

Sutton in Craven Community Primary School

(Statutory Policy - review annually)

Approval - Governing Board, or can be delegated to a committee, an individual governor or the headteacher



School Complaints Policy

**We are an aspirational place where learners grow.
Our school is kind and happy and we respect and
celebrate the differences in ourselves, our community
and our world.
Our children become responsible, determined and
independent citizens.**

Approved by:	Business Group	Date: March 2021
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COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE (updated guidance referenced)

Based on DfE Best Practice Guidance for School Complaints Procedures 2024 (effective September 2024)

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 Sutton in Craven CP 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.

The difference between a concern and a complaint

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

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

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. Sutton in Craven CP 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, the Headteacher or another senior member of staff, will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, the Headteacher or another senior member of staff will refer you to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important.

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

How to raise a concern or make a complaint

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

Concerns should be raised with either the class teacher in the first instance. Should you wish to discuss your concerns further you should contact the school office to make an appointment with the Headteacher or another senior member of staff. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

Complainants should not approach individual governors to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at Stage 2 of the procedure.

Complaints against school staff (except the Headteacher) should be made in the first instance, to Mrs Anna Riley, the Headteacher, via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints that involve or are about the Headteacher should be addressed to Mr D. Smith (the Chair of Governors), via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor or the whole governing body should be addressed FAO the Clerk to the Governing Body via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

For ease of use, a template complaint form is included at the end of this procedure.

If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office. You can also ask third party organisations like the Citizens Advice to help you.

In accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure. For instance, providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

Anonymous complaints

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

Time scales

You must raise the complaint within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply (e.g., serious illness, bereavement, ongoing investigations).

Complaints received outside of term time

We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

Scope of this Complaints Procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by Sutton in Craven CP School other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

Exceptions	Who to contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admissions to schools • Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs • School re-organisation proposals 	Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with North Yorkshire Council
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation 	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.

	<p>If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exclusion of children from school* 	<p>Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusion.</p> <p><i>*complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure..</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whistleblowing 	<p>We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors.</p> <p>The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus.</p> <p>Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the LA or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff grievances 	<p>Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff conduct 	<p>Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate.</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>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities 	<p>Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Curriculum - content 	<p>Please contact the Department for Education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus</p>

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority (LA) safeguarding teams or Tribunals, this may impact on our ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations.

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

Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, Sutton in Craven CP School wants to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- an explanation
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- an assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur
- an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint
- an apology.

Outcomes of the complaint might include:

- Partially upheld complaints (where some elements are valid, others aren't)
- Not upheld with clear explanation
- Actions taken as a result (while maintaining staff confidentiality)
- Lessons learned and changes implemented

Withdrawal of a Complaint

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

Duplicate and Persistent Complaints

Definition of a Duplicate Complaint

A duplicate complaint is one where the school has already investigated the same issue through this complaints procedure, reached a conclusion, and communicated the outcome to the complainant. The complaint must concern the same subject matter and involve the same parties as a previously concluded complaint.

A complaint will be considered a duplicate if:

- The same concerns have been raised and investigated previously
- The complaint has been through all stages of this procedure (including Stage 2 if escalated)
- A final response has been provided to the complainant

- No new evidence or information has been presented that would warrant re-investigation

1) The School's Right to Refuse to Investigate Duplicate Complaints

Once a complaint has been through all stages of this complaints procedure and a final decision has been communicated to the complainant, Sutton in Craven CP School is under no obligation to re-investigate the same complaint.

The school reserves the right to refuse to investigate a duplicate complaint where:

- The complaint has already been fully investigated under this procedure
- All stages of the complaints process have been exhausted
- The complainant is seeking to re-open the same issue without providing new evidence
- The complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome but has not identified any procedural failures in how the complaint was handled

This does not prevent a complainant from:

- Raising a new complaint about a different issue
- Raising concerns about how the original complaint was handled (which would be investigated as a new complaint about process)
- Contacting the Department for Education if they believe the school did not follow its complaints procedure correctly

2) Process for Informing the Complainant of This Decision

If the Headteacher or Chair of Governors determines that a complaint is a duplicate, the following process will be followed:

Step 1: Review and Decision

- The Headteacher (or Chair of Governors if the complaint is about the Headteacher) will review the new complaint alongside records of the previous complaint
- They will determine whether it is genuinely a duplicate or contains new elements
- This decision will be made within 5 school days of receiving the complaint

Step 2: Written Notification The complainant will be notified in writing (by letter or email) within 5 school days of the decision. This notification will include:

- A clear statement that the complaint has been identified as a duplicate
- Reference to when the original complaint was investigated and concluded
- A summary of the outcome of the original complaint
- Explanation of why the school considers this to be a duplicate complaint
- Information about the complainant's right to challenge this decision (see below)
- Contact details for the Department for Education if the complainant believes the school has not followed its complaints procedure correctly

Step 3: Record Keeping

- The decision to refuse to investigate a duplicate complaint will be recorded centrally

- The complainant's correspondence and the school's response will be filed with the original complaint records
- The governing board will be informed through the regular complaints monitoring report

3) Distinguishing Between a Duplicate Complaint and a Legitimate New Concern

The school recognises that it is important to distinguish between a duplicate complaint and a legitimate new concern that may arise from similar circumstances.

A complaint will NOT be considered a duplicate if:

1. New Evidence is Presented

- The complainant provides new information or evidence that was not available during the original investigation
- New circumstances have come to light that could materially affect the outcome
- Example: A complainant provides documentary evidence that was not previously available

2. A Related but Different Issue

- The complaint concerns a different aspect of the same general situation
- The complaint involves different staff members or different actions
- Example: The original complaint was about a teacher's handling of a behaviour incident; the new complaint is about how the school communicated with parents about the same incident

3. A New Incident

- The complaint concerns a new incident, even if it is similar in nature to a previous complaint
- The complaint relates to actions or events that occurred after the original complaint was concluded
- Example: A parent previously complained about their child being bullied in Term 1; they now raise a complaint about a new bullying incident in Term 3

4. Procedural Concerns

- The complaint is about how the original complaint was handled, rather than the original subject matter
- The complainant has identified specific failures in the school's complaints procedure
- Example: A complainant believes the investigation was not impartial or that evidence was not properly considered

4) Decision-Making Process:

When determining whether a complaint is a duplicate or a new concern, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors will:

- Review all documentation from the original complaint
- Compare the new complaint carefully against the original
- Consider whether any new information or circumstances have been presented
- Apply the criteria listed above objectively
- Seek advice from the Clerk to Governors if needed

- Document the reasoning for their decision

If there is any doubt, the school will err on the side of treating the complaint as a new concern and investigating it accordingly.

5) The Complainant's Right to Challenge This Decision

If a complainant disagrees with the school's decision that their complaint is a duplicate, they have the right to challenge this decision.

How to Challenge the Decision:

Step 1: Request a Review The complainant must submit a written request for a review within 10 school days of receiving notification that their complaint has been classified as a duplicate. This request should be sent to:

- **If the decision was made by the Headteacher:** The Chair of Governors (via the Clerk to Governors at the school office)
- **If the decision was made by the Chair of Governors:** The Vice Chair of Governors (via the Clerk to Governors at the school office)

Step 2: What to Include in the Request The complainant's request should clearly explain:

- Why they believe the complaint is not a duplicate
- What new evidence or circumstances they are presenting (if applicable)
- How their complaint differs from the original complaint
- Why they believe the decision to classify it as a duplicate was incorrect

Step 3: Review Process

- The Chair of Governors (or Vice Chair if the Chair made the original decision) will review the decision within 10 school days
- They will consider:
 - The original complaint and its outcome
 - The new complaint
 - The complainant's reasons for challenging the duplicate classification
 - Whether the criteria for a duplicate complaint have been correctly applied
- The reviewer may consult with the Clerk to Governors or seek independent advice if needed

Step 4: Outcome of the Review The Chair (or Vice Chair) will notify the complainant in writing within 15 school days of receiving the challenge. The outcome will be one of the following:

Option 1: Decision Upheld

- The complaint is confirmed as a duplicate
- The school will not investigate further
- The letter will explain the reasons for upholding the decision
- The complainant will be advised of their right to contact the Department for Education

Option 2: Decision Overturned

- The complaint is accepted as a new or legitimate concern
- The complaint will be processed from Stage 1 of this complaints procedure
- The letter will explain why the decision has been overturned
- A timeline for investigation will be provided

This review process is the final stage within the school for challenging a duplicate complaint decision.

6) Contacting the Department for Education

If, after the review process, the complainant still believes that:

- The school has incorrectly classified their complaint as a duplicate, AND
- The school has not followed its published complaints procedure correctly

They may contact the Department for Education. The DfE will not re-investigate the substance of the complaint, but will consider whether the school has acted reasonably and followed its procedures correctly.

Contact details:

Online: www.education.gov.uk/contactus

Telephone: 0370 000 2288

Post: Department for Education, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD

Recording and Monitoring

All decisions regarding duplicate complaints, including any challenges to these decisions, will be:

- Recorded centrally by the school
- Included in the termly complaints report to the governing board
- Reviewed annually as part of the policy review process to ensure the school is applying this provision fairly and consistently

Managing Unreasonable Complaints

An unreasonable complaint focuses on the **behaviour and conduct** of the complainant during the complaints process.

Sutton in Craven CP School is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

Definition of Unreasonable Behaviour

Unreasonable complainant behaviour is any behaviour by a complainant that, because of its nature or frequency, hinders our ability to deal with their complaint or the complaints of others. This includes behaviour that is unreasonable in its persistence, demands, or manner of approach.

A complaint may be regarded as unreasonable when the person making the complaint:

- Refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
- Refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved
- Refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaints procedure
- Insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice
- Introduces trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant expects to be taken into account and commented on, or raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales
- Makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced
- Changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds
- Repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed)
- Refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education
- Seeks an unrealistic outcome
- Makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with
- Uses threats to intimidate
- Uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence
- Knowingly provides falsified information
- Publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums

We will not stop responding to a complaint simply because it is complex or demanding. We will consider the context and circumstances of each case, and will always ensure we have taken every reasonable step to address the complainant's needs before deciding to close a complaint.

When a complaint is deemed unreasonable, we will:

- **Inform the complainant in writing** that we consider their behaviour to be unreasonable, explaining which specific behaviours from our policy are causing concern
- **Set clear boundaries** for future communication, such as:
 - Limiting contact to written communication only
 - Designating a single point of contact
 - Restricting the number of contacts per term (e.g. one email per half term)
 - Specifying acceptable hours for contact
- **Notify the complainant** that we will not respond to further correspondence on the same issue once all stages of the complaints procedure have been exhausted
- **Stop the complaints procedure** if the complainant's behaviour is abusive, threatening or prevents a proper investigation from taking place

- **Inform relevant staff members** about any restrictions placed on the complainant's contact with the school
- **Record all decisions and actions taken** in writing, including dates, reasons and evidence of unreasonable behaviour
- **Cancel or terminate meetings** immediately if the complainant becomes aggressive, abusive or threatening
- **Remove the complainant from school premises** if they cause a nuisance or disturbance (under section 547 of the Education Act 1996)
- **Involve the police** if the complainant makes threats, uses violence, or commits a criminal offence
- **Review the restrictions** periodically (e.g. annually) to determine whether they remain necessary
- **Begin the complaints procedure afresh** if the complainant raises a genuinely new issue that is different from the closed complaint

Vexatious Complaints

Definition

A vexatious complaint focuses on the **intent and purpose** behind the complaint itself.

A vexatious complaint is one that is not designed to seek a genuine resolution, but rather to harass, cause distress, or disrupt the normal operation of the school. Such complaints are pursued in a manner that is obsessive, persistent, and lacks any serious purpose or value.

An unreasonable complaint is one where the complainant's behaviour or demands are unreasonable, even if the substance of the complaint may have some merit. This includes complaints where:

- The complainant persists in pursuing a complaint that has been fully investigated and concluded
- The demands made are excessive or unrealistic
- The complainant refuses to accept documented evidence or a clear and reasoned response
- The complaint is designed to cause disruption rather than seek resolution

Key characteristics of vexatious or unreasonable behaviour include:

- The complaint is obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious
- The complainant insists upon pursuing unmeritorious complaints and/or unrealistic outcomes beyond all reason
- The complainant insists upon pursuing meritorious complaints in an unreasonable manner
- The complaints are designed to cause disruption or annoyance
- The complainant's demands are disproportionate to the nature of the complaint

Examples of Vexatious and Unreasonable Behaviour

Sutton in Craven CP School considers the following behaviours to be unreasonable or vexatious when they occur during the complaints process:

Aggressive or Abusive Behaviour

- Using abusive or aggressive language, or making personal comments or threats towards staff members
- Raising voices, using inflammatory language, or swearing at staff
- Physical intimidation or threatening body language
- Making threats of physical violence or actual physical violence
- Sending abusive, threatening, or defamatory emails or letters
- Making derogatory or discriminatory comments about staff, governors, or pupils

Unreasonable Demands

- Making excessive or unrealistic demands on staff time and resources
- Insisting on immediate responses or meetings at unreasonable times
- Refusing to accept that certain information cannot be shared due to confidentiality or data protection
- Making repeated complaints about the same issue after it has been fully investigated
- Demanding outcomes that the school has no power to deliver
- Insisting on speaking only to senior leaders when other staff members are appropriate contacts

Unreasonable Persistence

- Contacting the school repeatedly but making the same points each time, after the school has taken every reasonable step to address the complainant's needs and provided a clear statement of the school's position
- Refusing to accept a decision made at the conclusion of the complaints procedure
- Continuing to correspond on the same issue after the complaints procedure has been exhausted
- Persistently approaching individual staff members or governors about the complaint outside of the formal process
- Changing the substance of a complaint or continually raising new issues as the complaint progresses

Unreasonable Use of the Complaints Procedure

- Making the same complaint repeatedly with minor variations
- Continuing to contact the school with the intention of causing disruption
- Recording meetings or conversations without the informed consent of all parties
- Posting defamatory or confidential information about the school, staff, or other families on social media
- Submitting falsified documents or making knowingly false allegations
- Pursuing complaints on behalf of others without their consent

Refusal to Cooperate

- Refusing to articulate the complaint clearly or to specify what outcome they are seeking
- Refusing to engage with the complaints procedure (e.g., not attending meetings, not providing information)
- Refusing to accept reasonable adjustments to the process (e.g., virtual meetings for safety reasons)
- Refusing to acknowledge receipt of correspondence or decisions

Process for Designating a Complaint as Vexatious or Unreasonable

The school does not have to carry out an investigation into a complaint that has been judged 'persistent', 'unreasonable', 'frivolous' or 'vexatious'. However, designating a complaint as vexatious or unreasonable is a serious decision that requires careful consideration and senior leadership involvement.

Step 1: Initial Assessment

When a member of staff believes a complaint may be vexatious or unreasonable, they should:

- Document the specific behaviours or demands that are causing concern
- Gather evidence (e.g., copies of correspondence, records of phone calls, witness statements)
- Report their concerns to the Headteacher immediately

Step 2: Headteacher Review

The Headteacher will:

- Review all evidence and documentation
- Consider whether the behaviour meets the criteria for vexatious or unreasonable complaints
- Assess whether the complainant's behaviour is preventing the school from carrying out its normal functions
- Consider whether other approaches have been tried (e.g., mediation, clear communication of boundaries)
- Determine whether the substance of the complaint has merit, separate from the manner in which it is being pursued

The Headteacher must not make this decision alone. They will consult with:

- The Chair of Governors
- The school's HR adviser or legal representative (where appropriate)
- The Local Authority (if the school is maintained)

Step 3: Chair of Governors Involvement

Before any complaint is designated as vexatious or unreasonable, the Chair of Governors must:

- Review all evidence and the Headteacher's assessment

- Ensure the decision is fair, proportionate, and properly evidenced
- Consider whether the complainant has been given adequate opportunity to modify their behaviour
- Approve (or reject) the designation

If the complaint involves the Headteacher, the Chair of Governors will lead this process from the outset.

If the complaint involves the Chair of Governors, the Vice Chair will lead this process.

Step 4: Decision and Documentation

Once the Headteacher and Chair of Governors agree that a complaint should be designated as vexatious or unreasonable, they will:

- Document the decision in writing, including:
 - The specific behaviours that led to this designation
 - The evidence supporting this decision
 - The actions the school will take as a result
 - The review date for this designation
- Ensure the decision is stored securely and confidentially

Step 5: Informing the Complainant

The complainant will be informed in writing (by letter, not email) within 5 school days of the decision. This letter will:

- Explain that their complaint has been designated as vexatious or unreasonable
- Provide specific examples of the behaviour that led to this decision
- Outline what actions the school will take (see below)
- Explain how long these measures will remain in place
- Inform them of their right to request a review of this decision (see below)
- Clarify that this does not prevent them from raising new, genuine concerns in the future
- Provide contact details for the Department for Education if they believe the school has not followed its procedures correctly

The letter will be sent by recorded delivery to ensure receipt.

Actions the School Can Take

When a complaint has been designated as vexatious or unreasonable, Sutton in Craven CP School may take one or more of the following actions to protect staff wellbeing and ensure the school can continue to function effectively:

1. Refuse to Investigate or Continue Investigating

The school can close persistent complaints and stop responding when it has taken every reasonable step to address the complainant's needs, provided a clear statement of the school's position and options, and the complainant is contacting repeatedly but making the same points each time.

The school may:

- Refuse to investigate a complaint that is clearly vexatious from the outset
- Stop investigating a complaint if the complainant's behaviour becomes vexatious during the process
- Close a complaint that has been fully investigated and refuse to re-open it

Important: If the school refuses to investigate, this decision will be clearly communicated in writing with full reasons.

2. Limit Contact and Communication

The school may restrict the complainant to a single point of contact via an email address, or set a fixed number of times they can contact the school per term.

Specific measures may include:

- **Single Point of Contact:** All communication must go through one designated person (e.g., the Headteacher or Chair of Governors)
- **Communication Method Restrictions:** All communication must be in writing (email or letter only); no telephone calls or in-person visits
- **Designated Email Address:** The complainant must use a specific email address monitored by senior staff
- **Communication Limits:** The complainant may only contact the school a specified number of times per week or term
- **Response Timeframes:** The school will respond within a specified timeframe (e.g., within 10 school days) and will not respond to interim communications
- **Subject Matter Restrictions:** The complainant may only contact the school about new issues, not previously concluded complaints

Staff Protection: All staff members will be informed (on a need-to-know basis) that they should not engage with the complainant and should direct any contact to the designated person.

3. Restrict Access to School Premises

Under section 547 of the Education Act 1996, it is a criminal offence to cause or permit "a nuisance or disturbance" on school premises. Complainants can be legally removed from the site if they're acting in an abusive or threatening way.

If the complainant's behaviour poses a risk to staff or pupil safety, or disrupts the school's operation, the school may:

- Ban the complainant from entering the school premises
- Require the complainant to communicate only in writing
- Arrange for the complainant to drop off/collect their child at a designated location (e.g., the school gate) with supervision
- Require the complainant to nominate another person to attend meetings on their behalf

Important Safeguards:

- Banning someone from the school site does not remove their right to have their complaint heard.
- The school will make alternative arrangements for the complainant to engage with the complaints process (e.g., virtual meetings, written submissions)
- The ban will be reviewed regularly and lifted when appropriate
- The complainant's child will not be penalised or excluded as a result of their parent's behaviour

4. Hold Meetings Virtually or Accept Written Submissions Only

Where there is a higher risk of aggressive behaviour, the school may hold virtual meetings or use written submissions only to allow the complainant to have their concerns heard without putting staff members at risk.

The school may:

- Require all meetings to be held virtually (e.g., via Microsoft Teams or Zoom)
- Request that the complainant provides their case in writing only, with no in-person or virtual meetings
- Require the complainant to be accompanied by a support person who can help manage their behaviour

5. Involve External Agencies

If the complainant's behaviour is threatening, abusive, or potentially criminal, the school will:

- Contact the police if there are threats of violence or actual violence
- Seek legal advice about obtaining a restraining order if necessary
- Report harassment or stalking to the police
- Work with the Local Authority safeguarding team if there are concerns about a child's welfare

6. Refuse to Respond to Certain Communications

- The school may decide not to respond to communications that are:
 - Abusive, threatening, or defamatory
 - Excessively long or repetitive
 - Sent outside of agreed communication channels or timeframes
 - About issues that have already been fully addressed

The school will acknowledge receipt of such communications but will state that no further response will be provided.

Duration and Review of Measures

Any measures put in place will:

- Be proportionate to the behaviour
- Be reviewed regularly (at least termly)
- Be lifted when the complainant demonstrates a sustained change in behaviour
- Be communicated clearly to the complainant in writing

Review Process:

- The Headteacher and Chair of Governors will review the measures every term
- The complainant may request a review at any time (see below)
- If the complainant's behaviour improves, measures will be relaxed or lifted
- If the behaviour continues or worsens, measures may be strengthened

The Complainant's Right to Request a Review

If a complainant disagrees with the decision to designate their complaint as vexatious or unreasonable, or with the measures put in place, they have the right to request a review.

How to Request a Review

The complainant must submit a written request for a review within 10 school days of receiving notification of the decision. This request should be sent to:

- **If the decision was made by the Headteacher and Chair of Governors:** The Vice Chair of Governors (via the Clerk to Governors at the school office)
- **If the decision involved the Chair of Governors:** An independent governor appointed by the governing board

What to Include in the Request

The complainant's request should clearly explain:

- Why they believe the designation is unfair or incorrect
- What evidence they have that their behaviour does not meet the criteria for vexatious or unreasonable complaints
- What changes they will make to their behaviour going forward
- Why they believe the measures put in place are disproportionate

Review Process

- A panel of two governors who were not involved in the original decision will review the case within 15 school days
- They will consider:
 - All evidence of the complainant's behaviour
 - The school's response and the measures put in place
 - The complainant's representations
 - Whether the decision was fair, proportionate, and properly evidenced

- The panel may consult with the school's HR adviser or legal representative
- The panel will not re-investigate the original complaint; they will only review whether the vexatious/unreasonable designation was appropriate

Outcome of the Review

The panel will notify the complainant in writing within 20 school days of receiving the review request. The outcome will be one of the following:

Option 1: Decision Upheld

- The vexatious/unreasonable designation is confirmed
- The measures remain in place
- The letter will explain the reasons for upholding the decision
- The complainant will be advised of their right to contact the Department for Education

Option 2: Decision Overturned

- The vexatious/unreasonable designation is removed
- The measures are lifted
- If there is an outstanding complaint, it will be processed through the normal complaints procedure
- The letter will explain why the decision has been overturned

Option 3: Measures Modified

- The vexatious/unreasonable designation is upheld, but the measures are reduced or modified
- The letter will explain what changes have been made and why

This review process is the final stage within the school for challenging a vexatious/unreasonable designation.

Contacting the Department for Education

If, after the review process, the complainant still believes that:

- The school has incorrectly designated their complaint as vexatious or unreasonable, AND
- The school has not followed its published complaints procedure correctly

They may contact the Department for Education. The DfE will not re-investigate the substance of the complaint or the complainant's behaviour, but will consider whether the school has acted reasonably and followed its procedures correctly.

Contact details:

Online: www.education.gov.uk/contactus

Telephone: 0370 000 2288

Post: Department for Education, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD

Important Principles

When managing vexatious or unreasonable complaints, Sutton in Craven CP School will:

1. **Distinguish Between the Complaint and the Complainant:** The school will distinguish between the complaint and the complainant. Measures put in place are a response to unacceptable behaviour, not a dismissal of concerns.
2. **Protect Staff Wellbeing:** The school has a duty of care towards employees. Staff should not be placed in upsetting or dangerous situations, or expected to respond to abusive communications or attend meetings where someone is behaving aggressively.
3. **Maintain Fairness:** Even if a complaint is not upheld, the individual may make valid complaints in the future, which will need to be treated fairly.
4. **Act Proportionately:** All measures will be proportionate to the behaviour and regularly reviewed
5. **Maintain Confidentiality:** Information about vexatious/unreasonable designations will be kept confidential and shared only on a need-to-know basis
6. **Support the Child:** If a formal complaints process becomes persistent or aggressive, the school will ensure that affected pupils have access to support and will monitor their mental health. The child will not be penalised for their parent's behaviour.

Recording and Monitoring

All decisions regarding vexatious or unreasonable complaints, including any reviews of these decisions, will be:

- Recorded centrally and securely by the school
- Included in the termly complaints report to the governing board (in anonymised form)
- Reviewed annually as part of the policy review process to ensure the school is applying this provision fairly, consistently, and proportionately

The governing board will monitor:

- The number of complaints designated as vexatious or unreasonable
- The types of behaviour leading to these designations
- The measures put in place and their effectiveness
- The outcomes of any review requests
- Any patterns or trends that might indicate a need for additional support or training for staff

Stage 1

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 on the Complaint Form at the end of this policy), or by telephone.

The Headteacher will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 3 school days.

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

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:

- if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
- keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the Headteacher will provide a formal written response within 10-15 school days unless complexity justifies 20 days.

If the Headteacher is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions Sutton in Craven CP School will take to resolve the complaint.

The Headteacher will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1.

If the complaint is about the Headteacher, or a member of the governing body (including the Chair or Vice-Chair), a suitably skilled governor will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 1.

Complaints about the Headteacher or member of the governing 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 1 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.

Stage 2

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 1 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 2 – a meeting with members of the governing body's complaints committee. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.

Requesting Stage 2

A request to escalate to Stage 2 must be made to the Clerk to Governors, via the school office, within 10 school days of receipt of the Stage 1 response.

The Clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 3 school days.

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

Convening the Complaints Committee

The Clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within 20 school days of receipt of the Stage 2 request. If this is not possible, the Clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

The Clerk will offer the complainant three proposed dates for the meeting. 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.

Composition of the Complaints Committee

The complaints committee will consist of at least three governors with no prior involvement or knowledge of the complaint. At least one panel member must be independent of the management and running of the school. An independent panel member is someone who has no connection with the school's governance or day-to-day operations, and has not been involved in any earlier stage of the complaint.

Where necessary, the Clerk to Governors will source independent panel members through North Yorkshire Council's Governor Services team, from the governing body of another local school, or through the National Governance Association.

All panel members should possess the skills and experience necessary to conduct a fair and impartial hearing. This includes the ability to listen carefully, question effectively, analyse evidence objectively, and reach reasoned decisions. Panel members should have an understanding of the school complaints procedure and relevant education legislation.

To ensure panel members can fulfil their role effectively, the school will provide appropriate training. This may include guidance on conducting complaint hearings, understanding procedural fairness, maintaining impartiality, and managing challenging situations. Governors who have not received such training should not sit on a complaints panel until they have completed the necessary preparation.

If there are fewer than three governors from Sutton in Craven CP School available, the Clerk will source any additional, independent governors through another local school or through North Yorkshire Council's Governor Services team, in order to make up the committee. Alternatively, an entirely independent committee may be convened to hear the complaint at Stage 2.

Prior to the meeting, the committee members will decide amongst themselves who will act as the Chair of the Complaints Committee.

Format of the Hearing

The committee will decide whether to deal with the complaint by inviting parties to a meeting or through written representations, but in making their decision they will be sensitive to the complainant's needs and ensure the process is fair to all parties.

If the complainant is invited to attend the meeting:

The complainant may bring someone along to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. Generally, we do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the committee meeting. 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.

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.

Preparation for the Meeting

At least 10 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 7 school days before the meeting

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 5 school days before the date of the meeting.

The committee will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

The committee will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.

The Meeting

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

The committee will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The committee can:

- Uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part

If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the committee will:

- Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- Where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future

Outcome of Stage 2

The Chair of the Committee will provide the complainant and Sutton in Craven CP School with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 20 school days of the meeting.

The letter to the complainant will include:

- A summary of the complaint and the key issues considered
- Details of any findings of fact
- The committee's decision (upheld in whole, upheld in part, or not upheld)
- The reasons for the decision
- Details of any actions the school will take as a result
- Details of how to contact the Department for Education if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by Sutton in Craven CP School

Special Circumstances

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 heard by a committee of independent governors.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions Sutton in Craven CP School will take to resolve the complaint.

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

Next Steps

If the complainant believes the school did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact the Department for Education after they have completed Stage 2.

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by Sutton in Craven CP School. They will consider whether Sutton in Craven CP School has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint.

Contact details:

Online: www.education.gov.uk/contactus

Telephone: 0370 000 2288

Post: Department for Education, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD

Publication of this Policy

- This policy is available on our school website
- Paper copies are available from the school office on request
- The policy is reviewed annually by the governing board

Roles and Responsibilities

Complainant

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

- explain the complaint in full as early as possible
- co-operate with the school in seeking a solution to the complaint
- respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint
- ask for assistance as needed
- treat all those involved in the complaint with respect
- refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality.

Investigator

The investigator's role is to establish the facts relevant to the complaint by:

- providing a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint through:
 - sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved
 - interviewing staff and children/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.

Complaints Co-ordinator

(this could be the Headteacher / designated complaints governor or other staff member providing administrative support)

The complaints co-ordinator should:

- ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure
- liaise with staff members, Headteacher, Chair of Governors, Clerk and LAs (if appropriate) to ensure the smooth running of the complaints procedure
- be aware of issues regarding:
 - sharing third party information
 - additional support. This may be needed by complainants when making a complaint including interpretation support or where the complainant is a child or young person
- keep records.

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 General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)
- set the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties (if they are invited to attend) and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- collate any written material relevant to the complaint (for example; stage 1 paperwork, school and complainant submissions) and send it to the parties in advance of the meeting within an agreed timescale
- record the proceedings
- circulate the minutes of the meeting
- notify all parties of the committee's decision.

Data Protection and Complaints Records

Complaints records as personal data

All information relating to individual complaints will be treated as personal data under the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. We will process this data in accordance with our data protection policy and privacy notices.

Personal data collected during the complaints process may include:

- Names and contact details of complainants
- Details of the complaint
- Correspondence and records of conversations
- Records of meetings and interviews
- Investigation notes and evidence gathered
- Outcomes and decisions made
- Information about staff members involved

Lawful basis for processing

We process complaints data under the following lawful bases:

- Public task - processing is necessary for us to perform our functions as a school
- Legal obligation - where we are required to process complaints under statutory guidance
- Legitimate interests - where necessary to protect the vital interests of pupils and staff

Subject Access Requests (SARs) during complaints

If a complainant submits a Subject Access Request (SAR) during an ongoing complaint, we will:

- **Continue to process the complaint** - submitting a SAR does not pause or stop the complaints procedure
- **Handle the SAR separately** - the SAR will be managed by our Data Protection Officer/designated staff member and processed within the statutory one-month timeframe (extendable by a further two months for complex requests)
- **Not delay the complaint** - we will not use a SAR as a reason to delay responding to or investigating the complaint
- **Provide relevant information** - the complainant will receive the personal data they are entitled to under data protection law, which may include complaints correspondence and investigation notes
- **Apply exemptions where appropriate** - we may redact or withhold information where exemptions apply, such as:
 - Information about third parties (unless they consent or it's reasonable to disclose without consent)
 - Information that would prejudice the prevention or detection of crime
 - Information covered by legal professional privilege
 - Information where disclosure would adversely affect the rights and freedoms of others

We will communicate separately about the SAR and the complaint to avoid confusion.

Who has access to complaints information

Access to complaints information will be restricted to those who need it to fulfil their role:

- **The headteacher** - has access to all complaints information
- **Staff directly involved** - will have access to information relevant to their involvement
- **Investigating officers** - will have access to information necessary to conduct the investigation
- **The governing board/complaints panel** - will receive anonymised reports for monitoring purposes, and full details only when hearing complaints at the formal stage
- **The chair of governors** - may have access to complaints information when overseeing the process or dealing with serial/unreasonable complaints
- **The clerk to governors** - will have access to information necessary to administer complaints panels
- **Our Data Protection Officer** - may access complaints records to respond to SARs or data protection queries
- **External agencies** - we may share information with the Department for Education, Education and Skills Funding Agency, Ofsted, or other relevant bodies where required by law or necessary for safeguarding

All individuals with access to complaints information are required to treat it confidentially.

Retention periods for complaints records

We will retain complaints records in line with our data retention schedule and the Information and Records Management Society (IRMS) guidance for schools:

- **Informal complaints** - 6 years from resolution
- **Formal complaints** - 6 years from resolution
- **Complaints that result in disciplinary action** - 6 years from the date the member of staff leaves employment, or until the individual's normal retirement age, whichever is longer
- **Complaints involving safeguarding concerns** - until the individual reaches age 25, or 6 years from resolution if longer (in line with safeguarding record retention)
- **Complaints that go to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) or Department for Education** - 6 years from resolution

After the retention period expires, records will be securely destroyed in accordance with our data protection policy.

In some cases, we may need to retain records for longer, for example:

- Where there are ongoing legal proceedings
- Where we have a legitimate reason to retain the information beyond the standard period
- Where the complaint relates to a serious safeguarding matter

Anonymising data when reporting to governors

When reporting complaints information to the governing board for monitoring purposes, we will:

- **Remove identifying details** - names of complainants, staff members, and pupils will be removed or replaced with generic descriptors (e.g. "Parent A", "Teacher B")

- **Summarise the nature of complaints** - using categories such as "curriculum concerns", "staff conduct", "bullying allegations" rather than specific details
- **Provide statistical information** - such as the number of complaints received, outcomes, and timescales
- **Aggregate data where possible** - presenting information in summary form rather than case-by-case details
- **Only provide full details when necessary** - governors hearing complaints at the formal panel stage will receive full, non-anonymised information as they need this to make a decision

This approach balances the governing board's need to monitor the effectiveness of our complaints procedure with our duty to protect the privacy of individuals involved.

Confidentiality

All complaints will be handled confidentially. Information will only be shared on a need-to-know basis and in accordance with data protection law.

We will not disclose information about complaints to third parties unless:

- We have the consent of the individuals involved
- We are required to do so by law
- It is necessary for safeguarding purposes
- It is necessary to defend a legal claim

Complainants should also treat information about the complaint confidentially, though we recognise we cannot impose this as a requirement.

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 GDPR.

If a new issue arises it would be useful to give everyone the opportunity to consider and comment upon it; this may require a short adjournment of the meeting

- both the complainant and the school are given the opportunity to make their case and seek clarity, either through written submissions ahead of the meeting or verbally in the meeting itself
- the issues are addressed

- key findings of fact are made
- the committee is open-minded and acts independently
- no member of the committee has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure
- the meeting is minuted
- they liaise with the Clerk (and complaints co-ordinator, if the school has one).

Committee Member

Committee members should be aware that:

- the meeting must be independent and impartial, and should be seen to be so

No governor may sit on the committee if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it.

- the aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant

We recognise that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the meeting does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations.

- many complainants will feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting

Parents/carers often feel emotional when discussing an 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.

The Governing Board

The governing board has overall responsibility for monitoring the effectiveness of our complaints policy and procedure. The board will:

- Review anonymised complaints data on a termly basis to identify trends, patterns and areas for improvement
- Ensure the complaints policy is followed consistently and fairly across the school

- Monitor timescales for complaint resolution to ensure we are meeting our stated deadlines
- Ensure that appropriate action is taken following complaints, including implementing any recommendations or lessons learned
- Review and approve the complaints policy annually, or sooner if required by changes in legislation or best practice
- Ensure that staff and governors receive appropriate training on handling complaints
- Appoint members to complaints panels when required, ensuring panel members have no prior involvement in the complaint
- Monitor the use of provisions for managing serial, unreasonable or vexatious complaints to ensure these are applied fairly and proportionately

The governing board will receive an anonymised report on complaints at least termly, which will include statistical information such as the number of complaints received, the nature of complaints, outcomes, and whether timescales were met. Individual governors who sit on complaints panels will receive full, non-anonymised information about specific complaints as necessary to make informed decisions.

Senior Leadership Team

The Senior Leadership Team (SLT), led by the headteacher, is responsible for ensuring that all staff understand and apply the complaints policy consistently. The SLT will:

- Ensure all staff are familiar with the complaints policy and know how to access it
- Provide training and guidance to staff on handling complaints appropriately, including how to respond to informal concerns and when to escalate issues
- Model good practice in responding to complaints professionally, calmly and constructively
- Ensure that staff understand the difference between informal concerns and formal complaints, and know which procedure to follow
- Monitor how complaints are being handled at an operational level to identify any training needs or areas where additional support is required
- Ensure that lessons learned from complaints are shared with staff and used to improve school practices
- Support staff who are the subject of complaints, ensuring they are kept informed and have access to wellbeing support
- Maintain confidentiality and ensure that staff understand their responsibilities regarding data protection and confidentiality
- Ensure that appropriate records are kept and stored securely in accordance with data protection requirements
- Regularly review the effectiveness of the policy and recommend updates to the governing board where necessary

The headteacher will ensure that the complaints policy is implemented fairly and consistently, and that all staff receive appropriate training when they join the school and through regular refresher sessions.

All staff

All staff members have a responsibility to handle concerns and complaints professionally and to direct complainants to the correct procedure. All staff will:

- Treat all complainants with courtesy, respect and professionalism, even when the complaint is challenging or the complainant is upset
- Listen carefully to concerns raised by parents, carers or other members of the school community and attempt to resolve minor issues informally where appropriate
- Direct complainants to the complaints policy, which is available on the school website and in hard copy from the school office
- Explain the difference between informal concerns (which we will try to resolve quickly and informally) and formal complaints (which follow the staged procedure set out in this policy)
- Refer complainants to the appropriate person or stage of the procedure:
 - For concerns about day-to-day matters: the class teacher or relevant staff member
 - For concerns that cannot be resolved informally: the headteacher
 - For formal complaints: the school office or headteacher, who will provide information about Stage 1 of the formal procedure
 - For complaints about the headteacher: the chair of governors (contact details available from the school office)
- Avoid making promises about outcomes or admitting liability before a proper investigation has taken place
- Report any complaints received to the headteacher or appropriate member of the SLT promptly, even if resolved informally, so that patterns can be identified
- Maintain confidentiality and handle all information in accordance with data protection requirements
- Follow the school's code of conduct when dealing with complaints and not tolerate abusive, threatening or aggressive behaviour
- Seek support from the SLT if they are unsure how to handle a complaint or if a complainant's behaviour is causing concern

Staff should remember that many concerns can be resolved quickly and informally through open, honest communication. However, if a complainant wishes to make a formal complaint, staff must respect this and ensure they are directed to the correct procedure rather than attempting to persuade them otherwise.

Sutton in Craven Community Primary School

Complaint Form

Please complete and return to Mrs Anna Riley (Headteacher) or Mr David Smith (Chair of Governors) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:
Pupil's name (if relevant):
Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):
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: