



The Law

[Section 29 Education Act 2002](#) requires that all Local Authority (LA) maintained schools must have and publish a procedure to deal with all complaints relating to their school and that this will also apply to any community facilities or services that the school provides, apart from those that have separate (statutory) procedures.

Schools must have their own distinct complaints procedure in place, a guidance document on how parents can make a complaint does not satisfy legal requirements to have in place a procedure to deal with all complaints.

Framework of Principles for a Complaint Procedure

The following is brief guidance in the principles behind a complaints procedure and copies of the DfE model policies are given as appendices. More detailed guidance is given in the best practice guidance produced by the DfE in January 2019 - [Best Practice guidance for school complaints procedures 2019](#).

Any procedure cannot limit complaints to parents or carers but must be open to any complaint made to the school about any provision of facilities or services they provide, including governance. Although it should be noted that any third parties using the school premises or facilities should have their own complaints procedures in place.

There needs to be clarity about the difference between a concern and a complaint. Informal concerns, taken seriously at the earliest stage, will reduce the numbers that develop into formal complaints.

Concern – defined as ‘an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought’.

Complaint – defined as ‘an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action’.

The underlying principle is that concerns ought to be handled, if possible, without the need for formal procedures.

Formal procedures should only be invoked when initial attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further. When this happens the complaints procedure should be followed.

Any complaints procedure should:

- Encourage resolution of problems by **informal** means wherever possible;

- Be **clear** on the issues that will be dealt with under the formal complaints process
- Be easily **accessible** and **publicised**, including on the school website;
- Be **simple** to understand and use;
- Be **impartial**;
- Be **non-adversarial**;
- Allow **swift** handling with established **time-limits** for action and keeping people informed of the progress;
- Ensure a full and **fair** investigation;
- Respect people's desire for **confidentiality**;
- Address all the points at issue and provide an **effective** response and **appropriate** redress, where necessary;
- Provide **information** to the school's senior management team so that services can be improved.

An effective procedure will make sure that the complainant is asked, at the earliest stage, what they feel will resolve the issue. If the school acknowledges that a situation could have been handled better, they are not admitting to any unlawful or negligent action. Complainants should be informed of their escalation options so at the outcome of stage 1 you would inform them of details of stage 2. Your procedure should also be clear about what you 'will' do rather than 'should' or 'may'.

A complaints procedure will be clear on the steps to follow when the complaint is about: -

- The headteacher,
- A member of the governance board, or
- The entire governance board.

Timelines

Best practice are complaints should be considered and resolved as soon as possible. Whilst a procedure will have realistic and reasonable time-limits within each stage the procedure should be reviewed by the board to ensure that these are still reasonable and not too excessive or restrictive.

The DfE consider that 3 months is an acceptable time-frame for a complainant to lodge their complaint, although additional time could be given in exceptional circumstances.

Cut-off time frames for raising a complaint and escalating a complaint can be included in your procedure along with a statement making it clear where there are exceptional circumstances these will be considered when making the decision to accept or progress a complaint.

Whenever published time-frames cannot be met then new time-limits can be set that are reasonable for a complaint to be raised following an incident and that the new time-scales are communicated to the complainant.

Stages

Whilst boards are free to choose how many stages a procedure will include, accepted practice and the recommendation of the DfE is that it is limited to 2 stages. The second stage is an appeal stage heard by a governance board panel whose remit is to consider the complaint afresh, not just to consider the handling of the complaint at earlier stages.

Whatever you choose your procedure **must** not state that a complaint will only be escalated, to a next stage, if the school or board permits it. Complainants must be given the opportunity to complete the complaints procedure in full, the exception would be where there is evidence that the complaint is a serial or persistent complaint.

Serial and Persistent Complainants

No complaint should be marked as serial or persistent if the complainant has not completed your complaints procedure. All complainants, in accordance with administrative law principles, should be given every opportunity to complete the complaints procedure in full.

If a complainant, having completed the procedure, contacts the school or board again on the same issue then the complaint can be viewed as serial or persistent and the school or board may choose not to respond, or advise the complainant that the complaint has been dealt with according to the schools procedure and the school or governance board will not respond to further correspondence regarding the same complaint.

Your procedure can include a separate policy for managing serial and unreasonable complaints as an appendix.

However, should a complainant raise a completely new separate/different complaint you will need to respond and process in accordance with your complaint's procedure.

Recording Complaints

Governance boards will need to decide how long complaints records are kept and under GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations) data must not be kept longer than is necessary. Complainants would also have a right to copies of any records under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR

Review by the Board of Governors_– Complaints will not be shared with all members of the governance board except in general terms in case an appeal panel needs to be organised. If the whole board is made aware of the substance of a complaint, prior to the final stage being completed, an independent panel will need to be arranged to hear the complaint comprising of governors from another school and/or members of the governor services team. Complainants can request an independent

panel if they believe there is likely to be bias in the proceedings and the board will consider the request, but the decision will be made by the governors.

As well as addressing an individual's complaint, the process of listening to and resolving complaints will contribute to your school improvement. The monitoring and review of complaints by the school and the governance board is a useful tool in evaluating your school's performance. Expectation is that as a board you will monitor the level and nature of complaints and review the outcomes on a regular basis to ensure the effectiveness of your procedure making changes where necessary, even if complaints aren't escalated to the governance board panel stage. Complaint information shared with all the governance board will not name individuals.

A decision will need to be taken by the board as to when you will review your policy/procedure.

Publicising the Procedure – There is a legal requirement for the complaints procedure to be publicised and it must be published on your school's website. As a governance board you could also include details of your procedure within information given to new parents when their children join the school.

The Role of the DfE in a school's complaint

Anyone can make a complaint about a maintained school to the DfE, however they will expect that complaints will have completed your local procedure first. The DfE make it clear in their contact form that complainants must have completed your procedure before they can submit concerns to them. The only exceptions would be when: -

- Children are at risk of harm,
- Children are missing education,
- A complainant is being prevented from using your published complaints procedure, and
- The DfE have evidence that your school is proposing or is acting unlawfully or unreasonably.

The DfE will only intervene when it is appropriate to do so because either the LA or governance board have acted outside their duties under education law or is acting unreasonably.

When considering a complaint, the DfE review all evidence provided, this will include the school's published policies, and will then determine whether they need to take any action. If appropriate where serious failings are identified the DfE may share information about the complaint and their findings with other agencies such as Ofsted.

Any maintained school can contact the DfE for general assistance on complaint handling by: -

- Calling the National Helpline on 0370 000 2288
- Using the DfE's [Contact form](#)

- Writing to – School Complaints Unit, Department for Education, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD

They do not provide explicit advice on what a school should do but can explain options that may be open to a school.



Meare Village Primary School

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 Meare Village 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 stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaint's procedure. [Meare Village Primary School](#) takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, Mrs Jan Fellows, Headteacher, will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, Mrs Fellows will refer you to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important.

We understand however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, Mrs Fellows will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaint's procedure.

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 on a complainant, if they have appropriate consent to do so.

Concerns should be raised with either the class teacher or headteacher. 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 headteacher) should be made in the first instance, to Mrs Fellows, Headteacher. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints that involve or are about the headteacher should be addressed to Mrs Rachael Hann or Mrs Emma Mitchell (the co-Chairs of Governors), and sent to the clerk to the governing body 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 Mrs Glenda Jones (the Clerk to the Governing Body) via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

For ease of use, a template complaint form is included at the end of this procedure. 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, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

Anonymous complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the headteacher 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.

Complaints received outside of term time

We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

Scope of this Complaints Procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by Meare Village 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">• Admissions to schools• Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs• School re-organisation proposals	Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with Somerset County Council Somerset County Council County Hall, The Crescent Taunton

	Somerset TA1 4DY Tel: 0300 123 2224
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation 	<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).</p> <p>LADO Anthony Goble</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exclusion of children from school* 	<p>Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions.</p> <p><i>*complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whistleblowing 	<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 whistle-blowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus.</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"> Staff grievances 	<p>Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff conduct 	<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 taken against a staff member because of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities 	<p>Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.</p>

- National Curriculum - content

Please contact the Department for Education at:
www.education.gov.uk/contactus

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 Meare Village 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, Meare Village Primary School wants 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 headteacher (unless they are about the headteacher), via the school office. This may be done in person, in writing (preferably on the Complaint Form), or by telephone.

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

Within this response, the headteacher will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The headteacher can consider whether a face to face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

Note: The headteacher may delegate the investigation to another member of the school's senior leadership team but not the decision to be taken.

During the investigation, the headteacher (or investigator) will:

- if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
- keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their

investigation.

At the end of their investigation, the headteacher will provide a formal written response within fourteen school days of the date of receipt of the complaint.

If the headteacher 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 Meare Village Primary School will take to resolve the complaint.

The headteacher 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 headteacher, 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 headteacher 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
- most of the governing body

Stage 1 will be considered by an independent investigator appointed by the governing body. At the end 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 – a meeting with members of the governing body's complaints committee, which will be formed of the first three, impartial, governors available. 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 twenty eight 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 seven school days. Requests 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 ten school days of receipt of the Stage 2 request. 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 based on written submissions from both parties.

The complaints committee will consist of at least 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 from Meare Village Primary School available, or there are not enough impartial governors available, the Clerk will source any additional independent panel members from other maintained school governance boards or academy trust governance boards or through their Local authority, to make up the committee. The independent panel members will be suitably skilled and are able to demonstrate that they are independent and impartial. 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 seven 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
- request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the committee at least seven school days before the meeting.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least three 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.

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 Meare Village Primary School with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within seven 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 Meare Village Primary School.

If the complaint is:

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

Stage 2 will be heard by a committee of independent panel members of governors from local maintained schools.

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 Meare Village Primary School will take to resolve the complaint.

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

Duplicate Complaints

When a complaint has been through our procedure, and concluded, and we receive a duplicate complaint from a spouse, partner, grandparent, child or other individual, we will inform the new complainant that we have already considered that complaint and that our process is complete.

However, if any new aspects to the complaint that were not previously considered are identified these will be investigated and dealt with to the full extent of the complaint's procedure.

If the new complainant is dissatisfied with the school's handling of the original complaint they can contact the DfE (Department for Education).

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 Meare Village Primary School. They will consider whether Meare Village Primary 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, by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:
Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD.

Complaint Form

Please complete and return to Jan Fellows, Headteacher, Meare Village Primary School.

Your name:
Pupil's name (if relevant):
Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):
Address:
Postcode:
Day time telephone number:
Evening telephone number:
Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it.

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

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

Signature:

Date:

Official use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By who:

Complaint referred to:

Date:

Roles and Responsibilities

Complainant

The complainant will receive a more effective response to the complaint if they:

- explain the complaint in full as early as possible
- co-operate with the school in seeking a solution to the complaint
- respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint
- ask for assistance as needed
- treat all those involved in the complaint with respect
- refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality.

Investigator

The investigator's role is to establish the facts relevant to the complaint by:

- providing a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint through:
 - sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved
 - interviewing staff and children/young people and other people relevant to the complaint
 - consideration of records and other relevant information
 - analysing information
- liaising with the complainant and the complaints co-ordinator as appropriate to clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.

The investigator should:

- conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning
- keep notes of interviews or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of the meeting
- ensure that any papers produced during the investigation are kept securely pending any appeal
- be mindful of the timescales to respond
- prepare a comprehensive report for the headteacher or complaints committee that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.

The headteacher or complaints committee will then determine whether to uphold or dismiss the complaint and communicate that decision to the complainant, providing the appropriate escalation details.

Complaints Co-ordinator (this could be the headteacher / designated complaints governor or other staff member providing administrative support)

The complaints co-ordinator should:

- ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure
- liaise with staff members, headteacher, Chair of Governors, Clerk and LAs (if appropriate) to ensure the smooth running of the complaint's procedure
- be aware of issues regarding:
 - sharing third party information
 - additional support. This may be needed by complainants when making a

complaint including interpretation support or where the complainant is a child or young person

- keep records.

Clerk to the Governing Body

The Clerk is the contact point for the complainant and the committee and should:

- ensure that all people involved in the complaint procedure are aware of their legal rights and duties, including any under legislation relating to school complaints, education law, the Equality Act 2010, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)
- set the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties (if they are invited to attend) and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- collate any written material relevant to the complaint (for example; stage 1 paperwork, school and complainant submissions) and send it to the parties in advance of the meeting within an agreed timescale
- record the proceedings
- circulate the minutes of the meeting
- notify all parties of the committee's decision.

Committee Chair

The committee's chair, who is nominated in advance of the complaint meeting, should ensure that:

- both parties are asked (via the Clerk) to provide any additional information relating to the complaint by a specified date in advance of the meeting
- the meeting is conducted in an informal manner, is not adversarial, and that, if all parties are invited to attend, everyone is treated with respect and courtesy
- complainants who may not be used to speaking at such a meeting are put at ease. This is particularly important if the complainant is a child/young person
- the remit of the committee is explained to the complainant
- written material is seen by everyone in attendance, provided it does not breach confidentiality or any individual's rights to privacy under the DPA 2018 or GDPR.

If a new issue arises it would be useful to give everyone the opportunity to consider and comment upon it; this may require a short adjournment of the meeting

- both the complainant and the school are given the opportunity to make their case and seek clarity, either through written submissions ahead of the meeting or verbally in the meeting itself
- the issues are addressed
- key findings of fact are made
- the committee is open-minded and acts independently
- no member of the committee has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure
- the meeting is minuted
- they liaise with the Clerk (and complaints co-ordinator, if the school has one).

Committee Member

Committee members should be aware that:

- the meeting must be independent and impartial, and should be seen to be so
No governor may sit on the committee if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it.
- the aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant
We recognise that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the meeting does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations.
- many complainants will feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting
Parents/carers often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child.
- extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child/young person and present during all or part of the meeting
Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings should ensure that the child/young person does not feel intimidated.
The committee should respect the views of the child/young person and give them equal consideration to those of adults.
If the child/young person is the complainant, the committee should ask in advance if any support is needed to help them present their complaint. Where the child/young person's parent is the complainant, the committee should give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the meeting, if any, the child/young person needs to attend.
However, the parent should be advised that agreement might not always be possible if the parent wishes the child/young person to attend a part of the meeting that the committee considers is not in the child/young person's best interests.
- the welfare of the child/young person is paramount.

Appendix B – DfE model policy for managing serial and unreasonable complaints

Note: This policy can also be adapted to manage unreasonable or persistent contact not directly associated with, or resulting from, formal complaints.

Meare Village Primary School is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with our school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will act to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

Meare Village Primary School defines unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the school, such as, if the complainant:

- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
- refuses to co-operate with the complaint's investigation process
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaint's procedure
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaint's procedure or with good practice
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be considered and commented on
- raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales
- makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced
- changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds
- repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed)
- refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education
- seeks an unrealistic outcome
- makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with
- uses threats to intimidate
- uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence
- knowingly provides falsified information
- publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school that relates to their complaint, while the complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text), as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the headteacher or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an '*unreasonable*' marking.

If the behaviour continues, the headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact Meare Village Primary School causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will be reviewed after six months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from Meare Village Primary School.

Signed Headteacher

Date ... November 2019....

Due for review: November 2021