

Ainslie Wood Primary School Complaints Policy

Aims

We value the feedback and well-being of all members of our community and are committed to always acting in a professional manner and in accordance with our policies and procedures.

To support this commitment the following policy has been created and outlines the specific arrangements in place for the unlikely event that someone may wish to make a complaint.

When responding to complaints, we aim to:

- Be impartial and non-adversarial
- Address all the points at issue and provide an effective and prompt response
- Respect complainants' desire for confidentiality
- Treat complainants with respect
- Facilitate a full and fair investigation including by a panel where necessary
- Keep complainants informed of the progress of the complaints process
- Consider how the complaint can feed into school improvement evaluation processes

We seek to resolve concerns or complaints by informal means wherever possible. Where informal resolution is not possible, formal procedures will be followed.

To support these aims we will ensure we publicise the existence of this policy and make it available on the school website. This policy will be reviewed and ratified by the governing body every two years, or sooner if new guidance is issued.

Complaints not in scope of this policy

Certain types of complaint fall outside the remit of this policy as they are covered by separate statutory or alternative procedures. These include complaints about:

- Admissions to schools
- Exclusion of pupils from school
- Statutory assessments of special educational needs (SEND)
- Matters likely to require child protection investigation
- Staff grievances or disciplinary procedures
- Whistleblowing concerns
- Data protection or Freedom of Information requests
- Services provided by other organisations using school premises or facilities

Where a complaint is received about one of the above matters, the complainant will be directed to the appropriate procedure.

The complaints process

The school's complaints procedure has three stages:

Informal concern or complaint - Stage 1

The DfE guidance explains the difference between a concern and a complaint.

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

The school will resolve concerns through day-to-day communication as far as possible.

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

The school will take informal concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve the matter quickly. It may be the case that the provision or clarification of information will resolve the issue.

The complainant should raise the complaint as soon as possible with the relevant member of staff or the headteacher as appropriate, either in person, by phone or writing.

If the complaint is not resolved informally, it will be escalated to a formal complaint.

Formal Complaint - Stage 2

Formal complaints should be submitted in writing using the School Complaint Form and addressed to the Headteacher. The form should include relevant dates, times, names of witnesses and any supporting documents, together with what outcome is sought.

The Headteacher (or a nominated member of the senior leadership team) will investigate the complaint and may invite the complainant to a meeting. A written response will normally be provided within ten school days of receipt.

If the complaint is about the Headteacher, it should be addressed to the Chair of Governors via the

school office. The Chair will investigate and respond in writing, normally within ten school days.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they may request that the complaint proceeds to Stage 3.

**Please note that if complaining in writing is difficult or not possible, please contact the office who will take notes about your complaint or put you in contact with another person who will be able to do this for you.*

Complaint Heard by Review Panel - Stage 3

Where the complainant is dissatisfied with the complaints process or the outcome of their complaint, they may request their complaint to be heard by a Governors Review Panel. The complainant should set out in writing the reason they are dissatisfied with the process or the outcome and pass it to the school office marked **for the attention of the Chair of Governors**.

The complaint will then be considered by a panel of governors who have had no prior involvement with the complaint or the circumstances surrounding it. The panel will review the evidence, consider representations, and reach a final decision. A written outcome will be sent to the complainant within twenty school days of the meeting. The decision of the panel is final within the school's process.

An outcome letter detailing the final decision of the panel will be sent to the complainant within 20 school days of the meeting.

Referring complaints on completion of the school's procedure

If the complainant is unsatisfied with the outcome of the school's complaints procedure, they can refer their complaint to the School Complaints Unit (SCU), which investigates complaints relating to maintained schools on behalf of the secretary of state.

The SCU will not re-investigate the matter of the complaint. It will look at whether the school's complaints policy and any other relevant statutory policies that the school holds were adhered to. The SCU also looks at whether the school's statutory policies adhere to education legislation. It may direct the school to re-investigate the complaint where it is clear the school has acted unlawfully or unreasonably.

Complaints about the governing body

Complaints about an individual governor should be addressed to the Chair of Governors.

Complaints about the Chair or both the Chair and Vice Chair should be addressed to the Clerk to the Governing Body.

Complaints about the full governing body, or matters involving governance or management of the governing body, should also be addressed to the Clerk, who will determine the most appropriate course of action. This may include:

- Appointing an independent investigator to conduct Stage 1; and/or
- Sourcing co-opted governors from another school to form a panel at Stage 2.

In some cases, particularly those relating to the governing body's discharge of statutory duties, the Clerk may refer the matter to the Local Authority for handling.

Anonymous complaints

Anonymous complaints will be considered at the Headteacher's discretion. Factors to be taken into account will include the seriousness of the issue and whether there is enough information to investigate the matter.

Persistent, Unreasonable or Vexatious Complaints

Where a complainant tries to re-open the same issue (or a slightly altered version of it) after the school's complaints procedure has been fully exhausted and the school has taken all reasonable steps to respond, the Chair of Governors (or other appropriate person, in the case of a complaint about the Chair) will inform the complainant that the matter is closed.

Occasionally, a small number of complainants pursue their complaints in ways which can impede the school's ability to investigate and resolve matters effectively. This may include:

- Repeatedly making the same complaint despite clear responses being provided;
- Raising related or new issues in a way that appears designed to prolong contact or prevent resolution;
- Submitting frequent, overlapping or excessive correspondence;
- Using abusive, offensive or threatening language or behaviour;
- Refusing to engage with the normal process or insisting on unrealistic outcomes.

If the complainant subsequently contacts the school again about the same issue, the school may choose not to respond. The normal circumstances in which we will not respond include where:

- The school has taken every reasonable step to address the complainant's concerns; and
- The complainant has been given a clear statement of the school's position and their options (if any); and
- The complainant continues to contact the school repeatedly but makes substantially the same points each time.

However, this list is not exhaustive. The school will also be likely to stop responding if:

- We have reason to believe the individual is contacting the school with the intention of causing disruption or inconvenience; and/or
- The individual's letters, emails or telephone calls are often or always abusive, aggressive or harassing; and/or
- The individual makes insulting personal comments about, or threats towards, school staff or governors.

When such behaviour occurs, the Headteacher (or Chair of Governors) may decide to:

- Limit future contact with the complainant to a named person or a specific method (for example, email only);
- Set defined time intervals for communication;
- Decline to consider further complaints about the same matter once the process has been exhausted; or

- In exceptional cases, refuse to respond to further correspondence on any matter that is deemed vexatious.

The decision to restrict or cease contact will be confirmed in writing, explaining the reasons for this action and advising that new, unrelated complaints will still be considered.

The school will ensure, when making such decisions, that any new issues raised are heard and that all actions taken are reasonable and proportionate. A record of any such decisions will be kept and reviewed periodically to ensure that they remain justified.

Next steps

If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome after the school's process has been exhausted, they may contact:

School Complaints Compliance Unit (SCCU)
Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD
Email: school.complaints@education.gov.uk

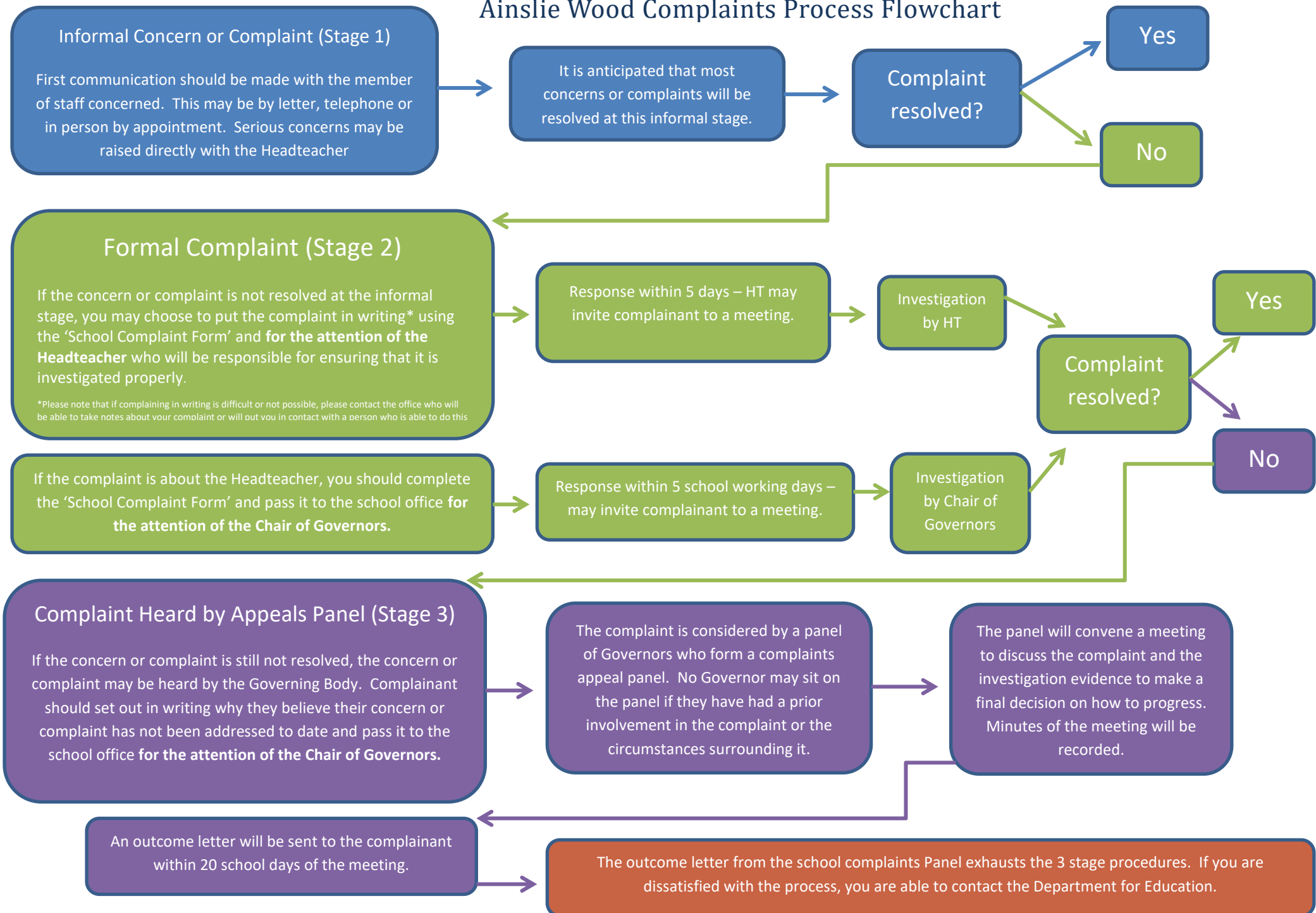
The SCCU will not re-investigate the matter but will consider whether the school's policy and procedure have been properly followed.

Reviewed and ratified by: Ainslie Wood Governing Body

Review frequency: Annually

Next review due: July 2027

Ainslie Wood Complaints Process Flowchart



School Complaint Form

Please complete and pass to the Headteacher (or Chair of Governors) via the school office.

Your name: _____

Pupil's name: _____

Your relationship to the pupil: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Daytime telephone number: _____

Evening telephone number: _____

Email address: _____

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

What action (if any) have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint? (Who have you spoken or written to and what was the response?)

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

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

Signature: _____ Date: _____