SLADEFIELD INFANT SCHOOL

Complaints Procedure

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Complaints Procedure

In accordance with equality law we will consider making reasonable adjustments, if required, to enable you to access this complaints procedure. Please contact us if, for example, you require a copy of this procedure in a particular format (such as large print) or require assistance with raising a formal complaint or holding complaint meetings in accessible locations.

1. Introduction

All schools are legally required to have a procedure in place to deal with complaints relating to the school. The Governing Board of our school has approved the following procedure which explains what you should do if you have concerns or wish to make a complaint and how your complaint will be dealt with.

Our school follows current advice and guidance published by the Department for Education (DfE) regarding school complaints procedures, including on dealing with serial and persistent complaints. Our school intends for all concerns or complaints to be dealt with fairly, openly and promptly.

This procedure applies to all concerns or complaints, **except** for those which relate to:

- pupil admissions and exclusions,
- statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN),
- child protection and safeguarding procedures,
- staff conduct, grievances, capability or disciplinary procedures,
- services provided from the school's premises by other organisations,
- school re-organisation proposals,
- National Curriculum content,
- whistleblowing or
- Subject Access Requests (SAR) and Freedom of Information (FOI) requests.

You can access policies relating to the above on our school website or ask us for a copy. If applicable, you can also contact the relevant organisation which operates a service from our school premises.

2. Resolving concerns informally

It is in everyone's interest that concerns are resolved informally at the earliest possible stage, before they become formal complaints which need to invoke formal procedures. We encourage parents with a concern to raise it informally with their child's class teacher in the first instance. Other concerns can be raised through the school office. We hope that we will either be able to address your concern on the spot, or arrange to discuss it further at a mutually convenient time.

Our Head Teacher and/or Chair of the Governing Board will not routinely be involved in resolving informal concerns but, in exceptional circumstances, appointments can be made with them by contacting the school office. It is for them to determine if such circumstances are exceptional and if it is therefore appropriate for them to become involved at this stage.

You should not approach individual governors to raise concerns or complaints, as they have no authority to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at Stage 2 of this procedure.

3. Observing confidentiality

Where possible complaints will be dealt with confidentially and, where the Governing Board is involved, we will avoid sharing details of your complaint with the whole Governing Board except in very general terms. We would also ask **you** to observe confidentiality and not discuss complaints publically or via social media.

Our school maintains a centrally held record of all formal complaints received, including any actions taken and outcome, and documentation referred to as part of the complaints process. You have a right to request copies in accordance with our policy of dealing with Subject Access Requests (SAR) and Freedom of Information (FOI) requests.

The governing board will monitor the effectiveness of the complaints procedures to ensure that all complaints received are managed appropriately.

4. Safeguarding

Wherever a complaint suggests that a child's wellbeing or safety is at risk, our school has a duty to report this immediately in accordance with our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, a copy of which is available on our website.

5. Timescales

Our school will endeavour to abide by timescales stated under each stage of the process below. Sometimes, due to the nature or complexity of the concern raised, we may need to set different timescales in which case you will be notified of the date by which we will respond and you will be kept informed of progress throughout. We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

Our school will not look into complaints that have been made more than ***3 months*** after the event that led to the complaint, apart from in exceptional circumstances. It is for us to determine if such circumstances are exceptional and if it is therefore appropriate for the complaint to be looked into.

If other bodies are investigating aspects of your complaint, for example the police, local authority safeguarding teams or tribunals, this may impact on our ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or could result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations.

If you start legal action against our school in relation to your complaint, we will consider whether to suspend our procedure regarding this complaint until those legal proceedings have concluded.

6. Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, our school wants to resolve your concern. The person looking into your complaint (or persons if a panel of governors in involved) may:

- **contact** you and any other person that they consider necessary, in order to consider the issue(s) raised in the complaint;
- **review** any documentation provided in support of your complaint or that they consider relevant;
- **request** further information or documents from you (or others) before the process can continue.

After considering the available evidence, this person(s) will decide that your complaint is either:

- **upheld**, in which case they will recommend any action(s) that could be taken by our school in order to resolve it;
- **not upheld**; or
- **partially upheld**, in which case they will recommend any action(s) that could be taken by our school in order to resolve the upheld part of your complaint.

In addition, our school may offer you one or more of the following:

- an **explanation** and/or an **apology**;
- an **admission** that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
- an **assurance** that we will try to help ensure that what you complained about will not happen again, and/or an **explanation** of the steps that have been or will be taken in this respect, indicating the timescale within which any changes will be made;
- an **undertaking** to review school policies in light of the complaint.

7. Submitting and looking into your formal complaint (Stage 1)

If you want to make **a formal complaint**, please complete all sections of the form at **Appendix A** and then submit it to the school office, marked as **Private and Confidential**. If you would like to raise your complaint via another method, i.e. verbally or in person, please contact the school office. Complaints may also be submitted by a third party acting on your behalf, as long as you have shared with us your consent for them to do so.

If your complaint is about or involving our:

- **staff** (other than the Head Teacher), please address it in the first instance to the **Head Teacher**;
- **Head Teacher**, please address it to our **Chair of Governors**;
- **Chair of Governors**, any individual governor or the whole governing board, please address it to the **Clerk to the Governing Board**.

We will acknowledge your complaint in writing within ***5 school days*** (i.e. excluding weekends, bank holidays or school holidays) of receiving it, and confirm the name of the person who will look into it. As part of their investigation, this person will:

- seek to clarify the nature of your complaint;
- establish what remains unresolved and what outcome you would like to see; and
- consider whether a face to face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

You will receive either a **notification** of the outcome or an **update** on our investigation, in writing within ***15 school days*** of us acknowledging receipt of your complaint form. The notification will explain the reason(s) behind our decision and how you can request a review of it if you are dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint at Stage 1. The update will explain why the

process of looking into your complaint is still ongoing (e.g. because further documents have been requested) and estimate when it is expected to conclude.

8. Appealing the outcome of Stage 1 of your complaint (Stage 2)

If you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1 and wish to take the matter further, you can **request for the outcome to be reviewed** by the complaints panel of our governing board. To do that, please complete the review form at **Appendix B** and submit it to the Clerk to the Governing Board via our school office, marked as **Private and Confidential,** within ***20 school days*** of the date when you received the Stage 1 decision letter. If you would like to request a review via another method, i.e. verbally or in person, please contact the school office.

The **review panel** will be formed of at least three impartial governors with no prior involvement with or knowledge of your complaint. If your complaint is jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair, the majority of or the whole governing board, the panel will consist of external independent governors. The Clerk will acknowledge your review request in writing within ***5 school days*** of receiving it. We aim to convene the **review panel meeting** within ***20 school days*** of receiving your request. If this is not possible, the Clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep you informed.

At least ***10 school days*** before the review meeting date, the Clerk will contact you to:

- **confirm the date**, time and venue of the meeting ensuring that, if you are invited, the date is convenient to all the parties and the venue and proceedings are accessible;
- **request copies** of any further written material (if required), which needs to be submitted to the review panel no later than ***5 school days*** before the date of the meeting.

If you **reject the offer** of three proposed dates to meet without good reason, the panel reserves the right to convene the review meeting, which will then proceed in your absence on the basis of written submissions from both parties.

The panel will decide who they need to **invite to the meeting**, in order to enable them to review the outcome of your complaint effectively. Those invited may include:

- you, the complainant;
- the person who looked into your complaint at Stage 1 above; and
- any other relevant parties identified by the panel e.g. witnesses.

You are entitled to **bring a friend or colleague** to the review meeting. You should notify the panel if you intend to bring someone along and if you intend them to speak on your behalf.

The panel does not usually consider it necessary for **legal representatives** to be present at the review meeting. If you are considering bringing one though, you should make your request at least ***5 school days*** in advance of the meeting date, providing a clear explanation for why you believe one should attend. The panel will consider and respond to your request, but has absolute discretion to refuse attendance by legal representatives if it considers this appropriate.

Any **written material will be circulated** to all parties at least ***5 school days*** before the date of the meeting. The panel will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

The panel will also **not review any new complaints** at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint. New complaints must be dealt with from stage 1 of the procedure.

The meeting will be held in private. **Electronic recordings** of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's own needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before recording meetings or conversations. Consent or otherwise will be recorded in any notes taken.

The panel determines the **procedure followed at the review meeting**. In doing so it follows current advice and guidance published by the Department for Education (DfE) regarding school complaints procedures, including on dealing with serial and persistent complaints.

Within ***10 school days*** of the review panel meeting, the Clerk will write to you and the school's Senior Management Team explaining the panel's decision.

This is the **final stage in our internal complaints procedure**. If the same issues are raised with the school following the panel review, we will only re-consider these points in exceptional circumstances, for example where new evidence has come to light.

9. Escalating your complaint beyond the school

- If you believe we did not handle your complaint in accordance with our published procedure, or we acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of our duties under education law, you can **contact the Department for Education (DfE)** after completing Stage 2. The DfE will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn our decisions, but they will consider whether we have adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint.
- You can submit your complaint online at www.gov.uk/contact-dfe, by phone on 0370 000 2288 or in writing to: Department for Education, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD.

10. Queries that relate to this Complaints Procedure

If you have any questions about this complaints procedure, please contact the school office.

11. Relevant legislation and guidance

- The Equality Act 2010 www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents
- School complaints procedures: guidance for schools www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-complaints-procedures
- Section 29 of the Education Act 2002 www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents

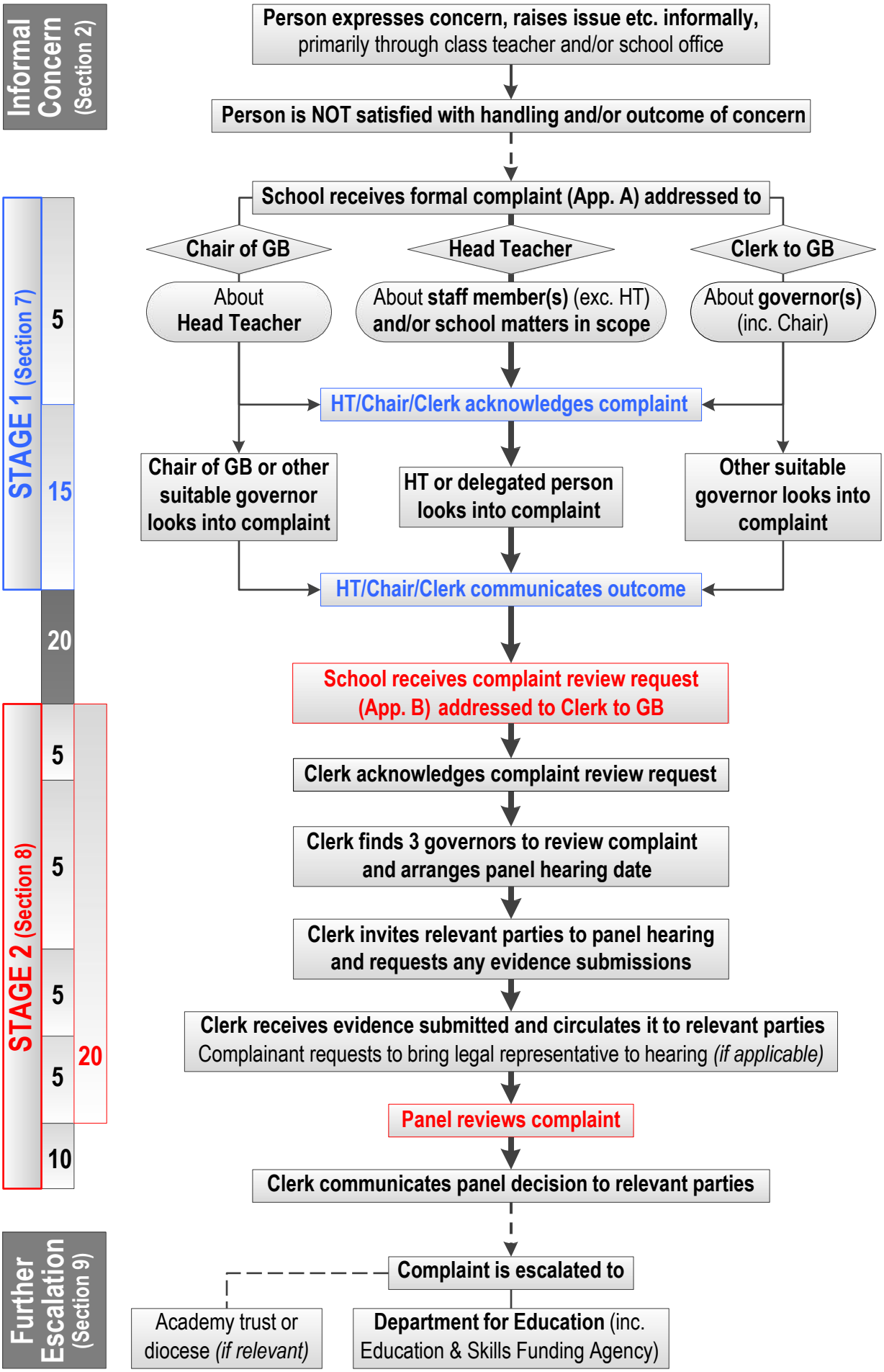
Signed

Chair of the Governing Board

Date: **Review Date**:

Complaints Procedure Flowchart

(inc. timeline in school days and references to corresponding procedure sections)



Formal Complaint Form (Appendix A)

If you wish to make a formal complaint, please complete this form and return it to the school.

Your **name**	
Your **address**	
Contact **phone** no. (day/mobile)	
Contact **email** address	
Pupil name, year group and your relationship to them *(where applicable)*	
Have you **shared this as an informal concern?**	**Yes / No** If yes, with **whom**?
Complaint details – please provide an overview of the complaint so far, who has been involved, why your concerns remain unresolved.	
Action(s) taken so far (including staff member dealing with it) and/or **solution(s)** offered.	

The **reason(s)** why this was **not a satisfactory resolution** for you.
What **action(s)** do you feel might **resolve the problem**?

Signed: Date:

Please return this form to: Sladefield Infant School, Bamville Road, Ward End, Birmingham B8 2TJ

Official use	
Date received:	*Signed:*
Date acknowledgement sent:	
Complaint referred to:	*Date:*

Complaint Review Request Form (Appendix B)

If you wish to request a review of the outcome of your complaint, please complete this form and return it to the school.

Your **name**	
Your **address**	
Contact **phone** no. (day/mobile)	
Contact **email** address	
When did you submit your **formal complaint (Appendix A)?**	
Why do you **remain dissatisfied by the outcome** of your complaint? *You may continue on a separate piece of paper or attach additional documents.*	

What **action(s)** do you feel might **resolve your c**omplaint at this stage?

Signed: Date:

Please return this form to: Sladefield Infant School, Bamville Road, Ward End, Birmingham B8 2TJ

Official use	
Date received:	*Signed:*
Date acknowledgement sent:	
Review request referred to:	*Date:*