Complaints Policy

Publication date: 1st September 2026

Review date: 31st August 2027

Status: Statutory

1. Policy Statement

We recognise the importance of establishing and maintaining good relationships with parents, carers and the wider community. We are aware that there may be occasions where people have concerns or complaints and the following procedure sets out the steps that should be followed in order to resolve these as fairly, quickly and informally as possible.

Safeguarding concerns, including allegations that a child may be at risk of harm, must be referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and managed in line with the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy. Complaints procedures do not replace statutory safeguarding processes.

2. Aims

- To maintain good communication and relationships between the School and persons who wish to express a concern or pursue a complaint
- To support the well-being of students, staff and everyone else who has legitimate interest in the work of the School, including governors and parents
- To provide a clear and fair procedure for the resolution of concerns or complaints

3. Policy Status

School governing bodies are required, under Section 29 of the Education Act 2002, to have in place a procedure for dealing with complaints. This procedure applies for any person, including a Governor, with a specific complaint concerning a pupil or member of staff.

4. Equality Statement

At Micklands we believe that all individuals and groups should receive equal access and opportunities to develop and learn. This procedure is part of our work to ensure there is no discrimination arising from disability, ethnicity or gender.

5. Monitoring and Evaluation

The Governing Body will receive termly reports of the number of complaints reaching the formal stages of the procedure. Individual complaints WILL NOT be discussed at Governing Body meetings. If a panel of governors considers a complaint, the recommendations from the panel will be shared with the Governing Body.

6. Application

This procedure applies to:

- Parental concerns and complaints
- Complaints about the curriculum or acts of worship.

This procedure does NOT apply to:

- Complaints about the conduct of a particular teacher where the investigations would be carried out under the school staff discipline procedures, which remain in the professional domain with the hearing and appeal being heard by a panel of governors. Disciplinary action is taken at the discretion of the Head.

7. Concerns Relating to Child Protection

If, at any stage, a complaint raises a concern that the member of staff isn't suitable to work with children the LADO ought to be consulted as well as following any other HR procedure. Local Authority Designated Officer on 0118 937 3555; Children's Single Point of Access on 0118 937 3641

8. Advice and Support for Parents Making a Complaint

- Reading Borough Council's parent helpline. Tel: 0118 937 2265 – Education Complaints Officer
- Reading Information, Advice and Support Service for SEND Tel: 0118 937 3421 (formally Parent Partnership) for parents of children with Special Educational Needs
- Translation & Interpretation Services (0118 937 2033)

If, after exhausting all stages of the complaints procedure, the complainant feels the school (in the case of general complaints) or Local Authority (in the case of Child Protection allegations) has acted unreasonably they may make a complaint in writing to the Secretary of State for Education at the Department for Education: Ministerial and Public Communications Division Department for Education Piccadilly Gate Store Street Manchester M1 2WD or by telephoning: 0370 000 2288 or online by completing the "school complaints form" on www.gov.uk https://form.education.gov.uk/fillform.php?self=1&form_id=cCCNJ1xSfBE&noLoginPrompt=1

9. PART A – General Complaints Concerning a Pupil or Member of Staff

STAGE 1 - Informal Resolution - Informal

Step 1:
Any complaint must first be raised in discussion with the class teacher concerned to clarify the situation and to try to reach an early mutually acceptable resolution.

Step 2:
If the complaint is unresolved at step 1 the complainant should ask for a meeting with the Headteacher to try to reach an early mutually acceptable resolution. A complainant should receive a response to a complaint within five working days of receipt of the complaint at either step in stage 1.

STAGE 2 - Headteacher Investigation - Formal

Should the complainant be dissatisfied with the resolution proposed at stage 1 they may ask for a Headteacher Investigation of their complaint. The Head or another senior member of staff would normally conduct the investigation. To escalate to this stage the complainant must write to the Head giving details of the complaint and the reasons why they are dissatisfied with the stage 1 resolution. The written complaint may be in the form of a letter, e-mail or on the form provided. A complainant should receive an acknowledgement of their request for an escalation to stage 2 within 5 working days giving an indication of when the investigation will be complete and when the complainant

should receive a full response. In any case the complainant should have a full response within 15 working days. In circumstances where the case is so complex that the investigation is going to take longer the complainant should be kept fully informed of progress in the case.

If the complaint raises safeguarding issues, the Headteacher may consult the DSL and, if appropriate, refer the matter to children's social care or the police before proceeding with the internal investigation. The complainant will be informed if this delays the response timescale.

STAGE 3 - Review by the Governing Body – Formal

Should the complainant remain dissatisfied with the outcome of the Professional Investigation stage they have the right to request a review by a panel of Governors. To escalate to this stage the complainant must write to the Chair of the Governing Body at the school address requesting the review and giving their reasons for being dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 2, using the Complaints Form in Appendix 2. The process for resolving the complaint will be shared with the complainant and a time scale no longer than 20 working days will be agreed to bring the complaint before the Governing Body complaints panel. On receiving a review request the Clerk to the Governors will convene a panel of the Governing Body complaints panel comprising of three governors to hear the complaint.

The panel will:

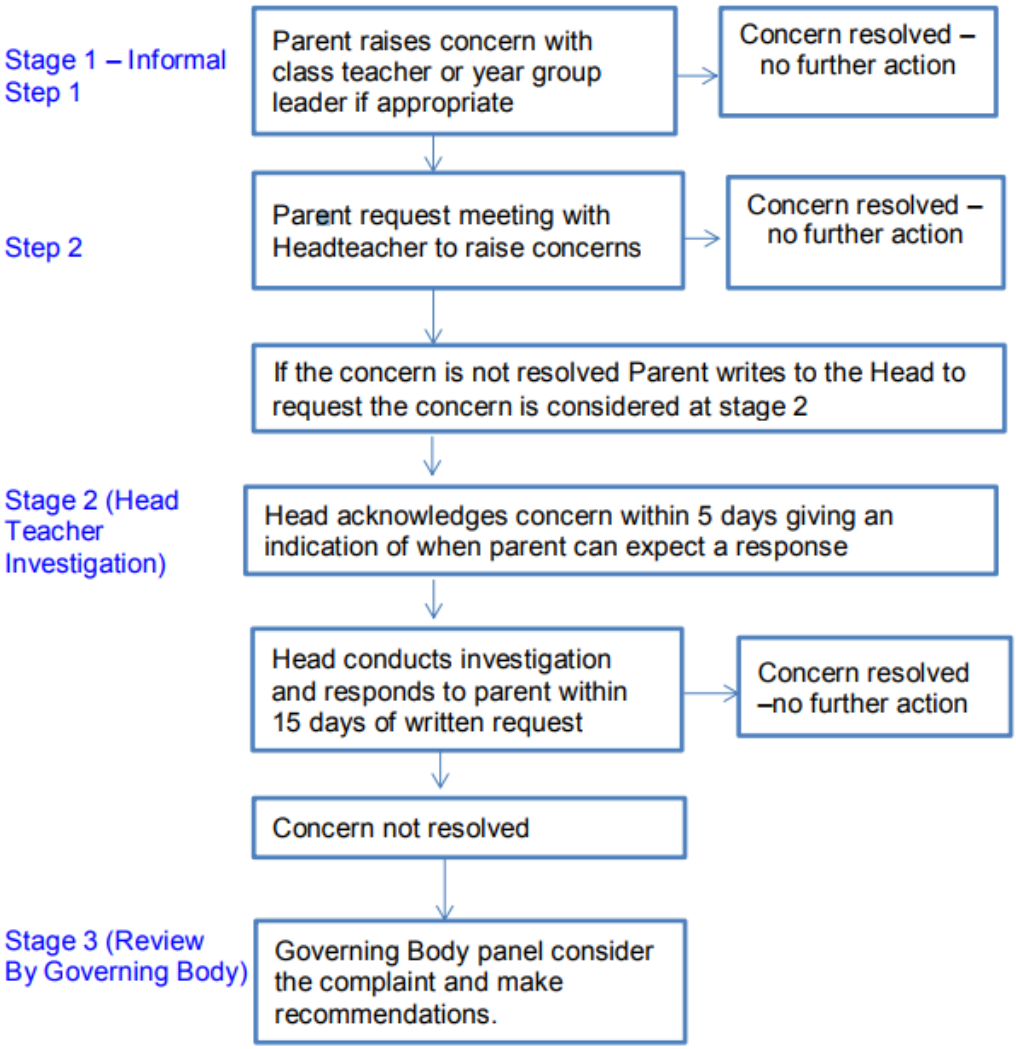
- Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;
- Uphold the complaint in whole or in part or
- Decide there is insufficient evidence to make a decision.

The panel may also:

- Recommend appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
- Recommend a review of the relevant school systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.
- If safeguarding issues are raised during the hearing, the panel must refer these to the DSL and ensure they are addressed under the appropriate safeguarding procedure.

The decision of the Governing Body complaints panel will be final in most cases. The main exceptions are exclusions (see Exclusions Policy) and statutory admissions where separate procedures are available.

Flowchart of procedure for handling general complaints concerning a pupil or member of staff:



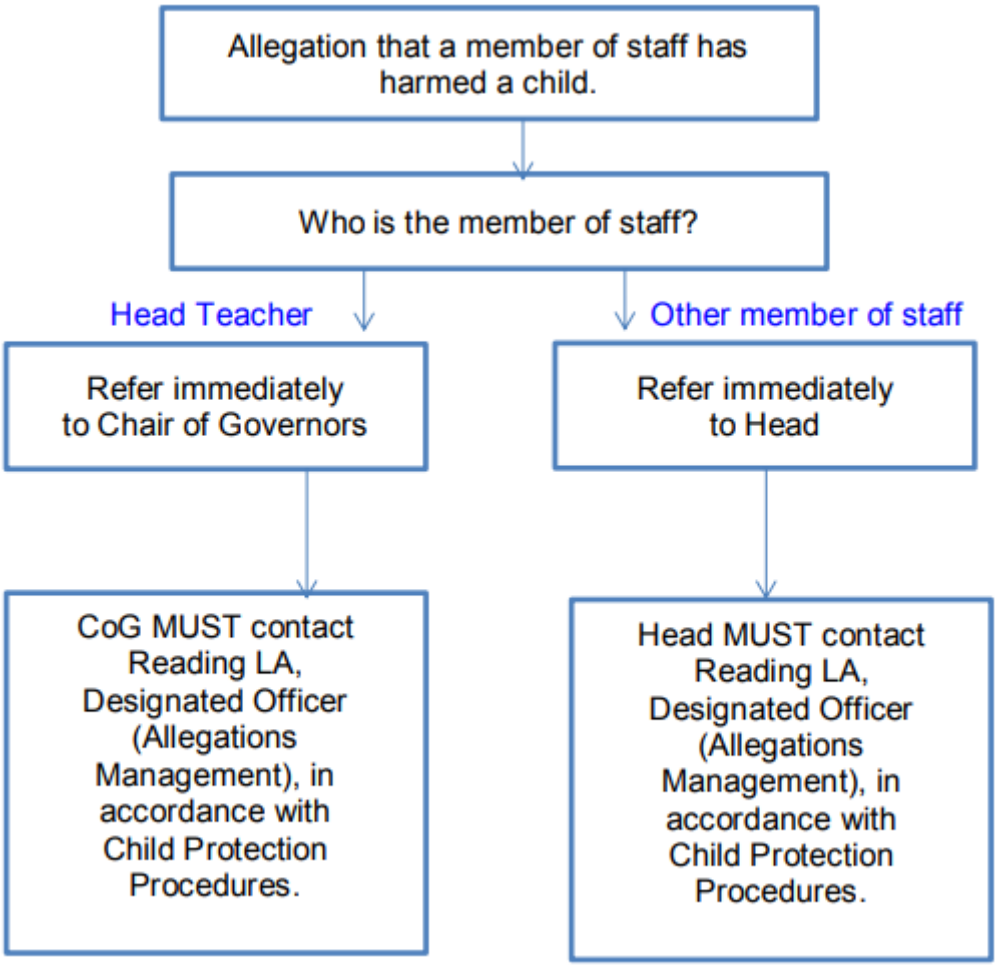
10. PART B - Child Protection Allegations against members of staff (including the Head)

If a child or parent makes an allegation that a member of staff has abused or harmed the child, the matter must be referred immediately to the Head. The Head must then without delay contact the LADO, Designated Officer (Allegations Management), in accordance with the child protection procedures.

If a child or parent makes an allegation that a Head has abused or harmed their child, the matter must be referred right away to the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors must then without delay contact the LADO, Designated Officer (Allegations Management), in accordance with the child protection procedures.

Where a concern does not meet the threshold for LADO referral but may indicate a pattern of inappropriate behaviour or poor judgement, it will be recorded and reviewed in line with the school's Low-Level Concerns Policy. These concerns should be reported to the Headteacher or DSL without delay.

Flowchart of actions for Child Protection Allegations against members of staff (including the Head.):



11. PART C – Complaints Concerning the Head or a Governor

Any complaint concerning the Head or a governor should be referred to the Chair of Governors, unless the Chair is involved or unavailable in which case the complaint should be dealt with by the vice chair/s.

Other than for Child Protection allegations against the Head Teacher, the Chair or Vice-Chair should arrange a meeting to relay the details of the complaint. Care must be taken not to give a judgement about the complaint or potential outcome but simply to explain the complaint and the procedure that will be followed. This needs to be done sensitively and quickly. Information may need to be repeated or updated by email, but this should not be a substitute for a meeting.

Stage 1 (Informal)

The Chair of Governors should seek to convene a meeting with the complainant and the Head or governor to secure an informal resolution to the complaint by mediation. Both the complainant and the Head/governor is entitled to have another person as support at the meeting.

Stage 2 (Formal)

Should either the Head/governor or the complainant be unwilling to participate in a mediation meeting or the mediation meeting fails to resolve the complaint the Chair of Governors should appoint an investigator from outside the Governing Body to investigate the complaint and prepare a report for the Complaints Panel. Schools should inform the Local Authority of any complaint against the Head that has reached this stage.

Procedure for investigating complaints concerning the Head or Governing Body

When using the procedure the Chair of the Governing Body would appoint an Investigating officer. (The investigating officer then works as an independent adviser to the Governing Body.)

On receipt of the complaint the investigating officer will write to the complainant and arrange a meeting to clarify and agree the exact nature of the complaint. The process for resolving the complaint will be shared with the complainant and a time scale no longer than 20 working days will be agreed to bring the complaint before the Governing Body complaints panel. (This is an important stage for the avoidance of doubt at subsequent stages.)

The investigating officer will then make appointments to speak with the Head/ Governor and any other relevant person. (The purpose of this stage is to enable the complaint to be put, answers to be given and evidence to be collected.)

When the investigating officer is satisfied that he/she is in receipt of all the relevant evidence he/she will prepare a report. The report will consider the complaint in detail, in the light of all the evidence, draw conclusions as to whether the complaint is upheld, not upheld, unproven or partially upheld and make recommendations.

When the draft report is complete it will be shared in the first instance with the Head and the complainant, who will be invited to make comments on points of factual accuracy.

The investigating officer should attend the panel meeting to answer any questions and make any points of clarification required by the committee.

The Complaints Panel should consider the report of the professional investigator, representations from the Head/governor and the complainant in coming to their decision. To this end the Complaints Panel may choose to invite written representations or invite the Head/governor and the complainant to attend the meeting to make oral representations. It is important that both parties are given the opportunity to make representations to the Complaints Panel.

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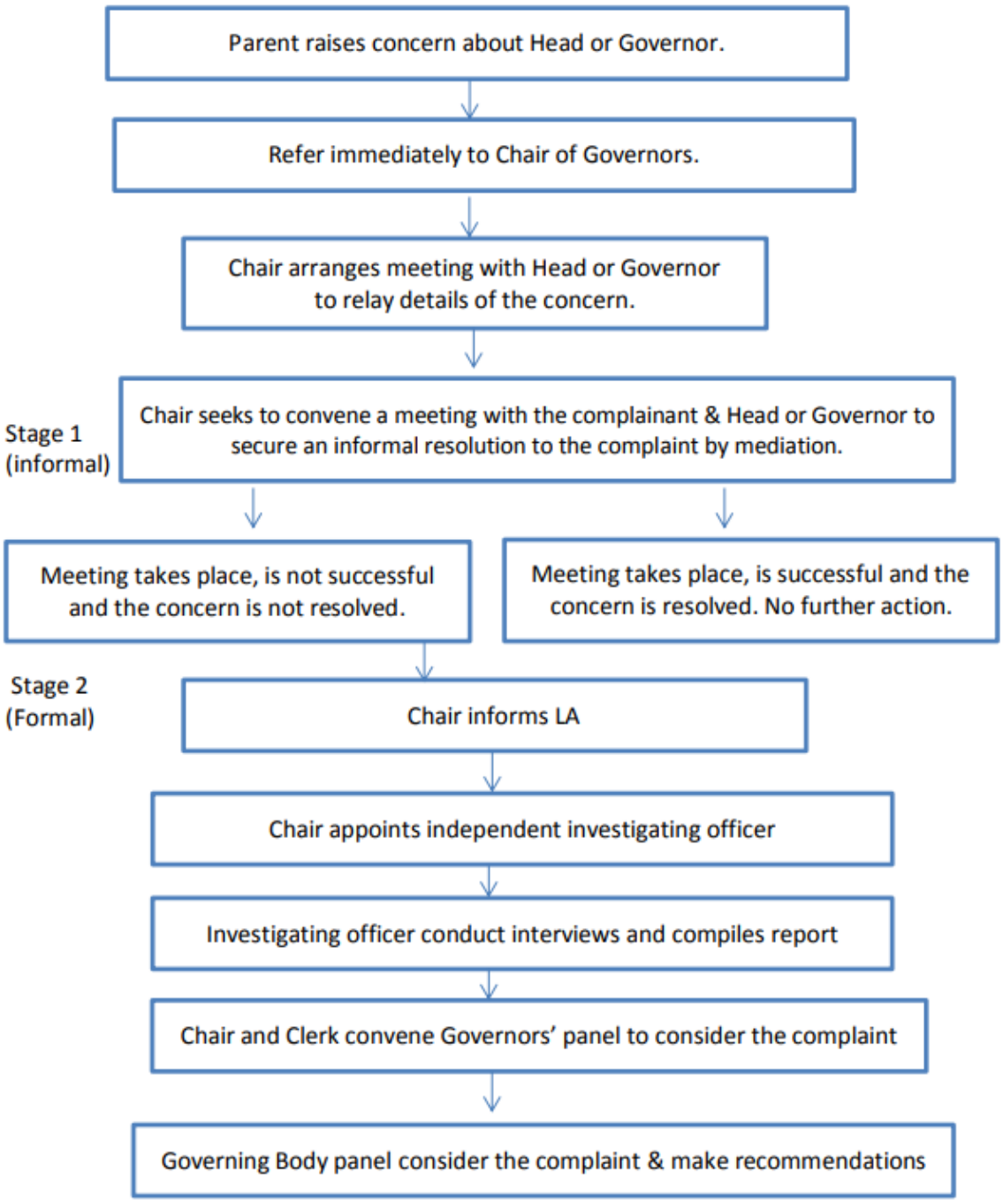
When the draft report is complete it will be shared in the first instance with the Head and the complainant, who will be invited to make comments on points of factual accuracy. 6. The investigating officer should attend the panel meeting to answer any questions and make any points of clarification required by the committee.

In the vast majority of cases the decision of the panel is final.

The investigation report to a governor panel does NOT form part of any staff HR procedure. If, as a result of the investigation, an HR procedure needs to be followed, the situation will have to be investigated again under the remit of the HR procedure. It is important not to confuse complaints from parents with issues about staff discipline or capability, which are dealt with under HR policies and procedures. A complainant is entitled to know that their complaint has been investigated and that the Head has taken the action the Head deems to be appropriate within the procedures of the school. A complainant is not entitled to become involved in the employment relationship between the school and the teacher and should not be given details about what an investigation may have discovered or how the Head intends to proceed if personnel procedures are to be embarked upon.

Flowchart of actions for complaints concerning the Headteacher or Governor:



12. Appendix 1 – Checklist for a Panel Hearing

The Governors' Complaints Panel needs to take the following points into account:

- The hearing is as informal as possible.
- Witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing in which they give their evidence.
- After introductions, the complainant is invited to explain their complaint, and be followed by their witnesses.
- The Headteacher may question both the complainant and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The Headteacher is then invited to explain the school's actions and be followed by the school's witnesses.
- The Complainant may question both the Headteacher and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The panel may ask questions at any point.
- The Complainant is then invited to sum up their complaint.
- The Headteacher is then invited to sum up the school's actions and response to the complaint.
- Both parties leave together while the panel decides on the issues.
- The Chair explains that both parties will hear from the panel within a set time scale.

13. PART D – Dealing with Unreasonably Persistent Complaints and Unreasonable Complainant Behaviour

The Headteacher and staff deal with specific complaints as part of their day-to-day management of the school in accordance with the School's Complaints Procedure.

We are committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially and in the best interests of the child. We do not normally limit the contact complainants have with the School. The majority of complaints are handled in an informal manner and are resolved quickly, sensitively and to the satisfaction of the complainant.

However there are a small number of complainants who, because of the frequency, nature and quality of their contact with the School, hinder our consideration of theirs, or other people's, complaints. We refer to such complainants as 'unreasonably persistent complainants' and, exceptionally, we will take action to limit their contact with the School.

The decision to restrict contact with the School will only be taken in consultation with the Chair of Governors after taking legal advice and will normally follow a prior warning to the complainant. Any restrictions imposed will be appropriate and proportionate. The options we are most likely to consider are:

a) inform the complainant in writing that his/her behaviour is now considered by the School to be unreasonable/unacceptable and, therefore, to fall under the terms of this policy
b) inform the complainant that all meetings with a member of staff will be conducted with a second person present and that notes of meetings may be taken in the interests of all parties
c) inform the complainant that, except in emergencies, all routine communication with the complainant to the School should be by letter only
d) (in the case of physical or verbal aggression) refer to the guidance for schools, on dealing with abuse, threats and violence towards school staff", and consider warning the complainant about being banned from the School site; (Advice is available from the Local Authority Legal Team)
e) consider taking advice from the Local Authority on pursuing a case under Anti-Harassment legislation.

In all cases where we decide to treat someone as an unreasonably persistent complainant, we will write to tell the complainant why we believe their behaviour falls into that category, what action we are taking and the duration of that action.

Where a complainant, whose case is closed, persists in communicating with us about it, we may decide to terminate contact with that complainant about the matter. In such cases, we will read all correspondence from that complainant, but unless there is fresh evidence which affects our decision on the complaint we will simply acknowledge it or place it on the file with no acknowledgement.

New complaints from people who have come under the unreasonably persistent complainant's policy will be treated on their merits.

14. Appendix 2 – MICKLANDS PRIMARY SCHOOL COMPLAINT FORM (Formal)

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

Your name: Pupil's name: Year group/class: Your relationship to the pupil: Address: Postcode: Day time telephone number:

Please give details of your complaint:

What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint. (Who did you speak to and what did they say/do)?

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.

Signature: ..... Date: .....