

# The Priory CE VA Primary School

*Inspiring a generation to learn, flourish and achieve in a caring,  
Christian community.*



## Complaints Policy

Complaints Policy			
<b>Approval</b>	Board of Governors	<b>Chair</b>	Geoff Tabor
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sarah Richardson		
<b>Date of last review</b>	Sep 2022	<b>Date of this review</b>	February 2025
<b>Date of next review</b>	3 Yearly – Sep 2027	<b>Maintenance</b>	Headteacher

## **1. Who can make a complaint?**

This complaints procedure is mainly aimed at parents or carers of children who are registered at the school, but it is not limited to them.

Any member of the public may make a complaint to The Priory CE VA Primary School about any provision of facilities or services that the school provides.

Children who attend The Priory CE VA Primary School have their own complaints procedure drawn up using the Common Principles for a Child Friendly Complaints Process outlined by the Children's Commissioner.

Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as appeals relating to exclusions or admissions), the school will use this complaints procedure.

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

A concern may be defined as *'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'*. A complaint may be defined as *'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'*.

It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest opportunity. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. The Priory CE VA Primary School takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, the Headteacher will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, the Headteacher will refer you to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important.

We understand however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, the Headteacher will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

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

A concern or complaint can be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

Concerns should be raised with either the class teacher, then a member of the senior leadership team. This can be done in writing or telephone or in person by appointment, during school hours. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

A formal complaint must be made in writing.

Complainants should not approach individual governors to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at Stage 2 of the procedure – see below.

Complaints against school staff (except the head teacher) should be made in the first instance, to the headteacher via the school office. Please mark them as ‘private and confidential’.

Complaints that involve or are about the head teacher should be addressed to the Chair of Governors via the school office. Please mark them as ‘private and confidential’.

Complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor or the whole governing body should be addressed to the clerk to the governing body via the school office. Please mark them as ‘private and confidential’.

For ease of use, a template complaint form is included at the end of this procedure. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office. You can also ask third party organisations such as Citizens Advice to help you.

In accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure. For instance, providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

#### **4. Anonymous complaints**

The school will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the head teacher or chair of governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

#### **5. 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 or a child not attending this school, we will remind them that we have already considered the complaint and the local process is complete. Complainants will be advised to contact the DfE if they are dissatisfied with our handling of the complaint.

#### **6. 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.

## 7. Timescales

Complainants must raise the complaint within three months of the incident, or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

## 8. Complaints received outside of term time

We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

## 9. Scope of this complaints procedure

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

Exceptions	Who to contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Admissions to schools</li> <li>● Statutory assessments of special educational needs</li> <li>● School re-organisation proposals</li> </ul>	<p>As a voluntary aided school, concerns about admissions should be directed to the school. However statutory assessments of special educational needs or school reorganisation proposals should be raised with BCP Council.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation</li> </ul>	<p>Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.</p> <p>If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Exclusion of children from school*</li> </ul>	<p>Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at</p>

	<p><a href="http://www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions">www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions</a>.</p> <p>*complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Whistleblowing</li> </ul>	<p>We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors.</p> <p>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 <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus">www.education.gov.uk/contactus</a>.</p> <p>Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain directly to the local authority or the DfE, depending on the substance of your complaint.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Staff grievances</li> </ul>	<p>Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Staff conduct</li> </ul>	<p>Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate.</p> <p><b>Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint.</b></p> <p>However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities</li> </ul>	<p>Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● National curriculum - content</li> </ul>	<p>Please contact the DfE at <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus">www.education.gov.uk/contactus</a></p>

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority

(LA) safeguarding teams or tribunals, this may impact on our ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations.

If a complainant commences legal action against The Priory CE VA Primary School in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure in relation to their complaint until those legal proceedings have concluded.

## **10. Resolving complaints**

At each stage in the procedure, The Priory CE VA Primary School wants to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may 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 the event 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 policies in light of the complaint;
- an apology.

## **11. Withdrawal of a complaint**

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

## **12. Formal Complaints Procedure**

If it is not possible to resolve the complaint informally, after raising the concern with a class teacher and senior leader, the complainant is advised to make a formal complaint. There are two stages to this procedure.

### **12. 1 - Stage 1 (Head Teacher)**

- Formal complaints must be made to the head teacher (unless they are about the head teacher), via the school office. This must be done in writing, preferably using the complaint form but letters or emails are acceptable. The head teacher will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 3 school days. Within this response, if necessary, the head teacher will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The head teacher can consider whether a face-to-face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

*Note: The head teacher may delegate the investigation to another member of the school's senior leadership team but not the decision to be taken.*

During the investigation, the head teacher (or investigator) will:

- if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
- keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the head teacher will provide a formal written response within 10 school days from the date of the acknowledgment. If the head teacher is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions The Priory CE VA Primary School will take to resolve the complaint.

The head teacher will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1. If the complaint is about the head teacher or a member of the governing body (including the Chair or Vice-Chair), a suitably skilled governor will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 1.

Complaints about the head teacher or member of the governing body must be made to the clerk, via the school office.

If the complaint is jointly about the chair and vice chair, or the entire governing body, or the majority of the governing body, Stage 1 will be considered by an independent investigator appointed by the governing body or a representative from the Winchester Diocese. At the conclusion of its investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response. As the complaint cannot be heard by members of the governing body and therefore cannot move to Stage 2, this concludes the complaints procedure.

## **12. 2 - Stage 2 (Chair of Governors or Complaints Review Panel)**

If the Complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of the Headteacher's investigation at Stage 1 and wishes to take the matter further or if the complaint is about the Headteacher, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 2. This should be done in writing by contacting the Clerk to Governors via [office@prioryceprimary.co.uk](mailto:office@prioryceprimary.co.uk).

Stage 2 complaints will be heard by the Chair of Governors or Complaints Review Panel, which will be formed of three impartial governors. Who hears the complaint will be dependant on its content. For example, complaints relating to an individual child or incident will be heard by a Complaints Review Panel, whereas complaints relating to broader issues like local decisions

affecting the curriculum will be heard by the Chair of Governors.

The Chair of Governors will decide who should hear the complaint within 5 school days and notify the complainant accordingly. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.

Next steps:

The clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 5 school days.

The Chair of Governors/Complaints Review Panel will aim to convene a meeting within 15 school days from the date of the Stage 2 acknowledgment. If this is not possible, the clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

The Complaints Review Panel will consist of at least three governors with no prior involvement or knowledge of the complaint. Prior to the meeting, they will decide among themselves who will act as the chair of the panel. If there are fewer than three governors from The Priory CE VA Primary School available, the clerk will source any additional, independent governors through another local school or through their local authority's governor services team, in order to make up the panel. Alternatively, an entirely independent committee may be convened to hear the complaint at Stage 2.

The Chair of Governors/Complaints Review Panel will decide whether to deal with the complaint by inviting parties to a meeting or through written representations, but in making its decision it will be sensitive to the complainant's needs.

If the complainant is invited to attend the meeting, they may bring someone along to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates without good reason, the clerk will decide when to hold the meeting. It will then proceed in the complainant's absence on the basis of written submissions from both parties.

At least 5 school days before the meeting, the clerk will:

- confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that if the complainant is invited, the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible;
- request copies of any further written material

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 2 school days before the date of the meeting. The Chair of Governors/Complaints Review 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 Chair of Governors/Complaints Review Panel will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. 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 disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

The Chair of Governors/Complaints Review Panel will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The Chair of Governors/Complaints Review Panel can:

- uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.

If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the Chair of Governors/Complaints Review Panel will:

- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
- where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

The Chair of Governors or chair of the panel will provide the complainant and The Priory CE VA Primary School with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 10 school days. The clerk will notify the complainant if this is delayed for any reason. The letter to the complainant will also include details of how to contact the DfE if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by The Priory CE VA Primary School – see Next Steps below

### **12. 3 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, they can contact the Department for Education after they have completed Stage 2.

The DfE will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by The Priory CE VA Primary School. They will consider whether The Priory CE VA Primary School has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint.

The complainant can refer their complaint to the DfE online at [www.education.gov.uk/contactus](http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus), by telephone on 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:

Department for Education  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

### **13. Policy version history**

#### **Policy Version History**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Comments / Reviewed:</b>
September 2019	New Policy written by Paul Ruffle, using DfE guidance documentation, The Key and examples from local schools
September 2022	Policy reviewed by Paul Ruffle. No changes.
February 2025	Policy reviewed by HT and Governing Body. Examples from other schools used as guidance as well as advice from BCP school advisor. Stage 2: complaints can be heard by the Chair of Governors. Formal complaints must be made in writing.

*Appendix 1 – See common principles for child-friendly complaints process adhered to by the school.*

**Appendix 2 ( The Priory CE VA Primary School - Complaints Policy)**

**Complaint form**

Please complete and return to Headteacher who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

<b>Your name:</b>
<b>Pupil's name (if relevant):</b>
<b>Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):</b>
<b>Address:</b>  <b>Daytime telephone number:</b>  <b>Evening telephone number:</b>
<b>Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it.</b>

**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:**