



Ferndale Primary School Complaints Policy

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1.0 Introduction:

It is in everyone's interests that concerns are resolved/clarified at the earliest possible stage. Where concerns are raised the school will work with the individual who raised the concern to identify what would resolve the situation and then endeavour to find a resolution at the earliest opportunity.

In accordance with **Section 29 of the Education Act 2002**, all local authority-maintained schools must have and make available a procedure to deal with all complaints relating to their school and to any community facilities or services that the school provides.

Initial concerns should be dealt with by an appropriate member of staff. These should be taken seriously, and every effort made to resolve matters as quickly as possible. In certain cases, it may be appropriate to forward these to the Head Teacher (or to the Chair of Governors if the complaint is about the Head Teacher).

Prior to the attention of the Head Teacher (or Chair of Governors), the following procedures are to be followed:

- communication with member of staff involved, in the case of a child, the class teacher.
- communication with associated phase leader –there are 4 phase leaders- Year 1/2, Year 3, Year 4, Year 5/6. Early Years (EYFS) parents should speak with the Assistant Headteacher (AHT) of EYFS. Please note this could change annually and parents can ask who is the phase leader of their child to the teacher, or another staff member.
- If the phase leader/EYFS AHT has not been able to solve the issue, or if the phase leader is the class teacher, they will triage and advise the parent on where the issue needs to go next. This could be:
- communication with the Assistant Headteacher or Deputy Head Teacher, depending on what the issue is e.g. SEN, behaviour, curriculum.

Where it is not possible to resolve concerns informally, the formal complaints procedure can be accessed.

This document outlines how complaints will be dealt with under the Formal Complaints Policy.

Complainants will always be given the opportunity to complete the complaints process in full, regardless of whether it is felt that that the complaint is justified or not.

If the complaints process is ongoing and further enquiries are received regarding the same subject, we will not respond to the new enquires/complaints. This is because it is unhelpful to have more than one investigation ongoing which duplicate the issues being investigated.

2.0 Complaints about services provided by external bodies using a school's premises

Where the school has third party providers offering community facilities or services through the school premise, or using school facilities, the providers must have their own complaints procedure in place. Any complaints made concerning third party providers will be dealt with under their own procedures. The governing body will ensure that providers have the correct

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processes in place to deal with any concerns or complaints, and any issues should be raised with the provider directly.

3.0 Who can make a complaint?

Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint about any provision of facilities or services that a school provides, unless statutory procedures apply (such as exclusions or admissions, a list is included within the next section).

4.0 Anonymous complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Head Teacher or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine where the complaint warrants an investigation.

5.0 Complaints received outside of term time:

Complaints made outside of term time will be receipted as having been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

6.0 Exclusions to the complaints procedure:

The following issues will not be subject to the school's complaints procedure as they are outside of the school's jurisdiction:

- admission to schools.
- exclusions from school.
- statutory assessments of Special Education Needs
- statutory proposals for school reorganisation.
- claims for damages
- staff grievance or disciplinary matters

- child protection issues; · claims for damages.

Complaints made against school staff will be considered, however where it is determined that matters should be dealt with under the school's grievance and disciplinary procedures complainants will not be informed of the outcome.

Where a complaint relates to the behaviour of a pupil this may be subject to the school's conduct and disciplinary procedures and the detail will remain confidential to the school and the parents of the child involved.

Complainants can be assured that the complaints will be investigated fully but due to data protection information will not be shared with them in these circumstances.

Where complaints concern child protection matters these should be raised with the school but will not usually be considered as a formal complaint where there is likely to be a Child Protection Investigation.

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Where a complaint is received which should not be dealt with as a formal complaint the school will write to the complainant to advise them of this and the reason for the decision. The school will confirm the correct process to be followed.

7.0 Accessibility

The school will ensure that the formal complaints procedure is:

- easily accessible and publicised both within the school and available on the school website;
 - simple to understand and use;
- impartial and in the spirit of working together co-operatively to reach the best resolution for everyone;
 - respectful of confidentiality for all.

8.0 Time limit for making a complaint:

You 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.

9.0 Recording Complaints:

Formal complaints should be made on the form provided by the school, this is to ensure that there is an accurate record of the complaint, and it is clearly understood. However, if complainants are unable to complete this form complaint will be accepted in the following ways: · in person; · by telephone; or · in writing.

When a formal complaint is received, the school will write to the complainant within five school days to confirm what will happen next and the anticipated timescales.

10.0 Keeping people informed

Each stage of the complaints process has an agreed timescale which should be adhered to. If for any reason this is not possible, the school/governing body will write to the complainant to explain the reasons and confirm when the action will be completed.

11.0 Stages of the complaints process:

The following outlines the stages of the formal complaints' procedure. At the end of each stage of the procedure, complainants will be advised of how to progress to the next stage if they remain dissatisfied.

Stage	Timescale
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Stage 1 Formal Complaint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Letter to be sent within 5 school days of the school receiving the complaint to confirm how the complaint will proceed with timescales. · Full response by school within 15 school days of receiving the complaint.
Request for stage 2 review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · To be made by complainant within 10 school days of receiving the outcome of the stage 1 complaint.
School to acknowledge stage 2 request	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Acknowledgement letter to be issued within 5 school days
Panel meeting to hear the complaint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Panel to meet within 20 working days of receiving the complaint
Stage 2 review panel arrangements confirmed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · At least 10 school days before the meeting the Clerk will confirm the date, time and venue and ask for any additional information to be provided at least 5 school days prior to the panel
Panel decision to be issued	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Within 5 school days of the panel meeting
Request for LA review of process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · To be made by complainant within 10 school days of receiving the outcome of the stage 2 review.
Review by LA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · To be completed within 10 working days of receiving the request to review

Formal stage one: a formal complaint will be investigated by the Head Teacher or person nominated by the Head Teacher. The investigation will be completed within 15 school days and at the end of the investigation a full written response will be sent to the complainant.

If the formal complaint is about the Head Teacher, this will be dealt with by the Chair of Governors.

Complaints made against the Chair of Governors or any individual governors are addressed to the Clerk to the Governing Body. The Clerk should then arrange for the complaint to be heard by a suitably skilled and impartial member of the governing body (Stage 1) and then a committee at Stage 2.

Complaints made against the entire governing body or complaints involving both the Chair and Vice Chair should also be sent to the Clerk, who should then determine the most appropriate course of action. This will depend on the nature of the complaint.

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Where a complaint relates to a member of staff this may be subject to internal staffing procedures and the outcome of such investigations will not be shared with complainants.

Where a complaint relates to the behaviour of a pupil this may be subject to the school's conduct and disciplinary procedures and the detail will remain confidential to the school and the parents of the child involved.

Complainants should be assured that the complaints will be investigated fully but due to data protection information will not be shared with them and this should be confirmed in writing.

Formal stage two: if stage one has been completed and the complainant wishes to take the matter further they can escalate their complaint to Stage 2. This will be a meeting with members of the governing body's complaints committee, which will be formed by the first three, impartial, governors available.

The request to progress to stage 2 should be made in writing within 10 school days of receiving the stage 1 response and addressed to the Clerk to Governors via the school office.

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 Clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. The school will aim to convene a meeting within 20 school days of receipt of the Stage 2 request. If this is not possible, the Clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed. If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates, without good reason, the Chair will decide when to hold the meeting. It will then proceed in the complainant's absence based on written submissions from both parties.

The complaints committee will consist of at least three governors with no prior involvement or knowledge of the complaint. Prior to the meeting they will decide between themselves who will act as Chair of the Complaints Committee. If there are fewer than three governors available, the Clerk can source additional, independent governors from a different school. Alternatively, an entirely independent committee may be convened to hear the complaint at Stage 2.

The committee will decide on whether to deal with the complaint by inviting parties to a meeting or through written representations, but in making the decision they will be sensitive to the complainant's needs. If it is agreed to invite parties to a meeting, then all parties should be invited including the Stage 1 complaints investigator and the complainant.

If the complainant is invited to attend the meeting, they may bring someone along to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. Generally, it is not encouraged for either party to bring legal representatives to the committee meeting. The meeting should be held in the spirit of reconciliation and attempt to reach a resolution which is acceptable to all.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

At least 10 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

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- Request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the committee at least 5 school days before the meeting

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

The committee will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the original complaint. New complaints must be dealt with at 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 should arrange for either the Clerk or suitable person to record the minutes of the meeting

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

Complainants have the right to request an independent panel if they believe that there is likely to be bias in the proceedings. The school will consider approaching a different school to ask for help or contact the local Governor Services team commissioned by the LA, or the Diocese. The school will consider any such request but ultimately, the final decision is made by the Chair of Governors.

The complaints panel will decide on whether to deal with the complaint by inviting parties to a meeting or through written representations, but in making the decision they will be sensitive to the complainant's needs. If it is agreed to invite parties to a meeting, then all parties should be invited including the stage 1 investigator and the complainant.

12.0 Next Steps for complainants who remain dissatisfied with the way in which the investigation was conducted:

When stage 2 has been completed, this is the end of the school complaints procedure. If complainants are dissatisfied with the way in which the investigation was conducted, they may request a review of the procedure by the Local Authority.

If a complainant has completed the local procedures and remains dissatisfied, they have the right to refer their complaint to the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State has a duty to consider all complaints raised but will only intervene where the governing body has acted unlawfully or unreasonably and where it is expedient or practical to do so.

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Further information can be obtained from the School Complaints Unit (SCU) by calling the National Helpline on 0370 000 2288 or going online at: www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus.

13.0 Social Media

Individuals who raise concerns are asked to comply with the school's guidance on social media which should be available on the school website, a complaint can be undermined by:

- Comments made on social media
- Identifying individuals' staff on social media
- Personal abuse targeted towards individual members of staff
- Physical or verbal threats targeted to individuals or groups of staff

These behaviours amount to harassment and will be dealt with by the police.

14.0 Serial and Persistent Complainants

The school is committed to working with anyone who raises an issue to take this seriously and work towards finding a solution to concerns. Generally, this should be a straightforward process, and the school values the feedback that we receive on services.

We accept that complainants may ask difficult questions where they believe that things have gone wrong and have a right to go through the complaints process. However, in a minority of cases people pursue their feedback in a way which is inappropriate.

Where the school is contacted repeatedly by individuals making the same point or asking for reconsideration on our position, the school will need to take appropriate action. The school has a Serial and Persistent Complaints Policy for these difficult situations. This policy sets out what is unreasonable behaviour and the action that will be taken to address this. The procedure is available on the school website.

The application of a 'serial' or 'persistent' marking will be made against the subject of the complaint itself rather than the complainant.

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Appendix 1 Model complaint form (Stage 1)

Ferndale Primary School Complaint Form

Please complete this form and return it to the school office or to the Head Teacher who will acknowledge its receipt within 5 school days and inform you of the next stage in the procedure.

Your name

Relationship with school (e.g. parent of a pupil on the school roll):

Pupil's

name (if relevant to your complaint):

Your address:

Evening

Telephone numbers

Daytime:

Email:

Please confirm below the details of your complaint, include dates, names of witnesses and any other information which is relevant to enable your complaint to be investigated. Please continue on a separate sheet if more space is required.

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If you have taken any actions to try to resolve this complaint, please confirm the details below and include the names of people you have spoken to.

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem?

School use:

Date form received:

Received by:

Complaint being dealt with by:

Date acknowledgment sent:

Target response date:

Appendix 2 Model complaint review request form (Stage 2)

Ferndale Primary School Complaint Review Request Form

Please complete this form and return it to the Clerk to the Governing Body (via the school office), who will acknowledge its receipt and inform you of what will happen next.

Your name

Your address:

		Evening	

Telephone numbers

Daytime:

Email:

Dear school,

Ferndale Primary School

I submitted a formal complaint to the school on _____ and am dissatisfied with the outcome.

My complaint was submitted to _____ and I received a response from _____ on _____

I have attached copies of my formal complaint and of the response from the school.

I am dissatisfied with the outcome of my complaint for the following reasons:

Please use a separate sheet if necessary.

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem?

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School use:

Date form received:

Received by:

Complaint being dealt with by:

Date acknowledgment sent:

Target response date:

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Appendix 3 Model guidance for all parties attending a complaints panel (Stage 2)

Complaint Panel meetings will be heard in the spirit of reconciliation and will focus on finding an acceptable resolution to the issues which have been raised. The Panel is not part of a legal process and no party should feel that they need to have legal representation. The Panel Chairperson will ensure that all parties have the opportunity to have their say and to be understood.

The Chairperson will decide on how the Panel should be run and if it is decided that the complaint will be heard in person by the Panel then both the parent/carer and the stage 1 investigator will be invited to attend.

The following contains guidance for people attending a complaints Panel:

1. Please make every effort to be punctual and arrive on time for the meeting.
2. Please make reasonable efforts to be available. If three dates have been offered which cannot be attended the Panel can decide to go ahead and hear the complaint without anyone attending in person.
3. If anyone has any special requirements, please inform the Clerk so that suitable arrangements can be made.
4. The Panel will want to hear about the complaint and the issues which remain unresolved and will invite everyone to have their say.
5. All attendees are requested to show respect to all during the meeting and address any questions through the Chairperson.
6. The minutes of the meeting will be noted by the Clerk to the panel as it is not permitted to record the meeting.
7. Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.
8. Clerk will retain electronic copies and one master copy of the documentation. All other copies will be collected in and shredded.

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Appendix 4 Model complaints meeting agenda (Stage 2)

1. The Chair of the Complaints Committee will welcome and introduce all parties.
2. The Chair will outline the process to be followed and how the decision will be reached.
3. The Chair will invite the parents/carers to present the complaint to the meeting.
4. The Chair will invite the Stage 1 complaints investigator to present their view.
5. All parties will have the opportunity to ask questions which should be addressed through the Chair.
6. All parties will have the opportunity to make any final comments.
7. The Chair will ask all to leave the room to allow the Panel to come to their decision. Before everyone leaves the Chair will inform both parties that they should receive a response from the Panel in writing within 5 school days.
8. The Panel will make their decision which will be recorded by the Clerk who will put this in writing for the Panel to be circulated to the complainant.
9. Clerk will retain electronic copies and a single hard copy of the papers used for the panel meeting. All other copies will be handed in to the school for shredding.

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Appendix 5 Parent guide to school complaints

Parentkind



Department
for Education



Parent guide to school complaints

Your checklist to resolving concerns quickly,
easily and positively with your school

2025/2



Working together to resolve issues

Parents and schools share the same goal: supporting children's education. Sometimes questions or concerns arise. This guide gives you clear steps to share your views and resolve issues quickly and positively.

Why this matters

We know you value clear communication and want your feedback to make a difference.

When the process feels unclear or slow, it can be frustrating and leave you feeling unsure about what to do next. By giving you simple, transparent steps for raising issues, we aim to help you feel heard and supported.

How this guide helps

Most issues can be resolved quickly when you know who to speak to and what to expect.

This guide will support you to follow your school's complaint procedure. Our goal is to keep the focus on your child's education while building positive, supportive partnerships between you and the school.

Five steps to making a school complaint

Share these with the
parent or carer for your child

Relationships between parents and schools last for several years. Ensuring mutual trust and respect is essential to making them work in the best interests of your child.

Let's build parent and school partnerships based on our shared commitment to a great education for all. We know these matters are incredibly important to parents, but everything is founded on good intentions.

The best way to resolve concerns is through clear, respectful communication.

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

1

What kind of issue is it?

p is to
ckest

Is it feedback?

*You need
to be heard*

Sometimes you will want to share your voice with your school without needing them to respond, but you expect them to listen and take it on board. Feedback is often sought by schools who want to hear and adapt to parents' views.

Is it a concern?

*You need
an answer*

Sometimes you have a worry or doubt over an important issue and you are looking for reassurance. Schools should take informal concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

Is it a complaint?

*You need
action*

Sometimes you are dissatisfied with the school's actions or lack of action. Your school will have a formal complaints procedure that is available to you (likely published on their website) with the steps you need to take to complain.

Five steps to making a school complaint

2 Who in the school do I go to?

Often issues can be best resolved by the person closest to your child. Who is best to hear your view at your school? anything that

Discuss with their teacher/form tutor

Go to them first for

directly wider than just one lesson, issues, serious concerns, involves your child's or if it can't be resolved by or if earlier steps haven't classroom experience. the teacher. Leaders worked. The head is Teachers know your child have oversight across responsible for the school best and can usually sort classes and can and final decisions before things quickly. coordinate support. governors are involved.

Examples: homework, friendships, behaviour, day concerns. repeated behaviour safety.

Raise to a middle or senior leader

Take it here if the issue is

Examples: bullying, additional support, issues.

Escalate it with the headteacher

Go here for whole-school

Examples: safeguarding, school policies, day-to-day staff conduct, health and safety.

3)

How do I raise my complaint?

ool. Complaints
Follow these tip

Follow one level at a time

Start with a query aimed at resolving things quickly with those closest to your child, and only escalate if you truly need

Keep a record

Note when you've spoken to a teacher or leader, so you can show you have followed the right steps.

Suggest a clear outcome

Be clear on what you are looking for from the school and ensure it is realistic, so they can see if it is possible.

Start with the facts

Write down what happened, when, and who was involved. Be clear, relevant and avoid long stories.

Stay objective

Avoid accusations against individuals, direct your issue toward the processes or decisions that led to the issue.

Be positive

Make your complaint constructive, focused on solutions, and trust your school to listen.

Remember - always check your school's complaint policy.

4

When to expect a response?

ints. You can
complaint.

Check the school's policy for timescales

Your school's complaints policy will be published on their website. Schools will normally outline how long they expect an outcome to take in that policy. Your school's policy should always be the best guidance to

Ask for written acknowledgement

If you have written a formal complaint to your school, they will usually acknowledge it quickly. Normally they will detail the timescales for investigating and responding to you and may ask for more details.

Complaint resolution times will vary

Complex complaints may take weeks of investigation. You may not always get updates, but trust that the school is following their policy, investigating and deciding the best action. You should always get a response to your complaint.

Five steps to making a school complaint



Where to Escalate a complaint?

Once you have fully followed your school's complaint procedure, you may still feel you need action from your school and there are a few ways that may apply to you. It's best to check who it should be escalated with to get it resolved quickly: contacting several people at once could slow things down.



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Is it for your school's governing body or trustees?

To be considered if you are unhappy with the school's response. Schools will normally have an escalation process that allows parents to seek a further review of their complaint by a panel which may involve governors or trustees.

Is it for the Department for Education (DfE)?

To be considered if you are unhappy with the way your complaint has been handled or the school is preventing you from following the complaints process. In some circumstances, DfE can consider if the school has followed relevant

statutory guidance and education law.

Is it for Ofsted?

Ofsted do not resolve disputes between parents and schools. They may keep your complaint on file for their next inspection but don't always provide a response to parents.

How complaints go wrong

Tensions can run high when you're concerned about your child, but some approaches make matters worse.

Using social media

Sharing your complaint on social media can be harmful to those involved and will not lead to a quicker resolution.

Building a crowd

Other parents may share your views, but your complaint should be specific to you and your child.

Targeting people

Making it personal to individual school staff members can take things too far, keep it to challenging school policy.

Behaving aggressively

Abusive and aggressive behaviour will never be tolerated by a school and can lead to consequences for you.

Only use AI with caution

AI doesn't always get it right when citing laws and can make a complaint more complex than necessary.

Lacking partnership

Having a good relationship with your school is important and it benefits all to move on after complaints are resolved.

Where parents act unreasonably

In extreme circumstances, there can be consequences for parents where there is bullying and harassing behaviour towards the school. If parents use abusive language, are threatening or use intimidation, the school could:

Pause complaints

Typically the first step is for the school to pause the complaints process until the unacceptable behaviour stops, and the school can resume the process.

Issue a verbal or written warning

This sets clear expectations for future conduct and the school may issue a communications plan to reduce risk of confrontation.

Ban parents from school grounds

In persistent or extreme cases of abusive behaviour, a school may take action by placing a ban on parents. The ban is usually issued in writing by the headteacher, though in some cases the local authority, academy trust or governing body may write one instead. Parents will have the right to appeal.

Powering positive partnerships between families and schools

This guide has been created to further support parents. Built with wisdom, research and care by expert partners and members of the Improving Education Together board (IET), led by the Secretary of State for Education.

- Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL)
- The Catholic Education Service
- The Confederation of School Trusts (CST)
- GMB Union
- The Local Government Association (LGA)
- The National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT)
- The National Education Union (NEU)
- National Governance Association (NGA)
- The Sixth Form Colleges Association (SFCA)
- Unison
- Community Trade Union
- NASUWT
- The Department for Education
- Ofsted

Get more insights, resources and support

Parentkind is on a mission to enrich the educational experience for every child - both at home and at school. We empower anyone with parental or educational responsibility with the knowledge, ideas and resources to give young people the very best start in life. As one of the largest federated charities in the UK, Parentkind has a network of 23,500 Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs), parent councils and schools, and mobilises more than 100,000 volunteers to raise vital funds for schools.

www.parentkind.org

This guide is not legal advice and is subject to future change.

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