



# Clipston Endowed VC Primary School

*"Be Kind ~ Be Your Best ~ Be Happy"*

# Complaint Policy

Presented to and approved by the Governing Body – July 2024

To be reviewed: Summer 2026

Signed .....

Mrs Sarah McElroy - Chair of Governors

# Clipston Primary School's Mission, Ethos and Aims

## Our Mission

Be Kind ~ Be Your Best ~ Be Happy

## Ethos

Recognising its historic foundation, Clipston Primary School seeks to serve its community by providing a rounded, connected and coherent education of the highest quality.

We endeavour to preserve and develop our distinct religious character in accordance with the principles of the Church of England.

The school lives out its Christian virtues – Thankfulness, Kindness, Justice, Love, Forgiveness, Responsibility and Courage – and all those essential human values, which are common to good, kind and tolerant people of all faiths and none, through the experiences it offers to all its pupils.

## Aims

The school's aim, through its Christian ethos, is the creation of a safe, happy learning environment, which supports all children on their journey towards becoming:

- Successful engaged learners, who enjoy learning, who are knowledgeable and skilled, and who make progress and achieve their best;
- Confident, articulate individuals who can lead safe, healthy and fulfilling lives in the communities in which they live now and in the future;
- Responsible, happy citizens of the world who have the capacity to make positive contributions to society.

**“Do to others as you would have them do unto you” Luke 6:31**

To achieve these aims, staff and governors will work in partnership with parents, carers and the local community for the benefit of all our pupils.

## Complaint Policy

These procedures outlined in this policy are based on the Department for Education's model procedures.

### Who can make a complaint?

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

### The difference between a concern and a complaint

A concern may be defined as *'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'*.

A complaint may be defined as *'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'*.

It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible opportunity. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaint procedure. Clipston Primary School takes concerns and complaints seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible, internally,

through the stages outlined within this complaint procedure. It is in everyone's interests for matters to remain confidential during this process.

### **How to raise a concern or make a complaint**

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

Matters should be raised with the class teacher.

If it is still not resolved, the Head Teacher should be approached.

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

Complainants should not approach individual governors to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at Stage 2 of the procedure.

Complaints against school staff (except the Head Teacher) should be made in the first instance, to Mrs Emma Mercer (Head Teacher) via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints that involve or are about the Head Teacher should be addressed to the Chair of Governors, via the school office. Please mark them 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 Body via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

A template complaint form is included at the end of this procedure. This is the form to complete and submit. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office. You can also ask third party organisations like the Citizens Advice to help you.

In accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure. For instance, providing information in alternative formats such as large font, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

### **Anonymous complaints**

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Head Teacher or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

### **Time scales**

You must raise the complaint within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

### **Scope of this Complaints Procedure**

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

Exceptions	Who to contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Admissions to schools</li> <li>• Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs</li> <li>• School re-organisation proposals</li> </ul>	<p>Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with West Northamptonshire Council Admissions.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation</li> </ul>	<p>Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.</p> <p>If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) <a href="https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/">https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/</a> Tel: 0300 126 7000 (Option 1)</p> <p><b>Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and Child Protection Team</b> Children, Families and Education Criminal Justice Centre 700 Pavilion Drive Brackmills Northampton NN4 7YL</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exclusion of children from school*</li> </ul>	<p>Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: <a href="http://www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions">www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions</a>.</p> <p><i>*complaints about the application of the behaviour policy should be made through the school's complaints procedure.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whistleblowing</li> </ul>	<p>We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors.</p> <p>The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus">www.education.gov.uk/contactus</a>.</p> <p>Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the LA or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff grievances</li> </ul>	<p>Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff conduct</li> </ul>	<p>Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate.</p> <p>Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action</p>

	taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities</li> </ul>	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Curriculum - content</li> </ul>	Please contact the Department for Education at: <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus">www.education.gov.uk/contactus</a>

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority (LA) safeguarding teams or Tribunals, this may impact on our ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations.

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

### **Resolving complaints**

At each stage in the procedure, Clipston Primary School wishes to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- an explanation
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- an assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur
- an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint
- an apology.

### **Withdrawal of a Complaint**

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

### **Stage 1**

Formal complaints must be made to the Head Teacher (unless they are about the Head Teacher), via the school office. This should be done in writing (on the Complaint Form).

The Head Teacher will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within five school days. Within this response, the Head Teacher will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The Head Teacher can consider whether a face to face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

*Note: The Head Teacher may delegate the investigation to another member of the school's staff, but not the decision to be taken.*

During the investigation, the Head Teacher (or investigator) will:

- if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of
- keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation

At the conclusion of their investigation, the Head Teacher will provide a formal written response within ten school days of the date of receipt of the complaint. If the Head Teacher is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions the school will take to resolve the complaint. The Head Teacher will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1.

If the complaint is about the Head Teacher, or a member of the governing body (including the Chair or Vice-Chair), a suitably skilled governor will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 1. Complaints about the Head Teacher or member of the governing body must be made to the Clerk, via the school office.

If the complaint is:

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

then Stage 1 will be considered by an independent investigator appointed by the governing body. At the conclusion of their investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response.

## **Stage 2**

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 1 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 2. This will involve a meeting with members of the governing body's complaint's committee.

This is the final stage of the complaint's procedure.

A request to escalate to Stage 2 must be made to the Clerk, via the school office, within five school days of receipt of the Stage 1 response. The Clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within five school days. At this point the Clerk will request that the Stage 2 form be completed and returned within five school days of the date of the acknowledgement letter, together with any supporting documents that support the case.

At this point, the school will be invited by the Clerk to the Board of Governors to submit a response with any supporting documents.

Requests to escalate to Stage 2 received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

The Clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within fifteen school days of receipt of the Stage 2 request, with five school days' notice. If this is not possible, the Clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates, without good reason, the Clerk will decide when to hold the meeting. It will then proceed in the complainant's absence on the basis of written submissions from both parties.

The complaints committee will consist of three governors with no prior involvement or knowledge of the complaint. Prior to the meeting, they will decide amongst themselves who will act as the Chair of the Complaints Committee. If there are fewer than three governors available, the Clerk will source any additional, independent governors through another local school or through their LA's Governor Services team, in order to make up the committee. Alternatively, an entirely independent committee may be convened to hear the complaint at Stage 2.

The committee will decide whether to deal with the complaint by inviting parties to a meeting or through written representations, but in making their decision they will be sensitive to the complainant's needs.

If the complainant is invited to attend the meeting, they may bring someone along to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. Generally, we do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the committee meeting. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate. For instance, if a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by union and/or legal representation.

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

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

At least five school days before the meeting, the Clerk will:

- confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that, if the complainant is invited, the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least five school days before the date of the meeting. The committee will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

The committee will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from

Stage 1 of the procedure.

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken – these will usually be taken by the Clerk.

The committee will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The committee can:

- uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.

If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the committee will:

- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

The Chair of the Committee will provide the complainant and the school with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within five school days. The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the Department for Education if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by the school.

If the complaint is:

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

then Stage 2 will ideally be heard by a committee of independent governors.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions the school will take to resolve the complaint.

The response will also advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied.

### **Next Steps**

If the complainant believes the school did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact the Department for Education after they have completed Stage 2.

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by Clipston Primary School. They will consider whether the school has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint. The complainant can refer their complaint to the Department for Education online at: [www.education.gov.uk/contactus](http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus) by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to: Department for Education, 20 Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT



**Complaint Form – Stage 1**

Please complete and return to: Mrs Emma Mercer (Head Teacher) or for complaints about the Head Teacher or Governing Body, to The Clerk to the Governing Body who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

<b>Your Name</b>
<b>Pupil's name (if relevant):</b>
<b>Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):</b>
<b>Address</b>
<b>Postcode</b>
<b>Phone Number: Evening</b> <b>Phone Number: Daytime</b>
<b>Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it.</b>
<b>What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?</b>
<b>Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.</b>
<b>Signature:</b>
<b>Date:</b>

<b>Official use</b>
<b>Date acknowledgement sent:</b>
<b>By whom:</b>
<b>Complaint referred to:</b>
<b>Date:</b>

### **Complaint Form – Stage 2**

Please complete and return to The Clerk to the Governing Body who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken. Please return this form, together with any supporting documentation, within five days.

<b>Your Name</b>
<b>Pupil's name (if relevant):</b>
<b>Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):</b>
<b>Address</b>
<b>Postcode</b>
<b>Phone Number: Evening</b> <b>Phone Number: Daytime</b>
<b>Please give details of the issues that still need to be resolved</b>
<b>What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?</b>
<b>Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.</b>
<b>Signature:</b>
<b>Date:</b>

<b>Official use</b>
<b>Date acknowledgement sent:</b>
<b>By whom:</b>
<b>Complaint referred to:</b>
<b>Date:</b>

## Complaint Procedure Timeline

<b>Stage 1</b>	
Complaint received	Acknowledged in five school days of receipt of Stage 1 form
Investigation	Conclusion with formal written response in ten school days from receipt of Stage 1 form
<b>Stage 2</b>	
Request on Stage 2 form to be received by Clerk, within 5 school days of receipt of the Stage 1 outcome	Acknowledged in five school days Request written submissions to be received by the clerk five school days from date of acknowledgement letter.
Clerk to inform Complainant of the date of the meeting	Arrange meeting ideally within fifteen school days of receipt of Stage 2, with five school days' notice
Written submissions	Circulated to all parties five school days prior to the meeting
Stage 2 outcome	Outcome to be circulated to both parties five school days after the Stage 2 meeting.