



The Mease Federation

Mary Howard St. Andrew's

Complaints Policy

2023

Review 2025

Grow and Flourish

COMPLAINTS POLICY

Who can make a complaint?

This complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children that are registered at the school. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to **Mary Howard Primary** or **St. Andrew's Primary** about any provision of facilities or services that we provide. Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as appeals relating to exclusions or admissions), we 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 generally defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action.'

It is in everyone's interest that concerns or complaints are resolved quickly and efficiently at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. At **The Mease Federation**, we take concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, the Executive Headteacher will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, the Executive 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, **Mary Howard Primary** or **St. Andrew's Primary** will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

The process of listening to and resolving complaints can contribute to school improvement. The Governing Board can use learning identified from across the spectrum of complaint investigations to inform improvements within the school and improve the effectiveness of the complaints procedure.

How to raise a concern or make a complaint

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant, as long as they have the appropriate consent to do so. Our complaints procedure has several stages to ensure that decisions are not taken in isolation and there is always a mechanism by which decisions are considered independently.

Expressing Concerns and Informal resolutions

If a parent / carer is concerned about anything to do with the education that we are providing at our schools, they should in the first instance, discuss the matter with the **class teacher**. This is better face to face, but class teachers can also be contacted by telephone, Class Dojo or email (via the school office). Most matters of concern can be dealt with in this way. All teachers work very hard to ensure that each child is happy at school and is making good progress; they always want to know if there is a problem, so that any necessary action can be taken before the problem affects the child's experience at school.

Concerns can also be raised with the **Deputy Headteacher** (Sarah Orgill at Mary Howard and Joanne Bennett at St. Andrew's) or the **Executive Headteacher**. All staff will make every effort to resolve your problem promptly at this stage.

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.

Complaints against school staff (except the Executive Headteacher) should be made in the first instance to **Miss Mills (Executive Headteacher)** via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints that involve or are about the Executive Headteacher should be addressed to **Mr Webb (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 board should be addressed to **The Clerk to the Governing Board** 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 like the 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.

Anonymous complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Executive Headteacher or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

Time scales

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.

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.

Scope of this Complaints Procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by Mary Howard Primary and St. Andrew's Primary, 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"> ▪ Admissions to schools ▪ Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs ▪ School re-organisation proposals 	<p>Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with Staffordshire County Council.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation 	<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) 0300 111 8007</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Exclusion of children from school 	<p>Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions</p> <p>Complaints about the application of the Behaviour for Learning and Caring policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Whistleblowing 	<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 whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus</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 direct to the LA or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Staff grievances 	<p>Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Staff conduct 	<p>Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate. Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities. 	<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"> ▪ National Curriculum - content 	<p>Please contact the Department for education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus</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 **Mary Howard Primary** or **St. Andrew's 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 concluded.

Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure **Mary Howard Primary** or **St. Andrew's Primary** 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 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

Withdrawal of a Complaint

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

Stage 1

Formal complaints must be made to the Executive Headteacher (unless they are about the Headteacher), via the school office. This may be done in person, in writing (preferably on the Complaint Form), or by telephone.

The Executive Headteacher will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within five school days. If a formal complaint is made to the school, a copy of this policy will be provided. All details of a complaint will be kept confidential except in so far as they need to be shared with people who might contribute to their resolution.

Within this response, the headteacher will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The headteacher can consider whether a face to face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

Please note that the headteacher may delegate the investigation to one of the Deputy Headteacher's but not the decision to be taken.

It is important that the school is very clear on what the complaint is about and may therefore request further clarification before starting to investigate it.

During the investigation, the headteacher / Deputy Headteacher 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.

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At the conclusion of their investigation, the headteacher will provide a formal written response within 30 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint.

If the headteacher 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 **Mary Howard Primary** or **St. Andrew's Primary** will take to resolve the complaint.

The headteacher 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 headteacher, or a member of the governing board (including the Chair or Vice-Chair), a suitably skilled governor will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 1.

Complaints about the headteacher or member of the governing board 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 board or
- The majority of the governing board

Stage 1 will be considered by an independent investigator appointed by the governing board. At the conclusion of their investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response.

In most cases it will be your choice as to whether to mount a formal complaint, but the School reserves the right to utilise the formal complaint procedures where the School feels that more 'informal' methods of resolving concerns have been exhausted but a complainant clearly remains dissatisfied.

The school will endeavour to respond in writing to a Stage 2 complaint within 5 working days after receiving the complaint. It should be noted that some outcomes of a complaint may lead to action being initiated under other formal procedures, such as safeguarding or disciplinary matters. Where this is the case you will be advised and informed of the procedures that are to be followed. It should be noted, however, that the school will not necessarily be able to provide you with the details of the outcome of those procedures for data protection reasons or otherwise, depending on the circumstances.

Stage 2

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 1 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 2 – a meeting with members of the governing board's complaints committee, which will be formed of the first three, impartial, governors available. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.

A request to escalate to Stage 2 must be made to the Clerk, via the school office, within five school days of receipt of the Stage 1 response.

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

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

The Clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within ten 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 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.

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 amongst themselves who will act as Chair of the Complaints Committee. If there are fewer than three governors from **The Mease Federation** available, the Clerk will source any additional, independent governors through another local school or through their LA Governor Services team, in order to make up the committee. Alternatively, an entirely independent committee may be convened to hear the complaint at Stage 2.

The committee will decide whether to deal with the complaint by inviting parties to a meeting or through written representations, but in making their decision they 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. Generally, we do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the committee meeting as these committees are not a form of legal proceedings. Although there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate, the aim is reconciliation and to put right things that may have gone wrong. If a complainant commences legal action against the school in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure, until those legal proceedings have concluded.

For instance, if a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by union and / or legal representation. (Please note that complaints about staff conduct will not generally be handled under this complaints procedure. Complainants will be advised that any staff conduct complaints will be considered under staff disciplinary procedures, if appropriate, but outcomes will not be shared with them.)

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

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 to be submitted to the committee at least 3 school days before the meeting.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 3 school days before the date of 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 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 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.

The Chair of the Committee will provide the complainant and **Mary Howard Primary** or **St. Andrew's Primary** with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 5 school days.

The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the Department for Education if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by Mary Howard Primary or St. Andrew's Primary.

If the complaint is:

- Jointly about the Chair or Vice Chair or
- The entire governing board or
- The majority of the governing board

Stage 2 will be heard by a committee of independent governors.

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 **Mary Howard Primary** or **St. Andrew's Primary** will take to resolve the complaint.

The response will also advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied.

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 Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by **Mary Howard Primary** or **St. Andrew's Primary**. They will consider whether **Mary Howard Primary** or **St. Andrew's Primary** has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint.

The complainant can refer their complaint to the Department for Education online at: 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

Punitive action is not taken against schools when breaches of legislation or failures to adhere to statutory policies are identified. However, if serious failings are identified, they may share information about the complaint and their findings with relevant bodies, such as local authorities and Ofsted, to make sure that appropriate safeguarding, remedial or preventative action is taken.

Ofsted normally expects parents to seek to resolve any concerns with the school in the first instance. See Ofsted's complaints process <https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school>

There may be occasions when it's necessary or reasonable to deviate from the published complaints procedure. This includes not doing something the procedure states we will, should or may do. In these instances, we will document any deviation from the published procedure.

Handling complaints fairly

We will make sure that complainants are treated fairly and offered a chance to state their case either in person or in writing, at each stage of the procedure. Complainants can request an independent complaints committee if they believe there is likely to be bias in the proceedings. They should provide us with evidence of bias in support of their request, as it's the school's decision whether to agree to it.

Any decision made by a school, must also be made in line with the principles of administrative law. This means a decision is:

- Lawful – it complies with education and other law, including human rights and equality law, such as the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Equality Act 2010
- Rational
- Reasonable
- Fair
- Proportionate

Mediation

Mediation can be useful in helping the school and complainants reach an agreement and move forward. It can:

- Provide a helpful mechanism for discussion when a concern is raised.
- Help to rebuild the relationship between parties once all of the investigative stages of the complaints procedure have been completed.

However, it should not be used as a substitute for an investigation during the formal stages of the complaints procedure. If neither the complainant nor the school considers that mediation will serve any practical purpose then the complainant will not be prevented from moving to the next investigative stage of the complaints procedure.

Duplicate complaints

If we receive a duplicate complaint on the same subject from, for example a spouse, a partner, a grandparent or a child, after closing a complaint at the end of the complaints procedure, we will inform the new complainant that the school has already considered that complaint and the local process is complete. We will advise the new complainant to contact the Department for Education if they are dissatisfied with the school's handling of the original complaint. If there are new aspects to the complaint that we may not have previously considered, we will ensure that these are investigated and dealt with to the full extent of the complaints procedure.

Complaint campaigns

Occasionally, schools may become the focus of a campaign and receive large volumes of complaints all based on the same subject or from complainants unconnected with the school. In this instance we would:

- Send a template response to all complainants or
- Publish a single response on the school's website and
- Signpost the complainants to the Department for Education if they are dissatisfied with our response.

Managing serial and persistent complaints

All complainants will be treated respectfully during and after the course of any complaints investigation and will receive a written response to their complaint. However, there will be occasions when, despite all stages of the complaints procedure having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If a complainant tries to re-open the same issue, we will inform them that the procedure has been completed and that the matter is now closed. If the complainant contacts us again on the same issue, the correspondence may then be viewed as 'serial' or 'persistent' and we may choose not to respond. Under no circumstances will a complainant be considered 'serial' for exercising their right to refer their complaint to their MP, regardless of which stage the complaint has reached.

Schools sometimes receive complaints considered to be vexatious. The Office of the Independent Adjudicator defines the characteristics of a 'frivolous' or 'vexatious' complaint as:

- 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

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We will not refuse to accept further correspondence or complaints from an individual we have had repeat or excessive contact with. The application of a 'serial or persistent' marking will be against the subject or complaint itself rather than the complainant. (APPENDIX 2)

The decision to stop responding is never taken lightly and would not happen just because an individual is difficult to deal with or asks complex questions. It would be because:

- The school has taken every reasonable step to address the complainant's concerns
 - The complainant has been given a clear statement of the school's position and their options
 - The complainant contacts school repeatedly, making substantially the same points each time
- Or because the school agrees with one or more of these statements:
- The complainant's letters, emails, or telephone calls are often or always abusive or aggressive
 - The complainant makes insulting personal comments about or threats towards staff
 - The school has reason to believe the individual is contacting school with the intention of causing disruption or inconvenience

If an individual's behaviour is causing a significant level of disruption, regardless of whether or not they have raised a complaint, schools can implement a tailored communication strategy such as:

- Restricting the individual to a single point of contact via an email address
- Limiting the number of times they can make contact, such as a fixed number of contacts per term

However, regardless of the application of any communication strategy, we will always provide parents and carers with the information they are entitled to under The Education (Pupil Information) (England) Regulations 2005, within the statutory time frame.

Once a decision has been made to stop responding, the individual will be informed. If the individual persists to the point that may constitute harassment, the school will seek legal advice. In some cases, injunctions and other court orders have been issued to individuals preventing them from contacting schools direct.

Barring from school premises

Although fulfilling a public function, schools are private places. The public has no automatic right of entry. Headteachers and Governing Board's therefore need to act to ensure they remain a safe place for pupils, staff and other members of their community.

If an individual's behaviour is a cause for concern, they can be asked to leave school premises. In some cases, individuals can be barred from entering school premises. We will always give the individual the opportunity to formally express their views on a decision to bar.

The Headteacher's decision to bar should then be reviewed by either the Chair of Governors or a committee of governors. They will take into account any representations made by the individual and decide whether to either confirm or lift the bar. If the decision is confirmed, the individual will be notified in writing, explaining how long the bar will be in place and when the decision will be reviewed.

Once the school's appeal process has been completed, individuals who remain barred may be able to apply to the Courts for a review of the school's decision. Individuals wishing to exercise this option should seek independent legal advice.

APPENDIX 1 Roles and Responsibilities

Complainant

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

- Explain the complaint in full as early as possible
- Co-operate with the school in seeking a solution to the complaint
- Respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing 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:

- 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 and other people relevant to the complaint
 - Consideration of records and other relevant information
 - Analysing information
- Liaising with the complainant and the complaints co-ordinator (Executive Headteacher) as appropriate to clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.

The investigator should:

- 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 Executive Headteacher or complaints committee that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.

The Executive Headteacher 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 Co-ordinator (this could be the Executive Headteacher / designated complaints governor or other staff member providing administrative support)

The complaints co-ordinator should:

- Ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure
- Liaise with staff members, headteacher, Chair of Governors, Clerk and Las (if appropriate) to ensure the smooth running of the complaints procedure

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- Be aware of issues regarding:
 - Sharing third party information
 - Additional support. This may be needed by complainants when making a complaint including interpretation support or where the complainant is a child.
- Keep records

Clerk to the Governing board

The Clerk is the contact point for the complainant and the committee and should:

- 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 1 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

Committee Chair

The committee's chair, who is nominated in advance of the complaint meeting, should ensure 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, is not adversarial, and that, if all parties are invited to attend, everyone is treated with respect and courtesy
- Complainants who may not be used to speaking at such a meeting are put at ease. This is particularly important if the complainant is a child
- The remit of the committee is explained to the complainant
- 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 give everyone the opportunity to consider and comment upon it; this may require a short adjournment of the meeting.

- Both the complainant and the school are given the opportunity to make their case and seek clarity, either through written submissions ahead of the meeting or verbally in the meeting itself
- The issues are addressed
- Key findings of fact are made
- The committee is open-minded and acts independently
- 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
- The meeting is minuted
- They liaise with the Clerk (and complaints co-ordinator, if the school has one).

Committee Member

Committee members should be aware that:

- The meeting must be independent and impartial, and should be seen to be so
No governor may sit on the committee if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the 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 does not find 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 issues that affects their child.
- Extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child and present during all or part of the meeting
Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings should ensure that the child does not feel intimidated.

The committee should respect the views of the child and give them equal consideration to those of adults.

If the child is the complainant, the committee should ask in advance if any support is needed to help them present their complaint. Where the child's parent is the complainant, the committee should give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the meeting, if any, the child needs to attend.

However, the parent should be advised that agreement might not always be possible if the parent wishes the child to attend a part of the meeting that the committee considers is not in the child's best interests.

- The welfare of the child is paramount.

APPENDIX 2 Managing Serial and Unreasonable Complaints

The Mease Federation is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with our schools. 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.

The Mease Federation 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:

- 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 co-operate with the complaints investigation process
- Refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure
- Insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice
- Introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on
- Raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant 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 Department for Education
- 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
- 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), as it could delay the outcome being reached. Whenever possible, the Executive Headteacher or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an '*unreasonable*' marking.

If the behaviour continues, the Executive Headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact St. Andrew's Primary or Mary Howard 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 St. Andrew's Primary or Mary Howard Primary.

APPENDIX 3 Complaints Form

Please complete this form and return to Miss R Mills (Executive Headteacher) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your Name:
Pupil's Name (if relevant):
Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):
Contact Details:
Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at 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 who:

Action taken:

Signature:

Date: