Bushfield Road Infant School Complaints Policy

Date approved: November 2026
Review date: November 2027

1. Our approach

Bushfield Road Infant School values positive relationships with pupils, families and the wider community. We aim to listen carefully, respond fairly and resolve concerns promptly. We will treat everyone involved with courtesy and respect, in keeping with our school values of **Kindness, Teamwork and Curiosity**.

We welcome feedback. We recognise that concerns may help us improve the support and education we provide. Most concerns can be resolved through an early conversation. Where this is not possible, this policy sets out how to make a formal complaint.

This policy applies to complaints about the school or services and facilities it provides, except where a separate statutory procedure applies.

2. What is a concern or a complaint?

A **concern** is an expression of worry or doubt about an issue where reassurance or action is sought.

A **complaint** is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about an action the school has taken or a failure to act.

We will try to resolve both concerns and complaints at the earliest appropriate stage. You do not have to use particular wording to raise a complaint.

Anyone may make a complaint about the school's provision or services. You do not need to be a current parent or carer.

3. Issues covered by other procedures

This policy does not replace procedures that apply to particular matters. These include:

- **Child protection or safeguarding concerns:** these must be dealt with under the school's safeguarding procedures. If a child may be at risk of harm, contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead or use the school's established safeguarding route. Do not wait for this complaints procedure.
- **Admissions:** follow the relevant admissions or admissions-appeal procedure.
- **Exclusions:** follow the statutory exclusions process.
- **Special educational needs and disability, including statutory assessment:** contact the local authority where the matter concerns its statutory assessment or decision-making procedures. A complaint about how the school has handled an issue may still fall under this policy.
- **Staff grievances, disciplinary or capability matters:** these are handled under the relevant staff procedures. A parent or member of the public may complain about the service provided, but this policy will not determine staff employment matters.
- **Whistleblowing:** use the school's whistleblowing procedure.
- **Services provided by an external organisation using the school's premises:** complain to that provider under its own procedure.

If you are unsure which procedure applies, contact the school. We will explain the appropriate route.

4. Access, support and confidentiality

We will make reasonable adjustments so that people can access and use this procedure. This may include accepting a complaint in a different format or helping someone to set out their complaint.

You may bring a friend, advocate or interpreter to meetings. Please tell us in advance if you need this support.

We will handle complaints sensitively and share information only with people who need it to investigate or respond. This does not prevent the school from sharing information where it is necessary to safeguard a pupil or meet a legal duty.

A complaint about an individual member of staff is not, in itself, a staff disciplinary process. The member of staff will be given a fair opportunity to respond to relevant matters. Any employment process will be handled separately and confidentially.

5. Time limits

Please raise a complaint as soon as possible and normally within **three months** of the incident or the date you became aware of the issue. We may consider a later complaint where there is a reasonable explanation for the delay and it remains possible to investigate it fairly.

The school will aim to meet the timescales below. If a delay is unavoidable, we will explain why, give a revised response date and keep you informed.

6. Stage 1: Informal resolution

Raise your concern with the member of staff best placed to help, usually your child's class teacher. If the concern is about that member of staff, or you feel unable to approach them, contact the Headteacher.

You can raise a concern in person, by telephone or in writing. We will:

- listen to the concern and clarify what outcome you are seeking;
- make a record of the concern and the action agreed;
- try to resolve it promptly, normally within **10 school days**.

If more time is needed, we will tell you when you can expect a response.

If the matter is not resolved, or it is too serious for informal handling, you may make a formal complaint at Stage 2.

7. Stage 2: Formal investigation

Send your complaint to the Headteacher in writing, using the school's complaints form if helpful. If the complaint is about the Headteacher, send it to the Chair of Governors via the Clerk. If the complaint concerns the Chair, Vice-Chair or a large proportion of the Governing Body, send it to the Clerk, who will arrange an appropriate independent route.

Please explain:

- what happened and when;
- who was involved, if known;
- what steps have already been taken to resolve the matter;
- what outcome you are seeking;
- any relevant documents or information.

The school will acknowledge the complaint within **five school days**. The acknowledgement will confirm who is investigating and the expected response date.

The investigator will consider the complaint impartially. They may contact you to clarify the issues, speak to relevant people and review relevant records. The person who is the subject of the complaint will have a fair opportunity to respond. Where the complaint concerns a pupil, any conversation with the pupil will be handled sensitively, taking account of the pupil's age and circumstances.

We aim to send a written response within **15 school days** of acknowledging the complaint. If this is not possible, we will explain the delay and give a revised date.

The response will summarise the complaint, explain the investigation and findings, set out any action the school will take, and explain how to ask for a review at Stage 3.

8. Stage 3: Review by a Governing Body complaints panel

If you remain dissatisfied after Stage 2, you may ask for a panel review. You should write to the Clerk within **10 school days** of receiving the Stage 2 response, explaining which parts of the outcome you dispute and why.

The panel will consist of at least **three governors** who have had no prior involvement with the complaint. The Headteacher will not be a panel member. Where the complaint concerns the Headteacher, the panel will review the investigation and response independently.

The Clerk will acknowledge the request within **five school days** and arrange a panel meeting, normally within **20 school days** where practicable. The Clerk will provide the complainant and the school with the relevant papers and explain the meeting arrangements in advance. Both parties may bring a friend, advocate or interpreter.

The panel will consider whether the complaint was investigated fairly, whether the evidence supports the findings, and whether the response and any proposed action are appropriate. It may uphold the complaint in whole or in part, not uphold it, or recommend further action.

The panel's decision is final within the school's procedure. The Clerk will send a written outcome to the complainant and the school, normally within **five school days** of the meeting. The outcome will explain the panel's decision and any recommendations.

9. Complaints about the Governing Body

Where a complaint involves the Chair and Vice-Chair, the whole Governing Body or most governors, the Clerk will arrange an independent investigation or other suitable process. Governors who have been involved in the matter must not determine the complaint.

The school will explain the route being used and how the complainant can request a review of the outcome.

10. Taking a complaint outside the school

After completing the school's procedure, a complainant may contact the Department for Education if they believe the Governing Body has acted unreasonably or failed to fulfil a duty under education law. The Department for Education does not normally reinvestigate the original complaint; it considers whether the school has followed its duties and procedure.

Ofsted does not resolve individual complaints or award remedies. It may consider information about a school as part of its inspection work.

11. Unreasonable behaviour and repeated complaints

We will not label a complaint as unreasonable simply because it is persistent, critical or difficult to resolve. Complainants should normally be able to complete the procedure.

In exceptional cases, behaviour may be considered unreasonable if it prevents the school from investigating a complaint fairly or significantly disrupts the school's work. Examples may include threats, abusive language, harassment, repeated contact after the procedure has concluded without new information, or demands that are disproportionate and incompatible with a fair investigation.

Before restricting contact, the Headteacher and Chair of Governors will consider the circumstances, any reasonable adjustments needed, and whether a proportionate alternative would work. Any restriction will be confirmed in writing, limited to what is necessary, and reviewed at a stated date. We will still consider any new and substantive complaint.

A decision to restrict contact will not prevent the school from meeting its safeguarding or legal duties.

12. Records and learning from complaints

The school will keep a confidential record of formal complaints, the investigation, correspondence, decisions and any action taken. Complaint records will be stored separately from pupil records unless there is a clear reason to retain relevant information in a pupil's record.

The Governing Body will receive appropriate information about complaint themes and how the school has responded, while protecting personal information. The school will use learning from complaints to improve its practice and services.

13. Review and publication

The Governing Body will review this policy at least annually and when relevant guidance or the school's arrangements change. The current policy will be published on the school website.

Sources

- Department for Education, *Best practice guidance for school complaints procedures 2020* (updated 15 January 2021). (gov.uk)
- Department for Education, *School complaints procedures: guidance for maintained schools*. (gov.uk)
- Department for Education, *Maintained schools: governance guide* (updated 15 July 2026). (gov.uk)