Nottinghamshire County Council

Mapperley Plains Primary School

# Complaints Policy and Procedure

Statutory

| | |
|---|---|
| Approved by | Full Governing Board |
| Approval date | Autumn 2026 |
| Review date | Autumn 2027 |
| Version | V1 |

Inspiring learners. Shaping futures.

# Contents

Policy statement....3
Policy principles....3
1. Who can make a complaint?....4
2. The difference between a concern and a complaint....4
3. How to raise a concern or make a complaint....4
4. Anonymous complaints....5
5. Time limits....5
6. Complaints received outside term time....5
7. Duplicate complaints....5
8. Complaint campaigns....5
9. Complaints raised through social media or public forums....5
10. Mediation and facilitated discussion....5
11. Who manages each stage of a complaint?....6
12. Matters outside or alongside this procedure....7
13. Informal stage....8
14. Stage 1: formal complaint investigation....8
15. Stage 2: Governor Complaints Panel....9
16. Withdrawal of a complaint....10
17. End of the school procedure and referral to the Department for Education....10
18. Managing serial or unreasonable complaints and contact....10
19. Records, confidentiality, data protection and learning....11
Appendix 1: complaints process at a glance....12
Appendix 2: roles in the complaints process....12
Appendix 3: complaint form....13
Official use only....13
Approval record....13
Reference framework....14

## Policy statement

Mapperley Plains Primary and Nursery School is committed to working constructively with parents, carers and the wider community. Concerns and complaints are an important source of feedback and organisational learning. We will take them seriously and seek to resolve them fairly, promptly and proportionately. Raising a concern or complaint will not, of itself, adversely affect a child or family's relationship with the school.

The purpose of this policy is to provide a clear, accessible and defensible framework for resolving concerns, investigating formal complaints and reviewing disputed decisions while protecting the welfare, rights and confidentiality of children, complainants, staff and other people involved.

## Policy principles

- Accessible: concerns and complaints can be raised in different ways and reasonable adjustments will be considered where required.
- Early resolution: concerns will be resolved informally wherever this is appropriate, but a complainant will not be prevented from making a formal complaint.
- Fairness and impartiality: relevant parties will have a fair opportunity to provide information and respond to matters that concern them.
- Proportionality: the scope of an investigation and the evidence sought will reflect the nature, seriousness and complexity of the complaint.
- Timeliness: the school will work to the published timescales and will explain any unavoidable delay and provide a revised date.
- Confidentiality: information will be shared only where necessary and lawful, with particular care taken around information about children, staff and third parties.
- Safeguarding first: safeguarding action will never be delayed by complaint handling and separate statutory or specialist routes will be used where required.
- Independence: Stage 2 will be considered by suitably impartial panel members who have not been involved in the Stage 1 decision.
- Respect and staff protection: legitimate complaints will be heard, while abusive, threatening, discriminatory or seriously disruptive behaviour may be subject to proportionate controls.
- Learning and improvement: findings and anonymised themes will be used to improve systems, communication, practice and training where appropriate.

## 1. Who can make a complaint?

1.1 Any person, including a parent or carer, a former parent or carer, a member of the public or another person affected by a service we provide, may make an in-scope complaint about Mapperley Plains Primary and Nursery School. The procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children currently registered at the school.

1.2 This procedure covers complaints about the school and about community facilities or services provided by the school unless a separate statutory or specialist procedure applies. Section 12 explains the main exceptions and overlapping routes.

## 2. The difference between a concern and a complaint

2.1 A concern is an expression of worry or doubt about an issue considered important and for which reassurance or an explanation is sought.

2.2 A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about action taken or a lack of action.

2.3 It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved as early as possible. Many matters can be resolved informally and the school will make reasonable efforts to do so. A person who wishes to make a formal complaint, however, will not be required to complete an informal stage first.

2.4 The school will approach complaints with an open mind, explain its decisions and use learning from complaints to improve practice. If something has gone wrong, the school will seek to put it right in a proportionate way.

2.5 The complaints procedure is an internal school process. It is not a court, tribunal or substitute for safeguarding, employment, data protection or other statutory procedures.

2.6 All parties are expected to communicate respectfully. A legitimate complaint and unacceptable behaviour can exist at the same time. The school will continue to provide a fair route for substantive complaints while taking proportionate action to protect children, staff and others from abusive, threatening, discriminatory, intimidating or seriously disruptive behaviour.

## 3. How to raise a concern or make a complaint

3.1 A concern or complaint can be made in person, by telephone or in writing, including by email. It may be made by a third party acting on behalf of the complainant where appropriate authority or consent has been provided.

3.2 Concerns should normally be raised with the class teacher or the appropriate member of staff. A concern about a member of staff should normally be raised with the Headteacher. If the matter is about the Headteacher or senior governance, use the routes in section 11.

3.3 Complainants should not approach individual governors to discuss the substance of a live complaint. Governors may later be required to consider the matter impartially at Stage 2. Any complaint sent to an individual governor will therefore be passed to the appropriate recipient without substantive discussion.

3.4 Formal complaints should be sent to the school office. Use of the complaint form in Appendix 3 is encouraged but is not mandatory. A complainant should set out, as clearly as possible, the matters complained about, what remains unresolved and the outcome they are seeking.

3.5 If a complaint is difficult to understand, the school will offer reasonable help to clarify the complaint rather than rejecting it solely because of its format. The school may agree a concise statement of complaint points with the complainant before investigation begins.

3.6 If all or part of a complaint concerns the conduct of a member of staff, the matter may also need to be considered under the school's employment or disciplinary procedures. The complainant will be told that the matter is being addressed, but confidential employment outcomes will not be disclosed. A separate complaint about the school's service or handling may still be considered under this procedure where appropriate.

3.7 The person complained about will be given sufficient information to understand and respond fairly to the allegations relevant to them. This may be the complaint itself or a proportionate redacted summary where safeguarding, confidentiality or data protection considerations require this.

3.8 The school will consider reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010, including alternative formats, communication support, accessible meeting arrangements and other appropriate adjustments. The school will also seek to make the process accessible where English is an additional language.

## 4. Anonymous complaints

4.1 The school will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. The Headteacher, or the Chair of Governors where appropriate, will decide whether the nature and seriousness of the information warrants further enquiries. Where safeguarding concerns arise, safeguarding procedures will take priority whether or not the source is anonymous.

## 5. Time limits

5.1 A formal complaint should normally be raised within three months of the incident or, where there is a series of associated incidents, within three months of the most recent incident.

5.2 The school will consider whether exceptional circumstances justify accepting a complaint outside this period. There will be no blanket refusal solely because the normal time limit has passed.

## 6. Complaints received outside term time

6.1 A complaint received during a school holiday will normally be treated as received on the first school day after the holiday period. This does not alter any separate statutory timescale that may apply to a safeguarding, information-rights or other legal process.

## 7. Duplicate complaints

7.1 If the school has completed its procedure on a complaint and receives a duplicate complaint on the same subject from another person, the school may explain that the matter has already been considered and the school's process is complete. Any genuinely new complaint point or new material issue will be considered on its own merits and routed appropriately.

## 8. Complaint campaigns

8.1 If the school receives a high volume of complaints about the same subject, including from people unconnected with the school, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors, as appropriate, may appoint a suitable person to coordinate consideration of the issues.
8.2 Depending on the circumstances, the school may issue a common response to complainants or publish a single response on the school website. Any alternative process used for a complaint campaign will still be fair, proportionate and consistent with the school's published procedure and legal duties.

## 9. Complaints raised through social media or public forums

9.1 The school will not normally investigate or determine a formal complaint through social media. Where a concern is raised publicly, the school may contact the person to direct them to this procedure. The school may also request removal of material where there is a safeguarding, confidentiality, data protection, harassment or other legitimate concern.

9.2 Public discussion of a matter does not of itself prevent a complaint being considered. However, the school will protect the privacy of children, staff and third parties and will not debate confidential case details publicly.

## 10. Mediation and facilitated discussion

10.1 Mediation or a facilitated discussion can be useful during the informal stage or after investigative stages have concluded, particularly where relationships need to be rebuilt. It will only proceed where the relevant parties agree.

10.2 Mediation will not be used as a substitute for a formal investigation. If mediation is attempted during a formal complaint, the complaint timescale may be paused by agreement and will resume at the same stage if the matter is not resolved.

10.3 A neutral third party, such as a local authority officer or other suitable independent person, may facilitate a discussion where this is appropriate and agreed.

## 11. Who manages each stage of a complaint?

11.1 The school will protect independence at each stage. No person should determine a complaint where they have a conflict of interest, prior involvement that would compromise impartiality or detailed prior knowledge that would make a fair review difficult.

| Complaint relates to | Informal stage | Stage 1 | Stage 2 |
|---|---|---|---|
| School service, a child, parent or member of staff other than the Headteacher | Appropriate member of staff. Staff conduct issues may also require HR procedures. | Headteacher. The Headteacher may delegate investigation to an impartial senior leader but normally retains the Stage 1 decision. | Three suitably skilled and impartial governors or eligible associate members with no prior involvement or detailed knowledge. |
| Headteacher | No informal stage is required. A suitable informal resolution may be attempted only if appropriate. | Chair of Governors or another suitably skilled and impartial governor or independent investigator arranged through the Governance Professional. | Impartial panel excluding the Stage 1 decision-maker. External members will be used where necessary. |
| Individual governor or group of governors other than the Chair | Chair of Governors where an informal approach is appropriate. | Chair of Governors or another suitably skilled and impartial governor or independent person. | Impartial panel excluding anyone involved at Stage 1. |
| Chair of Governors | No informal stage is required. | Vice-Chair or another suitably skilled impartial governor or independent investigator arranged through the Governance Professional. | Independent or otherwise demonstrably impartial panel. |
| Chair and Vice-Chair jointly, the majority of the governing body or the whole governing body | No informal stage is required. | Independent investigator arranged through the Governance Professional with Nottinghamshire County Council Governor Services or another suitable external provider. | Independent panel arranged through the Governance Professional with Nottinghamshire County Council Governor Services or another suitable external provider. |
| Governance Professional / Clerk | No informal stage is required where this would create a conflict. | Chair of Governors with Governor Services advice or another suitably independent route. | Impartial panel or external review as appropriate. |

11.2 Formal complaints about the school, a service or a member of staff other than the Headteacher should be sent to the school office marked “Private and Confidential - for the attention of the Headteacher”. Formal complaints about the Headteacher, the Chair of Governors, another governor, a group of governors or the governing body should be sent to the school office marked “Private and Confidential - for the attention of the Governance Professional / Clerk to the Governing Body”. The Governance Professional will route the complaint securely to the appropriate Stage 1 decision-maker shown below and will protect the independence of any person who may later be required to consider the matter at Stage 2.

11.3 Where insufficient impartial governors are available, the Governance Professional may source suitably skilled independent governors or associate members from another school, through Nottinghamshire County

Council Governor Services or another appropriate route. The governing body should maintain suitable reciprocal or external arrangements for this purpose.

## 12. Matters outside or alongside this procedure

12.1 Some matters have separate statutory or specialist processes. Where a complaint contains more than one issue, the school may need to run different routes in parallel. The school will explain this where possible and will not allow the complaints procedure to delay urgent safeguarding action.

| Matter | Route |
|---|---|
| Admissions, admission appeals and school reorganisation | Use the relevant Nottinghamshire County Council, admission authority or statutory route. Complaints about admission appeals are not determined under this school procedure. |
| Statutory assessment of special educational needs and local authority EHCP decisions | Raise with Nottinghamshire County Council through the relevant SEND statutory route. Complaints about the school's own provision, support or reasonable adjustments may still fall within this procedure. |
| Child protection and safeguarding | The school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and current statutory/local safeguarding procedures apply. A complaint about how the school handled a safeguarding matter may be considered separately without delaying safeguarding action. Members of the public who believe a child is at risk can contact Nottinghamshire MASH on 0300 500 80 80. If a child is in immediate danger call 999. |
| Allegations or concerns about an adult working or volunteering with children | The school will use current Nottinghamshire Managing Allegations / LADO arrangements. Parents and members of the public concerned that a child may be harmed should use the public MASH route rather than attempting to make a LADO referral themselves. |
| Suspensions and permanent exclusions | Use the statutory review arrangements and current GOV.UK guidance. Complaints about the application of the school's Behaviour Policy may be considered under this procedure where they are not part of the statutory exclusion route. |
| Whistleblowing | Employees, temporary staff and contractors should use the school's whistleblowing procedure. Volunteers may use this complaints procedure unless another route is more appropriate. |
| Staff grievances and employment matters | These are dealt with under the school's employment, grievance, disciplinary or capability procedures as appropriate. |
| Staff conduct | May be addressed under employment procedures. The complainant will not receive confidential disciplinary or employment information but will be told that the matter has been addressed through the appropriate route. |
| Services provided by another organisation using school premises | The provider's own complaints procedure should normally be used. |
| National Curriculum content | Complaints about national curriculum content should be directed to the Department for Education. Complaints about the school's delivery of the curriculum are within scope of this procedure. |
| Collective worship | Complaints about the content of the daily act of collective worship should be directed to the local authority, SACRE or other relevant body. Complaints about the handling of a request to withdraw a child may be considered under this procedure. |
| Freedom of Information requests | Handled under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the school's information governance arrangements. |
| Subject access requests and educational record requests | Handled under data protection law and, where applicable, the Education (Pupil Information) (England) Regulations 2005. These requests have separate statutory timescales. |
| Data protection complaints | A complaint that the school has infringed data protection law should be sent to the school office marked "Data Protection Complaint". It will be logged separately, acknowledged within 30 days and investigated with the complainant kept informed. The outcome will be communicated without undue delay. This may run alongside a service complaint under this procedure. |

12.2 If the police, social care, a safeguarding service, a tribunal, regulator or another public body is considering an overlapping matter, the school may need to adjust or suspend all or part of its complaint investigation to avoid prejudice or duplication. The complainant will be informed of the position and given an update point where possible.

12.3 If a complainant starts legal proceedings against the school in relation to the same subject, the school will consider whether it is reasonable to suspend the complaint procedure until those proceedings have concluded. Suspension is not automatic.

## 13. Informal stage

13.1 The informal stage is intended to resolve concerns quickly and constructively. The school may speak or meet with the complainant to clarify the issue, understand the outcome sought and agree practical next steps.

13.2 The school will identify the appropriate person to consider the concern. A note of the concern, relevant actions and agreed follow-up will be made where appropriate. Important agreed actions will be confirmed in writing.

13.3 The school will normally update the complainant within 10 school days. If more time is required, the school will explain why and provide a revised update point.

13.4 If the concern is not resolved, or if the complainant wishes to make a formal complaint immediately, the matter can proceed to Stage 1.

## 14. Stage 1: formal complaint investigation

14.1 Stage 1 applies where a complainant asks for formal consideration or where an informal approach has not resolved the matter.

14.2 A formal complaint may be made in person, by telephone or in writing. Written complaints are preferable where reasonably possible because they help define the issues precisely. If a complaint is made verbally, the receiving person will make a written record and pass it to the appropriate decision-maker.

14.3 The school will record the date of receipt and acknowledge the complaint within five school days. The acknowledgement will identify the person who will consider or investigate the complaint, explain any clarification required and confirm the expected timescale.

14.4 The investigator will clarify the complaint points, what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant seeks. The investigator will set a proportionate evidence plan and check any conflicts of interest, reasonable adjustments and confidentiality requirements.

14.5 During the investigation, the investigator will, as necessary:

- interview or seek written accounts from the complainant, people complained about and relevant witnesses, giving each relevant person a fair opportunity to respond
- consider contemporaneous records, policies, communications and other relevant information
- keep a written record of meetings, calls and interviews
- distinguish established facts, reported accounts, disputed points and matters where the evidence is insufficient to reach a safe conclusion
- consider each complaint point separately and proportionately
- keep complaint information secure and share it only with those who need it for the process.

14.6 Where a complaint concerns a child, the school may speak with the child and other children where this is necessary and appropriate. The child's welfare, age, development, SEND and communication needs will be considered. A parent, carer or trusted adult will normally be present unless this would cause inappropriate delay, create a safeguarding concern or the circumstances justify another arrangement.

14.7 Recording meetings. Electronic recording is not normally necessary. A request to record will be considered individually, including where recording may be a reasonable adjustment. Recording will normally require advance agreement, a clear purpose and appropriate data protection safeguards. Covert recordings will not automatically be accepted or rejected as evidence. Their relevance, reliability, lawfulness, impact on third parties and any safeguarding significance will be considered before a decision is made.

14.8 The Stage 1 decision will normally be issued within 20 school days of receipt of the formal complaint. If that timescale cannot be met, the school will explain the reason for the delay and provide a revised response date.

14.9 The written response will address each complaint point within scope and, where the evidence allows, state whether it is upheld, upheld in part or not upheld. It will explain the reasons for the findings and any action, remedy or learning that can appropriately be shared.

14.10 The Stage 1 response will explain how to request Stage 2 if the complainant remains dissatisfied. The complainant may escalate any part of the complaint or remedy that remains disputed. Stage 2 is not limited to checking whether Stage 1 followed procedure.

## 15. Stage 2: Governor Complaints Panel

15.1 Stage 2 is the final internal stage of the school's complaints procedure. It is a fresh, impartial consideration of the complaint points that remain disputed, taking account of the original complaint, the Stage 1 findings, relevant evidence and the parties' representations.

15.2 A request for Stage 2 should be made within 10 school days of receiving the Stage 1 response. Requests outside this period will be considered where exceptional circumstances apply. The request should explain what remains disputed and what resolution is sought.

15.3 The school will acknowledge a Stage 2 request within five school days. A nominated complaints co-ordinator or Governance Professional will arrange the panel, clerk, dates, evidence timetable and practical arrangements.

15.4 The panel will normally comprise three suitably skilled and impartial governors or eligible associate members with no prior involvement or detailed knowledge of the complaint. External members may be used where this is necessary to preserve independence. The Stage 1 decision-maker will not sit on the Stage 2 panel.

15.5 The panel may consider any aspect of the original complaint that remains disputed, including the adequacy of any remedy where a complaint point was upheld. Wholly new and unrelated complaints will normally be considered separately from Stage 1.

15.6 The panel will decide whether to consider the matter at a meeting, including a virtual meeting, or on written representations. In most cases a meeting will be appropriate where oral clarification would assist. The panel will ensure the process remains fair and accessible.

15.7 The co-ordinator will aim to convene the panel within 30 school days of receiving the Stage 2 request. If this is not possible, the complainant will be given an anticipated date and kept informed.

15.8 If the complainant is invited to attend, the school will make reasonable attempts to agree a suitable date. If three reasonable dates are offered and rejected without good reason, the panel may proceed in the complainant's absence using the written material available.

15.9 The complainant and the school will be invited to provide relevant written material and identify any witnesses or companions. The evidence deadline will normally be at least 10 school days before the panel. The co-ordinator will normally circulate the complete panel pack to all parties at least five school days before the panel, subject to lawful redaction and confidentiality controls.

15.10 A complainant may bring a relative, friend or other companion for support. The panel is not a legal proceeding and legal representation is not normally necessary, although there may be circumstances where legal or trade union representation is appropriate, including for an employee called as a witness.

15.11 Representatives of the media are not permitted to attend.

15.12 The panel will normally receive evidence disclosed in advance. If significant new relevant evidence emerges, the Chair may adjourn or take other steps so that each party has a fair opportunity to consider and respond to it.

15.13 The meeting will be private. Written minutes will be taken by an impartial clerk. Recording requests will be considered using the principles in paragraph 14.7.

15.14 The panel will consider the evidence and make a finding on each complaint point within scope. It may:

- uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- not uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- where appropriate, recommend action to resolve the complaint

- recommend changes to school systems, policies or practice to reduce the likelihood of recurrence.

15.15 The panel's written decision and reasons will normally be sent within five school days of the meeting or completion of written consideration. If more time is required, the complainant will be informed and given a revised date.

15.16 The outcome will explain any appropriate remedy or recommendation and will confirm that Stage 2 concludes the school's internal procedure. It will provide the current Department for Education escalation route.

15.17 A complainant may request a copy of the approved minutes. The school will normally provide an appropriate copy, subject to lawful redaction, confidentiality and data protection requirements.

15.18 Where employment action is required, confidential disciplinary, capability or other HR details will not be disclosed to the complainant.

## 16. Withdrawal of a complaint

16.1 A complainant may withdraw a complaint at any stage. The school will ask for written confirmation where possible. If withdrawal is communicated verbally and no written confirmation follows, the school may write to confirm that it understands the complaint to be withdrawn and closed.

16.2 The school may still need to act on safeguarding, staff conduct, health and safety, data protection or other matters raised by the complaint even if the complainant withdraws it.

## 17. End of the school procedure and referral to the Department for Education

17.1 Stage 2 is the final internal complaint stage. Once the Stage 2 outcome is issued, the school's complaints procedure on that matter is complete unless the school itself identifies a clear reason to revisit the process.

17.2 If the complainant believes the school did not follow its published procedure or acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of duties under education law, they may complain to the Department for Education after completing the school's procedure. The current route is the GOV.UK service "Complain about a school to the Department for Education" at www.gov.uk/complain-to-dfe. The DfE helpline is 0370 000 2288 and correspondence may be sent to Department for Education, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD.

17.3 The Department for Education does not normally reinvestigate the substance of the complaint or substitute its own judgement for the school's. Its role includes considering whether the governing body has complied with education law, relevant statutory policies and the school's published complaints procedure.

## 18. Managing serial or unreasonable complaints and contact

18.1 The school is committed to dealing with complaints fairly and impartially and will not normally limit the contact a complainant has with the school. The school does not, however, expect staff to tolerate abusive, threatening, discriminatory, intimidating or seriously disruptive conduct.

18.2 Behaviour or contact may be considered unreasonable where its frequency or nature materially hinders fair consideration of a complaint or causes disproportionate disruption. Examples may include:

- refusing to identify the complaint points or desired outcome despite reasonable assistance
- refusing to cooperate with the investigation process or insisting on a process that is incompatible with the published procedure
- repeatedly introducing trivial or irrelevant material and requiring immediate detailed responses to it
- making repeated substantially identical complaints after the procedure has been completed
- changing the basis of the complaint repeatedly as the investigation proceeds
- making excessive demands through frequent, lengthy or repetitive contact that materially disrupts school operations
- making unjustified personal complaints about staff dealing with the complaint in order to have them removed
- using threats, abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence
- knowingly providing falsified information

- publishing personal, confidential, threatening or otherwise unacceptable material on social media or public forums.

18.3 Detail, complexity, criticism, persistence or disagreement with the school do not by themselves make a complaint unreasonable. A complainant will not be treated as serial or unreasonable merely for exercising a right to contact an MP, regulator or other lawful body.

18.4 A serial or persistent marking will normally apply to the subject or complaint rather than to the individual. A complaint will not normally be marked as serial or persistent before the published complaints procedure has been completed. This does not prevent the school from applying proportionate communication or conduct controls at any stage where behaviour meets the unreasonable-contact criteria in this policy. Any such controls will preserve access to the complaints procedure, safeguarding routes and statutory rights.

18.5 Where possible, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors, as appropriate, will explain the concern about communication or conduct before restrictions are imposed and will ask for the behaviour to change. Any decision will be based on recorded evidence and will be proportionate to the disruption or risk identified.

18.6 A communication plan may include a single point of contact, written communication only, agreed appointment arrangements, consolidation of responses or a reasonable limit on the frequency of non-urgent contact. It will state its scope and review date and will normally be reviewed within six months.

18.7 A communication plan will not remove access to safeguarding or emergency routes, statutory information rights, educational record rights or the ability to raise a genuinely new and substantive complaint. Separate FOI, data protection and other statutory timescales will continue to apply.

18.8 Once the school's complaint procedure has been completed, the school may stop responding on the same complaint where all of the following apply:

- every reasonable step has been taken to address the concerns
- a clear final position and available external options have been given
- the complainant continues to make substantially the same points repeatedly.

18.9 The case for stopping substantive responses is stronger where correspondence is abusive or aggressive, includes insulting personal comments or threats or there is evidence that contact is intended to cause disruption or inconvenience. The school will not stop responding solely because a person is difficult to deal with or asks complex questions.

18.10 If the school decides to stop responding or restrict contact, the decision will be communicated in writing, with the reasons, scope, review arrangements and any route for necessary school communication. Where the Headteacher is personally affected, the Chair of Governors will lead with Nottinghamshire County Council employer support as appropriate.

18.11 Serious aggression, violence, threats or conduct that may amount to harassment will be dealt with through safety, employer, police or legal routes as appropriate. If a person is barred from the school site, they will be given an opportunity to make representations and the decision will be reviewed by the Chair of Governors or another suitably impartial governor or committee not involved in the original decision. Where the Chair is affected by or involved in the matter, an alternative impartial review route will be used. Any confirmed bar will state its duration and review date.

## 19. Records, confidentiality, data protection and learning

19.1 The school will keep a secure record of the progress of formal complaints, evidence considered, decisions, reasons, correspondence, meetings and the final outcome. Complaint records will be stored separately from children's educational records while a complaint is live, unless a document properly forms part of the educational record for another reason.

19.2 Complaint information will be shared only with people who need it to perform their role or where disclosure is otherwise lawful. Personal information about other children, families and staff will not be disclosed simply because it has been requested as part of a complaint.

19.3 Records will be retained in accordance with the school's approved records retention arrangements and data protection law. No relevant complaint record or working paper will be destroyed while a complaint, Stage 2 review, safeguarding process, information-rights request, regulatory enquiry, litigation or legal hold remains live.

19.4 The Headteacher and governing body will use anonymised complaint themes and learning to improve school practice, while protecting the independence of governors who may later need to consider a live complaint.

19.5 The governing body will review this policy and procedure at least annually while significant national, local or organisational changes are being implemented, and sooner if legislation, DfE guidance, Nottinghamshire arrangements or the school's governance structure materially changes.

19.6 Anyone undertaking a formal complaints role will be suitably skilled and supported with appropriate guidance or training for that role. The school will use governance, local authority, HR, safeguarding, data protection or legal advice where the nature of a case requires specialist support.

## Appendix 1: complaints process at a glance

| Stage | What happens |
|---|---|
| Concern raised | Check scope, safeguarding and any separate statutory route. |
| Informal resolution | Where appropriate, seek a prompt explanation or practical resolution. Formal complaint can be made without completing this stage. |
| Stage 1 submitted | Acknowledge within 5 school days. |
| Stage 1 investigation | Investigate fairly and proportionately. Aim to issue outcome within 20 school days. |
| Stage 2 request | Request within 10 school days of Stage 1 outcome, subject to exceptional circumstances. |
| Stage 2 panel | Three impartial panel members. Aim to convene within 30 school days. Meeting may be in person or virtual. |
| Stage 2 decision | Issue written decision and reasons within 5 school days where possible. |
| School procedure complete | If dissatisfied with the school's handling, complainant may use the current Department for Education route. |

## Appendix 2: roles in the complaints process

| Role | Main responsibilities |
|---|---|
| Complainant | Explain the complaint and desired outcome clearly; provide relevant evidence; respond to reasonable requests; treat participants respectfully; respect the privacy of children, staff and third parties. |
| Stage 1 investigator | Establish relevant facts fairly; identify the evidence required; interview relevant people sensitively; keep clear records; distinguish fact from allegation or disputed evidence; report findings and recommendations to the Stage 1 decision-maker. |
| Stage 1 decision-maker | Confirm the complaint points; ensure the investigation was fair and sufficient; make and record a reasoned decision on each point; determine any remedy or learning; explain Stage 2 rights. |
| Nominated complaints co-ordinator | Administer the process; track deadlines; liaise with the parties; arrange reasonable adjustments; protect confidential information; prepare Stage 2 arrangements and papers as required. |
| Governance Professional / Clerk | Provide impartial governance and procedural advice; arrange or support panels; check independence and conflicts; record proceedings; support a clear outcome letter. |
| Stage 2 Panel Chair | Lead a fair, non-adversarial meeting; explain the remit; ensure each party can present relevant evidence; manage new evidence fairly; lead deliberation and ensure reasons are recorded. |
| Stage 2 Panel Members | Approach the complaint with an open mind; consider the complaint afresh; test evidence fairly; make a finding and reason on each point; recommend proportionate remedies or learning where appropriate. |
| Witness | Provide relevant factual evidence. Attend only for the relevant part of a meeting unless the panel agrees otherwise. Respect confidentiality and privacy. |
| Companion | Provide support to a participant. The companion will not normally answer questions on the participant's behalf unless this is agreed as a reasonable adjustment or is otherwise appropriate. |

## Appendix 3: complaint form

Please complete this form if it helps you set out your complaint. You may make a complaint in another accessible format or verbally if needed. Return the form to the school office and mark it “Private and Confidential” for the appropriate recipient under section 11.

| | |
|---|---|
| Your name | |
| Child’s name, if relevant | |
| Your relationship to the child, if relevant | |
| Address and postcode | |
| Telephone number | |
| Email address | |
| Is this a Stage 1 complaint or a Stage 2 request? | |
| Please set out the complaint points you want considered. If this is a Stage 2 request, explain what remains disputed from Stage 1. | |
| What outcome or resolution are you seeking? | |
| Please list any documents or evidence you are providing. | |
| Do you need any reasonable adjustment or communication support to take part in the process? | |
| Signature and date | |

## Official use only

| Field | Record |
|---|---|
| Date received | |
| Date acknowledged | |
| Complaint reference | |
| Current stage | |
| Decision-maker / investigator | |
| Deadline / revised deadline | |
| Stage 2 request received, if applicable | |
| Closure date | |

## Approval record

| | |
|---|---|
| Status | Approved by Full Governing Body |
| Approval date | 16 September 2026 |
| Approved by | Governing Body |
| Signed on behalf of the Governing Body | September 2026 |
| Review date | September 2027 |

## Reference framework

- Education Act 2002, section 29.
- Department for Education: School complaints procedures - guidance for maintained schools, including Best practice guidance for school complaints procedures 2020 (current guidance last updated 15 January 2021).
- Department for Education: Maintained schools governance guide.
- Nottinghamshire County Council: Model Complaints Policy for Maintained Schools, September 2026.
- Equality Act 2010.
- Data Protection Act 2018, UK GDPR and Data (Use and Access) Act 2025 where relevant.
- Education (Pupil Information) (England) Regulations 2005 where relevant.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 where safeguarding overlaps.
- Current Nottinghamshire Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub and Managing Allegations / LADO arrangements.