



Complaints Policy





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1. Introduction

At Storyybrook, we are committed to working positively and in collaboration with all stakeholders. Whilst we always aim to resolve issues in an effective and timely manner, we appreciate that some situations may lead to a more formal route of action. Therefore, we have a robust policy which outlines which steps should be taken should you wish to raise a complaint to the school.

Given the nature of SEMH needs, the school adopts a relational, trauma-informed and restorative approach to complaints, including those raised by parents and other adults. We aim to always adopt de-escalation and restorative approaches to issues which may arise, and work flexibly with our community to find a positive resolution for all, taking a child-centred approach at all times.

Safeguarding and SEMH Context

At Storyybrook, complaints are understood within the wider safeguarding and SEMH context of our pupils and families.

We recognise that:

- concerns raised by parents/carers may reflect underlying safeguarding or welfare issues
- heightened emotions, conflict or dissatisfaction may be linked to trauma, stress or unmet need
- behaviour-related complaints may indicate wider contextual safeguarding concerns

All complaints will therefore be reviewed through a safeguarding lens and, where appropriate, shared with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). Where a complaint raises a safeguarding concern, it will be managed in line with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Our approach remains:

Regulate → Relate → Resolve → Restore

Given the specialist SEMH nature of the school, Storyybrook adopts a relational, trauma-informed and restorative approach to managing concerns and complaints.

This means we will:

- prioritise de-escalation and emotional regulation in all interactions
- seek to understand the underlying context of concerns



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- respond with empathy, clarity and consistency
- maintain professional boundaries while supporting positive relationships
- focus on resolution, repair and rebuilding trust

We recognise that complaints may arise during times of heightened stress and will respond in a way that supports all parties while maintaining a clear focus on the safety and wellbeing of the child.

Please refer to appendix 1 for a clear flowchart of how to raise a complaint.

2. 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 Storyybrook 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.

3. The difference between a concern and a complaint

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

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

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

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, Mrs Rachel Burbridge, the Headteacher, will aim to either address the complaint directly or refer you to another appropriate staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, the Headteacher will redirect you to an appropriate alternative employee; this may be the Headteacher themselves. We always aim to ensure that complaints are dealt with by the most appropriate staff member; they may be a Senior Leader, but this is not always the case. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is most important.

We understand that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, Storyybrook will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.





4. 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.

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 Rachel Burbridge (the Headteacher) via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints that involve or are about the Headteacher should be addressed to Miss Kelly Lane (the Chair of Governors), via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

5. Stages to follow

Storybrook operates a staged complaints process to ensure concerns are addressed fairly, consistently and at the appropriate level. Each stage of the process is separate and builds upon the previous stage. New complaints will not normally be introduced at later stages, and each stage will focus on reviewing the handling and outcome of the previous stage. Where appropriate, the school will seek to resolve concerns at the earliest possible stage through a relational and restorative approach.

Stage 1: Any initial problem or concern should be raised promptly with the class teacher. If your concern is more serious you may prefer to make an appointment to discuss it with the Headteacher. All staff will make every effort to resolve your problem promptly at this informal stage. Most concerns and potential complaints can best be resolved through informal discussion with the Headteacher or relevant member of staff.

Complaints at this stage will be acknowledged within 3 school days and dealt with within 5 school days.

Stage 2: If you are dissatisfied with the response of the member of staff (or the Headteacher if they have been involved at the informal stage) then you may wish to put your concerns in writing to the Headteacher as a complaint. You should make it clear if you wish the matter to be dealt with as a complaint. The Headteacher will investigate the complaint and provide a written response. This will normally be within 10 school days of your letter, but you will be kept informed if, for example, more time is needed to complete the investigation.

If your original concern was about an action by the Headteacher personally, and you have already discussed it at the informal stage, then you should put your complaint in writing to the Chair of Governors.





The complaint will be acknowledged within 3 school days and a full written response provided within 10 school days. The written response will be sent to the complainant and retained securely in accordance with the school's Data Protection and Records Retention procedures.

Stage 3: If you are not satisfied with the Headteacher's response, you may contact the Chair of Governors. The chair's name, and how to contact him/her, is published in the school's Annual Report to parents, but it will also be available from the school office.

The Chair will investigate your complaint and, in most cases, seek to resolve the matter through discussion with yourself and the Headteacher. At the end of this stage, the Chair will provide you with a written response. This will normally be within 25 school days, but you will be kept informed if more time is needed.

The written response will be sent to the complainant and retained securely in accordance with the school's Data Protection and Records Retention procedures.

Stage 4: If you are not satisfied with the Chair's response at the end of stage 3, the complaint can be referred to the governing body by writing to the Chair or Clerk to the governing body. The governing body will ask a small panel of governors to investigate your complaint. This will normally be arranged within 25 school days of your complaint being received, depending on the availability of all concerned. You may be invited to speak to the panel at a meeting and be accompanied by a friend or representative. After the meeting you will be advised of the outcome in writing. This will normally be within 10 school days of the meeting. For most complaints, the decision of the complaints panel is the final stage of the school's complaints procedure. The panel will consider whether the complaint has been handled fairly, proportionately and in accordance with the school's procedures.

The complaints panel will consist of at least three individuals who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. At least one member of the panel will be independent of the management and running of the school.

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.

While the process is structured, we will always seek to resolve concerns at the earliest stage through a relational, trauma-informed and child-centred approach.

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.

Reasonable adjustments may include:



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- providing information in alternative formats
- supporting complainants to complete complaint forms
- accepting complaints verbally where appropriate
- accepting complaints via alternative communication methods, including email or assisted communication
- providing interpretation or translation support
- arranging meetings at accessible locations or through remote platforms
- adapting communication methods to meet SEND, disability, SEMH or communication needs

We will work collaboratively with complainants to identify and implement appropriate adjustments while ensuring the complaints process remains fair, transparent and accessible to all.

The written response will be sent to the complainant and retained securely in accordance with the school's Data Protection and Records Retention procedures.

Complaints Process Timescales and Responsibilities

Stage	Complaint Submitted To	Investigation Led By	Written Response Issued By	Response Sent To	Timescale
Stage 1: Informal Concern	Class Teacher or Headteacher	Relevant member of staff or Headteacher	Relevant member of staff or Headteacher	Complainant	Acknowledged within 3 school days. Resolved wherever possible within 5 school days.
Stage 2: Formal Complaint	Headteacher	Headteacher	Headteacher	Complainant	Acknowledged within 3 school days. Full written response within 10 school days.
Stage 2 (Complaint about the Headteacher)	Chair of Governors	Chair of Governors (or nominated investigator)	Chair of Governors	Complainant	Acknowledged within 3 school days. Full written response within 10 school days where possible.
Stage 3: Review by Chair of Governors	Chair of Governors	Chair of Governors	Chair of Governors	Complainant	Written outcome normally within 25 school days.
Stage 4: Complaints Panel	Clerk to Governors / Chair of Governors	Independent Complaints Panel	Clerk to Governors on behalf of the Panel	Complainant, Headteacher and Proprietor/Governing Body (where appropriate)	Panel meeting normally arranged within 25 school days. Written outcome within 10 school days of the meeting.





Communication During the Process

The school will:

- acknowledge receipt of complaints in writing;
- inform complainants if additional time is required to complete an investigation;
- provide written outcomes at the conclusion of each formal stage;
- explain any recommendations, actions or next steps arising from the complaint;
- advise complainants of their right to progress to the next stage where applicable.

Formal Written Responses

At each formal stage, the written response will normally include:

- a summary of the complaint;
- details of the investigation undertaken;
- findings and conclusions;
- whether the complaint is upheld, partially upheld or not upheld;
- any actions the school intends to take;
- details of the next stage of the complaints procedure (where applicable).

Please refer to appendix 2 for further detail.

6. Anonymous complaints

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

7. Managing unreasonable behaviour

While we are committed to working collaboratively, we expect all parties to engage respectfully.

Where behaviour becomes:

- aggressive
- abusive
- threatening
- persistently unreasonable

The school may:

- limit communication channels
- request communication in writing
- pause the process until behaviour is appropriate

This will always be done proportionately and with consideration of individual circumstances.



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Please refer to our Storybrook Managing Aggressive Behaviours from Parents, Carers and Visitors Policy for further information.

8. 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.

For further clarity on timescales, please refer to Appendix 3 or the Complaints Process Timescales and Responsibilities table.

9. 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.

10. Scope of Storybrook's complaints procedure

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

Exceptions	Who to contact
Admissions to schools Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs School re-organisation proposals	Separate complaint and appeal procedures exist for these matters, and appropriate information is available on request from the school. Please also refer to our admissions policy found on the school website. Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with Bracknell Forest Borough Council. Admissions decisions → statutory appeal Admin/process issues → complaints policy
Attendance	Concerns regarding attendance processes should initially be addressed through the Attendance Policy procedures





Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance. 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). Emma Langdon LADO. MASH Telephone: 01344 352020.
Exclusion of children from school*	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school http://www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusionsdiscipline-exclusions/exclusions. *Concerns about the application of the Behaviour and Relationships Policy should first be raised through that policy's internal processes before escalating via this complaints procedure Please refer to Storyybrook's website for information on behaviour and relationships or other policies.
Whistleblowing	We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors. 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: www.education.gov.uk/contactus. 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 Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.
Staff grievances	If your complaint amounts to or includes an allegation against a member of staff, this may need to be considered under the school's internal grievance procedures or disciplinary procedure for employees, rather than the complaint procedure. You will be advised if these procedures are to be used in dealing with your complaint.
Staff conduct	Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate. Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.





Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct. Procedures for complaining about the Local Authority are set out in a separate leaflet about the Council's complaints procedure.
National Curriculum - content	Please follow the stages outlined above for any initial complaints about the school curriculum and matters relating to it, including the provision of information and charges. Should the issue not be resolved to your satisfaction, please contact the Department for Education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus
Special Educational Needs and Disabilities	There is a separate appeal procedure for these matters, and appropriate information is available on request from the school. Please refer to Storyybrook's Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) policy on the website.

If you are in doubt whether your complaint comes into these categories, or need assistance in understanding this process, please call the school office who will be happy to support.

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 Storyybrook 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.

Where a complaint raises safeguarding concerns, including those relating to behaviour, staff conduct, peer interactions or family context, the matter will be immediately referred to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and managed in accordance with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Safeguarding considerations will take precedence over the complaints process where appropriate.

11. Resolving complaints



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At each stage in the procedure, Storybrook 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.

Where appropriate, resolution may also include:

- restorative meetings
- mediated discussions
- supported reintegration of relationships

12. Withdrawal of a complaint

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

13. Complaint Records

Records of complaints, investigations, correspondence, outcomes and actions taken will be retained securely in accordance with the school's Data Protection Policy and Records Retention Schedule. Records will be made available for inspection where required by law or regulation.

14. Next steps

If the complainant believes the school has not handled their complaint in accordance with the published procedure or has acted unlawfully or unreasonably, they may refer their complaint to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

The ESFA will not normally reinvestigate the substance of the complaint but will consider whether the school has followed its procedures correctly and complied with relevant legislation.

Complaints can be submitted online at: <https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school>.

15. Complaints Form

Please complete and return to Mrs Rachel Burbridge (Headteacher), the Clerk to Governors,



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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:





16. 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
- liaising with the complainant and the complaints co-ordinator as appropriate to clarify what the complainant feels would put things right
- analysing information.

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 Monitoring, Recording and Oversight

Storybrook maintains a confidential complaints register in accordance with the Independent School Standards, Data Protection legislation and the school's Records Retention Schedule.

The complaints register records:

- the date the complaint was received
- the nature of the complaint
- the stage reached within the complaints procedure
- the outcome of the complaint
- any actions taken as a result of the complaint
- the date the complaint was closed

Complaint records are stored securely and treated confidentially. Access is restricted to those with a legitimate role in managing, investigating or monitoring complaints.

The Headteacher will review complaints regularly to identify recurring themes, trends or areas for improvement.

An annual summary of complaints, outcomes and any resulting school improvement actions will be shared with the Proprietor and Governing Body. Individual complainants and confidential information will not be identified within these reports.

Information gathered through the complaints process may be used to inform:

- policy review
- staff training and professional development
- safeguarding and risk management
- curriculum and provision development
- wider school improvement planning

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 complaints 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

An annual summary of complaints, outcomes and resulting actions will be reviewed by the Proprietor and Governing Body.

17. Pupil Voice and Complaints

Storyybrook recognises that pupils, including those with SEMH needs, may wish to raise concerns or complaints.

We will:

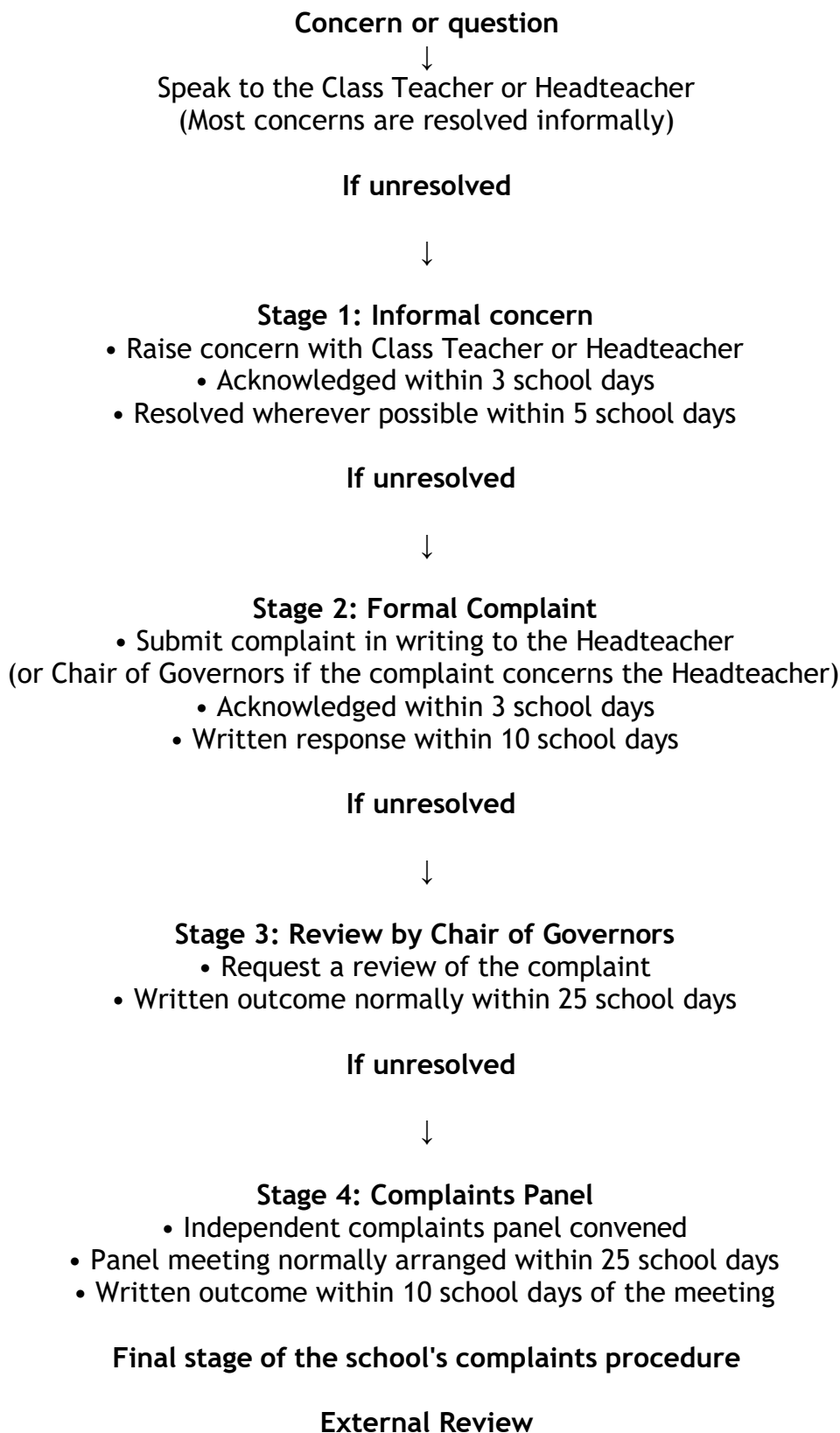
- support pupils to express their views using appropriate communication methods
- provide trusted adults for pupils to speak to
- ensure pupils feel safe and listened to
- take all pupil concerns seriously

Where appropriate, pupil concerns will be managed through safeguarding or pastoral systems, rather than the formal complaints process.





Appendix 1 - How to make a complaint: Storyybrook complaints procedure





If you believe the school has not followed its complaints procedure correctly, you may refer the matter to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

Throughout the process, Storybrook will:

- ✓ Listen respectfully
- ✓ Make reasonable adjustments where required
- ✓ Consider safeguarding concerns
- ✓ Seek restorative solutions wherever possible
- ✓ Keep complainants informed of progress

Appendix 2: Stages of complaints

Stage 1: An informal complaint or concern should be directed to the class teacher or another appropriate member of school staff who will address this quickly and to the best of their ability. The Headteacher may also be an appropriate point of contact at this point.

Stage 2: 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 3 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 the decision to be taken will be decided upon by the Headteacher.

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 conclusion of their investigation, the Headteacher will provide a formal





written response within 10 school days of the date of receipt/acknowledgement 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 Storybrook 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
- the majority of the governing body

Stage 2 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 3: If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 2 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 3 by contacting Kelly Lane, Chair of Governors.

A request to escalate to Stage 3 must be made to the Clerk, via the school office, within 5 school days of receipt of the Stage 2 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 10 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 25 school days of receipt of the Stage 3 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 on the basis of written submissions from both parties.

Stage 4: Should the complainant still feel dissatisfied at this time, 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 complaints procedure.

The complaints panel will consist of at least three individuals who have no prior involvement in the matter. At least one member of the panel will be independent of the management and running of the school. 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 Storybrook 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 3.

All panel members will be impartial and will not have a conflict of interest.

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 complaints 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 10 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 5 school days before the meeting.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 3 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 2 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 Storybrook with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 10 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 Storybrook.

If the complaint is:





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

Stage 3 will 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 Storybrook will take to resolve the complaint.

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

Appendix 3: Timescales

Stage 1 complaints (informal) - These will be acknowledged within 3 school days and dealt with within 5 school days

Stage 2 complaints (formal) - These will be acknowledged within 3 school days and dealt with within 10 school days

Stage 3 complaints (formal) - These will be acknowledged within 10 school days and a written response will be provided within 25 school days

Stage 4 complaints (formal) - A panel meeting will be arranged within 25 school days and a written decision will be provided within 10 school days of the meeting

A request to escalate to Stage 3 must be made to the Clerk, via the school office, within 5 school days of receipt of the Stage 2 response.

Any written responses following formal complaints meetings will be provided within 10 school days.

