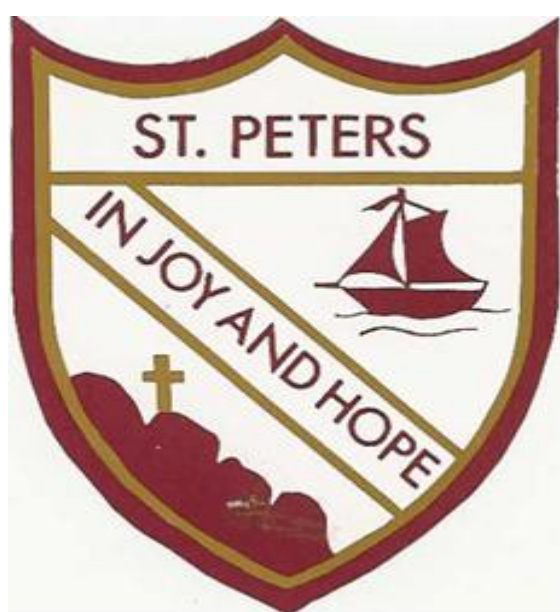


St Peter's Catholic **Primary School**



School Complaints **Procedure**

Approved by Governors _____

Chair of Governors _____

SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION AND AIMS		PAGE 3
1.1	SCHOOL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES AND LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES	PAGE 3
1.2	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR MANAGING COMPLAINTS?	PAGE 3
1.3	THE RANGE OF COMPLAINTS	PAGE 4
1.4	COMPLAINTS NOT COVERED BY THE PROCEDURE	PAGE 4
SECTION TWO: ELEMENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL COMPLAINTS POLICY		PAGE 5
2.1	BEING A LISTENING SCHOOL	PAGE 5
2.1	MAKING SURE THAT THE INFORMATION IS EASILY ACCESSIBLE	PAGE 6
2.3	SIGNPOSTING COMPLAINANTS	PAGE 6
2.3.1	WHERE SHOULD COMPLAINTS BE DIRECTED?	PAGE 7
2.4	PROMOTING RESOLUTION AND EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION	PAGE 8
2.4.1	SUPPORT FOR THE COMPLAINANT	PAGE 8
2.4.2	REDRESS AND RECONCILIATION	PAGE 8
2.4.3	STAFF AWARENESS AND TRAINING	PAGE 8
2.5	MANAGEMENT OF COMPLAINTS	PAGE 9
2.5.1	COMPLAINTS SHOULD BE RESOLVED WITHIN A REASONABLE TIMESCALE	PAGE 9
2.5.2	SUBMISSION OF COMPLAINTS	PAGE 9
2.5.3	COMPLAINTS CONCERNING THE HEAD TEACHER, A GOVERNOR OR THE GOVERNING BODY	PAGE 9
2.5.4	COMPLAINTS CONCERNING THE CHAIR OF GOVERNORS	PAGE 9
2.5.5	COMPLAINTS BY PUPILS	PAGE 10
2.5.6	WITHDRAWAL OF COMPLAINTS	PAGE 10
2.6	ENSURING CONFIDENTIALITY	PAGE 10
2.6.1	MANAGING ANONYMOUS COMPLAINTS	PAGE 10
2.6.2	SUPPORT FOR A PERSON COMPLAINED AGAINST	PAGE 10
2.7	REPORTING OUTCOMES OF A COMPLAINT	PAGE 11
2.8	APPEALS REGARDING THE COMPLAINTS PROCESS	PAGE 11
SECTION THREE – MANAGING VEXATIOUS COMPLAINTS		PAGE 12
SECTION FOUR – FOUR STAGES OF OUR COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE		PAGE 14
4.1	STAGE 1 – MANAGING INFORMAL COMPLAINTS	PAGE 15
4.2	STAGE 2 - GUIDELINES FOR DEALING WITH FORMAL COMPLAINTS	PAGE 16
4.3	STAGE 3 - RECONCILIATION STAGE FOR FORMAL COMPLAINTS	PAGE 17
4.4	STAGE 4 - APPEALS REGARDING THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES	PAGE 18
SECTION 5: GUIDANCE FOR THE GOVERNING BODY'S COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE		PAGE 19
5.1	ROLE OF THE COMPLAINTS COMMITTEE	PAGE 20
5.2	MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMPLAINTS COMMITTEE	PAGE 21
5.3	CHAIR OF THE COMPLAINTS COMMITTEE	PAGE 21
5.4	MANAGEMENT OF A COMPLAINTS COMMITTEE MEETING	PAGE 22
5.4.1	CHAIRING THE GOVERNING BODY'S COMPLAINTS COMMITTEE	PAGE 24
5.4.2	MODEL AGENDA FOR A COMPLAINTS COMMITTEE	PAGE 25
Appendix One: Complaints Policy leaflet for parents		PAGE 26
Appendix Two; Summary flowchart of complaints process		PAGE 28
Appendix Three: recording of official complaints form (Used at stage two and three if a formal letter has already not been received)		PAGE 29
Appendix Four: Model Letters for responding to the complaints		PAGE 30

SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION AND AIMS

This policy was written with reference to Wirral Complaints Policy Procedure (last revised 2004), guidance published by the NAHT and guidance given to Governors through the National Governors Association.

The policy is designed to ensure that;

- All complaints are managed correctly and in accordance with all statutory guidance.
- All complaint procedures are transparent. These should be available to all children, parents/guardians, school governors, staff and other stakeholders in the school. The rights of all parties should be made clear and reinforced through this policy.
- That the rights of all parties involved in complaints are managed in a framework of professional respect.
- That the school's Vision, Values and Mission Statement are upheld by an effective complaints procedure.

1.1: SCHOOL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES AND LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES

The School Standards and Framework Act 1998 requires schools to establish a formal complaints procedure. The procedure must make provision for complaints from different categories of person i.e. governors, parents, guardians, pupils and the general public.

The complaints procedure is intended to be extended to those persons who may have a legitimate complaint relating to the school and where any complaint may not be pursued through another statutory procedure. (It is anticipated that, primarily, these persons will be parents, as defined by Section 576 of the Education Act 1996, and those with parental responsibility, as defined in the Children Act 1989.)

Section 29 of the Education Act 2002 requires governing bodies of all maintained schools and nursery schools in England to have in place by 1 September 2003 a procedure to deal with complaints.

Any procedure should include provision that "An anonymous complaint will not be investigated under this procedure unless there are exceptional circumstances." These would include serious concerns such as Child Protection issues or bullying allegations, where the school would either involve appropriate external agencies or else conduct its own internal review to test whether there is any corroborative evidence which might trigger a formal investigation.

1.2 WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR MANAGING COMPLAINTS?

The responsibility for dealing with general complaints lies solely with the school. Some complaints are dealt with under other statutory provisions (see next page). The procedures of the Local Authority and other agencies are expected to reflect existing legislation and ensure that any complaint received by them, which does not fall to them by statute to resolve, will be redirected to the school immediately and that the complainant be informed accordingly.

Section 496 of the 1996 Act allows a person to complain to the Secretary of State that a Governing Body (or LA) has acted, or is proposing to act, unreasonably with respect to any power conferred or

duty imposed by that Act. Such a complaint is unlikely to be successful where a school can show that it has acted reasonably in seeking to resolve a complaint and has used a "fair" procedure.

In formalising their complaints procedure governing bodies need to be aware that they may need to have a response mechanism to urgent or serious complaints about the head teacher or a senior staff member, a member or the Chair of the governing body and have appropriate provision in place. The processes for this are outlined in section two of this complaints policy. The responsibilities of the Governing Body's complaints procedure are also outlined in section 5 of this policy.

1.3 THE RANGE OF COMPLAINTS

Concerns raised are likely to be wide ranging and varied and could include complaints concerning:

- child's rate of progress at school
- concerns regarding the delivery of a school policy e.g. homework
- health and safety concerns,
- behaviour management procedures
- individual teacher's actions or attitudes toward a parent or pupil
- lack of effective action e.g. over bullying
- quality of playground supervision
- racist behaviour
- sexual harassment
- treatment of child

Governing Body at St Peter's Catholic Primary School accepts Wirral Local Authority's working definition of a complaint. This is;

"A clear statement of dissatisfaction of a service provided or requested".

A formal complaint would arise if a concern was not dealt with to the satisfaction of the complainant at stage one of this policy (see section 5 for further information on the stages of the school's complaint's policy).

It is vital that parents are aware of the procedure for raising concerns and all staff are directed and supported to respond appropriately.

1.4 COMPLAINTS NOT COVERED BY THE PROCEDURE

The procedure does not apply to complaints which fall to be dealt with under other statutory provisions. These will be dealt with by the Governing Body or the Local Authority;

- Appropriate provision of the National Curriculum,
- Provision of Sex Education,
- Pupil Admissions,
- Exclusions
- SEN
- Staff grievance and capability proceedings
- Complaints about child protection investigations
- Complaints about the Governing Body

If these procedures are required the school must signpost complaints to the appropriate body.

SECTION TWO: ELEMENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL COMPLAINTS POLICY

The following statements summarise the practice and principles that the staff and Governing Body at St Peter's uphold in this complaints policy. They are designed to promote high quality communication, management and resolution. They provide a quality assurance framework for the management of complaints in school.

2.1 BEING A LISTENING SCHOOL:

At St Peter's Catholic Primary School we encourage feedback from children, parents, carers and staff on a regular basis. Whilst, we want to hear the positive feedback, we are also keen to know how we can improve. This policy is an extension of that commitment.

Examples of how we structure feedback:

Children	Parents/Carers	Staff	Other Partners
Regular Pupil Interviews	Drop In Sessions by the head teacher and other members of staff	Professional Interviews/Enquiries	Professional Meetings
Anonymous Student Surveys	Anonymous and named parent surveys	Parent , staff surveys	Access to direct e-mail correspondence with the head teacher/chair of governors.
Ambassadors , Mini Vinnies	E-mail contact with the school.	Effective team meetings	
Worry Boxes	Parent Governors	Direct access to head teacher/other senior members of staff.	
	Parent workshops with evaluations	Staff Governors	
	Parent consultation exercises	Staff consultation exercises	

2.2 MAKING SURE THAT THE INFORMATION IS EASILY ACCESSIBLE.

Child, parents, staff and other stake holders need to know how they can raise a concern or lodge a complaint. Making a complaint cannot often cause anxiety. We accept that it is our responsibility to ensure that the complaints process is straight forward, easy to understand and accessible for all groups involved.

A summary of how we manage complaints will be available on the school website, in the prospectus and in the school foyer. **This is in appendix one.**

Note : At present the school has not translated this into other languages because there is no requirement for this in our school population. However, if the need arises in the future, the head teacher and Governing Body will arrange for this to be done. Equally, if required copies would be made available in audio or Braille form.

2.4 SIGNPOSTING COMPLAINANTS

It is important that any potential complainant is aware of the correct channel through which to pursue their complaint. This will reduce the likelihood of letters of complaint being directed, say, to the LA, Secretary of State, Councillors, MP, local paper, individual Governors. Reference to the complaints procedure will be made through the website and the school prospectus (see appendix one). Leaflets on the school's complaints procedure will also be displayed in the office foyer. Where appropriate the school will also signpost complainants for additional support, through established channels such as Parent Partnership (see section 2.4.1)

The list on the next page should be used to signpost complainants.

2.3.1 WHERE SHOULD COMPLAINTS BE DIRECTED?

Contact/Complaints Triage Table

Nature of Contact	Appropriate person	Relevant Policy/Procedure
Complaint about the conduct of the head teacher (related to any of the policies/issues below)	Chair of Governors	School Staff Discipline Procedure (Confidential to School and Employees)
Complaint about school policy (content or application of)	Head Teacher (copied to the chair of Governors)	General Complaints Procedure
Concern about provision of facilities or services by the school	Head Teacher	General Complaints Procedure Specific policy
Allegation about conduct of a member of staff	Head Teacher	School Staff Discipline Procedure
Allegation of verbal or physical assault by employee on pupil	Head Teacher	Local Child Protection Procedures
Allegation about capability of a member of staff	Head Teacher	School Staff Competence Procedure (Confidential to School and Employee)
Conduct of another pupil (e.g. bullying)	Head Teacher	School behaviour and discipline procedures. School Anti Bullying procedures
Discipline of a pupil	Head Teacher/Deputy head teacher Senior member of staff	School behaviour and discipline procedures
Content of /Failure to maintain a statement of SEN	Head Teacher /SENCO (copied to the LA if unresolved) also seek support from Parent Partnership	SEN Policy LA procedures
Admissions	Local Authority	Admissions Procedure Admissions Appeal Procedure
Exclusion	Chair of Governors LA (in the case of a permanent exclusion or appeal against a decision by the Governing Body)	Exclusion Appeal Procedure
Failure to provide NC Entitlement or Inappropriate Curriculum	Head Teacher (copied to the Chair of Governors) LA (if not satisfied with the response of the head teacher)	LA Procedure
Decision to remove licence for a person to enter school premises (banning)	Clerk to GB/Chair	GB Appeal Committee

2.4 PROMOTING RESOLUTION AND EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

The procedure is designed to ensure that, wherever possible (and appropriate), an informal resolution is attempted. In most cases we recognise that effective communication and understanding resolves the majority of issues. All stages of the complaints procedure should be investigatory rather than adversarial. Complaints must be treated as a professional procedure.

Some other existing complaint procedures include a "hearing" stage, where the subject of the complaint is questioned in the presence of the parent or by the parent. The absence of such a stage in this procedure is deliberate as its inclusion creates an opportunity for confrontation, which runs counter to the resolution of any complaint.

2.4.1 SUPPORT FOR THE COMPLAINANT

We acknowledge that making complaints causes difficulties for the complainant. As part of our commitment to being a listening school, we want them to be able to access information, advice and advocacy. Therefore we offer support, if required, through referrals to;

- WIRED Parent and Child Advocacy service
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Alison Grimshaw; Local Authority Behaviour Management Support Officer
- Education Social Welfare Officer
- School's Family Support Worker
- Parent Governors (if desired)

Parents, children or other stake-holders making complaints will be made aware that if they consider it appropriate, they are welcome to be accompanied by a friend, a relative or a representative at any stage of the procedure.

2.4.2 REDRESS AND RECONCILIATION

The outcome of a complaint investigation may show that the school has made mistakes. This policy is designed to ensure that the rights of the complainant are respected, whilst seeking to promote reconciliation so that trust and appositive working relationship are restored.

The outcome of a valid complaint should result in acknowledgement followed by one or more of the following;

- An explanation,
- An apology,
- An undertaking to review school policies or practices in the light of the complain
- If required redress for any claims to the school's indemnity insurers.

2.4.3 STAFF AWARENESS AND TRAINING

School staff, including non-teaching staff, are familiar with the school's procedures on complaints. This will help to ensure that communication about complaints is effective. Office staff, teaching staff and teaching assistants can all advise complainants about the process. Their default position should be to refer any complaints to a senior member of staff.

Staff will also have access to clear information leaflets about our school's complaints procedure. These will be available in the office foyer or on the school website.

Senior staff are committed to these procedures and have received training to ensure that complaints are dealt with professionally and respectfully.

2.5 MANAGEMENT OF COMPLAINTS

Our complaints policy should be managed professionally with clarity of expectations and procedures for all parties involved.

2.5.1 COMPLAINTS SHOULD BE RESOLVED WITHIN A REASONABLE TIMESCALE

Our complaints procedures should address the complaints as speedily as possible and be consistent with fairness to all concerned. Experience will probably demonstrate that at **stage one** of the complaints procedure (see section four) many concerns can be dealt with and resolved immediately. We expect that all informal complaints should be resolved at the point of contact or as soon as possible. Where a concern cannot be dealt with immediately, the employee dealing with the issue should arrange a meeting as soon as possible.

At a minimum we are committed to the following;

- The informal stage of a complaint will be administered within 5 working days.
- Any formal investigation of any complaint or review request shall begin within 5 school days of receipt of the complaint, save in exceptional circumstances (this will normally be when legal advice is required or staff are on absent from school).
- The investigation shall be completed as soon as reasonably practicable. We aim to ensure that all complaints are resolved within 10 school days, save in exceptional circumstances (this will normally be when legal advice is required or staff are on absent from school).

If complaints progress to **stage two** (see section four) and require a meeting with the head teacher or another senior member of staff, these meeting should take place as soon as possible and within a maximum timescale of 5 days.

2.5.2 SUBMISSION OF COMPLAINTS

Complaints will **normally** not be considered unless they are raised within a three month time scale. There are exceptional circumstances where this will not apply. These are;

1. When the complaint relates to statutory issues or has any legal implications.
2. The complaint has arisen because of information that has only recently been discovered/disclosed.

2.5.3 COMPLAINTS CONCERNING THE HEAD TEACHER, A GOVERNOR OR THE GOVERNING BODY

In these cases the Chair of the Governing Body must investigate the complaint. The complainant can appeal against the decision of the Chair within a maximum of 15 school days of receipt of the decision letter (The appeal can only relate to the process followed by the Chair of Governors, not the outcome of that complaint).

The Governing Body can either delegate the appeal to the complaints committee, or may, where they think it appropriate, appoint 3 other governors to form a complaints panel to investigate and make a recommendation by majority decision to the Governing Body.

2.5.4 COMPLAINTS CONCERNING THE CHAIR OF GOVERNORS

A senior member of staff or Head teacher, upon receiving a formal complaint against the Chair, must notify the clerk, who must then table the complaint at an extraordinary meeting of the

Governing Body. This complaint will then be discussed by the Governing Body. The Chair must withdraw from any discussion. The Governing Body may either decide to refer the matter to the Local Authority, or must refer the complaint to the Complaints Committee of the governing body.

2.5.5 COMPLAINTS BY PUPILS

These are taken very seriously and the school ensures that in all issues, complaints are investigated and that parents are informed for advocacy.

2.5.6 WITHDRAWAL OF COMPLAINTS

Formal complaints may be withdrawn at any stage by notice in writing.

2.6 ENSURING CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality is crucial to the integrity of a complaints policy. Therefore we will make it clear to any person who raises a concern that the school will treat the matter with a high degree of confidentiality and asks the complainant to do likewise. This is more likely to meet with a favourable response if the complainant is convinced that the school is taking their concern seriously and is actively seeking to resolve the matter.

It is very important to treat conversations and correspondence with discretion. It is vitally important that complainants feel confident that their complaint will not penalise their child. However, from the outset all parties to a complaint will need to be aware that some information may have to be shared with others involved in the operation of the complaints procedure. The head teacher and members of the senior management team may feel it appropriate to be accompanied by another member of staff when dealing with some complaints. Complainants should be aware that a written record will be maintained of all meetings as part of the procedure, if a complaint progresses beyond the informal stage into stage two of the complaints procedure (see section 4 for further details)

Equally a complainant may also seek somebody to support them when they submit a complaint (see section 2.4.1 for further information).

2.6.1. MANAGING ANONYMOUS COMPLAINTS

A school will seek to maintain as much confidentiality as possible for complainants. However, they cannot encourage anonymous complaints. Anonymous complaints can result in injustice and harassment of staff and cause unnecessary stress and anxiety. The school will usually follow official guidance to disregard anonymous complaints unless somebody is prepared to substantiate them.

However, the danger in this is that it may result in a serious allegation being overlooked. If an anonymous complaint relates to safeguarding or any other criminal allegations then the head teacher will make preliminary investigations and decide on a course of action with other senior members of staff and the Chair of Governors. This will be recorded on the complaint and kept on record. If the complaint is about the head teacher, then this process will be managed by the Chair and Vice of Chair of Governors.

The school has other policies to support whistle blowing procedures with staff.

2.6.2 SUPPORT FOR A PERSON COMPLAINED AGAINST

Staff who may be questioned as part of a complaints procedure investigation must feel they are being treated in a fair way and that they too will have an opportunity to put their case. They should be told about the procedure and be kept informed of progress. There is a crucial balance to be

maintained between supporting the individual so that his/her rights and reputation are protected, and investigating a complaint thoroughly and impartially. Professional confidentiality will be respected at all times.

The complaints procedure is distinct from formal disciplinary proceedings for staff and this needs to be made clear to all concerned. There may be occasions where a complaint launches a disciplinary procedure which puts the complaints procedure on hold. If so, the complainant should be informed of this and any non-disciplinary aspects of the complaint should be dealt with by the usual complaints procedures; the complainant should be “up-dated” on likely further delays to a response. It may be clear after the disciplinary procedures have been completed that particular responses to the complainant are required.

Processes for supporting a complainant are outlined in section 2.4.1

2.7 REPORTING OUTCOMES OF A COMPLAINT

The member of staff managing the complaint at an informal stage will report back to the complainant verbally or through brief correspondence.

All formal complaints (from stage two onwards) and any written replies will be recorded. They will be securely stored in the head teacher’s office. If there are complaints about the head teacher, the Chair of Governors will ensure that formal records are kept of this and inform the head teacher about these. Complaints will be monitored by the Chair of Governors on behalf of the Governing Body.

In advising complainants of the outcome of their complaint it is important to be most circumspect in the details provided. To do otherwise may prejudice the ability of any employee complained about to continue in post. The release of certain information might be an obstacle to the fair application of disciplinary/capability procedures or otherwise contravene the employee’s employment or data protection rights

2.8 APPEALS REGARDING THE COMPLAINTS PROCESS.

In the event that a complainant believes that the appropriate procedures have not been followed, by the person dealing with their complaint, the complainant may request that the governing body reviews the process that has been followed in order to verify whether the procedure has been adhered to. Any review request that is based solely on dissatisfaction with the outcome, rather than any identified failure to deal with a complaint according to procedure, will not be accepted.

If the complaint is about the conduct of a senior member of staff investigating the complaint, it will be dealt with by the head teacher. If the complaint is about the conduct of the head teacher investigating the complaint, it will be dealt with by the Chair of Governors or delegated to other members of the Governing Body.

Any governors involved in the process will receive prior training for their role. The Chair of the Governing Body will co-ordinate this training annually with the head teacher.

Guidance for the Governing Body’s Complaints procedure is included in section 5

SECTION THREE: PREVENTING VEXATIOUS COMPLAINTS

This complaints procedure is designed to facilitate resolution of concerns with the minimum of conflict. It explicitly aims to promote transparency, professionalism and resolution. Therefore, it is important that the procedure adopted carries the confidence of all interested parties so that its use secures “closure”.

The head teacher and governing body are fully committed to the improvement of our school. We welcome feedback from parents/carers and will always try to resolve any concerns as quickly as possible. There is a clear procedure for parents to use if they wish to make a formal complaint.

Sometimes, however, parents or carers pursuing complaints or other issues treat staff and others in a way that is unacceptable. Whilst we recognise that some complaints may relate to serious and distressing incidents, we will not accept threatening or harassing behaviour towards any members of the school community.

What do we mean by 'an unreasonably persistent complainant'?

An unreasonably persistent complainant may be anyone who engages in unreasonable behaviour when making a complaint. This will include persons who pursue complaints in an unreasonable manner.

Unreasonable behaviour may include:

- actions which are
 - out of proportion to the nature of the complaint, or
 - persistent – even when the complaints procedure has been exhausted, or
 - personally harassing, or
 - unjustifiably repetitious
- an insistence on
 - pursuing unjustified complaints and/or
 - unrealistic outcomes to justified complaints
 - pursuing justifiable complaints in an unreasonable manner (eg using abusive or threatening language; or
 - making complaints in public or via a social networking site such as Facebook; or
 - refusing to attend appointments to discuss the complaint.

What is 'harassment'?

We regard harassment as the unreasonable pursuit of issues or complaints, particularly if the matter appears to be pursued in a way intended to cause personal distress rather than to seek a resolution.

Behaviour may fall within the scope of this policy if:

- it appears to be deliberately targeted at one or more members of school staff or others, without good cause;
- the way in which a complaint or other issues is pursued (as opposed to the complaint itself) causes undue distress to school staff or others;
- it has a significant and disproportionate adverse effect on the school community.

What does the school expect of any person wishing to raise a concern?

The school expects anyone who wishes to raise concerns with the school to:

- treat all members of the school community with courtesy and respect;
- respect the needs of pupils and staff within the school;
- avoid the use of violence, or threats of violence, towards people or property;
- recognise the time constraints under which members of staff in schools work and allow the school a reasonable time to respond to a complaint;
- follow the school's complaints procedure.

Schools' responses to unreasonably persistent complaints or harassment

In cases of unreasonably persistent complaints or harassment, the school may take some or all of the following steps, as appropriate:

- inform the complainant informally that his/her behaviour is now considered by the school to be unreasonable or unacceptable, and request a changed approach;
- require all future meetings with a member of staff to be conducted with a second person present. In the interests of all parties, notes of these meetings may be taken;
- inform the complainant that, except in emergencies, the school will respond only to written communication and that these may be required to be channelled through the Local Authority.

Physical or verbal aggression

The governing body will not tolerate **any** form of physical or verbal aggression against members of the school community. If there is evidence of any such aggression the school may:

- ban the individual from entering the school site, with immediate effect;
- request an Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO);
- prosecute under Anti-Harassment legislation.
- call the police to remove the individual from the premises, under powers provided by the Education Act 1996.

Legitimate new complaints will always be considered, even if the person making them is (or has been) subject to the Unreasonably Persistent Complaints/ Harassment Policy. The school nevertheless reserves the right not to respond to communications from individuals subject to the policy.

SECTION FOUR : ST PETER'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY 4 STEP APPROACH TO COMPLAINTS

This guidance document suggests a four-stage complaints procedure to manage complaints from **parents, guardians and members of the general public** starting with an informal stage for concerns and ending with an appeal to the governing body.

The **first stage** deals with concerns which have the potential to be managed by the majority of the staff during the course of their duties. These are classified as **informal complaints**. These are quickly resolved and not recorded. These can also be managed by the head teacher or a senior member of staff but are a quick and informal enquiry.

Complaints dealt with at **stage 2** should either be managed by the head teacher or a senior member of staff. These are classified as the first stage of the formal complaints procedure. All parties should be informed if this is a formal complaint and records kept of these. The school encourages all parents to submit these complaints in writing. If they are not, they are offered a brief form, that will be completed by the senior member of staff to record the complaint (see appendix 2). This will also be signed by the complainant.

When a formal complaint arises and is not dealt with to the satisfaction of the complainant, it will first be addressed by the head teacher at **stage 3**, if they have not been involved at stage 2.

Finally complaints will be reviewed by the governing body at **stage 4**. This stage will only be used in two incidents. They are;

1. For the Governing Body's Complaints Committee to review if the correct procedures have been followed by the head teacher. Any review request that is based solely on dissatisfaction with the outcome, rather than any identified failure to deal with a complaint according to procedure, will not be accepted.
2. If the Governing Body's Complaints Committee has to review the actions of the Chair of Governors as part of the complaints process.

There should be a mechanism for terminating spurious complaints and those brought by vexatious complainants. **See appendix 1 of this procedure.**

4.1 STAGE 1 – MANAGING INFORMAL COMPLAINTS

The vast majority of concerns and complaints can be resolved informally. There are many occasions where concerns are resolved straight away through the class teacher or office staff or Head teacher, depending on whom the complainant first approached. These are not recorded.

Complainants must feel able to raise concerns with members of staff without any formality, either in person, by telephone or in writing.

At first it may be unclear whether a complainant is asking a question or expressing an opinion rather than making a complaint. A complainant may want a preliminary discussion about an issue to help decide whether he or she wishes to take the issue further. The school has an obligation to ensure that any serious complaints are managed under stage two of this procedure and appropriately recorded.

A model procedure for schools to use at Stage 1

Complainants may be offered an opportunity to discuss their concern with the appropriate member of staff designated to deal with the situation who will clarify with the complainant the nature of the concern, and reassure them that the school wants to hear about it. The member of staff may be able to explain to the complainant how the situation happened. It can be helpful to identify at this point what sort of outcome the complainant is looking for.

If the member of staff first contacted cannot immediately deal with the matter, s/he should make a clear note of the date, name, contact address or phone number and a brief note on the nature of the complaint and either;

- Arrange a further meeting within 5 working days
- Refer to a senior member of staff to enquire/respond to the complaint. This may include the head teacher.

It is not acceptable to leave an enquiry or issue unresolved at this stage.

If the concern relates to the Head teacher, the complainant should be advised to contact the Chair of the Governing Body, giving them details of how to do so. The Chair of Governors will record this under stage 2 of the complaints procedure.

If the staff member dealing with the concern feels that there needs to be any changes to school policy or formal processes put in place, they should make sure that the complainant is clear what action (if any) or monitoring of the situation has been agreed, putting this in writing only if this seems the best way of making things. **This escalates the complaint to stage 2 of the process.**

Where no satisfactory solution has been found within a maximum of 10 school days, complainants should be asked if they wish their concern to be considered further and referred to the head teacher. If required support strategies for the complainant should be considered (see section 2.6.1)

4.2 STAGE 2_GUIDELINES FOR DEALING WITH FORMAL COMPLAINTS

At stage 2 it has become clear that the concern is a definite complaint. This is now being managed and recorded formally. In some cases the Head teacher or senior member of staff will already have been involved in looking at the matter; in others it is his/her first involvement. In either case, it is helpful for the Head teacher (or the person delegated to investigate) to use guidelines to ensure consistency among cases, and to make sure that nothing happens at this stage which could make it difficult for later stages to proceed smoothly.

As Head teachers have responsibility for the day-to-day management of their schools, they also have responsibility for the implementation of a complaints procedure, including the decisions about their own involvement at various stages. One of the reasons for having various "stages" in a complaints procedure is to reassure complainants that their grievance may be heard by more than one person.

A model procedure for school to use at Stage 2

The Head teacher (or designate) acknowledges the complaint orally or in writing within a maximum of 3 school days of receiving the complaint, confirming the exact nature of the complaint.

The school will then ensure that;

- The formal investigation of any complaint or review request shall begin within 5 school days of receipt of the complaint, save in exceptional circumstances (this will normally be when legal advice is required or staff are on absent from school).
- The investigation shall be completed as soon as reasonably practicable. We aim to ensure that all complaints are resolved within 10 school days, save in exceptional circumstances (this will normally be when legal advice is required or staff are on absent from school).

If necessary, the Head teacher (or designate) provides an opportunity for the complainant to meet him/her to supplement any information provided previously. It should be made clear to the complainant that if s/he wishes, s/he may be accompanied to any meeting by a friend, relative, representative, or advocate who can speak on his or her behalf; and that interpreting facilities are available if needed (see section 2.6.1)

If necessary, the Head teacher (or designate) could interview witnesses and take signed statements from witnesses and those involved. If the complaint concerns a pupil, the pupil identified should be interviewed. The pupil should preferably be interviewed with another member of staff present and in the case of a serious complaint with their parents present.

It is strongly advised that the Head teacher (or designate) should keep a written record of any relevant interviews, telephone conversations, and other documentation. Once all the relevant facts have been established, the Head teacher (or designate) should then produce a written response to the complainant, or may wish to meet the complainant to discuss/resolve the matter directly.

A written response should include a full explanation of the decision and the reasons for it. Where appropriate, this should include what action the school will take to resolve the complaint. Complainant will be advised that if they are unhappy with the way that the complaint has been managed they can ask for their complaint to be referred to the head teacher (if s/he has not been involved already).

If the complaint is about the conduct of a senior member of staff investigating the complaint, it will be dealt with by the head teacher.

If the complaint is about the conduct of the head teacher investigating the complaint, it will be dealt with by the Governing Body.

If a complaint is against the action of a Head teacher, the Chair of the Governing Body should carry out all the Stage 2 procedures.

4.3 STAGE 3 - RECONCILIATION STAGE FOR FORMAL COMPLAINTS

This stage in the procedure can follow Stage 2 where the earlier stage has been investigated by a senior member of staff other than the Head teacher.

If the complainant is not content with the decision reached by the designate in response to their complaint they may then refer the matter to the Head teacher. An agreed period of time for this to take place could be established –within a maximum of 15 school days.

The Head teacher should endeavour to resolve any complaint referred to them at this stage and should seek to arrange a meeting with the complainant as soon as practical. The meeting offers an opportunity to reassess all the issues, discuss any further findings from the Head teachers investigation, clarify the action to be taken by the school and ally the complainants worries in order to seek reconciliation.

In some circumstances it may be appropriate to seek advice from third parties (Local Authority, NAHT etc)

In the event that a complainant believes that the appropriate procedures have not been followed, by the person dealing with their complaint, the complainant may request that the governing body reviews the process that has been followed in order to verify whether the procedure has been adhered to. Any review request that is based solely on dissatisfaction with the outcome, rather than any identified failure to deal with a complaint according to procedure, will not be accepted. **This would then result in the complaint being dealt with at stage 4 of this procedure.**

If the complaint is about the conduct of a senior member of staff investigating the complaint, it will be dealt with by the head teacher.

If the complaint is about the conduct of the head teacher investigating the complaint, it will be dealt with by the Chair of Governors or delegated to members of the Governing Body's Complaints Committee.

Any governors involved in the process will receive prior training for their role. The Chair of the Governing Body will co-ordinate this training annually with the head teacher.

STAGE 4 – APPEALS REGARDING THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES

This stage will be managed by the Governing Body's Complaints Committee. The Governing Body's Complaints' Committee will only convene in two circumstances;

1. They have received a serious complaint about the head teacher that the Chair of Governors has had to delegate to the Governing Body's Complaints Committee. This may be related to the Chair having prior involvement or being unavailable. If this occurs, the committee's response will be final.
2. They have received notice that that a complainant believes that the appropriate procedures have not been followed, by the person dealing with their complaint, the complainant may request that the governing body reviews the process that has been followed in order to verify whether the procedure has been adhered to. Any review request that is based solely on dissatisfaction with the outcome, rather than any identified failure to deal with a complaint according to procedure, will not be accepted.

SECTION 5 - GUIDELINES FOR A COMMITTEE OF GOVERNORS DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS

The Clerk to the Governing Body should write to the complainant to acknowledge the Chair of Governors has received a written request for a review. The letter could also explain that the complainant has the right to submit any further documents relevant to the complaint. These should be made available immediately so that they can be circulated to all committee members.

The committee of the Governing Body should set a timetable for the investigation and should communicate the timetable to the complainant. This should be within a maximum of 10 working days.

The Clerk to the Governors should arrange to convene the Complaints Committee elected from members of the Governing Body. (It may be necessary for the Governing Body to appoint reserves to this committee to ensure that three governors are available to carry out their task within the set time).

The Complaints Committee members should be governors who have had no prior involvement with the complaint. If s/he has not previously been involved, the Chair of the Governing Body should chair the committee; otherwise the Vice-Chair should do so. **The head teacher will not have a place on this committee.**

The Chair/Vice Chair should ensure that the complaint is heard by the committee within a maximum of 15 school days of receiving the letter. All relevant correspondence regarding the complaint must be made available to the committee members at least 5 school days before the hearing.

The Chair/Vice-Chair should write and inform the complainant, Head teacher, and any other relevant witnesses, and members of the committee at least 5 school days in advance, of the date, time and place of the meeting. The notification to the complainant should also inform him/her of the right to be accompanied to the meeting by a friend/advocate/interpreter. The letter should also explain how the meeting will be conducted and the complainant's right to submit further written evidence to the committee.

The Chair/Vice-Chair of the Governing Body should invite the Head teacher to attend the committee meeting and prepare a written report for the committee in response to the complaint. The Head teacher may also invite members of staff directly involved in matters raised by the complainant to respond in writing or in person to the complaint. Any relevant documents including the Head teacher's report should be received by all concerned – including the complainant – at least 5 school days prior to the meeting.

The involvement of staff other than the Head teacher is subject to the discretion of the Chair of the committee.

It is the responsibility of the Chair of the committee to ensure that the meeting is properly minuted. In most circumstances, we would expect that this would be undertaken by the Clerk to Governors.

The aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve a reconciliation between the school and the complainant. However, it has to be recognised that sometimes it may only be possible to establish facts and make recommendations which will satisfy the complainant that his or her complaint has been taken seriously.

The committee should remember that many complainants are unused to dealing with groups of people in formal situations and may feel inhibited when speaking to the committee. It is therefore recommended that the Chair of the committee ensures that the proceedings are as informal as possible.

If either party should intend to introduce previously undisclosed evidence or witnesses, it is in the interests of natural justice to adjourn the meeting so that the other side has time to consider and respond to the new evidence.

The meeting should allow for

- the complainant to explain their complaint and the Head teacher to explain the school's response
- the Head teacher to question the complainant about the complaint and the complainant to question the Head teacher and/or other members of staff (if invited to be present by the Chair of the committee) about the school's response
- committee members to have an opportunity to question both the complainant and the Head teacher
- any party to have the right to call witnesses (subject to the approval of the Chair) and all parties having the right to question all the witnesses
- final statements by both the complainant and the Head teacher.

The Chair of the committee should explain to the complainant and the Head teacher that the committee will consider its decision, and a written decision will be sent to both parties within a maximum of 15 school days. The complainant, Head teacher, other members of staff and witnesses should then leave.

The committee should then consider the complaint and all the evidence presented and;

(a) reach a unanimous, or at least a majority, decision on the complaint

(b) decide upon the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint

(c) where appropriate, suggest recommended changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not happen again.

A written statement outlining the decision of the committee must be sent to the complainant and Head teacher.

The chair should ensure that parents are aware that they can complain to the Secretary of State for Education and Employment if they are unhappy with the outcome of the review or the investigation into the head teacher.

The school should ensure that a copy of all correspondence and notes are kept on file in the school's records.

5.1 ROLE OF THE COMPLAINTS COMMITTEE

The committee has the power to make decisions on behalf of the governing body and may;

- uphold the complaint
- uphold it in part, or
- dismiss it

Where the issue under consideration does not fall within the remit of the committee, the members may still wish to make recommendations. A Complaints Committee should be appointed at the Governing Body meeting in the Autumn Term. The composition of this Committee should be

considered carefully. Dealing with any complaints that reach this stage is likely to be challenging but careful planning early on can avoid unnecessary complications. Consider the following:

5.2 MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMPLAINTS COMMITTEE

The most important point to remember is that any Complaint Committee members should not have had previous significant involvement with the complaint under review. For example, it would be better as a principle not to appoint a parent governor who potentially is likely to have significant involvement because of regular visits to the school site or a teacher governor. A Chair of Governors of has been briefed by the head teacher regarding any stage of the complaint.

Whoever is appointed should be prepared to attend any meeting at short notice.

It is suggested that three governors (excluding the Head teacher) form the Complaints Committee. Substitutes should be appointed to take the place of any committee member who might be unavailable. The minutes of the Autumn Term governors' meeting should show exactly who should be called for a meeting and in what order.

5.3 CHAIR OF THE COMPLAINTS COMMITTEE

Where possible the Governing Body should appoint a Chair for the Complaints Committee at the same time as they decide on the membership of the committee. This avoids uncertainty all round and allows the Chair of the committee to take control of the situation before the meeting as well as during and after it. This is essential for a successful outcome. Previous experience of chairing a meeting is preferable. Governors should be aware that these meetings can be difficult and that the unexpected frequently occurs.

Clerk

The clerk should draw up the agenda and make all the necessary arrangements for the meeting.

5. 4 MANAGEMENT OF A COMPLAINTS COMMITTEE MEETING

Before a meeting

A copy of the agenda, the complaint, and any written response from the Head teacher should be sent to Complaints Committee members and the Chair of Governors at least five school days before the meeting. Each member must immediately read the papers to check that they have no significant involvement with the case under consideration, but should not discuss it with anyone else. If they need to withdraw from the committee the clerk should organise a substitute. It is essential to withdraw at this stage so that a substitute can be arranged.

Practical arrangements

The tone of the meeting is often set by what happens when the complainant first arrives.

Therefore it is worth the Chair considering the following:

- *What time will participants be asked to arrive?*
- *Who will greet participants when they arrive?*
- *Will anyone wait with them?*
- *Where will other people wait? (Separate places for complainants and school representatives may be advisable).*
- *Will there be any refreshments provided?*
- *Where will the meeting take place?*
- *How will the meeting room be arranged? (Small informal arrangements are usually best)*
- *What route will the complainant and school representatives take to the meeting room?*

The meeting

The model agenda is attached.

The same rules apply as for other committee meetings of governors. For example, governors are not bound to accept tabled papers and may adjourn if they feel that they need time to consider an unexpected issue, including procedural issues.

5.4.1 CHAIRING THE GOVERNING BODY'S COMPLAINTS COMMITTEE

During the meeting

- Take control of the meeting with confidence; use their judgement to move the meeting on when necessary and aim towards a resolution by coming to a conclusion on the written and oral evidence presented at the meeting.
- Convey to all concerned that as Chair you are acting impartially by treating all participants even handedly.
- The complainant and the Head teacher (with their friends/advocates) should be invited in and asked to leave together.
- At the discretion of the Chair witnesses should be invited to join the meeting when their input is required and to leave immediately afterwards
- It is not appropriate for a child/pupil to attend.
- Having ascertained the names of all those waiting outside the meeting room, start the meeting by agreeing with the committee who should be invited in to speak to the committee and in what order; at no time should the complainant, Head teacher or a witness be able to talk to committee

members without both the complainant and Head teacher being present; these arrangements may have to be modified if one or more of the parties have absented themselves from the meeting.

- If witnesses are waiting, the Chair should try to ensure that they are called in due course if required or sent home early if it becomes apparent that they will not be seen.
- Once the main participants have joined the meeting, explain the proceedings.
- Begin to hear the complaint being firm about keeping to the agenda and reminding participants as necessary about the procedure, e.g. if interruptions occur.
- Bear in mind that all participants will be under stress; be even-handed in the treatment of all participants.

Explaining the proceedings

- Introduce the people round the table.
- Explain that the agenda will be followed.
- Run down the items briefly and let the participants know if they will be able to hear the decision at the end of the meeting.
- If the complaint is complex and there are some aspects of it that fall outside the committee's remit, clarify this and explain exactly which aspects of the complaint can be addressed by the committee; later, advise the complainant as to how best to follow up any complaint that could not be dealt with by the committee.

Alternatively, the committee may wish to consider making representations to the responsible authority for those areas that fall outside its remit (SEN, admissions etc).

- Make it clear that although the meeting will be as informal as possible, it is intended to keep to the agenda to allow everyone to have a fair hearing.
- Explain that the complainant will speak without interruption and then allow the Head teacher and complaints committee members to ask any questions to clarify any issues raised; then the Head teacher's response will be heard, again without interruption and there will be an opportunity for the committee and the complainant to ask any questions about what has been said and so on.
- Indicate any time limits to adhere to.

Concluding the discussion

- It is important that all the participants feel that they have had every opportunity to be heard but if they are beginning to repeat themselves at the "further questions or points" stage, move the meeting on by proceeding to the summing up. The complainant and Head teacher should then be invited to sum up if they wish but if the issues are clear, formal summing up may not seem to be appropriate.
- Confirm the arrangements for the participants to receive the decision of the meeting.
- Write down the decision of the committee so this can be accurately recorded in the minutes.
- If the participants are invited back to hear the decision, make it clear to all parties that no further discussion is possible.

The decision letter and minutes

- The clerk to the Complaints Committee should send a copy of the decision letter to the complainant, Head teacher, chair of the complaints committee and chair of governors. Copies must be sent to the chair of the Committee
- The clerk to the complaints committee should write the minutes and send them to the governing body clerk for distribution to the rest of the governing body; the minutes should record the procedure followed, the decision reached and any recommendations made.

5.4.2 MODEL AGENDA FOR A COMPLAINTS COMMITTEE

1. Apologies.
2. To consider members' declaration of interests, entitlement to vote and any requirements to withdraw from the meeting.
3. To confirm the order of the procedure.
4. To agree whether the decision should be conveyed orally to all parties at the end of the meeting (as well as in writing afterwards).
5. Invitation to complainant and Head teacher to join meeting and introduction to governors.
6. Introduction and explanation of procedure.
7. To note the role of the clerk at the meeting.
8. Complainant's presentation and witnesses and questions to both by Head teacher and/or governors.
9. Head teacher's response and witnesses and questions to both by complainant and/or governors.
10. Any further questions or points from any of the parties.
11. Opportunity for summing up by Head teacher.
12. Opportunity for summing up by complainant.
13. Summing up by the Chair.
14. Complainant and Head teacher leave meeting.
15. To decide on the complaint. The committee can
 - uphold the complaint in full
 - uphold it in part, or
 - dismiss it.
16. To consider whether and how to refer issues of principle or general practice to another forum, such as the governing body, or to an individual such as the Head teacher.
17. To inform the complainant and the Head teacher of the governing body's decision and further rights of representation (if agreed at 4 above).
18. Confidentiality: to consider whether any items are confidential and should therefore not be available to persons wishing to inspect governing body papers.

APENDIX A: Leaflet on school complaints

SCHOOL COMPLAINTS _ WE WANT TO KNOW!

We pride ourselves on being a listening school at St Peter's Catholic Primary School. If you have a concern we want to know about it, so we can resolve any issues.

If you have a concern or complaint

We would like you to tell us about it. We welcome suggestions for improving our work in the school. Be assured that no matter what you are wanting to tell us, our support and respect for you and your child in the school will not be affected in any way. Please tell us of your concern as soon as possible. It is difficult for us to investigate properly an incident or problem which has happened some time ago.

What to do first

Most concerns can be sorted out quickly by speaking with your child's class teacher or another key member of staff for instance our office staff at the beginning or end of the school day

If your concerns cannot be managed by this member of staff, you can request an appointment with the deputy head teacher or another senior member of staff. This can be arranged in person, by phoning the school office or e-mailing us through schooloffice@stpeters-noctorum.wirral.sch.uk

If you have a concern which you feel should be looked at by the Head teacher, you can request an appointment. This can similarly be arranged in person, by phoning the school office or e-mailing us through schooloffice@stpeters-noctorum.wirral.sch.uk.

You can take a friend or relation to the appointment with you if you would like to so that they can support you.

How we manage complaints

All staff will make every effort to resolve your problem informally. They will make sure that they understand what you feel went wrong, and they will explain their own actions to you. They will ask what you would like the school to do to put things right. Of course, this does not mean that in every case they will come round to your point of view but it will help both you and the school to understand both sides of the question. It may also help to prevent a similar problem arising again.

If you are dissatisfied with the member of staff's response (or with the Head teacher's initial reaction if he/she has already been involved) you can make a formal complaint to the Head teacher. This should be made in writing

If your complaint is about an action of the Head teacher personally, then you should refer it to the Chair of Governors; Father John Hovington. You can contact him by ringing or calling in to the school office. Or you can e-mail us through; schooloffice@stpeters-noctorum.wirral.sch.uk

You may also find it helpful at this stage to have a copy of the full General Complaints Procedure as this explains in detail what procedures are followed. This is available on the school's website or from the school office.

The Head teacher/Chair of Governors will ask to meet you for a discussion of the problem. Again you may take a friend or someone else with you if you wish. The Head teacher will conduct a full

investigation of the complaint and may interview any members of staff or pupils involved. You will receive a written response to your complaint.

If you are still unhappy

The problem will normally be solved by this stage. However, if you are still not satisfied you may wish to contact the Chair of the Governing Body to ask for review of the management of your complaint by the Complaints Committee of the Governing Body.

You may request that the governing body reviews the process that has been followed in order to verify whether the procedure has been adhered to. Any review request that is based solely on dissatisfaction with the outcome, rather than any identified failure to deal with a complaint according to procedure, will not be accepted.

It will then be heard by a group of three governors who have no previous knowledge of the problem and so will be able to give it a fresh assessment. You will be invited to attend and speak to the committee at a meeting which the Head teacher will also attend. The General Complaints Procedure statement explains how these meetings operate.

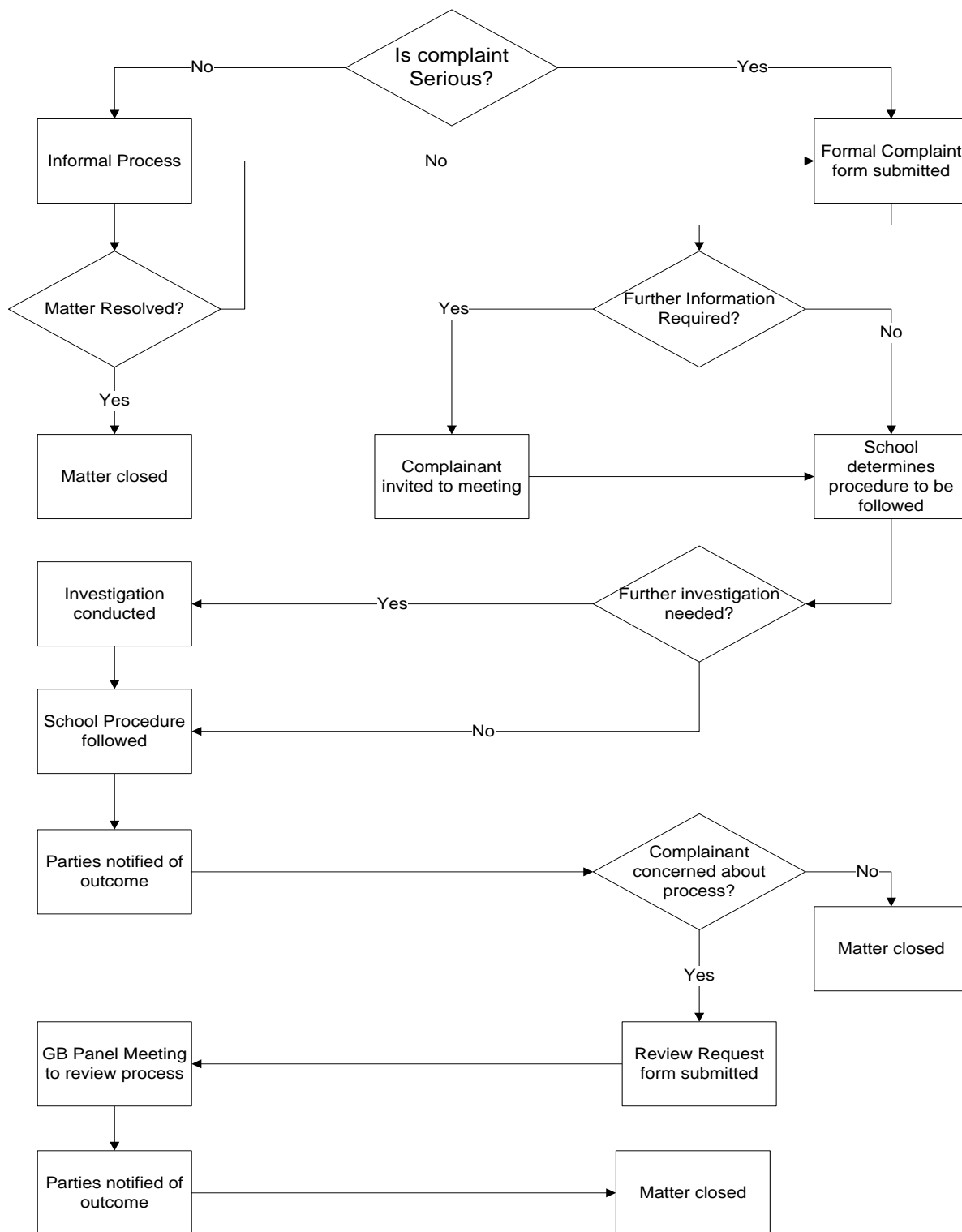
Independent Advice

We acknowledge that making complaints causes difficulties for the complainant. As part of our commitment to being a listening school, we want them to be able to access information, advice and advocacy. Therefore we offer support through referrals to;

- WIRED Parent and Child Advocacy service
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Alison Grimshaw; Local Authority Behaviour Management Support Officer
- Education Social Welfare Officer
- School's Family Support Worker
- Parent Governors (if desired)

APPENDIX 2 : SUMMARY FLOWCHART FOR THE COMPLAINTS PROCESS

Summary of Process to Resolve Complaints



APPENDIX 3 - MODEL FORM FOR SUBMITTING A FORMAL COMPLAINT

Personal Details			
Name:		Date:	
Address:		Status	Parent/Carer
			Governor
			School Visitor
			Other (please state)
Contact Number:			
E-mail:			
Details about the nature of the complaint			
Date(s) of incident		Who do you want to submit your complaint to?	Head Teacher
What does your concern relate to?	Conduct of staff		Deputy Head Teacher
	Safety concern for children		Chair Of Governors (if about the head teacher)
	School Policy(ies)		Other (please state)
	Other (please state)		
Please write a brief explanation for your complaint (you can attach further notes if required)?			

Signed:

SCHOOL RESPONSE			
Form received by:		Date:	
Complaint managed by:		What stage?	Two
			Three
Summary of actions taken			

Appendix 4: Model Letters (As recommended by NAHT)

a) Response to spurious complainant

Dear

Following receipt of your communications and careful consideration of the same, I regret that I am unable to deal with this matter under the Governing Body's Complaints Procedure as:

[It will be appropriate to include SOME of the following statements]

- You have not identified any specific actions of which you might complain
- Your concerns are presented as conclusions rather than specific actions of which you complain.
- The concerns that you identify relate to historical actions and any evidence which might have enabled an objective investigation of your complaint is no longer available.
- The substance of your complaint has been addressed under this procedure already.
- The concerns that you raise do not fall within the scope of this procedure.
- You have not identified any potential sources of evidence which might allow the matter to be investigated.

If you wish my decision to be reviewed then you may take advantage of the procedure set out in the school's Formal Complaint Procedure, by writing to the Clerk to the Governing Body.

Yours sincerely,

Head Teacher
Or Chair of Governing Body

b) Acknowledgement of receipt of formal complaint *and* invitation to meet

Dear

I have received your formal complaint, dated I am grateful that you have brought this to my attention.

The school and governing body take any complaint most seriously. Therefore I would like to meet with you, as soon as possible, so that I may understand the details of your concerns more clearly. You are welcome to be accompanied to the meeting by a friend, if you would find this helpful. Please telephone....., in order to arrange an appointment./ I can offer you an appointment at on ,..... Please let me know if this is convenient.

I hope that we will be able to resolve your concerns through our meeting, but if not I will ensure that the appropriate investigation takes place. This should begin within 5 days of our meeting.

Yours sincerely,

Head Teacher
Or Chair of Governing Body

c) Acknowledgement of receipt of formal complaint referred by a third party_[e.g. LA, Diocese, MP]

Dear

I have received a copy of the documentation that you sent to setting out a complaint about This has been passed to the school as it has responsibility for these matters.

The school and governing body take any complaint most seriously. Therefore I would like to meet with you, as soon as possible, so that I may understand the details of your concerns more clearly. You are welcome to be accompanied to the meeting by a friend, if you would find this helpful. Please telephone, in order to arrange an appointment./ I can offer you an appointment at on Please let me know if this is convenient.

Meanwhile I would be grateful if you would complete and return the Formal Complaint Form that is enclosed, along with details of the school's complaints procedure.

I hope that we will be able to resolve your concerns through our meeting, but if not I will ensure that the appropriate investigation takes place. This should begin within 5 days of our meeting.

Yours sincerely,

Head Teacher
Or Chair of Governing Body

d) Acknowledgements of receipt of formal complaint and advising complainant that the matter has been referred

Dear

I have received your formal complaint, dated I am grateful that you have brought this to my attention.

However, the matters that are of concern to you are the responsibility of the governing body/Pupil Discipline Committee/LA/Diocese/service provider, so I have forwarded your documentation to You should be contacted, in the near future, to be advised of how they intend to proceed.

If I can be of any further assistance, please do let me know.

Yours sincerely,

Head Teacher

e) Acknowledgements of receipt of formal complaint and advising complainant that the matter is being dealt with under a confidential school procedure

Dear

I have received your formal complaint, dated I am grateful that you have brought this to my attention.

The school and governing body take any complaint most seriously. Therefore I have initiated an immediate investigation. It is possible that the investigator will wish to meet with you to clarify the evidence that you have provided so far. If so, he/she will write to you to make suitable arrangements.

As your concerns relate to the conduct/capability of a member of staff, the investigation will be carried out under the school's personnel procedures. This means that the detail of the procedure and its outcome must remain confidential to the school and the member of staff concerned.

OR

As your concerns relate to the behaviour of a pupil, the investigation will be carried out under the school's pupil conduct and disciplinary procedures. This means that the detail of the procedure and its outcome must remain confidential to the school and the parents of the child concerned.

In due course, I may be able to provide you with some information about the outcomes of the investigation and the processes that have been followed, but in any event will let you know when the matter has been concluded.

If I can be of any further assistance, please do let me know.

Yours sincerely,

Head Teacher
Or Chair of Governing Body

f) NOTIFICATION OF DECISION REGARDING FORMAL COMPLAINT

Dear

Following receipt of your complaint and careful consideration of all the available relevant evidence, I/the panel have/has concluded that:

- There is insufficient evidence to reach a conclusion, so the complaint cannot be upheld. If you are able to provide additional evidence forthwith I/we will reconsider this decision.

OR

- The concern is not substantiated by the evidence in that

OR

- The concern was substantiated in part/in full, as The school will review its practices/procedures..... with the intention of avoiding any reoccurrence. Parents will be informed in due course of any policy changes.

OR

- In order to address fully the matters investigated, the school has initiated appropriate internal procedures. Due to the nature of these procedures, their outcome must remain strictly confidential. We are confident, however, that the circumstances that gave rise to your complaint should not recur

OR

- In order to address fully the matters of concern that you identified, the panel recommended that the governing body should review its policy, as a matter of urgency. We are confident that this should prevent similar concerns arising in future.

I hope that we may now put this matter behind us and work together for the benefit of your child's progress.

Yours sincerely,

Head Teacher/Chair of Governing Body/Chair of Panel

g) REVIEW OUTCOME NOTIFICATION

Dear

Having carefully considered your representations in the context of the relevant evidence, the Governing Body Complaints Review Panel has concluded that the school followed the relevant procedure appropriately in respect of your complaint.

Summary of reasons

Therefore, the matter is now closed as far as the school is concerned.

Or

Having carefully considered your representations in the context of the relevant evidence, the Governing Body Complaints Review Panel has concluded that the school followed the relevant procedure appropriately in respect of your complaint except

Therefore, the following action will be taken

Once this action has been completed the school will consider the matter to be closed.

Or

Having carefully considered your representations in the context of the relevant evidence, the Governing Body Complaints Review Panel has concluded that the school followed the relevant procedure appropriately in respect of your complaint except

However the panel determined that this procedural failure did not affect the outcome of the consideration of your complaint so, while we regret this error, we will now consider this matter to be closed as far as the school is concerned.

Yours sincerely,

Chair of Complaints Review Panel

c.c. Head Teacher
Chair of Governors