Primary School endeavours to provide the best education possible for all of its pupils in an open and transparent environment. We welcome any feedback that we receive from parents, pupils and third parties, and we accept that not all of this will be positive. Where concerns are raised the school intends for these to be dealt with:

- Fairly
- Openly
- Promptly
- Without Prejudice

In order to do so, the Governing Board of Meadlands Primary School has approved the following procedure which explains what you should do if you have any concerns about the school. All members of staff will be familiar with the procedure and will be able to assist you.

During this procedure, all parties are expected to behave courteously and with respect for each other. The welfare of our pupils and staff is paramount. During the process complainants should not solicit information from children that are not their own; all investigations including discussions with other parents should be carried out by the appropriate school staff.

Who can make a complaint?

This complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children who are registered at the school. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to Meadlands Primary School about any provision of facilities or services that we provide. Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statuary procedures (such as appeals to exclusion 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'.*

Concerns Procedure Flow Diagram

In the first instance concerns should be raised either in writing, email, phone or in person.
There are different members of staff to contact regarding concerns.

Educational matters *Class teacher*	Pastoral care *Class teacher*	Financial/Administrative matters *Mrs Gee*	Concern about a staff members conduct *Contact the staff member concerned, unless your concern is about a member of our support staff team, then approach the class teacher.*



Step 1

Within 2 school days, you will be contacted to address the concern either over the phone, or you may be invited in for a face to face meeting/discussion within one week.



Step 2

Any further actions to resolve the concern will be shared either via email or face to face.



Step 3

If you feel your concern remains unresolved, the next step is to make a complaint at Stage 1 of the complaints procedure.

Formal Complaints Procedure Flow Diagram

Stage 1 complaint to be made to the Headteacher ***within 3 months of the incidents or where are a series of associated incidences have occurred, within 3 months of the last of these incidences**** ***Complainant to complete a complaints form – Appendix A***



Within 10 school days, the Headteacher will respond in writing to acknowledge receipt of the complaint, clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved. The letter will also explain what actions will be taken and the timeframes.



Investigation period

Within 20 school days, from the receipt of the complaint and following an investigation, the Headteacher will provide the complainant with a formal response.



If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of **Stage 1**, then they must request an appeal at **Stage 2** in writing ***within 20 school days*** of receiving the Headteacher's decision.



Within 5 school days, the complainant will receive an acknowledgement letter from the Governing Body's Clerk.



Within 30 school days, the **Stage 2** review panel will convene in private with 3 Governors. At least ***5 school days prior*** to the meeting the Clerk will distribute relevant documentation to all attendees.



Within 5 school days, all parties who attended the meeting will be informed in writing from the Chair of the Committee of the outcome with a full explanation of the Appeal Board's decision.

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

If the complainant remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the complaint further they can contact the Department of Education. Contact details can be found at the end of this policy.

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. Meadlands 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, Meadlands Primary School will refer you to another staff member, most likely the Deputy Head. The member of staff may be more senior, but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concerns objectively and impartially is more important. Similarly if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, then they will be accompanied by a member of the senior leadership team.

We understand however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, Meadlands Primary School will attempt to resolve the issue internally through the stages outlined in this policy.

How to raise a concern or make a complaint

The majority of concerns can be dealt with without resorting to the formal complaints procedure. Where you have a concern about any aspect of the school or your child's education or wellbeing, raise this with your child's class teacher via the phone, in writing via the class email or in person. They will be able to address your concerns on the spot, or can arrange a meeting ***(within 2 school days)*** with you to discuss the issue.

If the concern remains unresolved, the next step is to make a complaint at Stage 1 of the complaints procedure.

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 Mrs Wreford (the Acting Headteacher), via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Where a complaint involves the Headteacher, the complainant should first directly approach the Headteacher in an attempt to resolve the issue informally. If the complainant is not satisfied with this outcome they should notify the Chair to the Governors (Annabelle Hughes and Lisa Fairmaner - see contact details at the end of this document). The Stage 2 process will then commence, but with the Chair of Governors as the individual responsible for the investigation rather than the Headteacher.

Where a complaint regards a governor, the same process applies as for the Headteacher. Where a complaint concerns the Chair of Governors, the complainant should contact the Clerk to the Governors, via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential. The Clerk would then arrange for the complaint to be heard. This could be done by a suitably skilled and impartial member of the governing body at Stage 1 and then a committee of members of the governing body at Stage 2.

Where a complaint is either jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair, or the entire governing body, the complainant should contact the Clerk to the Governors via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential. The Clerk would then determine the most appropriate course of action. This will depend on the nature of the complaint. This may involve sourcing an independent investigator to complete Stage 1 and co-opted governors from other schools to hear the complaint at Stage 2.

For ease of use, a template complaint form is included at the end of this policy. If you require help completing this form, please contact the school office. You can also ask a third party organisation like Citizens Advice to help you. https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/
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
We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Headteacher, or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

The role of the Clerk
During Stage 2 the Clerk will fulfil the role of organising and confirming the time and date of the appeal hearing, inviting all the attendees, collating all the relevant documentation and **distributing this 5 school days** in advance of the meeting, recording the proceedings in the form of minutes, and circulating these and the outcome of the meeting. The Clerk will ensure that the venue and proceedings are accessible.

Confidentiality
All concerns will be dealt with confidentially, although the staff member may need to take notes if they feel that the matter may need to be taken further or it may arise again in the future. Any such notes will be kept in accordance with the principles of the GDPR Act 2018. However, such notes may be used as evidence if further investigation was required, or if the concern became a formal complaint.

Complaints made by one person purportedly on behalf of someone else will not be considered unless they have been given appropriate consent to do so.

Safeguarding
Wherever a complaint indicates that a child's wellbeing or safety is at risk, the school is under a duty to report this immediately to the local authority. Any action taken will be in accordance with the school's Safeguarding Policy which can be found on the school's website.

Social Media
In order for complaints to be resolved as quickly and fairly as possible, Meadlands Primary School requires that the complainants do not discuss complaints publicly including via social media such as Facebook, X, WhatsApp including class WhatsApp groups. Complaints will be dealt with confidentially for those involved, and we expect complainants to observe confidentiality also.

Time scales
Meadlands Primary School will endeavour to abide by the timeframes stated for each stage, but acknowledges that in some circumstances, this is not always possible due to the complexity of information needed to review a complaint or difficulties regarding an individual's availability to deal with the complaint, for example. If it becomes apparent that it is not possible to complete any stage of the complaints procedure within a given timeframe, the individual responsible for handling the complaint will contact the complainant as soon as possible and come to an agreed timeframe that works for all parties involved.

Meadlands Primary School reserves the right not to investigate complaints that have been made three months after the subject of the complaint took place, except in exceptional circumstances. What is meant by exceptional circumstances is where new evidence has come to light, where the complaint is of an especially serious matter or where there is reasonable justification for why the complainant has been unable to raise the complaint before this time. The headteacher will review the situation and decide whether or not to enact the complaints procedure, informing the Chair of Governors of the decision.

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

Scope of this complaints procedure
The procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community or services by Meadlands Primary School. Sometimes, when concerns are more specific, there are alternative and more appropriate routes/policies for dealing with them. The following list details specific topics of complaints, and the correct policy to refer to. You can access these policies on the school website or ask for a copy from the main office. https://www.meadlands.richmond.sch.uk/policies-risk-assessments/

Matter	Who to approach
Pupil admissions School re-organisation proposals	Please contact London Borough of Richmond admissions. https://www.richmond.gov.uk/primary_school_admissions
Statutory assessment of Special Educational Needs (SEN	Concerns about statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, should be raised directly via the relevant EHCP Co-ordinator at Achieving for Children (AfC).
Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our Safeguarding and Child Protection 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) lado@achievingforchidlren.org.uk
Pupil exclusions – see Communication, Relationship and Behaviour Policy	Please see the school's Communication, Relationship and Behaviour Policy. Further information about raising concerns about exclusions can be found at www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions
Whistleblowing	We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors. The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistle blowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus. Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the LA or the Department fo Education (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, or be entitled to participate in the proceedings or received any detail about them. The matter will remain confidential. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.
Complaints about services provided by other providers who use school premises	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.
National Curriculum - content	Please contact the Department for Education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus

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 detailed in this policy or result in the complaints procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigation.

If a complainant commences legal action against Meadlands 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, Meadlands 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 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.

Formal Complaints

Stage 1: Formal investigation by the headteacher (or investigator)

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 Complaints Form attached), or by telephone.

2. The headteacher **will respond in writing within 10 school days** (excluding those that fall in the school holidays) of the date of receipt of the complaint to acknowledge receipt of the complaint. Within this response, the headteacher will also seek to clarify the nature of the complaint and ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The letter will also explain what action will be taken, giving clear timeframes. The head teacher can then consider whether a face to face meeting is the appropriate way of doing this.

3. A log of all correspondence in relation to the complaint will be kept in accordance with the General Data Protection Act Principles.

4. During the investigation, the headteacher (or investigator) will consider all relevant evidence and conduct an investigation. This may include but is not limited to:

- a statement from the complainant
- where relevant a statement from an individual who is the subject of the complaint
- any previous correspondence regarding the complaint
- any supporting documents in either case
- interview with anyone related to the complaint.
- Keep a written record or any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation

The Headteacher may decide to have a meeting with the complainant (and where relevant, the subject of the complaint) if they feel that it would be appropriate for the investigation.
Please note: The Headteacher may delegate the investigation to another member of Meadlands Senior Leadership team but not the decision to be taken.

5. At the conclusion of their investigation and after considering the available evidence, the headteacher **will provide the complainant a formal 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:

- Uphold the complaint and direct that certain action be taken to resolve it
- Reject the complaint and provide the complainant with details of the Stage 2 appeals process
- Uphold the complaint in part: in other words, the headteacher may find one aspect of the complaint to be valid, but not another aspect. They may direct for certain action to be taken to resolve the aspect that they find in favour of the complainant.

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.

Stage 2 – Review by a panel of the Governing Body

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1 and the action taken by the headteacher and wishes to take the complaint further, the complainant can escalate the complaint to the final stage, Stage 2. Please note during this stage no new complaints will be reviewed

The complainant **must request an appeal panel in writing within 20 school days** of receiving the headteacher's decision or it will not be considered, except for in exceptional circumstances.

They must write to the Clerk to the Governors via the school office briefly outlining the content of the complaint and requesting that a complaints appeal panel is convened. On receipt of this written notification, the following steps will be followed.

The Clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt by writing to the complainant **within 5 school days** (not including the school holidays) to confirm receipt of the appeal request and detail further action to be taken.

The Clerk will convene a panel of three school governors. All three panel members will have no prior knowledge of the content of the complaint. At this point all governors will be notified that a Stage 2 complaint has been made, but will not be given any further details.

If the complainant is unable to attend three proposed dates for the appeal, 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 the written submissions from both parties.

The **appeal review hearing will take place in private and within 20 school days** (excluding those which fall in the school holidays) from the date of the letter from the Clerk to the complaint acknowledging receipt of their complaint. At least **5 school days before** the meeting the Clerk will distribute relevant documentation to all attendees.

At the end of the appeals review meeting the panel can make the following decisions:

- Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part
- Uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- Recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

All parties who attended the meeting will be informed in writing from the Chair of the Committee of the outcome with a **full explanation of the appeals Body decision and the reason for it within 5 school days** (excluding those which fall in the school holidays).

This is the final stage at which the school will consider the complaint. If the complainant remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the complaint further, they can contact the Department of Education. Please see the contact details at the end of the document. The school will not consider the complaint beyond this.

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by Meadlands Primary School. They will consider whether Meadlands Primary School had adhered to education legislation and any statuary polices connected with the complaint.

Anonymised feedback will be provided to the Full Governing Body following the conclusion of the hearing.

Parties invited to attend a Stage 2 Review Appeals Meeting

In addition to the panel, the following parties will be invited, where applicable:

- the complainant
- the Headteacher who dealt with the complaint at Stage 1
- where the complaint regards a member of staff, the staff member who is the subject of the complaint.

The complainant is also able to bring a companion with them to the hearing if they wish. Where the subject of the complaint is a member of staff, that staff member is also able to bring a companion with them.

The companion will be a friend or a colleague. Neither party is able to bring legal representation with them. If after the hearing any party feels that legal action is necessary, please see the contact details at the end of the procedure.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

All parties will be asked to sign a declaration that they will adhere to hearing protocols ("Protocols"), which will be published in advance of any panel hearing. Any deviance from these protocols will be published in the findings of the panel.

If the attendance of any pupils is required at the hearing, parental permission will be sought. Extra care will be taken to consider the vulnerability of children where they are present at a complaints hearing.

Unreasonable complaints

Where a complainant raises an issue that has already been dealt with via the school's complaints procedure, and that procedure has been exhausted, the school will not reinvestigate the complaint except in exceptional circumstances, for example where new evidence has come to light.

If a complainant persists in raising the same issue, the headteacher will write to them explaining that the matter has been dealt with fully in line with the school complaints procedure, and therefore the case is now closed. If the complainant contacts the school again on the same issue, then the correspondence may be viewed as 'serial' or 'persistent' and the school may choose not to respond.

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

Meadlands defines unreasonable behaviour in accordance with Department for Education guidance and is explained in our Policy for Managing Unreasonable or Serial Complaints whether formal or not.

The Headteacher will use their discretion to choose not to investigate such complaints. Where they decide to take this course of action, they must inform the Chair of Governors that they have done so, explaining the nature of the complaint and why they have chosen not to investigate. If the chair deems it appropriate to, they can redirect the headteacher to investigate the complaint. The full complaints procedure will commence from stage one on this direction.

If the chair upholds the Headteacher's decision not to look into the complaint and the complainant deems this decision to be so unreasonable that no other rational body in the same position would have made that decision, then the complainant may write to the Department for Education (see the contact details at the end of the document).

Contact details for external organisations if not satisfied with the outcomes of the complaints procedure in full.

- If you have any queries regarding any aspect of the complaints procedure, please address these to the Clerk to the governors via office@meadlands.richmond.sch.uk
- If the complainant feels that the Governing Body acted 'unreasonably' in the handling of the complaint, they can complain to the Department for Education after the complaints procedure has been exhausted. Please note that unreasonable is used in a legal sense and means acting in a way that no reasonable school or authority would act in the same circumstances. https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-schools or phone 0370 000 2288

The Department for Education *Best Practice advice for school complaints procedures*
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-complaints-procedures
Telephone number: 0370 000 2288
Contact details: Department for Education, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD
Ofsted will also consider complaints about schools.

Relevant legislation and guidance

The Equality Act 2010 http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents
The Data Protection Act 2018 https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2018/12/contents/enacted

The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014
http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2014/3283/contents/made
Education Act 2002 *http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents*

Appendix A: Meadlands Primary School Formal Complaints Form

Name	
Name of pupil, year group and your relationship to them (where applicable)	
Contact address	
Contact telephone day	
Contact telephone mobile	
Contact email address	
Details of the complaint	
Action taken so far (including staff member who has dealt with it so far) or solutions offered	
The reason that this was not a satisfactory resolution for you	
What action would you like to be taken to resolve the problem?	

Signed:	
Dated:	

Official use Date received: