



Muscliff Primary School

Complaints Policy

Approved by:	RMC
Last reviewed on:	January 2026
Next review due by:	January 2027

The Legal Framework

It is a statutory requirement for all academies to have a complaints procedure in place that complies with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2014, Schedule 1, Part 7.

General Principles

This procedure is intended to allow a pupil, parent or people who are not parents of attending pupils at the academy, to raise a concern or complaint relating to the academy, or the services that it provides. Our website contains the following statement on complaints:

“We aim to provide the best possible service to parents and pupils. Should you have any concerns about school life then we ask that you share your concerns initially with your child’s class teacher, then the appropriate Year/ Phase leader or Deputy Head and finally the Head teacher. If your concerns cannot be satisfactorily dealt with then you can take the matter to the School Board of Directors. Please visit our website detailing our complaints procedure”

- In the event that these initial approaches fail to resolve a complaint, this policy lays out the procedures that should be followed to allay any concerns about a particular issue.
- We welcome suggestions for improving our work in school. Be assured that, no matter what you want to tell us, our support and respect for your child will not be affected in any way. Please tell us of your concern as soon as possible. It is difficult for us to investigate an incident or problem properly if it took place some time ago.
- An anonymous concern or complaint will not be investigated under this procedure, unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- To enable a proper investigation to take place, concerns or complaints should be brought to the attention of the academy as soon as possible. In general, any matter raised more than 3 months after the event being complained of, will not be considered, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Complaints Framework

Our Complaints Procedure will:

- encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible;
- be easily accessible and publicised;
- be simple to understand and use;
- be impartial;
- be non-adversarial;
- allow swift handling with established time-limits for action and keeping people informed of the progress;
- ensure a full and fair investigation by an independent person where necessary;
- respect people’s desire for confidentiality;
- address all the points at issue and provide an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary;
- provide information to the school’s senior management team so that services can be improved.

Complaints' Coordinator

Every school should have a named person to receive, record and monitor complaints. For our school, this will be the Head teacher. Specific actions and learning points from any complaints are reviewed and shared with the Board on a termly to ensure organisational learning and improvement.

Investigating Complaints

At each stage, the person investigating the complaint (the Complaints Coordinator) will:

- establish what has happened so far, and who has been involved
- clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved
- meet with the complainant or contact them (if unsure or further information is necessary);
- clarify what the complainant feels would put things right;
- interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
- conduct the interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning;
- keep notes of the interview

Resolving Complaints

At each stage in the procedure the school will keep in mind ways in which a complaint can be resolved. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- an apology;
- an explanation;
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
- an assurance that the event complained of will not recur;
- an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again;
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint.

Complainants will be encouraged to state what actions they feel might resolve the problem at any stage. An admission that the school could have handled the situation better is not the same as an admission of negligence.

An effective 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.

Due to confidentiality, where a complaint refers to a member of staff, it will not be possible to share the outcome of any disciplinary or performance process.

Time Limits

Complaints need to be considered and resolved as quickly and efficiently as possible. Our complaints procedure has realistic time limits for each action within each stage. However, where further investigations are necessary, new time limits can be set and the complainant sent details of the new deadline and an explanation for the delay.

Complaints will not be considered under this procedure if:

- You have not identified any specific actions of which you might complain.
- Your concerns are presented as conclusions rather than specific actions of which you complain.
- The concerns that you identify relate to historical actions and any evidence which might have enabled an objective investigation of your complaint is no longer available.
- The concerns that you raise do not fall within the scope of this procedure.
- You have not identified any potential sources of evidence which might allow the matter to be investigated.
- Unreasonable persistent complaints and unreasonable complainant behaviour.

There are rare circumstances where the academy may deviate from the Complaints Procedure set out in the remainder of this policy. These include, but are not necessarily limited to:

1. Where the complainant's behaviour towards staff or panel members is unacceptable, for example, is abusive, offensive or threatening;
2. Where, because of the frequency of their contact with the academy, the complainant is hindering the consideration of their or other people's complaints and/or the proper running of the academy;
3. Where the complainant's complaint is clearly vexatious and/or has patently insufficient grounds;
4. Where the complainant's complaint is the same, similar to or based on the same facts of a complaint which has already been considered in full by the academy.

In these circumstances, the academy may:

- a. Inform the complainant that their behaviour is unacceptable or unreasonably persistent and ask them to change it;
- b. Restrict the complainant's access to the academy e.g. requesting contact in a particular form (for example, letters only), requiring contact to take place with a named person only, restricting telephone calls to specified days and times or banning the complainant from the academy's premises;
- c. Conduct the panel based on the documentary evidence only i.e. not hold a hearing;
- d. Refuse to consider the complaint and refer the complainant directly to Stage 4.

In all cases the academy will write to tell the complainant why we believe his or her behaviour is unacceptable or unreasonably persistent, what action we are taking and the duration of that action.

Where the behaviour is so extreme that it threatens the immediate safety and welfare of staff or panel members, the academy will consider other options, for example reporting the matter to the police or taking legal action. In such cases, we may not give the complainant prior warning of that action.

Additional Notes

The academy should ensure that a copy of all correspondence and notes are kept on file in the academy's records. An Individual Record Sheet/Log of Actions form (Appendix A) should be completed by the academy detailing the complaint, the actions taken as a result of the complaint

and the findings of any investigations. The Complaints' Register/Summary Log (Appendix B) will also be completed by the academy to summarise the relevant dates/actions/findings.

These records should be kept separately from the pupil's personal records but may, if considered appropriate by the Head teacher, be passed on to any future schools/academies that the pupil may attend i.e. in the case of an aggressive parents or bullying incident or to relevant agencies e.g. Children's Services.

Complaints against the Head teacher or a Governor

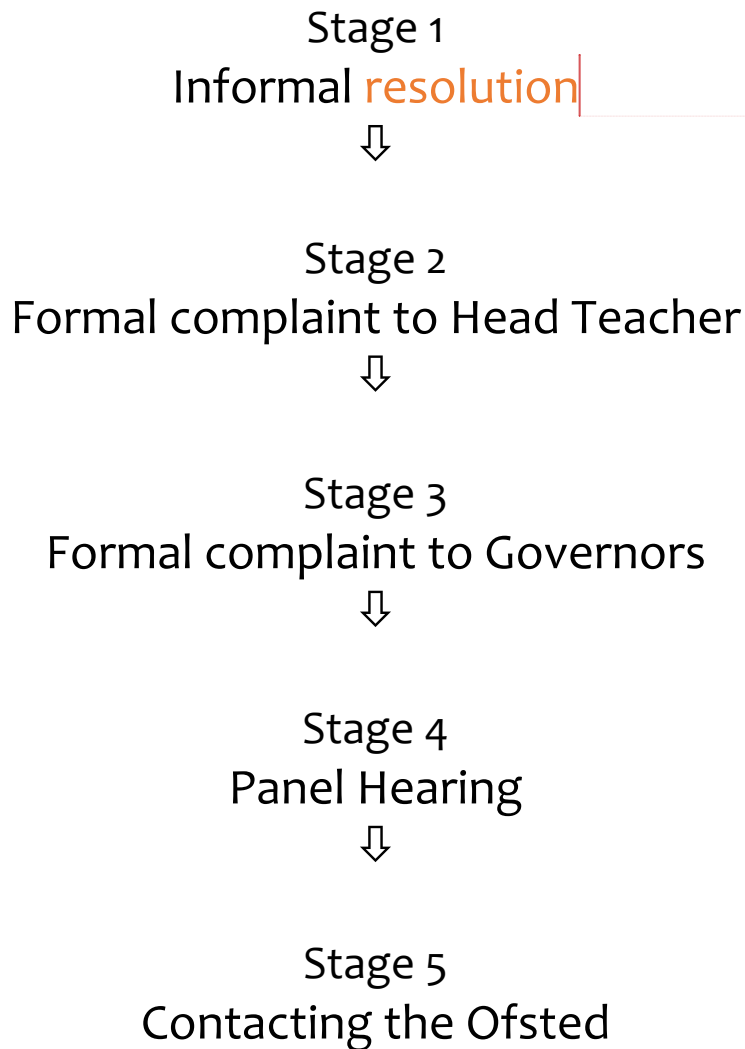
Complaints made against the Head teacher should be directed to the Chair of the Trust via the Governance Professional. Where a complaint is against the Chair of the Trust or any Governor, it should be made in writing to the Governance Professional,

Muscliff Primary School's Governance Professional is Charlotte Blanch, c/o Muscliff Primary School.
Charlotte.blanch@muscliffprimary.co.uk

Withdrawal of Complaint

The complainant may ask for his/her complaint to be withdrawn at any stage of the formal process and this will be acknowledged in writing.

Complaints procedure at-a-glance:



Commented [JH1]: This is so a 'formal' complaint can be dealt with informally

Stage 1 - Informal resolution

In line with our values, it is strongly believed that most complaints can be dealt with quickly and thoroughly at this informal stage. It is expected that people with concerns will fully engage with this process.

Step 1 • A parent or pupil contacts the academy because they are unhappy with something that has happened
Step 2 • A class teacher, key stage leader, designated member of the senior leadership team or other relevant individual attempts to resolve the concerns. This may take place via a meeting or phone call during which they ascertain what outcome the complainant is seeking.
Step 3 • The outcome will be confirmed within 15 days of the receipt of the complaint.
Step 4 • Details of the complaint are recorded for monitoring purposes.
Step 5 • The complainant is advised what the next stage will be if the complaint is not resolved.
Step 6 • If the complaint is not resolved, it will proceed to stage 2. A complainant's unreasonable refusal to attempt a local resolution may result in the procedure being terminated – this will be confirmed in writing.

Considerations

If the complaint is centered on a class teacher or any individual in a leadership or management role, it will proceed directly to stage 2, as it would be inappropriate for someone other than the Head teacher or Deputy Head teacher to respond. The Head teacher can escalate the complaint to stage 2 at any time if they deem it appropriate.

Complainants will be provided with written responses where appropriate and if requested.

Stage 2 - Formal complaint to Head Teacher

Step 1

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage 2 complaints should be made in writing to the Head teacher and the complainant should include their desired outcome.
<p>Step 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the complaint has reached stage 2 by the complainant's request, a response must be sent within 10 working days.
<p>Step 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the complainant has not used the stage 1 process, the academy will provide acknowledgement within two days of receipt and set a response date within 20 working days.
<p>Step 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Head teacher will provide an opportunity for the complainant to meet and discuss the complaint further. They may bring a companion if they wish.
<p>Step 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Head teacher may interview any relevant pupils (age/stage appropriate) and witnesses or they may delegate this task.
<p>Step 6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Head teacher will inform the complainant of the findings and outcome of the investigation.
<p>Step 7</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should the outcome be unsatisfactory to the complainant, the complaint may proceed to Stage 3.

Considerations

Complaints will not be progressed to Stage 3, unless Stage 1 and 2 have been undertaken. However, should the complaint be regarding the Head teacher, it may be prudent for it to proceed directly to Stage 3 and the complaint addressed to the Governance Professional, in place of the Head teacher.

Stage 3 - Formal complaint to Governors

<p>Step 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage 3 complaints should be made in writing to the Chair of Governors via the Governance Professional and the complainant should include their desired outcome.
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<p>Step 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the complaint has reached stage 3 by the complainant's request, a response must be sent within 10 working days.
<p>Step 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the complainant has not used the stage 3 process, the academy will provide acknowledgement within two days of receipt and set a response date within 20 working days.
<p>Step 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Governing Board will provide an opportunity for the complainant to meet and discuss the complaint further. They may bring a companion if they wish.
<p>Step 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Governing Board may interview any relevant pupils (age/stage appropriate) and/or staff, and witnesses or they may delegate this task.
<p>Step 6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Governing Board will inform the complainant of the findings and outcome of the investigation.
<p>Step 7</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should the outcome be unsatisfactory to the complainant, the complaint may proceed to Stage 4.

Considerations

Complaints will not be progressed to Stage 4, unless Stage 3 has been undertaken.

Stage 4 – A Panel Hearing

<p>Step 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Complaints at this stage should be made in writing and addressed to the Chair of Governors, via the Governance Professional no later than 10 school days following receipt of a stage 3 outcome.
<p>Step 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Written acknowledgement of the complaint will be made, within 3 school days, informing the complainant that their complaint will be heard within 20 school days.
<p>Step 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A complaint panel hearing will be arranged. The panel will consist of three members, one of which should be independent of the Board of Directors and who is also not involved in the management or running of the academy. The complainant is allowed to attend and to bring a companion with them. Five days' notice will be given to all who may attend. All paperwork must be circulated at least 48 hours in advance. No children should be named or be made identifiable, within any documents.
<p>Step 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• At the hearing, everyone's case will be communicated and discussed. See explanatory notes for the hearing provided below.
<p>Step 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A written response to the complainant will be made within 15 school days following the hearing. The Panel Hearing is the last school-based stage of the complaints process. The decision of the appeal panel is final. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.

If the complainant is not satisfied about the handling of their complaint, please see Stage 5.

Explanatory notes for the hearing:

- The complainant explains their complaint and the Head teacher explains the academy's response
- The Head teacher is able to question the complainant about the complaint and the complainant is able to question the Head teacher about the academy's response
- Panel members are provided with an opportunity to question both the complainant and the Head teacher
- Documentary evidence is considered

- Final statements may be made by both the complainant and the Head teacher

If either party wishes to introduce previously undisclosed evidence or witnesses, it is in the interests of natural justice to adjourn the meeting so that the other side has time to consider and respond to the new evidence. This may result in the meeting being re-arranged and concluded on another date.

After all evidence has been presented, the Chair of the Panel will explain to the complainant and the Head teacher that the Panel will now consider its decision, and a written decision will be sent to both parties within 15 working days.

The Panel will: (a) reach a unanimous, or at least a majority, decision on the complaint and (b) decide upon the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint and (c) where appropriate, suggest recommended changes to the academy’s systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not arise again.

Stage 5 – Contacting Ofsted

<p>Step 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If Ofsted receives a complaint about an academy, they will first check whether the academy has attempted to deal with the complaint.
<p>Step 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Then, Ofsted will consider complaints that come under the following criteria: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The academy has not complied with its own complaints procedure or there was undue delay 2. The academy is in breach of its funding agreement with the Secretary of State 3. The academy has failed to comply with any other legal obligation
<p>Step 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While Ofsted will not overturn an academy’s decision about a complaint, they may request the complaint is looked at again, if they find the academy did not deal with the complaint properly initially
<p>Step 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If Ofsted finds an academy’s procedure does not meet regulation standards, it will ask the academy to put this right, or under necessary circumstances, enforce the decision under the terms of the funding agreement.