Complaints Policy

Policy ratified by the Staffing & Community Committee

Spring Term 2026

Review date: Spring Term 2028 (or as required)

Policy Owner: Rachel Davies, Headteacher

EXTERNAL POLICY

If you have any questions about this policy please contact info@grovepark.hounslow.sch.uk

COMPLAINTS POLICY

Our School Values

We have a variety of ways in which any member of our community can express a concern or make a complaint. At Grove Park we believe that feedback is key to helping us grow and develop as a school. In keeping with our school ethos and values, we will treat complainants and those who raise concerns about our provision with respect and courtesy.

Legislation and Guidance

This document meets the requirements of section 29 of the Education Act 2002, which states that schools must have and make available a procedure to deal with all complaints relating to their school and to any community facilities or services that the school provides. It is based on guidance for schools on complaints procedures, published by the Department for Education (DfE), including its model procedure.

In accordance with equality law, we will be sensitive to the needs of all parties involved. If required we will make reasonable adjustments to enable complainants to access and follow the Complaints Procedure (for example, providing information in alternative formats). We will ensure that any decisions made are lawful, rational, reasonable, fair and proportionate, in line with the principles of administrative law.

Contacting Governors

Please do not approach Governors to raise a concern or make a complaint. They have no power to act on an individual basis. It may also prevent them considering your issue if the formal Complaints Procedure is activated and it reaches Stage 2 of the Procedure.

The difference between a concern and a complaint

A **concern** is an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important and for which reassurances are sought. A **complaint** is an expression of dissatisfaction with actions taken or with a lack of action.

This policy document is divided into two sections, 'Concerns' and then 'Complaints'. The procedure is different in each case.

CONCERNS

It is in everyone's interest that concerns are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally. Grove Park Primary School takes concerns seriously and will always make every effort to resolve matters as quickly as possible.

How to raise a concern

<u>Stage A</u>

A concern can be brought to the attention of the School in person, in writing (e.g. email) or by phone. It can also be made by a third party acting on your behalf, so long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

If the concern is about teaching and learning (e.g. behaviour, SEN or the curriculum), please speak to your Class Teacher. If it is about a non-teaching matter (e.g. communication), please speak to the School Office. If your concern cannot be addressed immediately and a further meeting is required, it should take place within 10 days.

Please see below, the school contact details: -
Grove Park Primary School, Nightingale Close, Grove Park Terrace, Chiswick London W4 3JN;
info@grovepark.hounslow.sch.uk;
020 8994 7405.

Stage B

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of Stage A, you can raise your concern with the School Business Manager (Miss Hayley O'Brien), who will refer you to the relevant member of the Senior Leadership Team.

Stage C

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of Stage B, you can raise your concern with the Headteacher. Once she has addressed your concern, any decision she then makes is final.

We understand that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. If that proves to be the case, the School will attempt to resolve the issue internally through the stages involved in the Complaints Procedure (see below).

COMPLAINTS

Who can make a complaint?

The complaints procedure outlined below is not limited to parents or carers that are registered at Grove Park Primary School. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to the School about any provision of facilities or services that we provide.

How to make a complaint

A complaint can be made in person, in writing (e.g. email) or by phone. It can also be made by a third party acting on your behalf, so long as they have appropriate consent to do so. The Headteacher (or Chair of Governors, if appropriate) will determine whether an anonymous complaint can be investigated.

Complaints must be raised within three months of the incident or, within three months of a series of associated incidents. However, we will consider complaints made beyond this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply. A complaint submitted outside of term time will be regarded as having been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

Appendix 1 outlines how the school will respond to persistent, unreasonable or serial complaints.

Written complaints should be addressed to the Headteacher, via the School Office. Complaints involving or about the Headteacher should be addressed to the Chair of Governors, via the School Office. Complaints about a member or members of the Governing Board should be addressed to the Clerk of the Governing Board, via the School Office. Please mark any written complaint' Private and Confidential'.

For ease of use, a template complaint form is included as Appendix 2. If you require help in completing it, please contact the School Office or our Parent Support Advisor. Third party organisations such as Citizens Advice may be able to provide advice and support.

Roles and Responsibilities

It is important that all parties are clear about their roles and responsibilities within this policy. Appendix 3 summarises the key considerations for each role.

Scope of the Complaints Procedure

This procedure covers complaints about all services and facilities provided by Grove Park Primary School, other than complaints which are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed in Appendix 4.

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint — for example, the police, the Local Authority safeguarding teams or Tribunals — this may impact on our ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or it may result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations. Similarly, if a Complainant commences legal action against the School in relation to their complaint we will consider whether to suspend the Complaints Procedure until those legal proceedings have concluded.

If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, and we will also 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 that the action or inaction 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 polices in light of the complaint;
- an apology.

Withdrawal of a complaint

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

The Complaints Procedure

Stage 1

All formal complaints, other than those involving or about the Headteacher or Governors, should be submitted to the Headteacher, via the School Office. This can be done in person, in writing (preferably using the Complaints Form attached to this document) or by phone. It can also be made by a third party acting on behalf of the Complainant, so long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

The Headteacher will record the date that the complaint was received and will acknowledge receipt in writing (either by letter or by email) within 5 school days. Within this response they will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint and the desired outcome. The Headteacher can consider whether a face-to-face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this. Following this response, an investigation will take place. This may be carried out by the Headteacher or delegated to another member of the Senior Leadership team. The investigator will, if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing the latter to be accompanied if they so wish. Written records of any meetings or interviews will be kept in relation to the investigation.

At the investigation's conclusion, the Headteacher will provide the Complainant with a formal written response within 15 school days. The response will provide information about the investigation, a full explanation of the decision and the reasons for it. Where appropriate, it will give details of actions the School will take to resolve the complaint. If the Headteacher is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the Complainant with an update and revised deadline date.

Should the Complainant be dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1, they should inform the Headteacher, who will advise them how to raise their complaint to the Stage 2 level.

Complaints about the Headteacher

If the complaint is about the Headteacher, the complaint should be addressed to the Chair of Governors (via the School Office), who will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 5 school days. The Chair will then appoint a suitably skilled Governor to conduct the Stage 1 investigation procedure. The investigator will subsequently report to the Chair, who will then respond to the Complainant within 15 school days of receipt of the complaint. If the Chair is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the Complainant with an update and revised deadline date.

Complaints about individual Governors

If the complaint is about one or more of the Governors, the complaint should be addressed to the Clerk to the Governing Board (via the School Office), who will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 5 school days. The Clerk will then alert the Chair (or, if the Chair is the subject of the complaint, the Vice Chair) that a complaint has been lodged and ask them to appoint a suitably skilled Governor to conduct the Stage 1 investigation procedure. That Governor will subsequently report to the Chair (or, if appropriate, Vice Chair), who will then respond to the Complainant within 15 school days of receipt of the complaint. If the Chair or Vice Chair is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the Complainant with an update and revised deadline date.

Complaints about the Governing Board or a majority of its members, or jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair

If the complaint is about the Governing Board, or a majority of its members, or jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair, the complaint should be addressed to the Clerk to the Governing Board (via the School Office), who will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 5 school days. The Clerk will ask the Board to appoint a suitably skilled independent external investigator, who will investigate the complaint and report to the Board. The Chair will then write a response to the Complainant within 15 school days of receipt of the complaint. If the Chair is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the Complainant with an update and revised deadline date.

Stage 2

If the Complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1 and wishes to take the matter further, they can raise their complaint to Stage 2 — the final stage of the Complaints Procedure. Stage 2 involves a Complaints Panel established by the Clerk to the Governing Board.

A request to raise the complaint to Stage 2 should be made to the Clerk (via the School Office) within 10 school days of the Complainant's receipt of the Stage 1 response. Requests outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply. The Clerk will record the date the request was received, acknowledge its receipt and inform the Complainant of the time frame within which it is hoped that a meeting of the Complaints Panel can be convened. This will normally be within 15 days and, if that is not impossible, the Clerk will provide an update and revised deadline date.

Complaints about the School's actions or inaction, or about the Headteacher, or about individual Governors

For these complaints the Complaints Panel will be made up of three Governors, none of whom has had any prior involvement with or knowledge of the complaint. If there are fewer than three such Governors available, the Clerk will source any additional independent Governors through another local school or through the Local Authority's Governor Services team. Alternatively, an entirely independent panel may be convened to hear the complaint.

Once the panel's membership has been established, a Chair will be chosen. The panel will receive copies of the complaint, the Stage 1 Investigator's report and the Headteacher or Chair's response to the Complainant. In light of this information, the panel will decide whether to deal with the complaint by inviting parties to the meeting or through written representations. In making this decision they will be sensitive to the Complainant's needs.

The Complaints Meeting

If the Panel decides to deal with the complaint by inviting the Complainant to attend the meeting, the Clerk will identify three possible dates when the Panel is available to hold the meeting and offer them to the Complainant. If the Complainant rejects all three possible dates without good reason, the Clerk will select one of the dates and inform the Complainant that the panel will meet with or without the Complainant's presence.

At least 10 school days before the meeting, the Clerk will notify all parties of the confirmed date, time and venue. The Clerk will also request that copies of any further written material which should be submitted to the panel are received at least 7 school days before the meeting. The Clerk will circulate any written material to all parties at least 4 days before the meeting. The panel will not normally accept as evidence recordings of conversations obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded. Neither will the panel review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint. Any new complaint must be dealt with under Stage 1 of the Complaints Procedure.

If the Complainant is invited to attend the meeting, they may bring someone to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. Generally, we do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the meeting. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate. For instance, if a School employee is called as witness they may wish to be supported by union and/or legal representation. Complaints about staff conduct will normally be handled under Staff Disciplinary Procedures rather than the Complaints Procedure.

The meeting will be confidential. Representatives of the media are not permitted to attend. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless the Complainant's own disability or special needs require them. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties must be sought before such meetings or conversations take place, and consent will be recorded in the minutes of the panel meeting. Minutes will be taken by the Clerk.

The Panel will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented.

The Panel can either uphold the complaint, in whole or in part, or it can 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, it will recommend changes to the School's systems or procedures in order to try to prevent similar issues arising in the future.

The chair of the Complaints Panel will provide the Complainant and the School with a full response, in writing and within 7 school days of the meeting. The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reasons for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions the School will take to resolve the complaint. The response will also advise the Complainant of how to escalate their complaint (see 'Next Steps' below), should they remain dissatisfied.

Complaints about the entire Governing Board, about a majority of the Board, or jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair

If the complaint is about the entire Governing Board, about a majority of the Governing Board, or jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair, Stage 2 will be heard by a Complaints Panel made up of three independent members recruited by the Clerk on behalf of the School. It will be the chair of the Panel who responds to the Complainant. In all other respects the procedure will be the same as that described above.

A diagram showing each stage of the complaints procedure can be found in Appendix 5.

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, the Complainant 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 the School. They will, however, consider whether the School has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint.

The Complainant can refer their complaint to the Department for Education online at https://www.gov.uk/complain-to-dfe or by writing to Department for Education, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD.

APPENDIX 1

Persistent, unreasonable or serial complaints

Duplicate complaints

If, after closing a complaint at the end of the complaints procedure, we receive a duplicate complaint from a spouse, a partner, a grandparent, a child not attending this school or any other individual, we will assess whether there are aspects that we hadn't previously considered, or any new information we need to take into account.

If we are satisfied that there are no new aspects, we will:

Tell the new complainant that we have already investigated and responded to this issue, and the local process is complete

Direct them to the DfE if they are dissatisfied with our original handling of the complaint

If there are new aspects, we will follow this procedure again.

Complaint campaigns

If we receive what we consider to be a large volume of complaints, all based on the same subject and possibly from complainants not connected to the school, then we will treat these complaints as being part of a campaign and respond in one of the following two ways, depending upon the nature and scale of the complaint:-

- Send the same response to all complainants; or
- Publish a single response on the school's website.

If complainants are not satisfied with the school's response, or wish to pursue the complaint further, the normal procedures will apply.

Unreasonable or persistent complaints

Most complaints raised will be valid, and therefore we will treat them seriously. However, a complaint may become unreasonable if the person:

Has made the same complaint before, and it's already been resolved by following the school's complaints procedure;

Makes a complaint that is obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, defamatory or repetitive;

Knowingly provides false information;

Insists on pursuing a complaint that is unfounded, or out of scope of the complaints procedure;

Pursues a valid complaint, but in an unreasonable manner e.g. refuses to articulate the complaint, refused to co-operate with this complaints procedure, or insists that the complaint is dealt with in ways that are incompatible with this procedure and the time frames it sets out;

Changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation progresses;

Makes a complaint designed to cause disruption, annoyance or excessive demands on school time;

Seeks unrealistic outcomes, or a solution that lacks any serious purpose or value.

Steps we will take:

We will take every reasonable step to address the complainant's concerns, and give them a clear statement of our position and their options. We will maintain our role as an objective arbiter throughout the process, including when we meet with individuals. We will follow our complaints procedure as normal (as outlined above) wherever possible.

It the complainant continues to contact the school in a disruptive way, we may put communications strategies in place. We may:

Give the complainant a single point of contact via an email address;

Limit the number of times the complainant can make contact, such as a fixed number per term;

Ask the complainant to engage a third party to act on their behalf, such as Citizens' Advice;

Put any other strategy in place as necessary.

Stopping responding

We may stop responding to the complainant when all of these factors are met:

We believe we have taken all reasonable steps to help address their concerns;
We have provided a clear statement of our position and their options;
The complainant contacts us repeatedly, and we believe their intention is to cause disruption or inconvenience;
Where we stop responding, we will inform the individual that we intend to do so. We will also explain that we will still consider any new complaints they make.
In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from our school site.

APPENDIX 2

Grove Park Primary School 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: Daytime 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:

APPENDIX 3

Roles and Responsibilities

Complainant

The Complainant will receive a more effective response to their complaint if they

1. Explain the complaint in full as early as possible.
2. Co-operate with the School in seeking a solution to the complaint.
3. Respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint.
4. Ask for assistance as needed.
5. Treat all those involved in the complaint with respect.
6. Respect confidentiality and refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media.

Investigator

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

1. Providing a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint.
2. Conducting sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved.
3. Interviewing staff and children and other people relevant to the complaint.
4. Taking consideration of records and other relevant information;
5 Analysing information.
6. Liaising with the Complainant to clarify what the Complainant feels would put things right.

The Investigator should

1. Conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning.
2. Keep notes of interviews or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of the meeting.
3. Ensure that any papers produced during the investigation are kept securely pending any appeal.
4. Be mindful of the timescales to respond.
5. Prepare a comprehensive report for the Headteacher, Chair of Governors or Complaints Panel (as appropriate) that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.

Clerk to the Governing Board

When involved in the Procedure, the Clerk should

1. Record the date of receiving any correspondence and acknowledge its receipt.
2. Keep a record of events as they unfold.
3. When required to arrange a meeting, liaise with all parties who should be invited in order to ensure that its date and time are convenient and the venue available, accessible and appropriate.
4. Collate any written material relevant to the complaint and send it to the relevant parties in advance of any meeting and within any agreed timescale.
5. Take summarising (i.e. not verbatim) minutes of the meeting and circulate them to all parties, but at the point when the Chair asks all but the Panel to withdraw, not to minute the Panel's subsequent discussion leading to a decision.

Panel Chair

The Chair of a Complaints Panel should ensure that

1. Both parties are asked by the Clerk to provide any additional information relating to the complaint by a specific time in advance of the Complaints Meeting.
2. Written material is seen by everyone in attendance, provided it does not breach confidentiality or any individual's rights to privacy under the DPA2018 or GDPR.
3. The meeting is conducted in an informal manner, is not adversarial, and, if all parties are invited to attend, everyone is treated with respect and courtesy.
4. Complainants who are not used to speaking at such a meeting are put at their ease. This is particularly important if the Complainant is a child.
5. The remit of the Panel is explained to the Complainant.
6. If new information pertaining to the complaint arises, there is the opportunity to consider and comment upon it. This may require a short adjournment of the meeting.
7. Both the Complainant and the School make their case.
8. The meeting achieves clarity in relation the issues raised, either through written submissions ahead of the meeting or orally in the meeting itself.
9. The issues are addressed.
10. Key findings are based on fact.
11. The Panel is open-minded and acts independently.
12. No member of the Panel has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure.
13. After both parties have provided their case, the Chair asks all but the Panel members to withdraw, at which point the Panel alone discusses the case and makes its decision about the complaint.
14. The meeting when the Complainant is present is minuted by the Clerk, but the Clerk does not minute the panel's discussion leading to the decision.

After the meeting, the Chair of the Panel writes to the Complainant to inform them of the Panel's findings and decisions, and provides them with information about how, to whom and within what timescale an appeal can be made.

Panel Member

Panel members should be aware that

1. The meeting must be independent and impartial, and should be seen to be so. For this reason no member of the Panel should have had any prior involvement with the complaint or the circumstances surrounding it.
2. 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 may not be satisfied with the outcome of the meeting if the Panel does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations.
3. Many complainants will feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting, and parents or carers often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child.
4. Extra care needs to be taken when the Complainant is a child and is present during all or part of the meeting. Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings can ensure that a child does not feel intimidated.
5. If the Complainant is a child, the Panel should ask in advance if any support is needed to help them present their complaint. Where the child's parent or carer is the Complainant, the Panel should give the parent or carer the opportunity to say which parts of the meeting, if any, the child needs to attend. However, the parent or carer should be advised that agreement may not always be possible if they wish the child to attend a part of the meeting that the Panel considers it is not in the child's best interests to attend. The child's welfare is paramount.

APPENDIX 4

Exceptions to Complaints Procedure

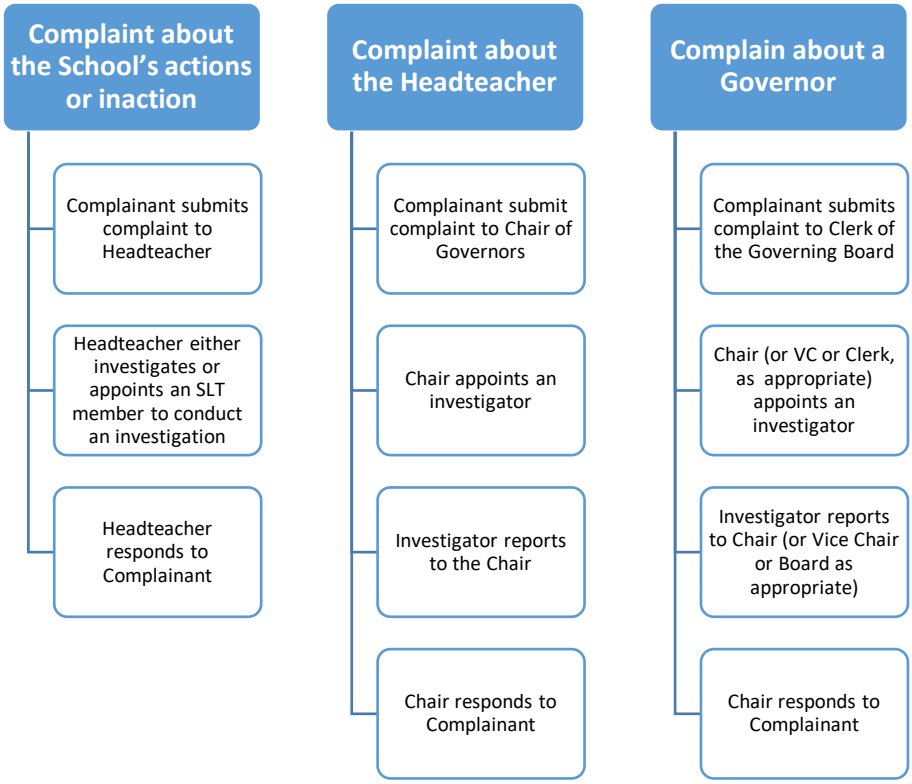
This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by Grove Park Primary School other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

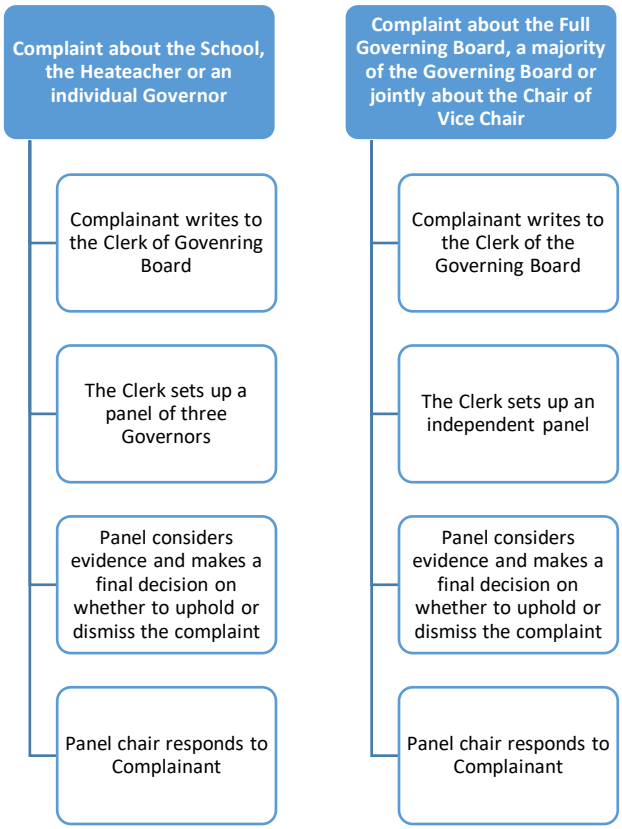
Exceptions	Who to contact
Admissions to schools - Statutory assessments of special educational needs School re-organisation proposals	Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of special educational needs or school reorganisation proposals should be raised with the London Borough of Hounslow.
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 Hounslow Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP) LADO: https://www.hscb.org.uk/professionals/allegations-against-professionals/ HSCP: https://www.hscb.org.uk/professionals/escalation-of-concerns/
Exclusion of children from school*	Further information about raising concerns about exclusions can be found at www.gov.uk/school-disciplineexclusions/exclusions. *complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.
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 local authority or the 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 other providers who may use school premises or facilities	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.
National curriculum - content	Please contact the DfE at www.education. ov.uk/contactus

APPENDIX 5

Complaints Flowchart

Stage 1



If the Complainant is not satisfied and wishes to move to Stage 2, the process is as follows:-

Stage 2