Complaints Policy

1. Stages of the Procedure

It is in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. The experience of the first contact between the complainant and the school can be crucial in determining whether the complaint will escalate. To that end, staff should know the Complaints Procedure so they know what to do should they receive a complaint. At Leominster Primary School one of the Head teachers are to assist with hearing complaints at the first stage.

A complaint may be made in person, by telephone, by e-mail or in writing. A standard form is attached at Appendix 1. Complaints should be made within 6 weeks of any alleged occurrence after which time a reliable investigation could not be undertaken. Time also needs to be allowed for the Head Teacher to implement any changes following a complaint being upheld.

1.1 Stage One: Complaint Heard by Staff Member

The Head Teachers should receive complaints in the first instance. Normally the parent would be directed to take the complaint to the member of staff involved. The views of a complainant who indicates that he/she would have difficulty discussing a complaint with a particular member of staff should be respected and in these cases, the complainant can be referred to another staff member.

Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels too compromised to deal with a complaint, the complainant may be referred to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the complaint objectively and impartially is crucial. Where the complaint concerns the Head Teacher, the complainant should be advised to write to the Chair of Governors directly.

Where the first approach is made to a Governor, he or she should refer the complainant to the Head Teacher and advise the parent about the school's procedure.

Individual Governors should not act unilaterally on an individual complaint outside the formal procedure or be involved at the early stages, in case they are needed to sit on a Panel at a later stage of the procedure. Most complaints will be resolved at this informal stage.

1.2 Stage Two: Complaint Heard by Head Teacher

The Head Teacher's influence will already have shaped the way complaints are handled in the school. At this point, however, as well as pursuing their initial complaint, the complainant may be dissatisfied with the way the complaint was handled at Stage 1. The Head may delegate the task of collating the information to another staff member, but not the decision on the action to be taken.

The Head will investigate the complaint, review all the information and discuss the findings, together with any recommendations or apology, with the complainant. Reconciliation should be achieved at this stage.

If the complaint relates to the alleged conduct or capability of a member of staff, which could result in disciplinary action, the complaints process will be replaced by appropriate line management and disciplinary procedures.

As almost all complaints concern the day to day management of the school, few matters should need to go further.

1.3 Stage Three: Complaint Heard by Governing Body's Complaints Appeal Panel
If the complainant remains dissatisfied, he/she should write to the Chair of Governors giving details of the complaint. The Chair may be able to diffuse the situation at this point, by speaking with or writing to the complainant and reassuring him or her that the school has taken the complaint seriously.
In the event of the complainant not being satisfied, the Chair, or a nominated Governor, will convene a Governing Body (GB) Complaints Appeal Panel. The Panel can be drawn from the nominated members and may consist of three or five Governors.
If the Chair has heard the complaint informally as described above, the Chair will not participate in the Panel Hearing. The Panel may choose its own chair.
Individual complaints should never be heard by the whole GB at any stage, as this could compromise the impartiality of any panel set up for a disciplinary hearing against a member of staff following a serious complaint.
The Governors. appeal hearing is the last school-based stage of the complaints process, and is not convened merely to rubber stamp previous decisions. The procedure adopted by the Panel for hearing appeals would be part of the school's complaints procedure and is set out at Appendix 3.

2. The Remit of the Complaints Appeal Panel
The Panel can:
a. dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;

b. uphold the complaint in whole or in part;

c. decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;

d. recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

There are several points which any Governor sitting on a Complaints Appeal Panel needs to remember:
(a) It is important that the appeal hearing is independent and impartial and that it is seen to be so. No governor may sit on the Panel if he or she has had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it. In deciding the make-up of the Panel, Governors need to try and ensure that it comprises a cross-section of the categories of Governor and is sensitive to issues of race, gender and religious affiliation.
(b) The aim of the hearing, which should be held in private, will always be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. However, it has to be recognised that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome, if the hearing does not find in his/her favour. It may, however, be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations, which will satisfy the complainant that his or her complaint has been taken seriously.
(c) An effective Panel will acknowledge that many complainants feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting. Parents often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child. The Panel Chair will ensure that the proceedings are as welcoming as possible. The layout of the room will set the tone and care is needed to ensure the setting appears appropriate and not adversarial.

(d) The Governors sitting on the Panel need to be aware of the entire complaints procedure. A checklist for a Panel Hearing is attached at Appendix 2.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 The Role of the Clerk
The Complaints Appeal Panel should have an independent clerk. The clerk would be the contact point for the complainant at the third stage and be required to:
a) set the date, time and venue of the hearing, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible;

b) collate any written material and send it to all of the parties in advance of the hearing;
c) meet and welcome the parties as they arrive at the hearing;
d) record the proceedings;
e) notify all parties of the Panel's decision.

3.2 The Role of the Chair of the Governing Body or the Nominated Governor
a) check that the complaints procedure has been correctly followed to this point;
b) if a hearing is appropriate, notify the clerk to arrange the Panel.

3.3 The Role of the Chair of the Panel
Ensure that:
a) no Member of the Panel has a vested interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure;
b) the remit of the Panel is explained to the parties and each party has the opportunity of putting their case without undue interruption;
c) parents and others who may not be used to speaking at such a hearing are put at ease;
d) the issues are addressed;
e) key findings of fact are made;
f) the hearing is conducted in an informal, although structured, manner, with each party treating the other with respect and courtesy;
g) each side is given the opportunity to state their case and ask questions;
h) written material is seen by all parties. If a new issue arises all parties should be given the opportunity to consider and comment on it;
i) the Panel is seen to be open minded and acting independently.

4. Notification of the Panel's Decision
The Chair of the Panel will ensure that the complainant and the Head Teacher are notified of the Panel's decision, in writing. The letter needs to explain that any further appeal should be addressed to the Secretary of State for Education.

Date Reviewed	October 2025
Next review due	October 2027

Appendix 1

Please complete and return to The Head teacher who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:

Pupil's name:

Your relationship to the pupil:

Address:

Post Code:

Day time telephone number:

Evening telephone number:

E.mail address

Please give details of your complaint:

What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint.
(Who did you speak 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

Official use:
Date of acknowledgement:

By Who:

Complaint referred to:
Date:

School Actions with dates:

Final Outcomes:

Date