



# Outwoods Edge Primary School

Every Child. Every Day. Every Future.

## Complaints Policy

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# 1. Introduction and aims

Outwoods Edge Primary School is committed to providing a high-quality education for all our pupils in a supportive and caring environment. We value positive relationships with parents, carers and the wider community, and we aim to resolve any concerns or complaints as quickly and fairly as possible.

## 1.1 Our aims

This policy aims to:

- Provide a fair, transparent and accessible complaints procedure
- Ensure that complaints are dealt with promptly, fairly and sensitively
- Resolve complaints at the earliest possible stage
- Provide a clear process for escalating complaints if they cannot be resolved informally
- Ensure that lessons are learned from complaints to improve our school's practices
- Protect the wellbeing of staff, pupils and complainants throughout the process

## 1.2 Our commitment

We are committed to:

- Taking all complaints seriously
- Dealing with complaints impartially and confidentially
- Investigating complaints thoroughly and fairly
- Keeping complainants informed of progress
- Providing a timely response
- Learning from complaints to improve our services

# 2. Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on and complies with:

- **Education Act 2002** (as amended by the Education Act 2022, section 29) - which requires maintained schools to have and publish a complaints procedure
- **The School Information (England) Regulations 2008** - which sets out what schools must publish online
- **DfE Best Practice Guidance for School Complaints Procedures 2024** - non-statutory guidance
- **Equality Act 2010** - which requires schools to make reasonable adjustments
- **Data Protection Act 2018** and **UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)** - which govern how we handle personal data
- **Freedom of Information Act 2000** - which gives rights of access to information

This policy also takes into account:

- **Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025** - statutory safeguarding guidance

- **Working Together to Safeguard Children** – multi-agency safeguarding guidance

### 3. Who can make a complaint?

This complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children who are registered at the school. **Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint** to Outwoods Edge Primary School 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.

#### 3.1 Third-party complaints

Complaints may be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so. We will verify this consent before proceeding.

#### 3.2 Complaints from pupils

We take complaints from pupils seriously. Where a pupil raises a complaint, we will ensure:

- They feel safe and supported
- They understand the process
- They have appropriate support (e.g. from a trusted adult)
- Their views are given equal consideration to those of adults
- Their welfare is paramount throughout the process

### 4. The difference between a concern and a complaint

#### 4.1 A concern

A concern may be defined as '**an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought**'.

#### 4.2 A complaint

A complaint may be defined as '**an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action**'.

#### 4.3 Our approach

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

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, Mr Matthew Peet, Headteacher, will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, the Headteacher will refer you to another staff member. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important than seniority.

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

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

### 5.1 Methods of raising a complaint

A concern or complaint can be made:

- **In person** - by visiting the school office or arranging a meeting
- **In writing** - by letter or using our complaint form (see Appendix A)
- **By telephone** - by calling 01509 216177
- **By email** - to [office@oedge.net](mailto:office@oedge.net)

### 5.2 Who to contact

**Complaints against school staff (except the headteacher)** should be made in the first instance to:

- **Mr Matthew Peet, Headteacher**
- Via the school office
- Outwoods Edge Primary School, 21 Redwood Road, Loughborough, LE11 2LD
- Please mark correspondence as **Private and Confidential**

**Complaints that involve or are about the headteacher** should be addressed to:

- **Mrs Kulraj Bhangra, Chair of Governors**
- Via the school office
- Outwoods Edge Primary School, 21 Redwood Road, Loughborough, LE11 2LD
- Please mark correspondence as **Private and Confidential**

**Complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor or the whole governing body** should be addressed to:

- **Mrs Helen Chadwick, Clerk to the Governing Body**
- Via the school office
- Outwoods Edge Primary School, 21 Redwood Road, Loughborough, LE11 2LD
- Please mark correspondence as **Private and Confidential**

### 5.3 Using the complaint form

For ease of use, a template complaint form is included at Appendix A of this procedure. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office on 01509 216177. You can also ask a third-party organisation, for example Citizens Advice, to help you.

### 5.4 Reasonable adjustments

In accordance with the Equality Act 2010, we will consider making reasonable adjustments if required to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure.

This may include:

- Providing information in alternative formats (e.g. large print, audio, different languages)
- Assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint
- Holding meetings in accessible locations
- Allowing extra time for responses
- Permitting a support person to attend meetings
- Accepting complaints in non-written formats (e.g. verbal complaints recorded by a member of staff)

If you require any reasonable adjustments, please contact the school office to discuss your needs.

## 6. Anonymous complaints

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

- The seriousness of the issues raised
- Whether there is any corroborating evidence
- The potential risk to pupils, staff or the school

If we decide not to investigate an anonymous complaint, we will document the reasons for this decision.

## 7. Time scales

### 7.1 Time limit for raising complaints

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. Examples of exceptional circumstances might include:

- Serious illness of the complainant
- Bereavement
- Ongoing police investigation
- Other significant personal circumstances

If you are making a complaint outside the three-month timeframe, please explain the exceptional circumstances in your complaint.

## 7.2 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.

## 7.3 Response timescales

At each stage of this procedure, we will make every effort to respond within the stated timescales. If we are unable to meet a deadline, we will:

- Contact you to explain the delay
- Provide a revised timescale
- Keep you regularly updated on progress

# 8. Scope of this complaints procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by Outwoods Edge Primary School, **other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures.**

## 8.1 Exceptions – complaints covered by other procedures

The following types of complaints are **not covered by this procedure** and have separate processes:

Exceptions	Who to contact
Admissions to schools	Concerns about admissions should be handled through a separate process – either through the appeals process or via the local authority.

<p>Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation</p>	<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. The LADO for Leicestershire is Kim Taylor, who can be contacted via telephone: 0116 305 5641 or email <a href="mailto:Kim.Taylor2@leics.gov.uk">Kim.Taylor2@leics.gov.uk</a></p>
<p>Exclusion of children from school*</p>	<p>Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at:  <a href="http://www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions">www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions</a>.</p> <p><i>*complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.</i></p>
<p>Whistleblowing</p>	<p>We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors.</p> <p>The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistle-blowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at:  <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus">www.education.gov.uk/contactus</a>.</p> <p>Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the LA or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.</p>
<p>Staff grievances</p>	<p>Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.</p>
<p>Staff conduct</p>	<p>Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate.</p> <p>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>

<b>Curriculum content</b>	<p>Complaints about the content of the National Curriculum should be directed to the Department for Education.  <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus">www.education.gov.uk/contactus</a></p> <p><b>Note:</b> Complaints about the school's delivery of the curriculum are within the scope of this policy.</p>
<b>Collective worship</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Complaints about collective worship should be directed to:</li> <li>● Leicestershire County Council</li> <li>● The local Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)</li> <li>● The relevant religious authority</li> </ul>
<b>Services provided by other organisations using school premises</b>	<p>These providers should have their own complaints procedures.</p>

## 8.2 Impact of other investigations

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint (for example the police, local authority safeguarding teams, the Disclosure and Barring Service, 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 this happens, we will:

- Inform you as soon as possible
- Provide a proposed new timescale
- Keep you regularly updated
- Resume our investigation as soon as appropriate

## 8.3 Legal proceedings

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

We will inform the complainant in writing if we decide to suspend the procedure for this reason.

## 9. Resolving complaints

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

### 9.1 Possible outcomes

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

- **An explanation** - of what happened and why
- **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** - which may be appropriate even if the complaint is not upheld

### 9.2 What we cannot do

Please note that we cannot:

- Disclose confidential information about staff disciplinary matters
- Overturn decisions made by other bodies (e.g. exam boards, admissions authorities)
- Provide financial compensation
- Make staff members apologise if they have not done anything wrong

## 10. Withdrawal of a complaint

If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing (by letter or email).

We will write to confirm that the complaint has been withdrawn and that the complaints procedure has been discontinued.

## 11. Stage 1 – Informal resolution

It is to be hoped that most concerns can be expressed and resolved on an informal basis.

### 11.1 Who to contact

Concerns should be raised with:

- **The class teacher** (for concerns about day-to-day classroom matters)
- **Deputy Headteacher** (for more serious concerns or if the class teacher cannot resolve the issue)

- **Headteacher** (for serious concerns or if the Deputy Headteacher cannot resolve the issue)

**Important:** 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 3 of the procedure.

## 11.2 The informal resolution process

The appropriate person will:

- Listen to your concerns
- Discuss the issue with you
- Try to resolve the matter as quickly as possible
- May arrange a meeting if appropriate

## 11.3 Response timescale

At the conclusion of their investigation, the appropriate person investigating the complaint will provide an informal written response within **10 school days** of the date of receipt of the complaint.

## 11.4 If the issue remains unresolved

If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint at Stage 2.

# 12. Stage 2 – Formal investigation

## 12.1 How to make a formal complaint

Formal complaints must be made to the Headteacher (unless they are about the headteacher), via the school office. This may be done:

- In person
- In writing (preferably using the Complaint Form at Appendix A)
- By email to [office@oedge.net](mailto:office@oedge.net)

Please mark all correspondence as **Private and Confidential**.

## 12.2 Acknowledgement

The Headteacher will:

- Record the date the complaint is received
- Acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within **2 school days**

Within this response, the Headteacher will seek to clarify:

- The nature of the complaint
- What remains unresolved
- 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.

### 12.3 Investigation

**Note:** The Headteacher 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 Headteacher (or investigator) will:

- 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
- Consider all relevant evidence
- Maintain confidentiality throughout

### 12.4 Response

At the conclusion of their investigation, the Headteacher will provide a formal written response within **10 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
- Provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it
- Where appropriate, include details of actions Outwoods Edge Primary School will take to resolve the complaint
- Advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2

### 12.5 Complaints about the Headteacher or Governors

**If the complaint is about the Headteacher, or a member of the governing body** (including the Chair or Vice-Chair), a suitably skilled governor will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 2.

Complaints about the Headteacher or member of the governing body must be made to the Clerk, via the school office.

#### **If the complaint is:**

- Jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair, or
- The entire governing body, or
- The majority of the governing body

Stage 2 will be considered by an independent investigator appointed by the governing body. At the conclusion of their investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response.

## **13. Stage 3 – Panel hearing**

### **13.1 When to request a panel hearing**

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 2 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 3 – a panel hearing. **This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.**

### **13.2 How to request a panel hearing**

A request to escalate to Stage 3 must be made to the Clerk, via the school office, within **10 school days** of receipt of the Stage 2 response.

The request should include:

- A copy of the original complaint
- A copy of the Stage 2 response
- An explanation of why the complainant is dissatisfied with the Stage 2 outcome
- What outcome they are seeking

### **13.3 Acknowledgement**

The Clerk will:

- Record the date the complaint is received
- Acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within **2 school days**

Requests received outside of the 10 school day time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

### **13.4 Arranging the panel hearing**

The Clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within **10 school days** of receipt of the Stage 3 request. If this is not possible, the Clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

The Clerk will offer the complainant three possible dates for the hearing. 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.

### 13.5 Panel composition

The panel will consist of **at least three people** who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, with **one panel member who is independent** of the management and running of the school.

**Independent panel member:** This means someone who is not a member, trustee, governor, or employee of the school. The independent panel member could be, for example, the chair of governors from a nearby school.

#### **If the complaint is:**

- Jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair, or
- The entire governing body, or
- The majority of the governing body

Stage 3 will be heard by a committee of independent, co-opted governors.

### 13.6 Attendance and representation

A complainant may bring someone along to the panel meeting 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. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate. 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.

If either party wishes to bring legal representation, they must inform the Clerk at least 5 school days before the hearing.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend

**Note:** 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.

### 13.7 Preparation for the hearing

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 **2 school days** before the date of the meeting.

### 13.8 Evidence

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. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.

### 13.9 The hearing

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 hearing will typically follow this format:**

1. The complainant (or their representative) will explain their complaint
2. The Headteacher (or their representative) will explain the school's response
3. Panel members may ask questions of both parties
4. The complainant will have the opportunity to make a final statement
5. The Headteacher will have the opportunity to make a final statement
6. Both parties will leave while the panel considers its decision

### 13.10 Panel decision

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

### 13.11 Notification of outcome

The Chair of the Committee will provide the complainant and Outwoods Edge Primary School with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within **10 school days** of the hearing.

The letter to the complainant will include:

- Details of any actions taken to investigate the complaint
- A full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it
- Where appropriate, details of actions Outwoods Edge Primary School will take to resolve the complaint
- Details of how to contact the Department for Education if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled

The panel will ensure that those findings and recommendations are sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about. Furthermore, they will be available for inspection on the school premises by the governing body and the Headteacher.

A written record will be kept of all complaints, and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing.

## 14. Next steps – Escalation to the DfE

### 14.1 When to contact the DfE

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 (DfE) after they have completed Stage 3.

### 14.2 What the DfE will consider

The DfE will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by Outwoods Edge Primary School.

They will consider whether Outwoods Edge Primary School has:

- Adhered to education legislation
- Followed any statutory policies connected with the complaint
- Followed its published complaints procedure

### 14.3 How to contact the DfE

The complainant can refer their complaint to the DfE:

**Online:** [www.education.gov.uk/contactus](http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus)

**By telephone:** 0370 000 2288

**By writing to:** Department for Education Piccadilly Gate Store Street Manchester M1 2WD

## 15. Persistent and unreasonable complaints

### 15.1 Definition of unreasonably persistent complaints

Most complaints raised will be valid, and therefore we will treat them seriously. However, a complaint may become unreasonable if the person:

- Has made the same complaint before, and it's already been resolved by following the school's complaints procedure
- Makes a complaint that is obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, defamatory or repetitive
- Knowingly provides false information
- Insists on pursuing a complaint that is unfounded, or out of scope of the complaints procedure
- Pursues a valid complaint, but in an unreasonable manner (e.g. refuses to articulate the complaint, refuses to co-operate with this complaints procedure, or insists that the complaint is dealt with in ways that are incompatible with this procedure and the time frames it sets out)
- Changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation goes on
- Makes a complaint designed to cause disruption, annoyance or excessive demands on school time
- Seeks unrealistic outcomes, or a solution that lacks any serious purpose or value

### 15.2 Steps we will take

We will take every reasonable step to address the complainant's concerns, and give them a clear statement of our position and their options. We will maintain our role as an objective arbiter throughout the process, including when we meet with individuals. We will follow our complaints procedure as normal (as outlined above) wherever possible.

If the complainant continues to contact the school in a disruptive way, we may put communications strategies in place. We may:

- Give the complainant a single point of contact via an email address
- Limit the number of times the complainant can make contact, such as a fixed number per term

- Ask the complainant to engage a third party to act on their behalf, such as Citizens Advice
- Put any other strategy in place as necessary

### 15.3 Stopping responding

We may stop responding to the complainant when all of these factors are met:

- We believe we have taken all reasonable steps to help address their concerns
- We have provided a clear statement of our position and their options
- The complainant contacts us repeatedly, and we believe their intention is to cause disruption or inconvenience

Where we stop responding, we will inform the individual in writing that we intend to do so. We will also explain that we will still consider any new complaints they make.

### 15.4 Aggressive or abusive behaviour

We will not tolerate aggressive or abusive behaviour towards our staff.

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 our school site under section 547 of the Education Act 1996.

## 16. Duplicate complaints and complaint campaigns

### 16.1 Duplicate complaints

If we have resolved a complaint under this procedure and receive a duplicate complaint on the same subject from a partner, family member or other individual, we will assess whether there are aspects that we hadn't previously considered, or any new information we need to take into account.

If we are satisfied that there are no new aspects, we will:

- Tell the new complainant that we have already investigated and responded to this issue, and the local process is complete
- Direct them to the DfE if they are dissatisfied with our original handling of the complaint

If there are new aspects, we will follow this procedure again.

## 16.2 Complaint campaigns

Where the school receives a large volume of complaints about the same topic or subject, especially if these come from complainants unconnected with the school, the school may respond to these complaints by:

- Publishing a single response on the school website
- Sending a template response to all of the complainants

If complainants are not satisfied with the school's response, or wish to pursue the complaint further, the normal procedures will apply.

## 16.3 Group complaints

We do not accept complaints from groups of parents/carers. Each complaint must be made individually.

We will deal with complaints separately and hold individual meetings. This is particularly true for groups of parents, who may discuss the school on social media or in the playground.

We make it clear to parents and carers that:

- Their right to complain rests on their position as the parent/carer of an individual pupil
- They cannot raise a complaint on behalf of other pupils or a group of pupils
- They can raise group concerns more constructively in other ways (e.g. through our parent-teacher association)

## 17. Complaints about other families

### 17.1 Our approach

Handling complaints about other families can be complex. We will not alienate the parent or carer complaining by dismissing their concerns about other families. However, we will make it clear that as a school, our priority is to address pupils' needs.

Unless the issue is directly school-related, parents/carers should not expect us to resolve disputes between themselves. Complaints about other families could be informal or formal – we will follow the appropriate stages in this procedure.

We will:

- Concentrate on establishing the facts
- Avoid entering into a detailed discussion with the person complaining about another child/family, because some of this information may be confidential
- If a complaint about another family is outside of our remit, consider involving or referring the issue to external agencies. If appropriate, a police liaison officer may be able to work with families

## 17.2 Support for affected pupils

If a formal complaints process is ongoing between 2 or more families in our school community, we will make sure that the relevant pupils have access to appropriate pastoral support, as they could find this process challenging.

We will:

- Monitor their mental health and wellbeing
- Consider developing a pastoral support plan if needed
- Ensure they know how to contact our pastoral lead
- Continue to prioritise effective home-school communication

## 18. Staff wellbeing and support

### 18.1 Our commitment to staff wellbeing

We have a duty of care towards our employees. This means that staff (including the Headteacher) should not be:

- Placed in upsetting or dangerous situations
- Expected to respond to abusive communications
- Expected to attend meetings where someone is behaving aggressively

### 18.2 Support during complaints

Being involved with, or being the subject of, a complaint can affect the mental health and wellbeing of staff members. We will:

- Remind staff that senior leaders are available to them during the complaints process
- Provide appropriate support and supervision
- Monitor staff wellbeing throughout the process
- Ensure staff have access to occupational health or counselling services if needed

### 18.3 Code of conduct

We make it clear that meetings will be stopped or cancelled if any visitors, including parents/carers, don't follow the code of conduct outlined in this complaints procedure.

## 19. Pupil wellbeing and support

If pupils are affected by a complaints process, particularly if it involves their family or is ongoing between families, we will ensure they have access to appropriate support.

We will:

- Monitor their emotional wellbeing
- Provide access to pastoral support

- Consider whether a pastoral support plan is needed
- Ensure they know who they can talk to if they're worried
- Maintain regular communication with parents/carers about their child's wellbeing

## 20. Roles and responsibilities

### 20.1 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

### 20.2 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/young people 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 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 Headteacher or complaints committee that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems

The 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.

### **20.3 Complaints Co-ordinator (the Headteacher)**

The complaints co-ordinator should:

- Ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure
- Liaise with staff members, Senior Leadership Team (if appropriate), Chair of Governors or the Clerk to ensure the smooth running of the complaints procedure
- Be aware of issues regarding:
  - Sharing third party information
  - Additional support that may be needed by complainants when making a complaint, including interpretation support or where the complainant is a child or young person
- Keep records

### **20.4 Clerk to the Governing Body**

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 UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK 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

### **20.5 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/young person

- 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 UK GDPR
- If a new issue arises, everyone has 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 (the Headteacher)

## 20.6 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 issue that affects their child

### **Extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child/young person and present during all or part of the meeting**

- Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings should ensure that the child/young person does not feel intimidated
- The committee should respect the views of the child/young person and give them equal consideration to those of adults
- If the child/young person is the complainant, the committee should ask in advance if any support is needed to help them present their complaint
- Where the child/young person's parent is the complainant, the committee should give the parent the opportunity 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 committee considers is not in the child/young person's best interests

**The welfare of the child/young person is paramount**

## **21. Record keeping and confidentiality**

### **21.1 Records we will keep**

We will keep written records of all complaints, including:

- Whether they are resolved at the informal stage or proceed to a formal investigation or panel hearing
- The action taken by the school as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint was upheld)
- Correspondence, statements, and records relating to individual complaints

### **21.2 How we store records**

Records will be stored securely and confidentially in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.

We will only share records if we're asked to by:

- The Secretary of State
- As part of a school inspection

### **21.3 Retention of records**

We will retain records in line with our Records Management Policy and data protection requirements. We will only keep records as long as necessary.

### **21.4 Responsibility for records**

The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring that records are kept appropriately.

## **22. Monitoring and review**

### **22.1 Monitoring**

The Headteacher will:

- Monitor the level and nature of complaints
- Review the outcomes to ensure that similar issues are identified and addressed
- Report to the Governing Body on the number and nature of complaints (without breaching confidentiality)

## 22.2 Review

This policy will be reviewed by the Governing Body at bi-annually, or sooner if:

- There are changes in legislation or DfE guidance
- There are significant changes in the number or nature of complaints
- Issues are identified with the effectiveness of the procedure

# Appendix A



**Outwoods Edge**  
Primary School

## Complaint Form

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

<b>Your name:</b>
<b>Pupil's name (if relevant):</b>
<b>Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):</b>
<b>Address:</b>
<b>Postcode:</b>
<b>Day time telephone number:</b>
<b>Evening telephone number:</b>
<b>Email address:</b>

**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 who:

Complaint referred to:

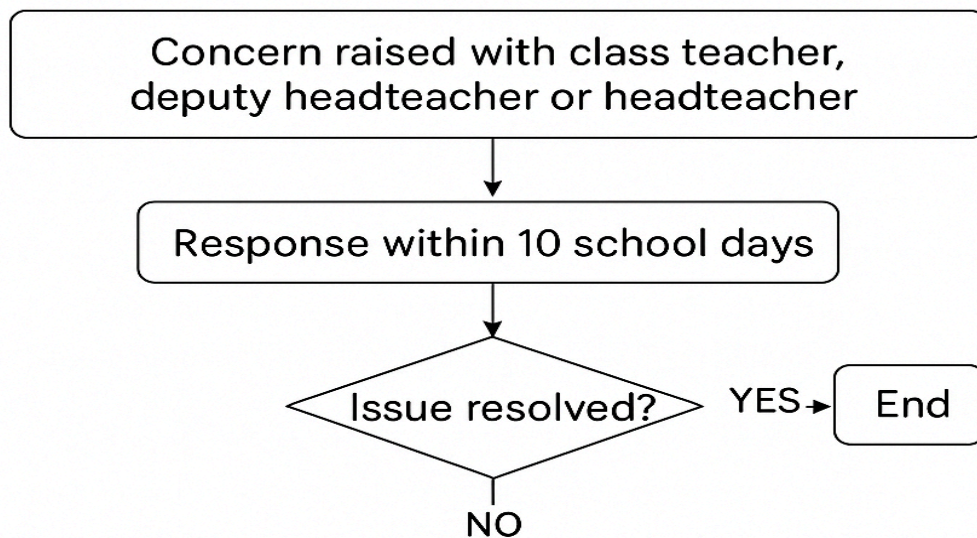
Action taken:

Date:

## Appendix B:

### Complaints procedure flowchart

#### Stage 1: Informal Resolution



#### Stage 2: Formal Investigation

