

# Cams Lane Primary School



## General Complaints Procedure

Most parents have a positive relationship with schools, but sometimes a problem may arise. Governing Bodies of schools are required by law under Education Act 2002 (Section 29) to establish a procedure which deals with complaints. This procedure will be used by the School's Governing Body when dealing with general complaints; it is for parents, carers and members of the public to use to raise informal and formal complaints with the school and the Governing Body. All Complainants will be treated seriously and courteously and given the time they need to be heard. It is important that complainants have confidence in the procedure and know that their concerns and complaints will be investigated fully and impartially.

Date agreed by governors	June 2019
Date Reviewed	May 2021
Date Reviewed against Model policy	April 2023
Date to be reviewed	April 2025

'Together as a Cams Lane family, we will inspire everyone to reach their potential. Guided by our 5 Rs, we will develop independent learners with an awareness of the world around them, ready for the challenges of the future. We will nurture relationships that build confidence and pride within each person.'

## **'INSPIRE, BELIEVE, LEARN'**

### **Resilience, Resourcefulness, Respect, Reflection, Responsibility**

#### **Who is the Procedure for?**

The procedure is for everyone (parents, carers and members of the public) to use to raise informal and formal general comments or complaints with the school and the Governing Body. Complainants will be treated seriously and courteously and given the time they need to be heard. It is important that complainants have confidence in the procedure and know that their concerns and complaints will be investigated fully and impartially.

If a complainant needs some kind of support in order to raise a concern or complaint, then every effort should be made to ensure this is available to enable them to fully participate in the process. (This could include provision of a translation of the procedure, provision of an interpreter etc.)

#### **Types of complaints NOT covered**

This procedure does not cover complaints that relate to certain matters for which there are separate arrangements. (See Appendix 1) Where a complaint is made and it does not fall into this policy, then it will be investigated in accordance with the appropriate procedures, and the complainant will be notified accordingly

If the complaint is of a serious nature or if the school is unsure as to whether it should be dealt with under the general complaints procedure, they may seek advice from the Local Authority.

If at any point during the procedure it becomes apparent that the complaint is potentially a disciplinary matter relating to a member of staff, the procedure will be stopped and advice sought from the Local Authority. All appropriate and involved parties will be notified.

#### **General Principles**

The procedure for handling complaints is intended to:-

- be easily accessible and well publicised
- be simple to understand and use
- encourage resolution of problems by informal means, wherever possible
- be impartial and non-adversarial
- allow swift handling with established time-limits for action and keeping people informed of the progress
- ensure a full and fair investigation
- respect individuals' desire for confidentiality
- address the key issues raised, provide an effective response and appropriate action

- be used by staff and governors consistently, appropriately and confidently.
- require written records of all meetings that take place in relation to both concerns and complaints
- provide information to the school's senior management team so that services can be improved

### **The difference between a Concern and a Complaint:**

All parties need to be clear about the difference between a **concern** and a **complaint**.

Parents can **raise a concern** should be handled if at all possible, without the need for formal procedures. In most cases, the class teacher will receive the first approach and may be able to resolve an issue immediately. See stages. The existence of a complaints procedure should not be seen as a way of undermining efforts to resolve a concern informally.

Schools need to be clear about the difference between a concern and a complaint. Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage will reduce the numbers that develop into formal complaints. However, formal complaints should always follow the complaints procedure.

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

A **"complaint"** may be generally recognised as an expression or statement of dissatisfaction however made about the actions taken or lack of actions

As a school we also encourage and welcome positive feedback to school.

**The formal complaints procedure will need to be used where initial attempts to resolve the issue have been unsuccessful and the person raising the issue remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further.**

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. [Cams Lane](#) takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

### **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 Cams Lane 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.

### **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.

## **Stages of the Complaints Procedure ( see page 7 of this document)**

Stage 1	The complaint is heard informally by a staff member (not the subject of the complaint) Either a KS leader or member of SLT
Stage 2	The complaint is heard formally by the Headteacher. If the complaint is about the headteacher, this should move directly to stage three
Stage 3	The complaint is formally heard by the Chair Of Governors
Stage 4	The complaint is heard by the Governing Body's Complaints Panel

See Appendix 2 for Flow Chart for Stages of Complaint

### **Resolving Complaints:**

At each stage in the procedure all parties should keep in mind ways in which a complaint can be resolved. It would be useful if complainants state what actions they feel might resolve the problem at any stage.

This procedure will identify areas of agreement between the parties. It is also of equal importance to clarify any misunderstandings that might have occurred as this can create a positive atmosphere in which to discuss any outstanding issues.

### **Vexatious, Serial, Persistent and Unreasonable Complaints:**

There may be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedures having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the Chair of the Governing Body is able to inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

While the vast majority of complainants are reasonable, a small minority may remain dissatisfied despite all the procedures having been followed. They are sometimes referred to as 'vexatious', 'persistent', 'habitual' or 'serial' complainants. Sometimes it is simply a case of 'agreeing to disagree' and moving on. Schools do not expect their staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect their staff from abusive, offensive or threatening behaviour.

Problems may arise where the complainants are unreasonable and are not seeking to have a situation remedied but instead are determined to extract retribution for some real or imagined wrong. Complainants will be advised in writing of the school policy for handling unreasonably persistent, harassing or abusive complainants.

See policy for further information

### **Time-Limits:**

Complaints should to be considered, and resolved, as quickly and efficiently as possible. Complaints should therefore be raised within 3 months of the event taking place, except in exceptional and mitigating circumstances. However, where further investigations are necessary, new time limits can be set and the complainant sent details of the new deadlines and an explanation for any delay.

### **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.

### **Standards for handling complaints:**

- We can receive complaints by letter or email, or alternatively if required during a face to face meeting (marked Private and Confidential)
- You can expect to be treated with courtesy, respect and fairness at all times.
- We expect that you will also treat our staff dealing with your complaint with the same courtesy, respect and fairness
- We will treat your complaint in confidence within the school/LA
- Complainants should not approach individual governors to raise concerns or complaints, as they have no power to act on an individual basis and may prevent them from considering complaints at stage 2 of the procedure.
- We will deal with your complaint promptly.
- We will acknowledge receipt of a written complaint within five working days you can expect to have a full reply within 20 working days.
- We will not treat you less favorably than anyone else because of your:
  - sex or legal marital or same-sex partnership status: this includes family status, responsibility for dependents, and gender (including gender reassignment, whether proposed, commenced or completed)
  - sexual orientation
  - colour or race: this includes ethnic or national origin or nationality
  - disability
  - religious or political beliefs, or trade union affiliation
  - any other unjustifiable factors, for example language

### **Third Party Reporting:**

Complainants may wish to have a third party act on their behalf. A third party is any person or organisation acting on behalf of or making enquiries for the complainant. For example, third parties may include:

- advice organisations
- professionals such as social workers, community psychiatric nurses or doctors, solicitors
- family members or friends
- interpreters for second language
- interpreters for the deaf

Where a third party is helping a complainant with a particular complaint, we need written consent to that effect. Where we have this authority, we will endeavour to take all possible steps to keep the third party informed of progress on the complaint.

### **Confidentiality:**

All complaints received will be dealt with confidentially and in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018, subject to the need to disclose information as required by statutory authorities, and/or as a result of statutory, legal or parliamentary obligations placed on the Commission.

The complaint should, where possible be put in writing to the Headteacher. In all cases, the complaint should include details of the complaint, action already taken to resolve the complaint and what actions might help resolve the problem. It is important that the complaint is not shared with the Full Governing Body.

Formal complaints should be lodged as soon as possible, but no later than three school months of the incident or issue occurring. There may be certain exceptions to this and the school should ensure that their complaint procedure reflects this. The Department for Education stipulates that schools must not have blanket policies of refusing to consider any complaints not lodged within the stated period.

### **Closing complaints:**

Very occasionally, school will feel it needs to close a complaint where the complainant is still dissatisfied. Sometimes it is simply not possible to meet all of the complainant's wishes and the complaint remains irresolvable.

### **Withdrawal of a Complaint**

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

# **School Complaints Procedure**

## **1. Informal**

It is in everyone's interest that any concerns or complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. The experience of the first contact between the complainant and the school can be crucial in determining whether the complaint will escalate. Anyone, (parents, carers or members of the public), must feel able to raise a concern or make a comment about what goes on in school with members of staff, the Head Teacher or other nominated senior member of staff, without formality. Informal complaints can be made in person, by telephone or in writing.

Most concerns, comments and complaints can usually be resolved informally by contacting the appropriate member of staff, the Head Teacher or other nominated senior member of staff at the school, and do not develop into formal complaints. The ability to consider the complaint objectively and impartially is crucial.

Anyone who wishes to raise a concern should ask for an appointment to meet with an appropriate member of staff at an agreed time. At the meeting, the nature of the concern should be clarified and brief details recorded.

The parties involved should discuss and be encouraged to offer their view of what would be a realistic resolution to the problem.

If the member of staff first contacted cannot deal with the matter personally, he/she may need to refer the matter to a colleague. Before doing so, the nature of the concern should be clarified, details recorded (name of person, contact address or phone number, nature of concern, date when concern raised and date(s) of any relevant incident or event) and the person should be notified of the likely time-scale of a response.

If the matter cannot be resolved at this stage, and the person wishes to take the matter further, they should be given clear information about how to proceed with a formal complaint.

**At this stage, members of the Governing Body should not be approached in case they are needed at a later stage of the procedure.**

## **2. Complaint heard by the Head Teacher**

All complaints should be submitted to the Head Teacher, unless the complaint is in respect of the Head Teacher, in which case it should be submitted to the Chair of Governors (stage 3).

All written complaints should be formally acknowledged within **five school days**, and a full written response should be sent within **twenty school days**. If this is not possible for any reason, i.e. the complaint is complex, the complainant should be notified of the delay, and reason in writing, and a new expected response date should be agreed.

A full written response should be made to complainants (letter or email) and where appropriate a further meeting to explain how decisions were reached.

If the matter cannot be resolved at this stage, and the complainant wishes to take the matter further, they will be advised that if they are dissatisfied with the way in which their complaint has been handled they may refer the matter to the next stage. This should be done by writing to the Clerk to the Governing Body within 10 school days of receipt of the letter from the Headteacher or Chair of Governors.

### **3. Formal Complaint heard by the Chair of Governors**

All formal complaints which remain unresolved following an investigation carried out by the Head Teacher or are complaints about the Head Teacher should be submitted to the Chair of Governors for further consideration.

All written complaints should be formally acknowledged within **five school days**. If this is not possible for any reason, i.e. the complaint is complex, the complainant should be notified of the delay, and reason in writing, and a new expected response date should be agreed.

A full written response should be sent **within twenty school days**.

If the matter cannot be resolved at this stage, and the complainant wishes to take the matter further, they should be given clear information about how to proceed with a formal complaint at Stage Four.

### **4. Hearing by Complaints Hearing Panel**

The panel will comprise at least three Governors who have had no previous knowledge of or involvement in the case. The panel should not include staff Governors.

An issue that has not been resolved through informal and formal procedure (Stages 1, 2 and 3) will escalate to a full investigation by the Governing Body's Complaints Committee who will be charged with seeing the complaint through. The Education Act 2002 (Section 29) requires Governing Bodies to establish these procedures and hear complaints. This committee will be the last school-based stage of the Complaints Process.

The complainant should write to 'The Clerk to the Governing Body' (marking it 'private and confidential – complaint') giving details of the complaint and asking for it to be dealt with at Stage 4. The Clerk to the Governing Body or Chair of the Panel should write to the complainant within five school days of receipt and advise them of the name of the Governor who will chair the Stage 4 panel, and outline the timescales for the process. The Chair of the Panel will then convene a meeting of the Governing Body Complaints Committee, usually within 20 school days of receipt of the letter. If there is a longer delay (i.e. due to school holidays), the complainant needs to be informed and given an estimated date of when the committee will meet.

Individual complaints would not be heard by the whole Governing Body at any stage, as this could compromise the impartiality of any panel set up for a disciplinary hearing against a member of staff following a serious complaint.

It should be made clear who can attend the meeting and advise both the complainant and the person/people subject to the complaint that they may bring someone to support or



represent them. The date, time and venue of the hearing, should be agreed to ensure that they are convenient and accessible to all parties.

The Chair should arrange for copies of all the relevant documentation to be sent to all people invited, ensuring that everyone has copies to read through at least 5 school days before the date of the meeting.

Should the complaint be lengthy, it is wise for the Chair to speak with the complainant prior to the meeting and identify "bullet point issues of complaint." This should ensure that the relevant people attend the hearing.

It is recommended that the Panel meet prior to the hearing to agree any questions that they may have from the paperwork, and also to agree how questions will be raised during the hearing.

### **Proceedings at the Meeting:**

1. The Chair of the Complaints Committee will introduce him/herself and ask the people present to introduce themselves. It needs to be made clear at the start of the meeting, who can be present for what part of the meeting. The Chair will then explain the purpose and format of the meeting and advise those present that at any time they can ask for a short break. It should be noted that complainants may feel uncomfortable speaking in front of a large number of people, and therefore it may be more productive for people to be invited into part of the hearing only
2. The complainant will be asked to give a verbal statement in support of his/her written letter of complaint and why he/she feels that the issue has not been resolved. He/she will be permitted to call witnesses and to produce relevant documentation.
3. The person subject to the complaint will be given the opportunity to ask questions:
  - of the complainant on the evidence given by him/her and
  - of any of the witnesses the complainant has called on their evidence.
4. The Chair and other Complaints Panel members will take the opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification.
5. The person subject to the complaint will be given the right of reply, to state his/her case, to call witnesses and to produce relevant documentation.
6. The complainant will be given the opportunity to ask questions:
  - of the person subject to the complaint on the evidence given by him/her
  - of any of the witnesses the person subject to the complaint has called on their evidence.
7. The Chair and other Complaints Panel members will take the opportunity to ask any further questions they may have. When the Complaints Panel members understand all the issues, the Chair will ask all parties to leave, except the members and the clerk.
8. It is important that the Panel agree their decision and the contents of their report whilst they are in the meeting. The Panel Chair should produce a written report detailing the Panel's findings and recommendations, which should be sent to all parties concerned within ten school days of the hearing.

### **After the Meeting:**

The Complaints Committee members then discuss the issues in private and will need to consider the information, come to a decision and suggest a way to resolve the issue taking into account the best interests of the child or children.

When the Complaints Committee have reached a decision the Chair will inform everyone concerned in writing of its conclusion as soon as possible, but in any event, within 10 school days of the meeting.

**The decision of the Complaints Panel is final.** They will report their findings to the Governing Body ensuring that any issues coming out of the investigation are put into action.

Once a Complaints Committee has heard a complaint and it is clear that correct procedures have been followed, that specific complaint cannot be reopened or re-heard. **The matter will then be closed as far as the school is concerned.** The complainant should also be made aware that there is **NO right of appeal to the Local Education Authority** if the complainant is still dissatisfied. If a request is received in this respect, the complainant should be advised that they should write to:

The School Complaints Unit (SCU) Sanctuary Buildings  
Department for Education  
2nd Floor, Piccadilly Gate  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

### **What will the Department for Education do?**

If a complaint has exhausted the local procedures, The School Complaints Unit will examine if the complaints policy and any other relevant policies were followed; they will also determine whether the policies adhere to education legislation. The Schools Complaints Unit will not re-investigate the substance of the complaint. This remains the responsibility of schools.

If legislative or policy breaches are found, the Schools Complaints Unit will report them to the school and the complainant and, where necessary, require remedial action to be taken. Failure to carry out remedial actions could ultimately result in a formal Direction being issued by the Secretary of State.

Further information and advice can be found on the Department for Education's School Complaints Toolkit 2014 (August 2014) which can be found on the following link:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/346867/School\\_Complaints\\_Toolkit\\_2014.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/346867/School_Complaints_Toolkit_2014.pdf)

### **Diocesan Authorities:**

The Catholic and Church of England Diocesan authorities discharge their functions in respect of maintained schools in their Trusteeship by appointing foundation governors to the governing body of the school. There is therefore no further avenue of complaint or appeal to the Diocese where the governing body has complied with and completed its own internal procedures.

The diocesan authorities will however receive and consider complaints about the exercise of their own functions in respect of a school and complaints that a school has failed or is failing to comply with the terms of its Trust Deed or Ethos Statement. 'Its own functions' in this case might mean, for example, the religious education programme, the content and delivery of acts of worship, the appointment of foundation governors or any other matters where the school claims to have acted on the advice of the diocese in a way parents consider to be inappropriate.

In Bury the relevant Dioceses are the Diocese of Manchester (CE) and The Diocese of Salford (Catholic).

### **Model School Complaint Form**

Please complete and return this form to the Head Teacher / The Chair of Governors / The Clerk of the Governing Body (relevant stage of the Complaints Process) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone (Daytime): \_\_\_\_\_

(Evening): \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Your child's name & Year Group (if relevant to your complaint):

\_\_\_\_\_

Please give concise details of your complaint, (including dates, names of witnesses etc.) to allow the matter to be fully investigated:

What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint? (I.e. who have you spoken with or written to and what was the outcome?) Who did you speak to and what was their response?

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so give details

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

<b>School Use only:</b>	
Date form received:	
Received by:	
Date acknowledgement sent:	
Acknowledgement sent by:	
Complaint referred to:	
Date:	
Date of final response:	

## **Complaint Review Request Form**

Please complete and return this form to the Chair of the Complaints Committee who will acknowledge receipt and inform you of the next stage in the procedure.

Your name:

Relationship with the School (e.g. Parent, neighbour):

Address:

Telephone (Daytime):  
(Evening):

E-mail:

Your child's name (if relevant to your complaint):

Year group:

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Dear Sir/Madam

I submitted a formal complaint to the school on \_\_\_\_\_ and am dissatisfied by the procedure that has been followed.

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

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

I am dissatisfied with the way in which the procedure was carried out, because:

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Signature.

Date.

<b>School Use only:</b>	
Date form received:	
Received by:	
Date acknowledgement sent:	
Acknowledgement sent by :	
Complaint referred to:	
Date:	
Date of Final Response	

## **Appendix 1**

### **Types of complaints NOT covered by the school complaints procedure**

A complaints procedure should cover all complaints about any provision of facilities or services that a school provides with the exceptions listed below and overleaf, for which there are separate statutory procedures. The Headteacher will determine which, if any of these statutory procedures apply. If one of these statutory procedures needs to be invoked at some point during the investigation of a more general complaint the complaints procedure should be suspended until the statutory procedure has been concluded.

Exceptions	Who to contact
Admissions to schools Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Appeals School re-organisation proposals Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation Collective Worship	Concerns should be raised direct with local authorities. For school admissions, it will depend on who is the admission authority (either the school or the local authority). Complaints about admission appeals for maintained schools are dealt with by the Local Government Ombudsman.
National Curriculum Content The Curriculum	Contact DfE; <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus">www.education.gov.uk/contactus</a>
Exclusion of children from school	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> .
Whistleblowing	Schools have an internal whistleblowing procedure for their employees and voluntary staff. Other concerns can be raised direct with Ofsted by telephone on: 0300 123 3155, via email at: <a href="mailto:whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk">whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk</a> or by writing to: WBHL, Ofsted Piccadilly Gate Store Street Manchester M1 2WD. The Department for Education is also a prescribed body for whistleblowing in education.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff grievances</li> <li>• Staff conduct</li> <li>• Staff disciplinary procedures</li> </ul>	<p>These matters will invoke the school's internal grievance procedures. Complainants will not be informed of the outcome of any investigation.</p>
<p>Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities.</p>	<p>Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Complaints about the Headteacher.</b> A complaint about the Headteacher should be made in writing to the Chair of Governors. This may include a complaint about the actions or lack of actions of the Headteacher in investigating a complaint. Where a complaint is about the conduct of the Headteacher, the Chair of Governors may seek advice from the school's personnel officer at the LA.</li> <li>• <b>Complaints about the Chair of Governors.</b> A complaint should be made in writing to the Vice-Chair of Governors.</li> <li>• <b>Complaints about issues covered by other statutory procedures.</b> Where complaints concern issues that are covered by other statutory procedures, for example, school admissions or exclusions, then those specific procedures and related timescales will apply instead.</li> <li>• <b>Complaints involving a claim for compensation.</b> Schools should refer any claims for compensation directly to the Council's Insurance department.</li> </ul>	<p>The Governors The Local Authority – the personnel officer The Vice Chair of Govs Councils Insurance dept</p>



**Appendix 2**

<b>Stage One</b>	<b>Dealing with concerns</b> Informal discussion between complainant and school staff. Formal complaint not accepted until this is exhausted
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<b>Stage Two</b>	Complainant lodges complaint <b>within 3 school months</b> of incident happening
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↓  
On receipt, school acknowledges **within 5 school days**

↓  
Is the complaint about the Headteacher?      Yes      No

↓  
Headteacher investigates & responds **within 20 school days**

↓  
Chair of Governors investigates & responds **within 20 school days**

Satisfied

Satisfied

Still dissatisfied

Case closed

Still dissatisfied

<b>Stage Three</b>	Complainant writes to the Chair of Governors <b>within 10 school days</b>
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↓  
Chair of Governors investigates & responds **within 20 school days**

Case closed

Satisfied

Still dissatisfied

<b>Stage Four</b>	Governors' panel meets with complainant <b>within 20 school days</b> to conduct review
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↓  
Complainant notified of decision **within 3 school days of panel review meeting**

Not Satisfied

Satisfied

↓  
Appeal to secretary of state if consider Governing Body acted illegally or unreasonably

Case closed

