



POLICY DOCUMENT

Complaints Policy

Princess May Primary School's approach to complaints — 2026–2027

Governing Body Representative (GBR)	Kristofer McGhee (Chair of Governors)
Signed by (GBR)	
Date approved	4 September 2026
Next review due by	September 2027
Related policies	Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy; Behaviour Policy; SEND Policy and SEND Information Report
Aligned to	Section 29 of the Education Act 2002; the DfE's non-statutory guidance, Best Practice Guidance for School Complaints Procedures (2020); and the DfE's, Parentkind's and Ofsted's guidance for schools and parents on handling complaints (January 2026), comprising the School Guide to Parent Complaints and the Parent Guide to School Complaints

1. Introduction and overview

Governing bodies are required by law, under Section 29 of the Education Act 2002, to have a procedure in place to deal with complaints relating to the school or the provision of community facilities or services at the school, and this procedure must be publicised. This policy sets out the procedure followed by our school.

The vast majority of complaints and concerns can be resolved informally. We take all concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve them as quickly as possible.

A complaint can be brought by a parent of a registered pupil, a person who has been provided with a service or facility at the school, or any third party who may have cause to complain about the school; this procedure refers to this person as the complainant. A concern or unresolved problem will be treated as a complaint only when the complainant asserts that the school has acted wrongly in some significant decision, action or failure to take action. Even once a complaint has been made, it can be resolved or withdrawn at any stage.

Our nominated complaints lead, with responsibility for the operation and management of the school's complaints procedure, is Obi Abigeli, who can be contacted at admin@princessmay.hackney.sch.uk. If a complaint is specifically against the Headteacher, please address this to the Chair of Governors, marking your correspondence as confidential, and send it to the complaints lead, who will forward it to the Chair.

Anonymous complaints will not normally be investigated, although the Headteacher or Chair of Governors may determine that a complaint warrants investigation. Unless exceptional circumstances can be shown, a complaint must be raised within 3 months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents has occurred, within 3 months of the last of these.

2. Feedback, concerns and complaints

In line with the DfE's, Parentkind's and Ofsted's January 2026 guidance for parents and schools on handling complaints, we find it helpful to think about what a parent or carer wants to raise as one of three things: feedback, which is something to note but does not necessarily need action; a concern, which is something we will look into but does not yet suggest the school has done anything wrong; and a formal complaint, where a parent or carer believes the school has acted wrongly in a significant decision, action or failure to act.

We would always encourage parents and carers to raise something as early as possible, directly with the member of staff best placed to help, as most things are resolved quickly and well at this stage; the Parent Guide to School Complaints, published alongside this guidance, sets out a five-step approach that families may find helpful when deciding how and with whom to raise a concern.

In turn, we are committed to being open, transparent, personal and accessible when a parent or carer raises a concern; to acknowledging how they are feeling, as well as the facts of the matter; and to resolving things quickly and positively wherever we can.

3. Special circumstances

Any complaint or other notice that suggests a child has been at risk of significant harm, through violence, emotional abuse, sexual interference or neglect, may be referred without further notice to Children's Social Care and/or the social services authority for the area in which the child lives. If a social services authority decides to investigate, this may postpone or supersede investigation by the Headteacher or governing body.

4. Other solutions to complaints

Where a matter can be resolved through a legal appeal, it will not be considered as a formal complaint under this policy. The key areas are admissions decisions, certain decisions relating to the statutory assessment of special educational needs, and decisions to permanently exclude a child.

School reorganisation proposals, child protection investigations, whistleblowing, staff grievance and disciplinary issues, and complaints about other providers who may use the school's premises or facilities, also fall outside the scope of this procedure; in most cases, these are covered by separate policies.

5. Dealing with concerns informally

The complainant will be given an opportunity to discuss their concern with an appropriate member of staff, which may require an appointment to be made; this person may be the Headteacher, the nominated complaints lead, or another senior school leader. The complainant may bring a friend to any discussion, to support them, though not normally to advocate on their behalf.

At the end of the meeting, the member of staff dealing with the concern will make sure the complainant is clear what action, if any, or monitoring of the situation has been agreed; this stage should be completed speedily and concluded in writing, with appropriate detail.

Where no satisfactory solution has been found, the complainant will be advised that they may wish to consider making a formal complaint to the Headteacher. A complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone; a complaint form is provided at Appendix 1 to assist with this, and the school office can help if support is needed to complete it.

6. Stage 1: referral to the Headteacher for investigation

The Headteacher will acknowledge the complaint in writing within 3 school days of receipt. The Headteacher may delegate investigation of the complaint to the nominated complaints lead or another member of the senior leadership team, but remains responsible for the decision on the outcome of the investigation.

The Headteacher, or delegated investigator, may meet with the complainant to supplement any information already provided; where the complaint is against a member of staff, they will talk to that member of staff, and will interview witnesses and take statements where necessary. Reasonable written records are kept of meetings, telephone conversations and other documentation informing the investigation.

Once all the relevant facts have been established, a written response is produced for the complainant. This is agreed by the Headteacher, who may wish to meet the complainant to discuss or resolve the matter before confirming the outcome in writing; the response includes a full explanation of the decision and the reasons for it, and, where appropriate, the action the school will take to resolve the complaint.

Stage 1 should be completed within 15 school days. Where a case is complex, it may prove difficult to meet this timetable, in which case the Headteacher will write to the complainant giving a revised target date. Our school does not pay financial compensation in response to complaints, although we may agree to cover expenses for a relevant educational purpose, such as the fee for a repeat examination.

The Stage 1 response will also advise the complainant that, if they are not satisfied and wish to take the matter further, they should write to the Chair of the Governing Body within 15 school days of receiving the outcome letter; the outcome letter will set out the Chair's name and the address to which the complainant can send this.

7. Stage 2: consideration by the Governing Body

If the complainant decides to take the matter further, the Clerk or Chair of the Governing Body will write to acknowledge the complaint within 3 school days of receipt, sending a copy of the acknowledgement and the complaint form to the Headteacher and the Clerk to the Governing Body.

Complaints against the Headteacher

Where a complaint is wholly or mainly about the Headteacher, it should be addressed to the Chair of Governors, marked confidential, and sent to the complaints lead, who will forward it to the Chair. Before Stage 2 begins, the Chair will invite the Headteacher to respond in writing within 10 school days, and will send a copy of that response to the complainant, who is asked to indicate within 5 school days of receipt whether they are satisfied; if not, Stage 2 will commence.

Complaints about governors

Complaints about the Chair of Governors, individual governors, or the whole governing body, should be addressed to the Clerk to the Governing Body, sent to the complaints lead marked private and confidential, and will be considered in accordance with Stage 2. In this instance, the Complaints Appeal Panel (CAP) will be made up of independent panel members, who may be drawn from another school's governing body and/or the Local Authority.

Investigating the complaint

Where a complaint has already been investigated at Stage 1, the Headteacher makes the result of that investigation available to the Clerk or Chair. Where the complaint is against the Headteacher and is referred to Stage 2, the Chair of the Governing Body decides how the complaint should be investigated; where the facts are already clearly established, the Chair is unlikely to order a further investigation, and the matter may instead be escalated directly to the CAP.

The Complaints Appeal Panel

A CAP of three governors, none of whom have had prior direct involvement in the complaint, is established to hear the complaint at Stage 2. Where possible, the governing body will try to ensure the panel reflects a cross-section of governor categories and is sensitive to issues of race, gender and religious affiliation. Where all, or a majority, of governors are already aware of the substance of a complaint, the governing body may arrange for the panel to be made up entirely, or in part, of independent panel members, drawn from another school's governing body or the Local Authority. The CAP agrees a single member to act as panel chair; the Headteacher cannot serve on the CAP, and the Chair of Governors is also excluded if they have had any prior involvement in the complaint.

The CAP considers the complaint on the basis of the written evidence, and sets up a hearing to hear both parties; it reconsiders the issues raised in the original complaint, rather than confining itself to procedural matters. The Clerk or Chair of the CAP will try to confirm a meeting date with the other governors within 5 school days of receiving the Stage 2 complaint, or otherwise provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed; they will write to the complainant and Headteacher confirming the date, time and venue, and invite any further written material to be submitted by return. If the complainant rejects three proposed dates without good reason, the Clerk or Chair of the CAP will decide when to hold the meeting, which may proceed in the complainant's absence.

The complainant may be accompanied by a friend or representative, although legal representatives are generally discouraged for either party. The Headteacher is invited to prepare a written report for the CAP, and all relevant correspondence is circulated to the CAP, the complainant and the Headteacher at least 5 school days before the meeting, except in exceptional circumstances. Where either party wishes to call witnesses, this requires the prior agreement of the CAP chair.

It is the responsibility of the CAP chair to ensure the meeting is properly conducted, though proceedings should be as informal as possible. The aim of the meeting is to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant; at the end of the meeting, however, the CAP must decide to uphold the complaint, in whole or in part, or to dismiss it, in whole or in part. Where either

party wishes to introduce previously undisclosed evidence or witnesses, the CAP chair may adjourn the meeting so the other side has time to respond; late evidence or witnesses should not normally be accepted without good reason.

The meeting allows for the complainant to explain their complaint and the Headteacher to explain the reasons for their decision; for each to question the other; for the CAP to question both; for any party to bring witnesses, subject to the chair's approval, with all parties able to question all witnesses; and for a final statement from the Headteacher and the complainant. The complainant, Headteacher and any witnesses are then asked to leave while the CAP considers the complaint and the evidence presented.

Where a complaint is upheld, in whole or in part, the CAP decides on the action required to resolve it, and may suggest changes to the school's systems or procedures to help prevent similar problems recurring. Within 5 school days of the meeting, the Clerk or Chair of the CAP sends a written statement of the decision, with reasons, to the complainant and the Headteacher, including how to contact the Department for Education if they remain dissatisfied with how the complaint was handled.

Stage 2 should be completed within 20 school days. This timetable can be challenging where complaints are complex, or where it is difficult to agree a convenient CAP hearing date; in such cases, the CAP chair will write to the complainant and Headteacher giving a revised target date.

8. Role of the Department for Education

If a complainant believes the school did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published procedure, or acted unlawfully or unreasonably in exercising its duties under education law, they can contact the Department for Education once Stage 2 has been completed.

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of a complaint, or overturn a decision made by the school; it will consider whether the school has adhered to education legislation and any relevant statutory policies. Complaints can be referred to the Department for Education online at www.education.gov.uk/contactus, by telephone on 0370 000 2288, or by writing to the Department for Education, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD.

9. Unreasonable, persistent or unacceptable complaints

There will be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedure having been followed, a complainant remains dissatisfied. If a complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the Chair of the Governing Body can inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and the matter is now closed.

In line with the DfE's, Parentkind's and Ofsted's January 2026 guidance, we ask that complaints are raised in a clear, respectful and constructive way. This means avoiding aggressive conduct, personally targeting a member of staff, using social media to escalate a dispute, or relying on AI-generated complaints, which can inaccurately cite legislation and make a concern harder to resolve fairly. Where a complainant's behaviour becomes abusive or unreasonable, the school may issue a written warning, pause the complaints process, restrict how or when contact is made, or, in serious cases, restrict access to the school premises.

10. Links to other policies

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy;
- Behaviour Policy; and
- SEND Policy and SEND Information Report.

Appendix 1: School Complaint Form (for Stage 1 complaints)

If you have tried unsuccessfully to resolve your complaint and wish to take the matter further, please complete this form and send it to the Headteacher. If your complaint is against the Headteacher, please send the form to the Chair of the Governing Body instead.

Field	Detail
Your name	
Address	
Telephone number (home)	
Telephone number (day)	
Telephone number (mobile)	
Name of child	
Date of birth of child	
What is your complaint about, and what would you like the Headteacher to do?	
When did you discuss your concern or complaint with the appropriate member of staff?	
What was the result of that discussion?	
Signed	

Date