



Complaints Policy

including Managing Serial and Unreasonable Complaints

Aycliffe Village Primary & Nursery School
Part of Eden Learning Trust

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 Aycliffe Village Primary & Nursery 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 **suspensions** 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 complaint procedure. Aycliffe Village Primary & Nursery School takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

Difficulties discussing concerns

If you have **difficulty discussing a concern** with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, the **Headteacher** of Aycliffe Village Primary & Nursery School will **refer you to another staff member**.

Similarly, if the **member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with** a concern, the Headteacher will refer you to **another staff member**. The member of staff **may be 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, Aycliffe Village Primary & Nursery School will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaint procedure.

How to raise a concern or make a complaint

Registering 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.

Complaints about school staff

Complaints against school staff (except the Headteacher) should be made in the first instance, to **Mrs. L Adamson, Headteacher** via the school office aycliffevillage@durhamlearning.net Please mark them as **Private and Confidential**.

Complaints about the Headteacher

Complaints that **involve or are about the Headteacher** should be addressed to **Mrs J Smith (Chair of Governors) via the School Business Manager (Mrs Dawn Swainston) via the school office** aycliffevillage@durhamlearning.net marked **FAO Chair of Governors**. Please mark them as **Private and Confidential**.

Complaints about the Chair of Governors

Complaints **about the Chair of Governors**, any individual governor or the whole governing body should be addressed to **Mrs Jayne Garlick (Deputy Headteacher)**. Please mark them as **Private and Confidential**.

Complaints about Trustees or the CEO

Complaints **about Mr. Kevin Brennan the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or a Trustee of the Trust**, should be addressed to **Garry Stout, Chair of Trustees**, via the **Trust office** at **Ferryhill School, Merrington Road, DL17 8RW**. 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 a third-party organization, for example, the **Citizens Advice Bureau** to help you.

Reasonable Adjustments

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 on 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.

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 the complaint procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by Aycliffe Village Primary & Nursery School, other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed overleaf.

Exceptions	Who to contact
Admissions to schools	Concerns about admissions should be handled through a separate process – either through the appeals process or via the local authority .
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. If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the Durham local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).
Suspension of children from school*	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: <u>www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions</u> . <i>*complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.</i>

Whistleblowing	We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors. The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistle-blowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: <u>www.education.gov.uk/contactus</u>. 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.
Staff grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures .
Staff conduct	Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate. 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.

Possible Delays

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 this happens, we will inform you of a proposed new timescale.

Legal Action

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

Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, Aycliffe Village Primary & Nursery 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** from the **school/organisation**.

Withdrawal of a complaint

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

Stage 1 - Informal complaints

It is to be hoped that most concerns can be expressed and resolved on an informal basis.

Concerns should be raised with either the Class teacher, Phase Lead (Mrs Lindsay Marambe EYFS & KS1, Deputy Headteacher or Headteacher.

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 3 of the procedure.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the appropriate person investigating the complaint will provide an informal written response within **10 school days** of the date of receipt of the complaint.

If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

Stage 2 - Formal complaints

Formal complaints **must be made to the Headteacher** (unless they are about the Headteacher). This may be done **in person or in writing** (preferably on the Complaint Form).

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 **10 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.*

The Investigation

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 20 school days** of the **date of receipt of the complaint**.

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

The response

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** Aycliffe Village Primary & Nursery 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 2.

Stage 2: Complaint about the Headteacher or member of the Governing Body

If the complaint is about the **Headteacher**, an independent member of the governing body (including the **Chair or Vice-Chair**), or a suitably skilled **governor will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 2**.

Complaints about the Headteacher or member of the governing body must be sent to **Mrs Jayne Garlick, Deputy Headteacher**, 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

then **Stage 2 will be escalated to the CEO of the Trust.**

Stage 3 Complaint - Panel Hearing

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 2 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 3.

This is a **panel hearing** consisting of **at least three people** who were **not directly involved** in the matters detailed in the complaint with **one panel member who is independent of the management and running of the school.**

This is the final stage of the complaint procedure.

A request to escalate to Stage 3 must be **made to the Clerk, via the school office**, within 10 school days of receipt of the Stage 2 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 10 school days.

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

The Clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting **within 10 school days** of receipt of the Stage 3 request.

If this is not possible, the Clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

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.

Stage 3 Complaints about the governing body

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire governing body or

- the majority of the governing body

Stage 3 will be **heard by the Trustees** and an **independent panel member**.

Support in Stage 3 meetings

A complainant **may bring someone along to the panel meeting** 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.

Complaints about staff Conduct

*Note: Complaints about **staff conduct** will **NOT** generally be **handled under this complaint** procedure. Complainants will be advised that any staff conduct complaints will be considered under (Human Resources) staff disciplinary procedures, if appropriate, but outcomes will not be shared with them.*

Representatives from the media are **NOT** permitted to attend.

The process of the Stage 3 meeting

Overview

Stage 3 request made	Max 10 days after Stage 2 response
Stage 3 request is confirmed by the school	Within 10 days of request being received
Meeting date Set	Within 30 days of request being received
Confirm venue and time	15 days before the meeting
Final request for any paperwork	10 days before the meeting
Circulation of paper work	5 days before the meeting
Feedback	Within 10 days after the meeting

At least **15 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 **10 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 to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.

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.

Stage 3 Outcomes

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.

Stage 3 Feeding back

The **Chair of the Committee** will provide the complainant and Aycliffe Village Primary & Nursery School with a **full explanation of their decision** and the **reason(s) for it**, in writing, within **10 school days**.

The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by Aycliffe Village Primary & Nursery School.

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 Aycliffe Village Primary & Nursery School will take to resolve the complaint.

The panel will ensure that those **findings and recommendations** are sent by electronic mail or otherwise **given to the complainant** and, where relevant, **the person complained about**. Furthermore, they will be **available for inspection** on the **school premises** by the proprietor and the **Headteacher**.

Records of meetings

A **written record will be kept of all complaints**, and of whether they **are resolved** at the stage 2 stage or proceed to a panel hearing, along with what **actions** have been taken, regardless of the decision.

All correspondence statements and records relating to **individual complaints will be kept confidential**, except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

Complaints escalated to / about the Trust, CEO or Trustee

If a complaint is escalated to Eden Learning Trust or if a complainant wishes to complain directly about the trust, then the complaint should be **sent to the CEO to be investigated**.

The CEO will write to the complainant acknowledging the complaint within **10 school days** of the date that the written request was received.

The acknowledgement will confirm that the complaint will now be investigated under Stage 4 of this Complaints Policy and will confirm the date for providing a response to the complainant.

Following the investigation, the CEO will write to the complainant confirming the outcome within **30 school days** of the date that the letter was received.

If it looks likely that this time limit cannot be met, the CEO will write to the Complainant within **20 school days** of the date that the letter was received, explaining the reason for the delay and providing a revised date.

Complaints about CEO / Trustees

If the complaint concerns the **CEO or a Trustee**, the complaint should be investigated by the **Chair of the Trust Board**. If a formal complaint form is received about **the Chair**, the complaint will be referred to the **Chair of Finance and Audit** for investigation

*NB. Where the Chair of the Trust Board has investigated the complaint, they will write the letter of **outcome to the Complainant and provide a copy to the CEO**.*

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the previous stage, the complainant should write to the Clerk to the Trust Board asking for the complaint to be heard before a Complaint Panel, within **30 school days**.

Stage 3: Complaint Panel

The Clerk will **record the date the complaint is received** and **acknowledge receipt** of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 10 school days.

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

The **Clerk will write to the complainant** to inform them of the **date of the meeting**. They will aim to convene a meeting within 30 school days of receipt of the request. If this is not possible, the Clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

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.

Stage 3: Complaint Panel if complaints are about Trust Board

If the complaint is:

- about the Chair or
- the entire trust board or
- the majority of the trust board

Stage 3 will be heard by a completely **independent committee panel**.

The Stage 3 Meeting at Trust Board Level

The Complaint Panel will consist of **three members**. **None of the three members** of the Complaint Panel will have been involved in the incidents or events which led to the complaint, or have been involved in dealing with the complaint in the previous stages, or have **any detailed prior knowledge of the complaint**.

One of the Complaint Panel members will be independent of the **management and running of the Academy Trust**. This means that the **independent Complaint Panel member will not be a Trustee or an employee of the Trust**.

A complainant may **bring someone along to the panel meeting 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 trust 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 complaint 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**.

At least **15 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 **10 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 to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.

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.

Outcomes

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.

Feedback

The Chair of the Committee will provide the complainant and Eden Learning Trust with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 10 school days.

The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by Eden Learning Trust

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** the Eden Learning Trust will take to resolve the complaint.

The panel will ensure that those findings and **recommendations are sent by electronic mail** or otherwise given to the **complainant** and, where relevant, the **person complained about**.

Records of Meetings

Furthermore, they will be available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the Headteacher.

A written record will be kept of all complaints, and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing, along with what actions have been taken, regardless of the decision.

All correspondence statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential, except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

Next Steps

If the complainant believes the school / trust 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 ESFA after they have completed Stage 3.

The ESFA will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by Aycliffe Village Primary & Nursery School. They will consider whether

Aycliffe Village Primary & Nursery School has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint and whether they have followed Part 7 of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

The complainant can refer their complaint to the ESFA online at:

www.education.gov.uk/contactus, by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:

Academy Complaints and Customer Insight Unit

Education and Skills Funding Agency

Cheylesmore House

5 Quinton Road

Coventry, CV1 2WT



Complaint Form

Please complete and return this form to **Mrs Lyn Adamson** via aycliffevillage@durhamlearning.net 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:
Email address:
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:

Date acknowledgement sent:

By who:

Complaint referred to:

Action taken:

Date:

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:
 - o sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved
 - o interviewing staff and children/young people and other people relevant to the complaint
 - o consideration of records and other relevant information
 - o 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 head teacher or complaints committee that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.
- The head teacher 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 or CEO / designated complaints governor or trustee 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, Executive Headteacher, CEO, Chair of Governors, Chair of Trust or the Clerk and to ensure the smooth running of the complaint procedure
- be aware of issues regarding:
 - o sharing third party information
 - o 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 / Trust Board

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.

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 / trustee 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.

Managing Serial and Unreasonable Complaints

Aycliffe Village Primary & Nursery School is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with our school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behavior and will take action to protect staff from that behavior, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

Aycliffe Village Primary & Nursery School defines unreasonable behavior as that which hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the school, such as, if the complainant:

- 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 complaint investigation process
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaint procedure
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaint procedure or with good practice
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on
- 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 and complicated 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

Complainants should try to limit their communications with the school that relates to their complaint, while the complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone or email), as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the Executive Headteacher / Head of School or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an “*unreasonable*” marking.

If the behavior continues, one of the above persons will write to the complainant explaining that their behavior is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact Aycliffe Village Primary & Nursery School causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will be reviewed after six months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from Aycliffe Village Primary & Nursery School.