

Nun Monkton Foundation Primary School

“Be curious, be brave and believe”



COMPLAINTS POLICY

For complaints about the school and its community facilities or services

Status	Statutory policy
Approved by	Governing Body
Date approved	September 2026
Review date	September 2028
Policy owner	Governing Body / Headteacher

1. Purpose and scope

Under section 29(1) of the Education Act 2002, the governing body of a maintained school must establish and publish procedures for dealing with complaints about the school and any community facilities or services it provides, where no separate statutory procedure applies. The governing body must have regard to Department for Education (DfE) guidance when establishing and publishing its procedure.

This policy is designed to be simple to understand and use, impartial, non-adversarial and capable of providing a full and fair investigation. The school will use complaints to improve its services and procedures where appropriate.

The policy applies to complaints about the provision of facilities or services by Nun Monkton Foundation Primary School. It is not limited to parents or carers: any person may complain.

Some matters have separate statutory or regulatory routes and are therefore outside this procedure. Where appropriate, the school will signpost the complainant to the relevant process.

2. Concerns and complaints

A concern is an expression of worry or doubt about an issue for which reassurance is sought. A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about action taken or a lack of action.

The school encourages concerns to be raised and resolved informally wherever possible. Concerns should normally be raised with the class teacher or Headteacher. If the concern cannot be resolved, or the complainant wishes to make a formal complaint, the formal procedure below is available.

The school will take concerns seriously and seek to resolve them as quickly as reasonably possible. A complainant is not required to complete an informal stage before making a formal complaint where they wish to do so.

3. Who can make a complaint and how

A complaint may be made in person, in writing or by telephone. A third party may complain on someone else's behalf where appropriate consent has been given. Where a person needs assistance to make a complaint, the school will consider reasonable adjustments and appropriate support.

The school will consider complaints from former parents/carers and members of the public where the complaint concerns a provision, facility or service within the scope of this policy.

Complaints should be clear about the issue complained of, what remains unresolved and, where possible, the outcome the complainant is seeking. The school will help to clarify these matters where necessary.

Complainants may seek advice or assistance from a third party, such as Citizens Advice. A complainant may also be accompanied by a friend, relative or other appropriate supporter at a meeting. Requests for legal representation will be considered case by case; legal representation will not normally be appropriate at a complaints meeting, but the school will consider exceptional circumstances and any relevant equality or safeguarding considerations.

4. Accessibility, equality and confidentiality

The school will make reasonable adjustments where required to enable a complainant to access the procedure. This may include alternative formats, assistance with making a complaint, interpretation support, accessible venues, remote participation or other reasonable adjustments.

The school will handle complaints sensitively and, where appropriate, confidentially. Information will be shared only where necessary and in accordance with data protection and other applicable legal requirements.

The school will not normally accept covert recordings as evidence where they were obtained without the knowledge of those being recorded. Any request to record a meeting will be considered in advance, including where recording may be a reasonable adjustment.

5. Matters outside this procedure

This policy does not replace statutory or other procedures for matters such as:

- school admissions and admission appeals;
- permanent exclusions and other statutory exclusion processes;
- statutory assessment of special educational needs and related statutory processes;

- school reorganisation proposals where a separate statutory process applies;
- child protection and safeguarding matters requiring action under safeguarding procedures;
- staff grievances and internal employment matters;
- whistleblowing by staff, which is dealt with under the school's whistleblowing procedure;
- matters relating to examination malpractice or awarding bodies, where a separate route applies;
- complaints about services provided by an external organisation using school premises, which should normally be raised with that provider.

A complaint about the way the school has applied a policy may be considered under this complaints procedure unless another statutory process applies. A complaint about staff conduct may be investigated under this procedure where appropriate; any employment or disciplinary action arising from it will remain confidential.

6. Time limits

A complaint should normally be raised within three months of the incident or, where a series of related incidents is involved, within three months of the last incident. The school will consider complaints raised outside this period where there are exceptional circumstances.

The school will not operate a blanket refusal of late complaints. Any decision to accept or reject a late complaint will take account of the circumstances of the individual case.

Complaints received during school holidays will be treated as received on the first school day after the holiday, unless the school determines that the circumstances require an earlier response.

7. Stage 1 – investigation

Formal complaints should normally be submitted to the Headteacher through the school office. If the complaint is about the Headteacher, it should be submitted to the Chair of Governors through the school office. If it is about the Chair, an individual governor or the governing body, it should be submitted to the Clerk to the Governing Body through the school office.

The school will acknowledge a formal complaint in writing within five school days. The acknowledgement will confirm the scope of the complaint, identify what remains unresolved and, where appropriate, clarify the outcome sought.

The Headteacher will investigate the complaint. The Headteacher may delegate the investigation to an appropriate senior member of staff, but will retain responsibility for the decision. The investigator will be impartial and will not investigate a matter in which they have had prior involvement that could create a conflict of interest.

Where necessary, the investigator will interview relevant people, consider relevant records and evidence, keep appropriate notes and give those complained about an opportunity to respond.

The Headteacher will provide a written response within ten school days of receipt of the formal complaint. Where this is not possible because further investigation is required, the complainant will be told the reason for the delay and given a revised date for the response.

The Stage 1 response will explain the findings, the decision and the reasons for it, any action to be taken, and how the complainant may escalate the matter to Stage 2.

8. Complaints about the Headteacher or governing body

A complaint about the Headteacher will be investigated by an appropriately independent and impartial person appointed by the Chair of Governors.

A complaint about the Chair, Vice-Chair, an individual governor or the governing body will be handled by an appropriately skilled governor or independent investigator who has had no prior involvement in the matter.

Where a complaint is jointly about the Chair and Vice-Chair, the whole governing body, or the majority of the governing body, an independent investigator will be appointed for Stage 1 and an independent complaints committee will hear Stage 2.

9. Stage 2 – governing body review

If the complainant remains dissatisfied after Stage 1, they may request Stage 2 by writing to the Clerk through the school office within ten school days of receiving the Stage 1 response. The school will consider requests made later where exceptional circumstances apply.

The Clerk will acknowledge the request within five school days and arrange consideration by a complaints committee of at least three governors who have had no prior involvement in the complaint and who can act impartially and independently.

The committee will consider the complaint afresh. It will not be limited to reviewing whether the Stage 1 process was followed. It will consider the relevant evidence, the Stage 1 response and any representations made by the complainant.

Where the school does not have enough suitable governors, the Clerk may seek appropriately independent governors through the local authority, another maintained school or another suitable source, or arrange an independent committee.

The committee will decide whether the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, or not upheld. It may recommend appropriate action to resolve the complaint and improvements to systems or procedures.

The committee will normally meet within ten school days of the Stage 2 request. If this is not possible, the Clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

The complainant may make written representations and, where a meeting is held, may be accompanied by a friend, relative or other appropriate supporter. The school will consider requests for reasonable adjustments.

At least five school days before a meeting, the Clerk will confirm the date, time, venue and arrangements. The parties should submit any further written material at least three school days before the meeting. Material accepted for consideration will normally be shared with all parties, subject to confidentiality and data protection requirements.

If a complainant has been offered reasonable opportunities to attend a meeting but is unable or unwilling to do so, the committee may proceed on the basis of written submissions and reach a conclusion in the interests of bringing the complaint to a conclusion.

The committee will provide a written decision, including reasons and any action to be taken, within ten school days of the meeting or consideration of the written submissions. The decision will explain that Stage 2 is the end of the school's complaints procedure and will provide information about contacting the DfE.

10. Minutes and records

The school will keep appropriate records of complaints, investigations, meetings, decisions and actions taken. Records will be stored securely and retained in accordance with the school's records management and data protection arrangements.

Where a Stage 2 meeting is held, minutes will be taken. A copy of the minutes will normally be provided to the complainant and the school, subject to any necessary redactions to protect personal data or confidentiality.

The governing body will use complaints information, in anonymised form where appropriate, to identify learning and improve school systems and services.

11. Withdrawal of a complaint

A complainant may withdraw a complaint at any time. The school may ask for written confirmation of withdrawal.

12. Serial, persistent and unreasonable complaints

The school is committed to dealing with complaints fairly and impartially and will not normally limit the contact a complainant has with the school. However, the school does not expect staff to tolerate behaviour that is abusive, offensive, discriminatory, threatening or otherwise unacceptable.

A complaint or contact may be considered serial, persistent or unreasonable where its frequency or nature unreasonably hinders the school's consideration of a complaint or request for information. The focus will be on the complaint or subject matter and the behaviour in the particular circumstances, not on labelling the individual complainant.

Examples of behaviour that may be considered unreasonable include:

- refusing to explain the complaint, its grounds or the outcome sought despite reasonable offers of assistance;
- refusing to co-operate with a reasonable investigation;
- insisting that matters outside the scope of the complaints procedure are dealt with under it;
- insisting on a method of handling the complaint that is incompatible with the published procedure or reasonable good practice;
- introducing substantial amounts of trivial or irrelevant information and insisting that every point is investigated or answered;
- making repeated or excessive demands for detailed answers, particularly where responses have already been provided;
- making unjustified complaints about staff who are dealing with the complaint and seeking their removal without a proper basis;
- changing the substance or basis of the complaint repeatedly as the investigation progresses;
- repeatedly raising substantially the same complaint after it has been properly investigated and responded to;
- refusing to accept the findings of a properly completed investigation without identifying a material new issue or evidence;
- seeking an outcome that is clearly unrealistic or disproportionate;

- making frequent, lengthy, complicated or overlapping contact by letter, email, telephone, text or in person that materially disrupts the school's ability to deal with the complaint or its other work;
- using threats, abusive, offensive or discriminatory language, or threatening or violent behaviour;
- knowingly providing materially false information; or
- publishing information about staff or the school in a way that is abusive, threatening or discriminatory.

The fact that a complainant is persistent, dissatisfied or makes frequent contact does not, by itself, make their complaint unreasonable. A complaint should not be treated as serial or persistent before the complainant has had a reasonable opportunity to complete the school's complaints procedure, unless the published criteria clearly apply to the circumstances.

The school will not treat a complainant as serial or persistent merely because they exercise their right to contact their MP.

Where possible, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors will discuss concerns about communication or behaviour informally with the complainant before restrictions are imposed. If the behaviour continues, the school may write to the complainant explaining the concern and setting reasonable boundaries for future contact.

Where a complainant's contact is causing significant disruption, the school may agree a communication plan. This may specify a named contact, preferred method of communication, reasonable frequency of contact, or arrangements for future meetings. Any restriction will be proportionate, time-limited where appropriate, and reviewed regularly.

The school will not use this section to prevent a complainant from raising a genuinely new complaint. A new issue will be considered under the appropriate stage of this procedure.

If a complainant seeks to reopen a complaint that has completed Stage 2 and raises no material new issue, the school may explain that the procedure is complete and that the matter is closed. Further correspondence about the same subject may then be recorded as serial or persistent and the school may decide not to provide a substantive response.

In response to serious incidents of aggression, threats or violence, the school may contact the police and may take proportionate steps to protect staff, pupils and visitors, including restricting access to school premises where lawful and necessary.

Any decision to restrict communication or close correspondence will be recorded, communicated in writing, and reviewed where appropriate. The school will continue to consider safeguarding, equality and other legal duties.

13. Complaints campaigns and duplicate complaints

Where the school receives a large volume of complaints about the same subject from people unconnected with the school, it may provide a consistent template response or publish a single response on its website, provided this does not prevent genuinely new or individual issues from being considered.

Where a duplicate complaint is received about a matter already fully considered through the complaints procedure, the school may explain that the matter has already been considered and that the local procedure is complete. The school will first check whether the new complaint contains any genuinely new aspect requiring consideration.

14. Referral to the Department for Education

After completing Stage 2, a complainant who believes the school has not followed its published complaints procedure, or has acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of its education duties, may complain to the Department for Education.

The DfE normally considers whether the school followed its complaints procedure and complied with relevant education legislation and duties. It does not normally reinvestigate the substance of a complaint or substitute its own decision for that of the school.

The current route is the GOV.UK service: <https://www.gov.uk/complain-to-dfe>

A complainant should normally complete the school's complaints procedure before contacting the DfE, subject to the exceptions explained by the DfE, including where a school is preventing a complaint from progressing, a child is not receiving an education, or a child has been exposed to harm.

15. Review and publication

This policy will be published on the school's website and made available from the school office.

The governing body will review the policy at least every two to three years and sooner where there are relevant legislative or guidance changes. The governing body will ensure that the published review date is kept up to date.

Appendix 1 – Complaint Form

Please complete and return this form to the school office. The school will acknowledge receipt and explain the next steps.

Your name:

Pupil's name (if relevant):

Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):

Address:

Postcode:

Day time telephone number:

Evening telephone number:

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

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

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.

Signature:

Date:

Official use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By who:

Complaint referred to:

Date:

Appendix 2 – Roles and responsibilities

Complainant

- explain the complaint as clearly and fully as reasonably possible;
- co-operate with reasonable requests for information or meetings;
- identify, where possible, what outcome they are seeking;
- treat staff and other participants respectfully; and
- raise any accessibility or support needs as early as possible.

Investigator

- act impartially and keep an open mind;
- establish the relevant facts through appropriate interviews, records and evidence;
- keep appropriate notes and secure records;
- give relevant people a fair opportunity to respond;
- keep the complainant informed where appropriate; and
- prepare a clear report or recommendation for the decision-maker.

Clerk / complaints coordinator

- act as an administrative point of contact;
- acknowledge and record complaints and escalation requests;
- arrange meetings and circulate relevant information;
- ensure accessibility arrangements are considered;
- maintain secure records; and
- notify the complainant of decisions and escalation rights.

Complaints committee

- act independently and impartially;
- ensure no member has had prior involvement in the complaint;
- consider the complaint afresh at Stage 2;
- give the complainant and school a fair opportunity to present relevant information;
- identify key findings of fact;
- reach a reasoned decision; and
- identify appropriate actions or recommendations where required.

Policy reviewed against current DfE guidance for maintained schools: September 2026.