



# Concern and Complaints Procedure and Policy

## Castle Hill Primary School

<b>Name of Responsible Manager / Head Teacher:</b>	Ms R Willmouth
<b>Policy Owner:</b>	Miss N Harding
<b>Date of Policy Approval by Governing Body:</b>	March 2026
<b>Date of last Policy Review:</b>	March 2026
<b>Date of next Policy Review:</b>	March 2028

### Aims

The aim of our school is to provide the highest educational opportunity for children within a warm and secure environment where their views and feelings are considered, and they can flourish as individuals.

It is important to us that we work in partnership with parents/carers to provide this safe environment and ensure that issues which may be affecting your child are dealt with quickly and effectively. We will therefore ask if you have a complaint or concern, you contact us as soon as possible so that the matter can be resolved quickly.

### Definition of a school-working day

A 'school-working day', for the purposes of this policy, is any day where children and staff are required to attend as per the school calendar. This does not include INSET days, weekends, non-term weekdays and public holidays

### 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 Castle Hill Primary about any provision of facilities or services that the school provides.

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

### 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'. If this is deemed to be a concern, then it will be noted by the complaints coordinator and a response sent acknowledging the receipt of the concern.

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

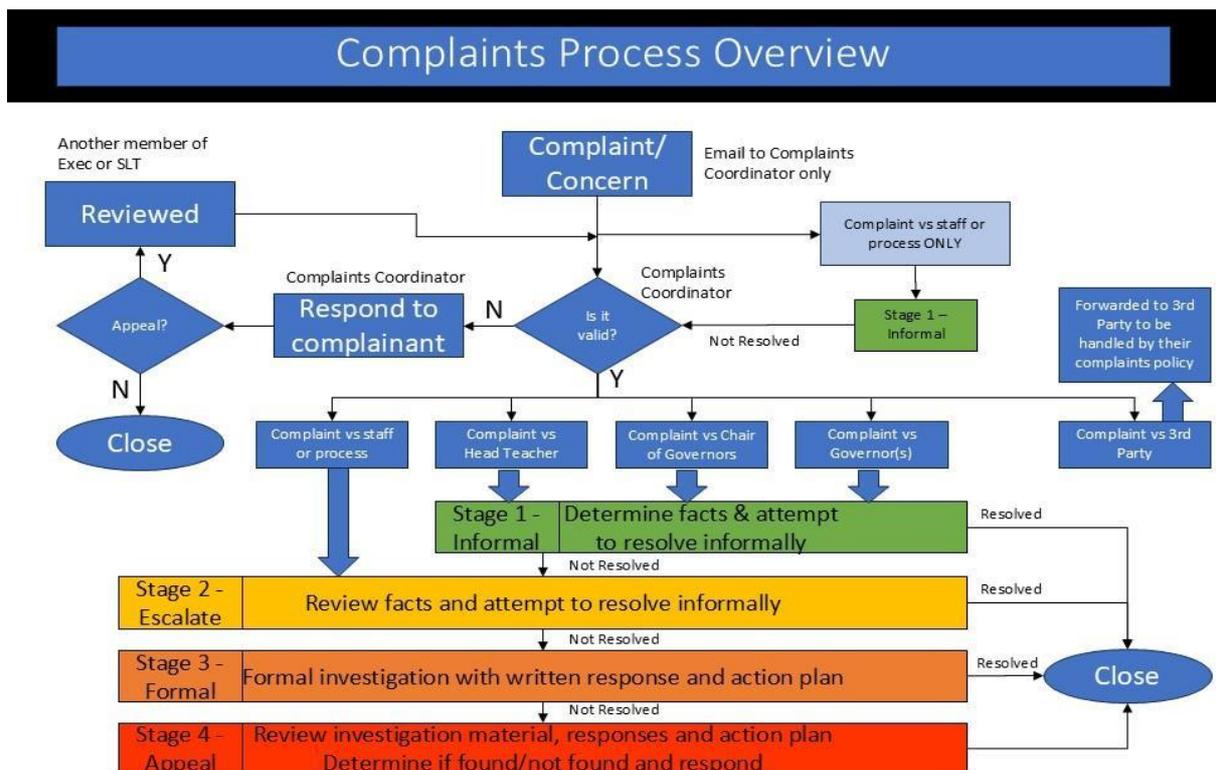
It is in the interest of the Castle Hill Community that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest opportunity. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaint's procedure. Castle Hill Primary takes all concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

A complaint that is about the general running of the school, its processes or its staff, excluding the Head Teacher, can be raised to any member of staff that it is appropriate to deal with the complaint by email, in person, in writing or by telephone.

All other complaints, in the first instance, must be addressed to the Complaints Coordinator for triaging, this must be made by email to the designated email inbox [complaints@castlehillprimary.net](mailto:complaints@castlehillprimary.net) and using the formal form that can be found in **Appendix B**.

A third party acting on behalf of a complainant, if they have appropriate consent to do so, may also lodge a complaint. Whichever method is used, the complaint must be submitted to the complaints coordinator or one of their designates.

Once submitted, the following high-level flow will be followed to take the complaint to resolution:



General complaints regarding the school, its processes or staff, in the first instance, will be dealt with by an appropriate member of staff who will determine validity of the complaint and attempt to provide a satisfactory resolution. If this is not possible, then it will be escalated to the Complaints Coordinator.

The Complaint Coordinator will assess each complaint and determine, based on the exclusions mentioned in the next section, whether the complaint is valid.

If the complaint is regarding any of the following, then it should be made clear in the complaint.

- Head Teacher
- Chair of Governors
- Individual Governors
- Part or all the Governing Body

If the complaint is deemed to be invalid, for whatever reason, a written response will be provided to the complainant stating the reason. This will be completed within 5 school-working days (term time) via the school admin email address.

Should the complainant not be satisfied with the decision, then they can appeal the decision. Any appeal must be lodged through the complainant's email address within 5 school-working days (term time) of the decision being made.

On receipt of the appeal, for complaints against the general school and its staff, a separate member of the Executive Committee or Senior Leadership Team (SLT) will re-review the complaint/decision within 5 school-work days (within term time). Please see **Appendix A** for details of which roles are designated Executive Committee or Senior Leadership Team.

For complaints against the Head Teacher, the Chair of Governors will re-review within 5 school-working days (term time) and for complaints against the Chair of Governors, individual Governors or the whole governing body, an external member of the Local Authority will be requested to re-review the complaint/decision within 20 school working days (term time).

If the complaint is then deemed to be valid, it will follow the normal process, otherwise the complaint will be closed.

### Complaint Exclusions

Whilst Castle Hill Primary School commits to making every attempt to handle all concerns and/or complaints, there are exclusions to this as follows:

Issue	Excluded from Complaints Policy?	Correct Route
School Admissions	Yes	Independent Appeals Panel
Permanent Exclusion	Yes	Governors' Discipline Committee / IRP
SEN Assessments/EHCP	Yes	SEND Tribunal
Child Protection	Yes	LADO / Social Services
Staff Employment	Yes	Internal HR (Outcomes confidential)
Bullying	No	Use Standard Complaints Policy
Curriculum Delivery	No	Use Standard Complaints Policy

In the event of the school receiving what is considered to be complaints that have the characteristics of a frivolous or vexatious nature then we will apply the Office of the Independent Adjudicator's definition that states:

- complaints which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious insistence upon pursuing

unmeritorious complaints and/or unrealistic outcomes beyond all reason

- insistence upon pursuing meritorious complaints in an unreasonable manner
- complaints which are designed to cause disruption or annoyance
- demands for redress that lack any serious purpose or value

Complaints where there are obvious signs of collusion or form the basis for a campaign (see later sections) will not be considered. Please refer to Appendix D for further information regarding how such scenarios will be handled by the school.

The remainder of this policy will cover each scenario depending on who/what is the subject of the complaint.

### **Complaints against the school but not against the Head Teacher, Chair of Governors, individual governors, the board of governors (whole or part) or 3rd party vendors.**

In the first instance, an informal approach should be made directly to the class teacher. If the complaint is not resolved at stage 1, then the Complaints Coordinator will be notified to take the complaint to stage 2. The Complaints Coordinator, having determined that the complaint is valid, will pass the relevant information to whichever of the SLT or Executive Committee member is chosen to handle the complaint.

#### **Stage 1: Informal Approach**

##### **Class Teacher**

Most concerns or complaints can be sorted out by speaking to your child's teacher directly. If you feel the matter can be dealt with quickly, teachers are usually available at the end of each school day. If you know you would like a longer time slot (more than 5 minutes) please make an appointment via the school office.

We will always try to see parents/carers quickly and aim to acknowledge notes or phone calls within a 24hr period. If you need to communicate with a member of staff before school on an important issue, please phone the Admin Team and they will pass the information on. Teachers cannot see parents once the children have started to come into school due to class commitments.

Staff track all concerns and more serious issues are logged into our Arbor SIMs system to ensure that all actions can be tracked. It also allows staff to go back through pupil incidents if a problem recurs at a later date.

##### **Head of Year (HoY)**

If you feel the concern is of a more serious nature or it is persistent and you have already spoken to the class teacher, you may wish to contact the Head of Year where your concern will be dealt with as above but with both class teacher and Head of Year involved.

If your complaint has not been resolved, then it is moved to stage 2.

#### **Stage 2: Escalation**

This is still an informal approach but allows for escalation to more senior members of staff.

##### **Senior Leadership Team (SLT)**

If your concern remains persistent and you have spoken to the class teacher and HoY, you can see a member of the SLT for further support.

##### **Executive Committee**

If you still feel a concern remains unresolved or is on-going, then the next stage would be to make an appointment to speak to any member of the Executive Committee but not the Head Teacher. You will receive a telephone call or



written reply regarding your concern within 5 school days. All complaints will be recorded and actions logged on to Arbor or CPOMs.

For details of the composition of the SLT or Executive Committee, please refer to Appendix A. If the issue remains unresolved, we move to Stage 3 to the Head Teacher.

### **Stage 3: Formal Complaint to Head Teacher**

Complaints will move to the formal stage by the complaints coordinator who will refer to the complaint, with any relevant material to the head teacher. The Complaints Coordinator will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 5 school-working days (term time).

On receipt of the formal complaint, 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 do the following:

- Where necessary, individuals involved in the matter or those subject to the complaint will be interviewed and may 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 5 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint. If the head teacher is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and a 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 Castle Hill Primary will take to resolve the complaint.

The head teacher will advise the complainant on how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome.

### **Stage 4: Chair of Governors and Complaints Appeal Panel**

A request to escalate to stage 4 must be made to the clerk to the Governors, Mrs Toobe (Clerk to Governors), via the school office, within 15 school-working days of receipt of the stage 3 response. Within 5 school-working days (term time), the clerk will record the date the complaint is received, acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email), and will send details of the complaint to the Chair of Governors, or the Vice-Chair in the absence of the Chair.

Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

On receipt of the complaint, the Chair (or Vice-Chair) of Governors will convene a Complaints Panel which will consist of at least two governors with no prior involvement or knowledge of the complaint and can include the Chair/Vice Chair of Governors and the Clerk will coordinate with the panel to offer 3 separate dates for the complainant(s) to meet with the appeals panel. These dates will be within 20 school-working days (term time) from the acknowledgement. The clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the 3 dates to which the complainant(s) will be expected to respond, advising whichever dates they can attend, if any.

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 based on written submissions from both parties.

Prior to the meeting The Complaints Panel will decide among themselves who will act as chair of the complaints panel. If there are fewer than two governors from Castle Hill Primary available, the clerk will source any additional, independent governors through another local school or through their local authority's governor services team to make up the panel. Alternatively, an entirely independent panel may convene to hear the complaint at stage 4.

The panel will deal with the complaint through face-to-face meetings and will also accept written representations, but in making its decision, it will be sensitive to the complainant's needs. If the complainant chooses to attend a meeting, they may bring someone along to provide support. This can be a relative or friend.

Whilst the panel will accept written representation, it will 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 3 of the procedure.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

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

- Confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that if the complainant is invited, the time is convenient for all parties and the venue and proceedings are accessible
- Request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the panel at least 3 school days (term time) before the meeting.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 3 school days (term time) 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 meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's disability or special needs requires it. Prior knowledge and consent must be given by all parties attending and sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in the minutes taken.

The panel will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented.

The panel can do the following:

- Uphold the complaint, in whole or part
- Dismiss the complaint, in whole or part.

If the complaint is upheld, in whole or part, the panel will do the following:

- Decide on the appropriate action to take 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 the panel will provide the complainant and Castle Hill Primary with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 10 school-working days (term time). The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the DfE if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by Castle Hill Primary.

## **Complaints against the Head Teacher**

The complaints coordinator, having determined that the complaint is valid and not a safeguarding issue, will pass the relevant information to the Head Teacher.

### **Stage 1: Informal Approach**

The head teacher will arrange, either through a face-to-face meeting or a telephone conversation, a discussion with the complainants. The purpose of this meeting is to determine whether an informal resolution is possible for the satisfaction of the complainants.

If resolution is not possible, then stage 2 would be omitted and the complaint escalated directly to a formal investigation.

### **Stage 2: Escalation**

Not Required.

### **Stage 3: Formal Complaint to Complaints Panel**

Complaints will move to the formal stage by the complaints coordinator who will refer to the complaint and any material submitted as part of the complaint to the Clerk of Governors and to the Chair of Governors.

The clerk will acknowledge receipt of the complaint to any complainants within 5 school-working days (term time).

The Chair of Governors will convene a Complaints Panel that will consist of at least 2 Governors that can include the Chair but should not include the Vice Chair of Governors.

The Complaints Appeal Panel, prior to any meetings, will decide among themselves who will act as the chair of the complaints panel. If there are fewer than two governors from Castle Hill Primary available, the clerk will source any additional, independent governors through another local school or through their local authority's governor services team to make up the panel. Alternatively, an entirely independent panel may convene to hear the complaint at stage 3.

Via the Clerk, interviews will be arranged with any relevant party to collect information that will allow for determination to be made by the panel, this being through face-to-face meetings, or through written submissions.

This must include, but not be limited to, face to face meetings with the complainants who will be offered 3 separate dates to meet with the panel. Should complainants not respond or are not able to attend on any of the three dates offered, then the panel will move forward with whatever evidence is provided as part of the complaint.

The Clerk will minute all meetings and will be distributed after each meeting for approval by meeting attendees. Amendments will be accepted or rejected on a case-by-case basis. All minutes will be designated as Strictly Confidential and be stored/distributed accordingly.

Evidence gathering should be completed by the panel within 20 school-working days (term time) with any determination regarding outcomes and actions to be completed within another 15 school-working days (term time) after evidence gathering has completed.

Formal letters detailing all outcomes and actions or recommendations with appropriate explanations regarding rationale will be emailed to all complainants. Where multiple complaint points exist across multiple complainants, only points relevant to each complainant will be referenced in these communications. As part of these

communications, details of how to appeal should be detailed.

#### **Stage 4: Complaints Appeal Panel**

A request to escalate to stage 4 must be made to the clerk to the Governors, Mrs Toobe (Clerk to Governors), via the school office, within 15 school-working days (term time) of receipt of stage 3 response. Within 5 school-working days (term time), the clerk will record the date the appeal is received, acknowledge receipt of the appeal request in writing (either by letter or email), and will send details of the appeal to the Vice-Chair of Governors.

Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

The request must state the grounds on which the appeal has been made and the Vice -Chair of Governors will determine whether the appeal will be accepted.

If the Vice Chair of Governors deems the grounds of appeal to be not valid then they will respond to the complainants within 5 school-working days (term time) given the rationale for denying the appeal. Complainants will still be able to refer to the DfE should that rationale not be accepted.

If the grounds for appeal are valid, the Vice-Chair of Governors will convene a Complaints Appeal Panel which will consist of at least two governors with no prior involvement or knowledge of the complaint and can include the Vice Chair of Governors but not the members of the Complaints panel from Stage 3.

The Complaints Appeal Panel will decide among themselves who will act as the chair of the panel. If there are fewer than two governors from Castle Hill Primary available, the clerk will source any additional, independent governors through another local school or through their local authority's governor services team to make up the panel. Alternatively, an entirely independent panel may convene to hear the appeal at stage 4.

The panel will review all material associated with stage 3 of the process and can choose to hold face-to-face meetings with complainants or accept a written representation from complainants to better understand the grounds for appeal if it is needed, but in making its decision, it will be sensitive to the complainant's needs.

If meetings are required, then 3 separate dates must be offered to the complainant(s), this to be coordinated by the Clerk. If all three dates are unacceptable or the complainants fail to attend, then the panel will move forward with the material at hand. If the complainant(s) chooses to attend a meeting, they may bring someone along to provide support. This can be a relative or friend.

Whilst the panel will take any grounds for appeal into account and may offer face-to-face meetings, it will not review any new information at this stage.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

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

- Confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that if the complainant is invited, the time is convenient for all parties and the venue and proceedings are accessible

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's disability or special needs requires it. Prior knowledge and consent must be given by all parties attending and sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in the minutes taken.

The panel will consider the complaint and grounds for appeal and all the evidence collected during stage 3 and can do the following:

- Uphold the appeal, in whole or part
- Dismiss the appeal, in whole or part.

If the appeal is upheld, in whole or part, the panel will do the following:

- Decide on the appropriate action to take to resolve the complaint
- Where appropriate, recommend changes to the school systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

The chair of the panel will provide the complainant(s) and Castle Hill Primary with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 10 school-working days (term time). The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the DfE if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by Castle Hill Primary.

### Complaints against the school Governing Body as a whole or individual members

This section applies when a complaint is about:

- the governing body as a whole or in part
- the Chair of Governors
- an individual governor
- a committee of the governing body
- The Clerk to the Governing Body

The complaint should set out the nature of the concern, relevant facts, and the outcome sought.

The complaints coordinator, having determined that the complaint is valid and not a safeguarding issue, will pass on the relevant information as follows:

Complaint about an individual governor, a committee of the governing body where the chair of governors if not a member or the Clerk to the Governing Body:

- Investigated by the Chair of Governors or an impartial panel of governors with no prior involvement
- Where a committee is the subject of a complaint and the Chair of Governors is a member of that committee, then this will be investigated by an impartial panel of governors with no prior involvement

Complaint about the Chair of Governors:

- Investigated by an impartial panel of governors who have not been involved in the matter.

Complaint about the governing body as a whole or in part, or where the governing body cannot form an impartial panel:

The complaint will be referred to the Local Authority, which may investigate directly or support the school in convening an independent panel.

#### Conflicts of interest

If at any point it becomes clear that the governing body cannot ensure an impartial investigation, the matter will be referred to the Local Authority to ensure fairness and independence.

### Stage 1: Informal Approach

Not Required.

## Stage 2: Escalation

Not Required.

## Stage 3: Formal Complaint to Appropriate Investigator

The Process:

### 1. Acknowledgement

The Clerk (or nominated governor) will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 5 school days.

### 2. Investigation

The investigating governor or panel will gather relevant information, meet with the complainant if appropriate, and review any evidence. Timelines will be advised at the time depending on the complexity of the complaint and potential composition of any panel, especially if external parties have to be sourced.

### 3. Outcome

A written response will be provided, setting out:

- the findings
- any actions to be taken
- the rationale for the decision

## Stage 4: Appeal

If the complainant remains dissatisfied after receiving the investigating panels' final response, they may refer the matter to the Local Authority.

Where the complaint concerns a potential breach of statutory duties, the complainant may contact the Department for Education.

## Other Information

### 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 DfE.

The DfE will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by actions at Castle Hill Primary. They will consider whether Castle Hill Primary actions have 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 calling 0370 000 2288 or by writing to the following address:

Department for Education  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

### 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.

### 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 on the nature and scale of the complaint:

1. Send the same response to all complainants
2. Publish a single response on the school's website.

### **Timescales**

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

### **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.

### **External Investigations**

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 in this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations.

If a complainant commences legal action against Castle Hill Primary in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure in relation to their complaint until those legal proceedings have been concluded.

### **Resolving complaints**

At each stage in the procedure, Castle Hill Primary wants to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or part.

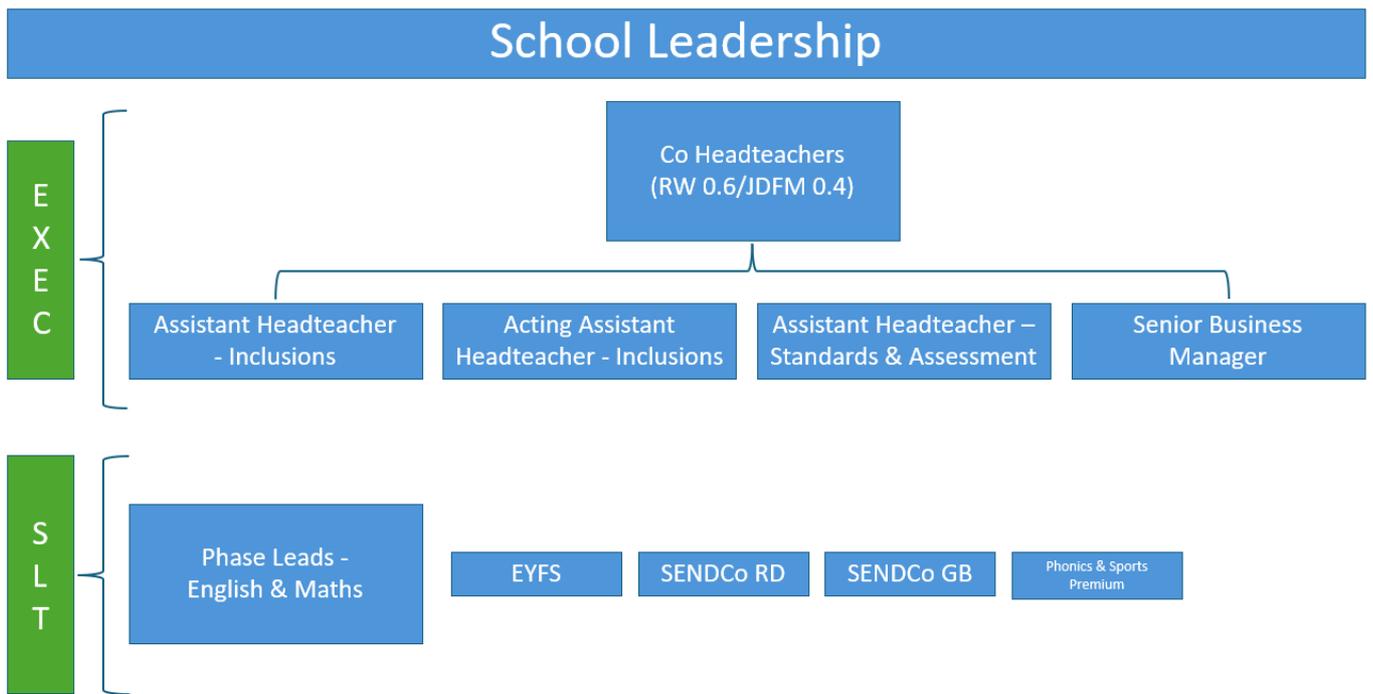
In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- 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 it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales in which any changes will be made
- An attempt to review the school's policies considering the complaint
- An apology.

### **Withdrawal of a complaint**

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

**Appendix A - Senior Management Organisation Structure**



March 2026

**Appendix B - Complaint Form**

Your name:

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Pupil's name (if relevant):

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Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):

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Address:

Daytime telephone number:

Evening telephone number:

Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it.

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 whom:
Complaint referred to:
Date:

**Appendix C - Roles and responsibilities**

Complainant

The complainant will receive a more effective response to the complaint if they do the following:

- Explain the complaint in full as early as possible
- Cooperate with the school in seeking a solution to the complaint
- Respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing on the details of the complaint
- Ask for assistance as needed
- Treat all those involved in the complaint with respect
- Refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality.

Investigator

The investigator’s role is to establish the facts relevant to the complaint by doing the following:

Providing a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint through:

- Sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved
- Interviewing staff and children/young people and other people relevant to the complaint
- Consideration and analysis of records and other relevant information.
- Liaising with the complainant and the complaint’s coordinator as appropriate to clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.

The investigator should do the following:

- Conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning
- Keep notes of interviews or arrange for an independent note-taker to record minutes of the meeting
- Ensure that any papers produced during the investigation are kept securely pending any appeal
- Be mindful of the timescales to respond
- Prepare a comprehensive report for the head teacher or complaints committee that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.

The head teacher or complaints committee will then determine whether to uphold or dismiss the complaint and communicate that decision to the complainant, providing the appropriate escalation details.

#### Complaints Coordinator

This could be the Head Teacher/Deputy/ designated Complaints Governor or other staff member providing administrative support. The complaints coordinator should do the following:

- Ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure
- Liaise with staff members, the head teacher, chair of governors, clerk and local authorities (if appropriate) to ensure the smooth running of the complaint's procedure
- Be aware of issues regarding the following:
  - Sharing third-party information
  - Additional support – this may be needed by complainants when making a complaint, including interpretation support
- Keep records.

#### Clerk to the Governing Body

The clerk is the contact point for the complainant and the committee, and they should do the following:

- Ensure that all people involved in the complaint procedure are aware of their legal rights and duties, including any under legislation relating to school complaints, education law, the Equality Act 2010, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)
- Set the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties (if they are invited to attend) and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- Collate any written material relevant to the complaint (for example, stage one paperwork, school and complainant submissions) and send it to the parties in advance of the meeting within an agreed timescale
- Record the proceedings
- Circulate the minutes of the meeting
- Notify all parties of the committee's decision.

#### Complaints Panel Chair/Complaints Appeal Panel Chair

The Panel Chair, who is nominated in advance of the complaint meeting, should ensure the following:

- That both parties are asked (via the clerk) to provide any additional information relating to the complaint by a specified date in advance of the meeting
- The meeting is conducted in an informal manner, it is not adversarial, and that, if all parties are invited to attend, everyone is treated with respect and courtesy
- Those complainants, who may not be used to speaking at such a meeting, are put at ease
- The remit of the committee is explained to the complainant
- That the written material is seen by everyone in attendance, provided it does not breach confidentiality or any individual's rights to privacy under the DPA 2018 or GDPR – if a new issue arises, it would be useful to allow everyone to consider and comment on it; this may require a short adjournment of the meeting
- That both the complainant and the school are allowed to make their case and seek clarity, either through written submissions ahead of the meeting or verbally in the meeting itself

- That the issues are addressed
- The key findings of fact are made
- That the committee is open-minded and acts independently
- That no member of the committee has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure
- That the meeting is minuted
- That they liaise with the clerk (and complaints coordinator if the school has one).

#### Panel member

Panel members should be aware of the following:

- The meeting must be independent and impartial, and it should be seen to be so. No governor may sit on the panel if they have had prior involvement in the complaint or circumstances surrounding it
- The aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. We recognise that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the meeting is not found in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations
- Many complainants will feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting. Parents/carers often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child
- Extra care needs to be taken if a child/young person is present during all or part of the meeting. Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings should ensure that any child/young person present does not feel intimidated. The panel should respect the views of the child/young person and give them equal consideration to those of adults. Where the child/young person's parent is the complainant, the panel should allow the parent to say which parts of the meeting, if any, the child/young person needs to attend. However, the parent should be advised that agreement might not always be possible if the parent wishes the child/young person to attend a part of the meeting that the panel considers is not in the child/young person's best interests
- The welfare of the child/young person is paramount.

### **Appendix D - Policy for managing serial and unreasonable complaints**

Castle Hill Primary is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially and providing a high-quality service for those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with our school.

However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

Castle Hill Primary defines unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the school, such as if the complainant does the following:

- Refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
- Refuses to cooperate with the complaint's investigation process
- Refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaint's procedure
- Insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways that are incompatible with the complaint's procedure or with good practice
- Introduces trivial or irrelevant information that they expect to be considered and commented on
- Raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant or backdated questions and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales
- Makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced
- Changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds
- Repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed)

- Refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the DfE
- Seeks an unrealistic outcome
- Makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with
- Uses threats to intimidate (please see our Parental Code of Conduct Policy)
- Uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence
- Knowingly provides falsified information
- Publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school that relates to their complaint while the complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text) because it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the head teacher or chair of governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking.

If the behaviour continues, the head teacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact Castle Hill Primary causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will be reviewed after six months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from Castle Hill Primary School.