



Theale C of E Primary School

School complaints procedures

At Theale CE Primary School the children come first. They are central to every decision made in school. We will ensure that our children are happy and successful. They will grow to be ambitious and resilient and their talents will be nurtured so they become highly skilled. Our children will be courageous and always behave with integrity.

“And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This *is* the first commandment. And the second, like *it, is* this: ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” *Mark 12: v 30-31*

“I have come that they may have life and that they may have it more abundantly.”
John 10:10

Published on public website	Yes
Links to related policies and procedures	School complaints policy
Author	Chair of Governors
Approved by	Governing Body
Date approved	Spring 2022
Date of next review	Spring 2025
Responsibility for next review	Chair of Governors

Investigating Complaints

At each stage the person investigating the complaint will ensure that they:

- establish what has happened so far, and who has been involved,
- clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved,
- meet with the complainant or contact them (if unsure or further information is necessary),
- clarify what the complainant feels would put things right,
- interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish,
- conduct the interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning,
- keep notes of any interview or meeting,
- communicate with the complainant at each stage over discussions and agreements reached.

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the school. Two different types of complaint are recognised by the school:

- a) A **complaint** - where the School may be at fault because we may have failed to do something we should have, or we may have done something we should not have.
- b) A **grievance** - where the complainant is dissatisfied but we are not at fault because we are following an agreed policy or procedure. The grievance relates to policies and budgets already agreed by the school and its Governing Body. As such the School has not failed to do something it said it would, or has agreed to do.

Resolving Complaints

At each stage in the procedure, successful resolution of the complaint will take priority. If appropriate one or more of the following may be offered:

- an apology,
- an explanation,
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better,
- an assurance that the event complained of will not recur,
- an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again,
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint.

At any stage complainants will be encouraged to state what actions they feel might resolve the problem.

Time Limits

Complaints will be considered and resolved as quickly and efficiently as possible. Realistic time limits will be set for each action within each stage. However, where further investigations are necessary, new time limits may need to be set and the complainant sent details of the new deadline and an explanation for the delay.

On occasion, the school may need to extend the time to respond to a Stage 1 or Stage 2 complaint. This may be because of resource or capacity issues or because additional information needs to be obtained to investigate the complaint. In such cases, the school will provide a holding letter explaining the reason for the delay and providing a date by which a response will be supplied.

Response times given refer to Monday to Friday inclusive, term time only.

STAGE ONE: INFORMAL

Complaint or grievance heard by a member of staff member who is not the subject of the complaint.

Complaints must not be referred to individual governors. Where the first approach is made to a governor, the complainant should be referred to the appropriate person above and advised of the procedure. Governors must not act on an individual complaint outside the formal procedure or be involved at the early stages in case they are needed to sit on a panel at a later stage of the procedure.

Where the complaint concerns the Headteacher, there is no informal procedure and the complaint should be made under Stage 2b (see below).

At this informal stage the complaint may be either made verbally or in writing.

Where someone is unhappy with an issue in school they should contact a member of staff in the first instance. In most cases this will be either a child's teacher or the school office. The member of staff receiving the complaint will either:

- provide a response to the complainant (after discussions with relevant colleagues if necessary) or
- refer the complaint to the appropriate person within the school. e.g. the SENCo if the complainant is the parent of an SEN child.

If the complainant indicates that he/she would have difficulty discussing a complaint with a particular member of staff, or the complaint relates to the member of staff, the complainant may be referred to another staff member (or the Headteacher). The ability to consider the complaint objectively and impartially is crucial.

The member of staff handling the complaint will give a response within five school days and normally much more quickly. Normally that response will be verbal, either face to face or by phone.

If the complainant wishes to move to Stage 2, a request must be submitted to the school in writing **within 15 school days** otherwise the matter is considered closed and will not be considered further. The letter should contain the phrase 'a formal complaint' (or the school will need to clarify the status of the complaint) and explain why the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1.

STAGE TWO (formal):

2a) Complaint or grievance heard by Headteacher

If dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage One, the complainant should contact the Headteacher about the issue. (At this point, the complainant may be dissatisfied with the way the complaint was handled at stage one as well as pursuing their initial complaint.) The Headteacher will provide a response to the complainant (after discussions with relevant colleagues, if necessary).

The school will respond in writing **within 15 school days**, with a summary of the complaint and a response.

If the complainant wishes to move to Stage 3a (see below), a request must be submitted to the school in writing **within 15 school days** of receiving the response from the school otherwise the matter is considered closed and will not be considered further. The letter must explain why the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2a.

If the complaint is about the Headteacher, the complaint will be treated under Stage 2b.

2b) Concern/Complaint heard by Chair of the Governing Body

If the complaint is about the headteacher, the complainant should contact the Chair of the Governing Body about the issue. The Chair can be contacted by letter addressed to the school. The Chair of the Governing Body will discuss the concerns with the Headteacher and provide a response to the complainant.

Under Law, where the Chair of the Governing Body is absent, the Vice Chair (or a representative nominated by the full Governing Body) will assume the responsibilities outlined in this procedure.

The Chair will respond in writing ***within 15 school days***, with a summary of the complaint and a response.

If the complainant wishes to move to Stage 3b (see below), a request must be submitted to the Chair in writing ***within 15 school days***. Otherwise the matter is considered closed, and will not be considered further. The letter must explain why the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2b.

STAGE THREE (review):

3a) Concern/complaint heard by Chair of the Governing Body (if not heard at 2b)

If dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2a) the complainant should contact the Chair of the Governing Body about the issue. The Chair can be contacted by letter addressed to the school. The Chair of the Governing Body will discuss the concerns with the Headteacher and provide a response to the complainant.

Under Law, where the Chair of the Governing Body is absent, the Vice Chair (or a representative nominated by the full Governing Body) will assume the responsibilities outlined in this procedure.

The Chair will respond in writing ***within 15 school days***, with a summary of the complaint and a response.

If the complainant wishes to move to Stage 3b, a request must be submitted to the Chair in writing ***within 15 school days***. Otherwise the matter is considered closed, and will not be considered further. The letter must explain why the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 3a.

3b) Complaint heard by the Governing Body's Complaints Panel – this may include governors from our partner school Enborne CE Primary School where insufficient eligible Theale governors are available.

If dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 2b or 3a, the complainant may write to the Chair of the Governing Body about the complaint, and the Chair will convene the Governing Body's Complaints Panel to review the handling of the complaint at Stage 2 or 3a and to examine the decision reached. The complainant should explain why they are requesting a review, and why they consider the response they have received to be unsatisfactory.

The Governing Body will determine which governors sit on the Governing Body Complaints Panel. The membership of the Panel will not include the Chair as s/he will have considered the complaint under Stage 2b or 3a. Staff governors and the Headteacher are also excluded, as are any governors who have a prior involvement in the case.

Individual complaints will not be heard by the whole Governing Body at any stage, as this could compromise the impartiality of any panel set up for a disciplinary hearing against a member of staff following a serious complaint. It is not appropriate for the details of complaints to be shared widely amongst the Governing Body.

The Remit of the Complaints Panel:

The governor chairing the Panel will acknowledge receipt of the complaint ***within five school days***.

The Panel will convene to examine the complaint ***within 15 school days*** of receipt of the complaint. The Complaints Panel is not convened to merely rubber-stamp previous decisions. It will investigate the complaint promptly and impartially.

If the matter is complex and requires more time to investigate, a letter may be sent to the complainant outlining the reasons for any delay and the subsequent timescale for the complaint.

Every effort must be made to respond to complaints in a timely manner.

The Complaints Panel will decide on the method of investigation depending on the nature of the complaint. The Complaints Panel can:

- 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, policies or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

Panel members must not have a conflict of interest and must not have been involved in the matters under review.

Outcome of the Complaints Panel meeting:

The complainant will receive a written explanation of the outcome and action taken ***within five school days*** of the Panel's meeting.

If the complainant is still dissatisfied, the final course of action is to write to the Secretary of State for education.