UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Complaints Policy

Approved by

Education Committee

Last reviewed on

December 2025

Next review due

December 2026

RELEASING THE IMAGINATION: CELEBRATING THE ART OF THE POSSIBLE

1. AIMS

The University of Cambridge Primary School aims to meet its statutory obligations when responding to complaints from parents and carers of children at the school, and others.

When responding to complaints, we aim to:

- Be impartial and non-adversarial
- Facilitate a full and fair investigation by an independent person or panel, where necessary
- Address all the points at issue and provide an effective and prompt response
- Respect complainants' desire for confidentiality
- Treat complainants with respect and courtesy
- Make sure that any decisions we make are lawful, rational, reasonable, fair and proportionate
- Keep complainants informed of the progress of the complaints process
- Consider how the complaint can feed into school improvement

We try to resolve complaints by informal means wherever possible. Where this is not possible, formal procedures will be followed. The school will aim to give the complainant the opportunity to complete the complaints procedure in full.

Throughout the process, we will be sensitive to the needs of all parties involved and make any reasonable adjustments needed to accommodate individuals.

2. LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

This document meets the requirements set out in part 7 of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, which states that we must have and make available a written procedure to deal with complaints from parents and carers of children at the school.

It is also based on best practice guidance for academies complaints procedures published by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

In addition, it addresses duties set out in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework with regards to dealing with complaints about the school's fulfilment of EYFS requirements.

3. 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 complaints procedure. The school takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of the team, we will respect your views. In these cases, the Director of Business will refer you to another team member. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important than seniority.

4. HOW TO RAISE A CONCERN OR MAKE A COMPLAINT

4.1 Who can make a complaint?

This complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children registered at the school. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint about any provision of facilities or services that we provide. Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as appeals relating to exclusions or admissions), we will use this complaints procedure.

4.2 How to raise a concern or 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.

- Concerns should be raised with either the class teacher or a senior leader
- Complaints against team members (except the Executive Headteacher) should be made to the Associate Headteacher via the school office, marked Private and Confidential
- Complaints involving or about the Executive Headteacher should be addressed to the Chair of Governors via the school office, marked Private and Confidential
- Complainants should not approach individual governors to raise concerns or complaints, as they have no power to act individually and it may prevent them from considering complaints at a later stage

5. SCOPE

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by our school, other than complaints dealt with under other statutory procedures.

This policy does not cover:

Exception	Who to contact
Admissions	Cambridgeshire County Council Admissions Team
Statutory assessments of SEN	Cambridgeshire County Council
Safeguarding matters	Refer to our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy; contact LADO or MASH if serious concerns
Suspension and permanent exclusion	See our Suspension and Permanent Exclusion Policy
Whistleblowing	See our Whistleblowing Policy; Secretary of State is prescribed person for education matters
Team grievances	Internal grievance procedures
Team conduct	Internal disciplinary procedures
National Curriculum content	Department for Education

Services by other providers on school premises	Contact the provider directly

Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a team member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.

6. ANONYMOUS COMPLAINTS

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Executive Headteacher or Chair of Governors will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

7. TIMESCALES

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 made outside of term time will be considered to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

If at any point we cannot meet the timescales set out in this policy, we will set new time limits with the complainant and explain the delay.

Informal Stage	Stage 1 (Formal)	Stage 2 (Panel)
Contacted within 3 school days Aim to resolve within 5 school days	Acknowledgment within 3 school days Outcome within 28 school days	Acknowledgment within 3 school days Clerk writes within 10 school days to arrange meeting Documents circulated 5 school days before meeting Written conclusion within 14 school days of meeting

7.1 Complaints about EYFS requirements

We will investigate all written complaints relating to the school's fulfilment of the Early Years Foundation Stage requirements and notify the complainant of the outcome within 28 days of receiving the complaint. The school will keep a record of the complaint and make this available to Ofsted on request.

Parents and carers can notify Ofsted if they believe the school is not meeting EYFS requirements by calling 0300 123 4666, emailing enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk, or using the online contact form.

8. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

8.1 The Complainant

The complainant will get a more effective and timely response if they:

- Follow these procedures and co-operate with the school throughout the process
- Respond promptly to requests for information or meetings
- Ask for assistance as needed
- Treat all those involved with respect
- Do not approach individual governors about the complaint
- Do not publish details about the complaint on social media

8.2 The Investigator

An individual will be appointed to look into the complaint and establish the facts. They will:

- Interview all relevant parties, keeping notes
- Consider records and any written evidence and keep these securely
- Prepare a comprehensive report which includes the facts and potential solutions

8.3 The Complaints Co-ordinator (Director of Business)

The complaints co-ordinator will:

- Keep the complainant up to date at each stage in the procedure
- Make sure the process runs smoothly by liaising with team members, the Executive Headteacher, Chair of Governors, and Clerk
- Be aware of issues relating to sharing third-party information and additional support needed by complainants
- Keep records

8.4 Clerk to the Governing Body

The Clerk will:

- Be the contact point for the complainant and the complaints committee
- Circulate relevant papers and evidence before complaints committee meetings
- Arrange the complaints hearing
- Record and circulate the minutes and outcome of the hearing

8.5 Committee Chair

The Committee Chair will:

- Chair the meeting, ensuring everyone is treated with respect throughout
- Make sure all parties see the relevant information, understand the purpose of the committee, and are allowed to present their case

9. STAGES OF COMPLAINT

We have adopted a 3-stage process for dealing with complaints: Informal resolution, Formal investigation, and Review panel.

9.1 Informal Stage

We take informal concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve the matter quickly. Often, the provision or clarification of information will resolve the issue.

The concern should be raised with the class teacher or a senior leader, either in person, by letter, telephone, or email. If you are unclear who to contact, please contact the school office at enquiries@universityprimaryschool.org.uk.

We will acknowledge informal concerns within 3 school days and aim to resolve them within 5 school days. If the concern is not resolved informally, it will be escalated to a formal complaint.

9.2 Stage 1: Formal Investigation

Formal complaints can be raised by letter or email (preferred), over the phone, in person, or through a third party acting on behalf of the complainant.

The complainant should provide details such as relevant dates, times, and the names of witnesses of events, alongside copies of any relevant documents. The complainant should also state what they feel would resolve the complaint.

The Director of Business will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 3 school days.

An investigation will then be conducted. The written conclusion will be sent to the complainant within 28 school days.

How to escalate a complaint

If the complainant wishes to proceed to Stage 2, they should inform the Clerk to the Governing Body in writing within 10 school days. Requests received outside of this timeframe will be considered in exceptional circumstances.

9.3 Stage 2: Review Panel

Complaints will be escalated to the panel hearing stage if the complainant is not satisfied with the response at Stage 1.

The panel will be appointed by, or on behalf of, the proprietor and must consist of at least 3 people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. At least one panel member must be independent of the management and running of the school.

The complainant must have reasonable notice of the date of the review panel. The Clerk will aim to find a date within 20 school days of the request. If the complainant rejects three proposed dates without good reason, the Clerk will set a date and the hearing will proceed using written submissions.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 5 school days before the meeting.

At the meeting

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings are not permitted unless required as part of reasonable adjustments. The complainant must be allowed to attend and may be accompanied if they wish.

At the meeting, each party will have the opportunity to give statements and present evidence. Witnesses will be called as appropriate. The panel, complainant and school representative(s) will be given the chance to ask and reply to questions.

The outcome

The committee can uphold or dismiss the complaint, in whole or in part. If the complaint is upheld, the committee will:

- Decide the appropriate action to resolve the complaint
- Where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future

The Chair of the Committee will provide the complainant and school with a full explanation of their decision and the reasons for it, in writing, within 14 school days. The letter will include details of how to contact the Department for Education if the complainant is dissatisfied with the handling of their complaint.

10. COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE EXECUTIVE HEADTEACHER OR GOVERNORS

Complaints against the Executive Headteacher or any individual governor should be directed to the Clerk of the Governing Body in the first instance.

Complaints that involve or are about the Executive Headteacher should be addressed to the Chair of Governors via the school office, marked as Private and Confidential. Complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor, or the whole governing body should be addressed to the Clerk to the Governing Board via the school office, marked as Private and Confidential.

If the complaint is jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair, the entire governing body, or the majority of the governing body, Stage 2 will be heard by a committee of independent governors.

11. RESOLVING COMPLAINTS

At each stage in the procedure, we want 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 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

12. REFERRING COMPLAINTS AFTER THE SCHOOL'S PROCEDURE

If the complainant believes the school did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or acted unlawfully or unreasonably, they can contact the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) after completing Stage 2.

The ESFA will check whether the complaint has been dealt with properly by the school. The ESFA will not overturn a school's decision about a complaint but will intervene if the school has breached its funding agreement, failed to act in line with its duties under education law, or acted unreasonably when exercising its functions.

For more information or to refer a complaint, see: www.gov.uk/complain-about-school

13. UNREASONABLE AND PERSISTENT COMPLAINTS

13.1 Unreasonable complaints

A complaint may be deemed unreasonable if the complainant:

- Refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds, or the outcomes sought, despite offers of assistance
- Refuses to co-operate with the complaints process
- Refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure
- Insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways that are incompatible with this procedure
- Makes excessive demands on school time through frequent, lengthy and complicated contact
- 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 communication with the school while the complaint is being progressed. Repeated correspondence may delay the outcome.

If behaviour continues to be unreasonable, the Executive Headteacher or Chair of Governors may write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and remind them to act in accordance with this policy. We may give the complainant a single point of contact, limit contact to a fixed number per term, or ask them to engage a third party to act on their behalf.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police. This may include barring an individual from school premises.

13.2 Serial and persistent complaints

We may stop responding when:

- We have taken every reasonable step to address the complainant's concerns
- The complainant has been given a clear statement of our position and their options
- The complainant contacts the school repeatedly, making substantially the same points each time

Where we decide to stop responding, we will inform the individual and explain that we will consider any new complaints they make provided the concerns raised are materially different.

13.3 Duplicate complaints

If we receive a duplicate complaint on the same subject from a partner, family member or other individual, we will assess whether there are new aspects to consider. If there are no new aspects, we will tell the new complainant that we have already investigated and direct them to the ESFA if dissatisfied with our original handling.

13.4 Complaint campaigns

Where we receive a large volume of complaints about the same topic, especially from complainants unconnected with the school, we may respond by publishing a single response on the school website or sending a template response. If complainants are not satisfied, the normal procedures will apply.

14. Record Keeping and Confidentiality

The school will record the progress of all complaints, including information about actions taken at all stages, the stage at which the complaint was resolved, and the final outcome. Records will also include copies of letters, emails, and notes relating to meetings and phone calls.

This material will be treated as confidential and stored securely, and will be viewed only by those involved in investigating the complaint or on the review panel.

Records of complaints will be kept securely, only for as long as necessary and in line with data protection law, our privacy notices and records retention schedule.

The details of the complaint, including the names of individuals involved, will not be shared with the whole governing body in case a review panel needs to be organised at a later point.

Complainants have the right to request an independent panel if they believe there is likely to be bias in the proceedings. The decision to approve this request is made by the governing board, who will not unreasonably withhold consent.

15. LEARNING LESSONS

The Education Committee will review any underlying issues raised by complaints with the Executive Headteacher, where appropriate and respecting confidentiality, to determine whether there are any improvements that the school can make to its procedures or practice to help prevent similar events in the future.

16. MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS

The Education Committee will monitor the effectiveness of the complaints procedure in making sure that complaints are handled properly. The committee will track the number and nature of complaints and review underlying issues.

The complaints records are logged and managed by the Director of Business.

This policy will be reviewed by the Education Committee at least every two years.

17. LINKS WITH OTHER POLICIES

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Suspension and Permanent Exclusion Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Team Grievance Procedures
- Team Disciplinary Procedures
- SEND Information Report
- Data Protection Policy
- Privacy Notices

Appendix: Complaint Form

Please complete and return to the Director of Business who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Email: enquiries@universityprimaryschool.org.uk (mark as Private and Confidential in the subject line)

Your name:	
Child's name (if relevant):	
Your relationship to the child:	
Address:	
Postcode:	
Daytime telephone:	
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: _____

For official use only

Date acknowledgement sent:	
By whom:	
Complaint referred to:	
Date:	