



THE ABBEY CE VA PRIMARY SCHOOL Complaints Policy

Date policy approved and adopted:	January 2018
Date reviewed:	February 2019
Next Review date:	February 2022

This policy is based on the Hertfordshire model procedure for dealing with school based complaints - publication date September 2017-September 2019 (publication schedule number CS4288). The policy was updated in February 2019 following the DfE Best practice guidance for school complaints procedures 2019 (11 January 2019).

How we will deal with your concerns – either comments or complaint

A 'concern' may be treated as 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'.

A complaint may be generally recognised as 'an expression or statement of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'.

Some complaints fall outside the school's complaints procedure, for example:

- Admissions
- Child protection
- Exclusions
- Staff grievances (Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures)
- Disciplinary procedures (Staff conduct complaints about staff are 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)
- Whistleblowing

How to comment:

We care about what you think. Each day Abbey School makes many decisions and tries hard to do the best for all the children. Your comments - either positive or negative - are helpful for future planning. You may want to talk to us about a particular aspect of this school, though not actually make a complaint - you just want to get something 'off your chest'. It is important to differentiate a concern from a complaint. A concern can be defined as a cause of worry, and should be handled without the need for formal procedures.

Your comments will be shared with staff on a need to know basis. If you are dissatisfied about the way your child is being treated, or any actions or lack of action by us, please feel free to contact us using the contact details below marked for the attention of the relevant member of teaching staff or the Head of Key Stage 1 or 2, dependent on the age of your child:

The Abbey CE VA Primary School, Grove Road, St Albans, Herts, AL1 1DQ. 01727 851802
admin@abbey.herts.sch.uk www.abbey.herts.sch.uk

We aim to make an initial response, if required, within two school days, and may need up to five school days where a more detailed response is necessary.

How to make a complaint:

In the first instance – Informal stage

If you have a concern about anything we do, or if you wish to make a complaint, you can do this by telephone, in person or in writing (by letter or email) via the School Office.

We hope that most complaints can be settled quickly and informally, either by putting matters right or by giving you an explanation. Your concern or complaint will be shared with staff on a need to know basis.

Complaints should be made as soon as possible and at the latest within three months of your child leaving Abbey School. For Year 6 children who transfer to secondary school this will be three months from the last day of the summer term. The Governing Board will consider exceptional circumstances when deciding whether to accept a complaint after this timeframe.

Informal stage step 1

If there is something you are not happy about, or you don't understand why we are doing something in a particular way, please come in and discuss it with the class teacher or Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) SENCO@abbey.herts.sch.uk if it is about Special Needs.

We know that it can feel uncomfortable to question or challenge something, but if you don't tell us what is worrying you we cannot explain what we are doing or try to put it right. We aim to make an initial response, if required, within two school days, and may need up to five school days where a more detailed response is necessary.

Informal stage step 2

If the member of staff you speak to in the first instance is unable to attempt to resolve the matter, you should make an appointment with the Head of relevant Key Stage 1 or 2 using the email address KS1head@abbey.herts.sch.uk or KS2head@abbey.herts.sch.uk. We aim to make an initial response within two school days, and may need up to five school days where a more detailed response is necessary. These senior staff members should be able to address your concerns, but sometimes this is not possible.

Informal stage step 3

Where this is the case, parents are invited, after speaking to a Head of Key Stage, to raise their concern with the Headteacher. The Headteacher will aim to make an initial response within two school days, and may need up to ten school days where a more detailed response is necessary.

If after meeting the Head of Key stage and the Headteacher your concern is still unsettled parents can enter the formal stage by raising a Formal stage 1 complaint.

Our aims:

- Your complaint will be dealt with honestly, politely and in confidence.
- Your complaint will be looked into thoroughly and fairly.
- If your complaint is urgent we will deal with it more quickly.
- We will keep you up to date with progress at each stage.
- You will get an apology if we have made a mistake.

- You will be told what we are going to do to put things right.
- You will get a full and clear written reply to formal complaints within 28 school days (5½ weeks).

How to make a complaint-Formal stage:

Formal stage 1

Following the Informal stage steps 1-3 parents can request a meeting with the Headteacher who will investigate your complaint further and aim to inform parents of the outcome within 10 school days (2 weeks) on receipt of receiving Appendix 1 completed by the parents. The Headteacher will respond using Appendix 3.

Complaints should be made as soon as possible and at the latest within three months of your child leaving Abbey School. For Year 6 children who transfer to secondary school this will be three months from the last day of the summer term. The Governing Board will consider exceptional circumstances when deciding whether to accept a complaint after this timeframe.

Documents and discussions must remain strictly confidential between parent making the formal complaint and staff involved to allow the complaints policy to be implemented.

If your first contact is with individual Governors, they will advise you to take up your concerns with the appropriate member of staff or Head of Key stage. A Governor should not be made aware of a potential complaint as they may be required to sit on a Panel in the event of a formal hearing (Formal stage 2) and should be impartial.

If your complaint is about the Headteacher, you should write to the Chair of Governors govchair@abbey.herts.sch.uk.

If your complaint is about a member of the governing body you should write to the clerk of the Governing Body via the School Business Manager SBM@abbey.herts.ch.uk. The clerk will arrange for the complaint to be heard by a suitably skilled and impartial member of the governing body and then a committee of members of the Governing Board if escalated to Formal stage 2.

If your complaint is about the entire Governing Board or complaints involving both the chair and vice chair these should also be sent to the clerk of the Governing Body via the School Business Manager SBM@abbey.herts.ch.uk, who will determine the most appropriate course of action. This will depend on the nature of the complaint. This may involve sourcing an independent investigator and if escalated, co-opted governors from other schools to hear the complaint in Formal stage 2.

If your child has an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) you might find it helpful to talk to our Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) or your child's named Special Needs Officer at the Local Authority. The SEND Information Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS – formerly Parent Partnership) may also be able to help you.

Formal stage 2

If you remain dissatisfied following Formal stage 1 and wish to take your complaint further, you will be asked to complete Appendix 2 addressed to the Chair of Governors via the School Office. Complaints can be escalated from Formal stage 1 to Formal stage 2 within thirty school days from receipt of Appendix 3 from the Headteacher. The Governing Board will consider exceptional circumstances when deciding whether to accept an escalation after this time frame.

In Appendix 2 you should:

- Make it clear why you are complaining.
- Say who you have spoken to already.
- Explain what you want to happen as a result of your complaint.

The Chair of Governors will arrange for your complaint to be considered and investigated under the arrangements approved by the Governing Board. This should involve a Panel of Governors at a hearing where the complainant and the respondent are invited to attend. If the Chair of Governors or another Governor has been involved in discussions to help settle the matter at Stage 1, s/he should arrange for another Governor to take charge of the situation.

Neither the Chair of Governors nor the Governor in charge should sit on the Panel themselves and they should instead ensure that a Panel is convened in line with the timeframes and guidance set out in the school's complaints procedure. The Governor in charge of investigating the complaint may ask to meet you to discuss your concerns. It is not advisable for a Panel to investigate and conclude matters without giving the Complainant and Respondent the opportunity to respond. Therefore a formal hearing with all in attendance is most preferable.

Parents should make sure that the Governors' Complaint Panel is provided with any written information or evidence you intend to use in a formal hearing. You may bring a friend, representative or interpreter to any meeting if you wish. The Chair of the Panel may invite any person who may help establish the facts of the complaint. The Chair should tell you who this person is before the meeting. If any member of staff is required by the Governing Board to attend a meeting they will have the opportunity to be accompanied or represented as they wish. A member of staff named in a complaint may also choose to attend a meeting, even if not required to do so by the Governors. They may be represented. If this happens, we will inform you in advance.

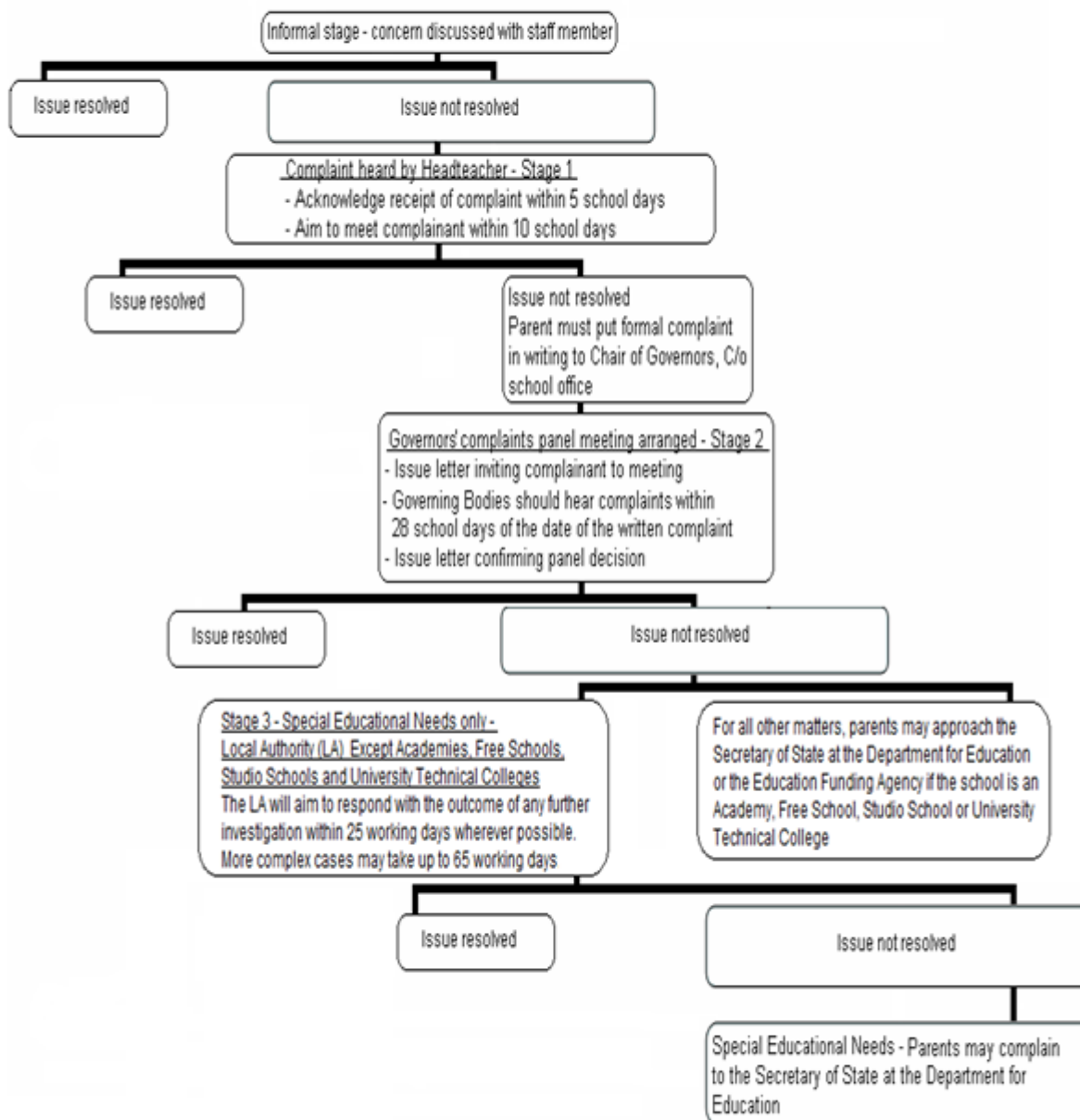
When the Panel has fully investigated your complaint, the Chair of the Panel or the Governor in charge of the investigation will write to you to tell you the findings. These findings will be reported to the Governing Body. The Chair of Governors will then write to you confirming the outcome of your complaint and any agreed actions to be taken. Our Governing Body will aim to deal with your Formal stage 2 complaint within 28 school days (5½ weeks).

General Principles of complaints diagram:

Extracted from 'School Complaints Procedure' document (DFE)

Dealing with complaints

The Education Act 2002 requires all schools to have a complaints procedure that has been approved by the Governing Body and publicised to parents.



Please note that the timescales specified in diocesan complaints guidance may differ from those detailed above. School days are term time only, whilst working days are weekdays throughout the year.

Further recourse:

Most complaints are resolved by this process. Should your complaint not be resolved following the process above, your further options are as follows following completion of Formal stage 2:

- **For complaints regarding denominational religious education or collective worship only you may complain to the Diocese of St Albans:**

The Diocesan Director of Education, Diocesan Office, Holywell Lodge, 41 Holywell Hill, St Albans, AL1 1HE. Email: schools@stalbans.anglican.org Website: www.stalbans.anglican.org Telephone: 01727 818170.

- **You can complain to the Secretary of State at the Department for Education:**

The Secretary of State Department for Education, Sanctuary Buildings Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BT. Website: www.education.gov.uk Telephone: 0370 000 2288

In the case of complaints about Special Educational Needs provision, you may complain further to the Local Authority. This should be done by writing to the Children's Services Complaints Manager.

It should be noted however that if you wish to pursue this route, you must do so within 20 working days (4 weeks) of receiving the written outcome of the hearing into your complaint. After 20 working days (4 weeks), neither the school nor the Local Authority is under any obligation to investigate or progress your complaint any further.

Useful contacts:

Advisory Centre for Education
Education Advice & Training
72 Durnsford Road
London
N11 2EJ
Web: www.ace-ed.org.uk
Phone: 0300 0115 142

POhWER
Hertlands House
Primett Road
Stevenage
SG1 3EE
Web: www.pohwer.net
Phone: 0300 456 2370

Children's Legal Centre
Riverside Office Centre
Century House North
North Station Road
Colchester
Essex
CO1 1RE
Web: www.childrenslegalcentre.com
0345 345 4345

National Youth Advocacy Service
(NYAS)
Egerton House
Tower Road
Birkenhead
Wirral
CH41 1FN
Web: www.nyas.net Phone:
Phone: 0345 345 4345

Special Educational Needs & Disability Information Advice Support Service (SENDIASS)
Web: www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/sendiaass
Email: SENDIASS@hertfordshire.gov.uk
Phone: 01992 555847



The Abbey CE VA Primary School

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Dear parent

Following our meeting on [date], I am writing to provide the outcome of my investigation of your complaint raised. We are committed to learning and improving every child's experience within our school and thank you for raising your concern, as we know this can feel uncomfortable to question or challenge.

1- Grounds of the complaint

I understand the complaint to be...

And note you would like the following outcome...

2- Investigation

I have conducted the following investigation:

- [detail materials reviewed, Policies applicable]
- [detail persons interviewed and statements recorded]
- [detail further advice, policy interpretation etc...]
-

3- Outcome of my Investigation

I have reached the conclusions below for the following reasons and taking all of the below circumstances into consideration...

I propose the following resolution for the complaint you raised...

4- Next steps and referral rights

Given the resolution proposed above, I am proposing the following next steps [this will naturally vary depending on the outcome]:

- e.g. I will be communicating to the staff / full school _____
- e.g. I will be reviewing the following policy / procedure _____
- e.g. I have implemented the following steps _____
- e.g. I have informed the Governing Body _____

If you are not satisfied with this resolution of your complaint at this stage (Formal stage 1), you can escalate the complaint to the Chair of Governors (Formal stage 2) using Appendix 2 . The chair will then arrange for your Formal stage 2 complaint to be investigated and considered by a panel of governors and aim to respond within 28 working schooldays using Appendix 4.

Feel free to contact me should you have any further questions, or wish to clarify any of the points raised in this letter.

Kind regards,

Headteacher



The Abbey CE VA Primary School

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Dear parent

FORMAL STAGE 2 COMPLAINT FINDINGS – date

Thank you for attending the Hearing on...

The Panel considered the complaint raised that...

At the Panel the complaint was clarified ...

The Panel considered the evidence very carefully ...

It is unfortunate that ...

We have noted the ...

We shall be making the following recommendations to the Headteacher:...

As a result of our investigation, there are also some recommendations that we shall be making to the Governing Body....

This decision is final and your complaint is now closed.

You may make a complaint to the Department of Education if you believe the Governing Body has acted outside its powers or is misusing them. The Secretary of State's address is Department of Education, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BT.

Yours sincerely