

Complaints procedure

The Eden School



Approved by:

The Board of
Governors

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1. Aims

Our school aims to meet its statutory obligations when responding to complaints from parents/carers of pupils at the school, and others.

For **The Eden School**, as an **Independent Seventh-day Adventist School**, we are committed to handling complaints in a fair, transparent, and efficient manner. While the legal requirement mandates us to set out procedures for handling complaints from **parents/carers of pupils** attending the school, we recognise that complaints may also arise from **others**, such as members of the community or the public.

To ensure a positive relationship with our wider community, **The Eden School** will adopt procedures for dealing with complaints from individuals beyond parents and carers, while maintaining a clear distinction in handling procedures. This will allow us to address concerns in a way that fosters open dialogue and constructive feedback, not only within our immediate school family but also with those who interact with us externally.

For complaints from parents/carers of pupils:

We will follow the procedures outlined in this policy to ensure that complaints are resolved in a fair and timely manner. These procedures focus on clarity, resolution, and building mutual understanding between the school and the complainants. The standard procedure applies as laid out in this document.

For complaints from others:

While this policy primarily addresses complaints from parents and carers, we have a separate procedure for managing concerns and complaints from individuals who are **not parents/carers of attending pupils**, such as members of the public. This procedure ensures that all complaints are handled fairly and respectfully. For complaints raised by individuals not connected to our school community as parents or carers, a separate procedure can be accessed by contacting our main school office or the governance team.

When responding to complaints, we aim to:

- Be impartial and non-adversarial
- Facilitate a full and fair investigation by an independent person or panel, where necessary

- › Address all the points at issue and provide an effective and prompt response
- › Respect complainants' desire for confidentiality
- › Treat complainants with respect and courtesy
- › Make sure that any decisions we make are lawful, rational, reasonable, fair and proportionate, in line with the principles of administrative law
- › Keep complainants informed of the progress of the complaints process
- › Consider how the complaint can feed into school improvement evaluation processes

We try to resolve complaints by informal means wherever possible. Where this is not possible, formal procedures will be followed.

The school will aim to give the complainant the opportunity to complete the complaints procedure in full.

To support this, we will make sure we publicise the existence of this policy and make it available on the school website.

Throughout the process, we will be sensitive to the needs of all parties involved, and make any reasonable adjustments needed to accommodate individuals.

Our commitment to handling complaints aligns closely with our **core values of love, integrity, fairness, and respect**, rooted in our **Seventh-day Adventist Christian ethos**. These values guide everything we do, and our approach to resolving complaints reflects these principles:

1. **Love and Compassion**

We believe that every individual in our school community deserves to be treated with **kindness** and **empathy**, even in times of disagreement. By fostering open communication and compassionate responses, we create an environment where all feel valued and understood.

2. **Integrity and Transparency**

As a Christian school, we are committed to honesty and **transparency** in all our dealings. Our complaints procedures are designed to ensure that concerns are handled fairly, and in a way that upholds the highest ethical standards, reflecting our integrity as a school community.

3. **Fairness and Justice**

In line with **God's teachings** on justice and fairness, we are dedicated to resolving complaints in a **just** and **equitable** manner. We ensure that all complaints, whether from parents, carers, or members of the public, are dealt with impartially, with the aim of achieving resolutions that are both fair and constructive.

4. **Respect for All**

Reflecting Christ's command to "**love thy neighbour**," we strive to ensure that every complaint is handled with **respect** for all parties involved. We listen attentively to concerns, seek to understand different perspectives, and aim to resolve issues with **dignity** and respect for all individuals.

2. Legislation and guidance

This document meets the requirements set out in part 7 of the schedule to the [Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), which states that we must have and make available a written procedure to deal with complaints from parents/carers of pupils at the school.

It is also based on [best practice guidance for academies complaints procedures](#) published by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

In addition, it addresses duties set out in the [Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework](#) with regards to dealing with complaints about the school's fulfilment of Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) requirements.

3. Scope

This policy does **not** cover complaints procedures relating to:

- › Admissions
- › Statutory assessments of special educational needs (SEN)
- › Safeguarding matters
- › Suspension and permanent exclusion
- › Whistle-blowing
- › Staff grievances
- › Staff discipline

Please see our separate policies for procedures relating to these types of complaint.

- › Withdrawal from the curriculum (parents and carers can withdraw their child from any aspect of religious education, including the daily act of collective worship. They do not have to explain why)

Complaints about services provided by other providers who use school premises or facilities should be directed to the provider concerned.

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 The complainant

The complainant will get a more effective and timely response to their complaint if they:

- › Follow these procedures
- › Co-operate with the school throughout the process, and respond to deadlines and communication promptly
- › Ask for assistance as needed
- › Treat all those involved with respect
- › Do not approach individual governors about the complaint
- › Do not publish details about the complaint on social media

4.2 The investigator

An individual will be appointed to look into the complaint and establish the facts. They will:

- › Interview all relevant parties, keeping notes
- › Consider records and any written evidence and keep these securely
- › Prepare a comprehensive report to the headteacher or complaints committee, which includes the facts and potential solutions

4.3 The complaints co-ordinator

The complaints co-ordinator can be:

- › The headteacher
- › The designated complaints governor
- › Any other staff member providing administrative support

The complaints co-ordinator will:

- › Keep the complainant up to date at each stage in the procedure
- › Make sure the process runs smoothly by liaising with staff members, the headteacher, chair of governors, and clerk
- › Be aware of issues relating to:
 - Sharing third-party information
 - Additional support needed by complainants; for example, interpretation support or where the complainant is a child or young person
- › Keep records

4.4 Clerk to the governing board

The clerk will:

- › Be the contact point for the complainant and the complaints committee, including circulating the relevant papers and evidence before complaints committee meetings
- › Arrange the complaints hearing
- › Record and circulate the minutes and outcome of the hearing

4.5 Committee chair

The committee chair will:

- › Chair the meeting, ensuring that everyone is treated with respect throughout
- › Make sure all parties see the relevant information, understand the purpose of the committee, and are allowed to present their case

5. Principles for investigation

When investigating a complaint, we will try to clarify:

- › What has happened
- › Who was involved
- › What the complainant feels would put things right

5.1 Timescales

The complainant must raise the complaint within 3 months of the incident. If the complaint is about a series of related incidents, they must raise the complaint within 3 months of the last incident.

We will consider exceptions to this timeframe in circumstances where there were valid reasons for not making a complaint at that time and the complaint can still be investigated in a fair manner for all involved.

When complaints are made out of term time, we will consider them to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

If at any point we cannot meet the timescales we have set out in this policy, we will:

- › Set new time limits with the complainant
- › Send the complainant details of the new deadline and explain the delay

5.2 Complaints about our fulfilment of early years requirements

We will investigate all written complaints relating to the school's fulfilment of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) requirements, and notify the complainant of the outcome within 28 days of receiving the complaint. The school will keep a record of the complaint (see section 10) and make this available to Ofsted on request.

Parents and carers can notify Ofsted if they believe that the school is not meeting Early Years Foundation Stage requirements, by:

- › Calling 0300 123 4666
- › Emailing enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
- › Using the online contact form available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted#org-contacts>

We will notify parents and carers if we become aware that the school is to be inspected by Ofsted. We will also supply a copy of the inspection report to parents and carers of children attending the setting on a regular basis.

6. Stages of complaint (not complaints against the headteacher or governors)

Stages of Complaint (Not Complaints Against the Headteacher or Governors)

At **The Eden School**, we are committed to a clear, transparent, and timely process for addressing complaints. Our process consists of at least three stages:

- **Stage 1** – Informal Resolution
- **Stage 2** – Formal Investigation
- **Stage 3** – Review Panel

6.1 Stage 1: Informal Resolution

We take informal complaints seriously and aim to resolve concerns quickly and effectively at this stage. Often, providing additional information or clarification may resolve the issue before it escalates to a formal stage.

1. Raising an Informal Complaint:

- The complainant should raise their concern as soon as possible and within the timescales set out in **Section 5.1**.
- The complaint can be addressed to the relevant member of staff or the Headteacher in person, or via letter, telephone, or email. If the complainant is unsure whom to contact, they should contact the school office at:
 - **Phone:** [Insert Phone Number]
 - **Email:** [Insert School Email Address]

2. Acknowledgement and Response Time:

- The school will acknowledge receipt of the informal complaint within **3 school days**, outlining how the school intends to proceed and an estimated timeframe for resolution.

3. Informal Meeting:

- The informal stage will usually involve a meeting between the complainant and a relevant member of staff or the Headteacher. If appropriate, the subject of the complaint may also attend this meeting to help resolve the concern.

4. Written Response:

- A written response summarising the outcome of the meeting and any actions taken will be provided by the school within **5 school days** following the meeting. This response will aim to bring the matter to a close in an amicable and constructive manner.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the resolution at this informal stage, they have the option to escalate the matter to **Stage 2** for a formal investigation.

6.2 Stage 2: formal

The formal stage involves the complainant putting the complaint to the headteacher and/or the subject of the complaint:

- In a letter or email (this is preferred)
- Over the phone
- In person
- Through a third party acting on their behalf

The complainant should provide details such as relevant dates, times and the names of witnesses of events, alongside copies of any relevant documents. The complainant should also state what they feel would resolve the complaint.

If complainants need assistance raising a formal complaint, they can contact the school office

The Eden School

Phone

020 3627 5556

Mobile

07450 462 752

The Old Vicarage
High Street, Harmondsworth,
Middx,
UB7 0AQ

info@theedenschool.com

If the complaint cannot be resolved informally, it will move to the formal stage for investigation.

1. **Recording the Complaint:**

The Headteacher will record the date the formal complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt in writing (either by letter or email) within **5 school days**.

2. **Investigation:**

The Headteacher, or another member of staff appointed by the Headteacher, will conduct an investigation into the complaint. This may involve reviewing relevant documentation, interviewing witnesses, or gathering evidence. The complainant may also be asked to provide any additional information to support their complaint.

3. **Conclusion and Response:**

Once the investigation is complete, a written conclusion will be sent to the complainant within **10 school days**. This letter will include a summary of the findings and any actions that the school will take to resolve the issue.

How to Escalate a Complaint

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the formal investigation and wishes to proceed to the next stage, they should inform the clerk to the governing board in writing within **5 school days** of receiving the formal response. Requests received outside of this timeframe will be considered in exceptional circumstances.

Complaints can be escalated by contacting the clerk to the governing board:

- By letter or email

- Over the phone
- In person
- Through a third party acting on behalf of the complainant

The clerk will require:

- A summary of the complaint and how it was addressed at the previous stage
- Details on why the complainant feels the previous stage did not resolve their complaint satisfactorily
- What they feel would resolve the complaint

The clerk will acknowledge receipt of the request within **3 school days**.

6.3 Stage 3: review panel

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the formal investigation (Stage 2), they may request for the complaint to be escalated to the panel hearing stage.

1. Panel Composition:

- The panel will be appointed by, or on behalf of, the proprietor and must consist of at least 3 people who were not directly involved in the matters related to the complaint.
- At least 1 panel member must be independent of the management and operation of the school. This is in line with **The Eden School's** commitment to impartiality and transparency.
- The panel cannot consist solely of governing board members, as they are not considered independent of the school's management and operations.

2. Access to Records:

- The panel will have access to the full record of the complaint's progress, which includes all relevant documentation, communications, and notes from previous stages of the process (see section 10 for more details on record-keeping).

3. Notice of the Panel Hearing:

- The complainant will be given reasonable notice of the date of the review panel meeting. The clerk will aim to secure a date within **10 school days** of receiving the request for a panel hearing, where possible.
- If the complainant rejects 3 proposed dates without providing a valid reason, the clerk will set a date for the hearing. In this case, the panel hearing will proceed with the available written submissions from both parties.

4. Written Submissions:

- Any written material related to the complaint (including evidence and responses from both parties) will be circulated to all parties, including the complainant, at least **5 school days** before the date of the meeting.

5. Recording of Proceedings:

- The review panel hearing will be formally minuted, ensuring an accurate and complete record of the proceedings. These minutes will be kept confidential and will be available only to those directly involved in the hearing or to an inspection body if required.

At the meeting

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless required as part of reasonable adjustments. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending will be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

At the review panel meeting, the complainant and representatives from the school, as appropriate, will be present. Each will have an opportunity to set out written or oral submissions prior to the meeting.

The complainant must be allowed to attend the panel hearing and be accompanied if they wish. We don't encourage either party to bring legal representation, but will consider it on a case-by-case basis. For instance, if a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by their union.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

At the meeting, each individual will have the opportunity to give statements and present their evidence, and witnesses will be called, as appropriate, to present their evidence.

The panel, the complainant and the school representative(s) will be given the chance to ask and reply to questions. Once the complainant and school representative(s) have presented their cases, they will be asked to leave and evidence will then be considered.

The panel will then put together its findings and recommendations from the case. The panel will also provide copies of the minutes of the hearing and the findings and recommendations to the complainant and, where relevant, the individual who is the subject of the complaint, and make a copy available for inspection by the proprietor and headteacher.

The outcome

The committee can:

- › Uphold the complaint, in whole or in part
- › Dismiss the complaint, in whole or in part

If the complaint is upheld, the committee will:

- › Decide the appropriate action to resolve the complaint
- › Where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future

The school will inform those involved of the decision in writing within 5 school days.

6.3 Stage 3: submit the complaint to an independent reviewer

The independent reviewer is appointed by or on behalf of the proprietor. This person must not, at any time, have been a governor of the school, or a member of staff or supply staff at the school, and must not have been the parent of a registered or former registered pupil at the school. They must also not have been directly involved in any matter detailed in the complaint.

The independent reviewer will convene a review meeting with the complainant and representatives from the school, as appropriate. Each will have an opportunity to set out written or oral submissions prior to the meeting.

At the meeting, each individual will have the opportunity to give statements and present their evidence, and witnesses will be called as appropriate to present their evidence.

The independent reviewer, the complainant and the school representative(s) will be given the chance to ask and reply to questions.

The complainant, proprietor and headteacher and, where relevant, the subject of the complaint, will be given a copy of the findings and recommendations made by the independent person.

The school will inform those involved of the decision in writing within 5 school days.

7. Complaints against the headteacher, a governor or the governing board

The information below is taken from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) model complaints procedures for single academies.

Set out more information about your school's procedure for dealing with complaints of this kind here, including who will be involved and timescales.

7.1 Stage 1: informal

Complaints made against the headteacher or any individual member of the governing board (including the chair or vice-chair) should be directed to the clerk of the governing board in the first instance.

A suitably skilled and impartial governor will then carry out the steps at stage 1 set out in section 6 above.

If the complaint is not resolved informally, it will be escalated to a formal complaint.

Complaints about the whole governing board will be resolved at stage 2 below.

How to escalate a complaint

Complaints can be escalated by contacting the clerk to the governing board:

- By letter or email
- Over the phone
- In person
- Through a third party acting on behalf of the complainant

The clerk will need the details of the complaint as set out above, as well as details from the complainant on how they feel the previous stage of the procedure has not addressed their complaint sufficiently, and what they feel would resolve the complaint.

7.2 Stage 2: formal

Complaints that involve or are about the headteacher should be addressed to the chair of governors, via the school office, marked as private and confidential.

Complaints about the chair of governors, any individual governor or the whole governing body should be addressed to the clerk to the governing board via the school office, marked as private and confidential.

Formal complaints can be raised:

- By letter or email
- Over the phone
- In person
- By a third party acting on behalf of the complainant

If the complaint is about the headteacher or an individual governor, a suitably skilled and impartial governor will then carry out the steps at stage 2 set out in section 6 above.

If the complaint is:

- Jointly about the chair and vice-chair or
- The entire governing board or
- The majority of the governing board

An independent investigator will carry out the steps in stage 2 set out in section 6 above. They will be appointed by the governing board or diocese [delete as appropriate], and will write a formal response at the end of their investigation.

The written conclusion of this investigation will be sent to the complainant within [number] school days.

If the complainant wishes to proceed to the next stage of the procedure, they should inform the clerk to the governing board in writing within [number] school days. Requests received outside of this timeframe will be considered in exceptional circumstances.

The clerk will acknowledge receipt of the request within [number] school days.

Academies use the following section:

7.3 Stage 3: review panel

If the complaint is about the headteacher or an individual governor, the steps outlined in stage 3 of section 6 above will be followed.

If the complaint is:

- › Jointly about the chair and vice-chair or
- › The entire governing board, or
- › The majority of the governing board

A committee of independent governors will hear the complaint. They will be sourced from local schools, the local authority or diocese [delete as appropriate] and will carry out the steps at stage 3 (set out in section 6 above).

Non-maintained schools use the following section:

7.3 Stage 3: submit the complaint to an independent reviewer

If the complaint is about:

- › The headteacher
- › An individual governor
- › The chair and vice-chair or
- › The entire governing board, or
- › The majority of the governing board

The steps outlined in stage 3 of section 6 above will be followed.

8. Referring complaints on completion of the school's procedure

At **The Eden School**, complaints against the headteacher, individual governors, or the entire governing board will be dealt with in line with the procedures outlined below. We maintain a fair, impartial, and transparent process to ensure that all complaints are managed effectively and in accordance with statutory requirements.

7.1 Stage 1: Informal

Complaints made against the headteacher or any individual member of the governing board (including the chair or vice-chair) should be directed to the clerk of the governing board in the first instance. The complainant may submit their concern via letter, email, phone, or in person. The clerk will appoint a suitably skilled and impartial governor to address the complaint in line with the procedures outlined in section 6.1 for informal complaints.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the informal process, the complaint will be escalated to a formal complaint under stage 2.

How to escalate a complaint:

- Complaints can be escalated by contacting the clerk to the governing board:
 - By letter or email
 - Over the phone
 - In person
 - Through a third party acting on behalf of the complainant
- The clerk will acknowledge receipt of the request within **5 school days**, providing the next steps in the process.

7.2 Stage 2: Formal

Complaints that involve or are about the headteacher should be addressed to the chair of governors, via the school office, marked as private and confidential. Similarly, complaints against the chair of governors, an individual governor, or the entire governing board should be directed to the clerk to the governing board. Formal complaints can be raised by letter, email, phone, or through a third party acting on behalf of the complainant.

For complaints about the headteacher or an individual governor, a suitably skilled and impartial governor will investigate the matter following the steps outlined in section 6.2 for formal complaints.

Complaints against the governing board: If the complaint involves:

- The chair and vice-chair jointly,
- The entire governing board, or
- The majority of the governing board,

An independent investigator will be appointed by the governing board or a designated authority (such as the diocese) to carry out the investigation. The investigator will write a formal response at the conclusion of their investigation, which will be provided to the complainant within **20 school days**.

How to escalate the complaint: If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, they may request to move the complaint to stage 3, by contacting the clerk to the governing board in writing within **10 school days**. Requests received outside of this timeframe will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

7.3 Stage 3: Review Panel

For complaints involving the headteacher, an individual governor, the chair and vice-chair jointly, the entire governing board, or the majority of the governing board, the review panel will be convened as outlined in section 6.3 of this policy.

A committee of independent governors will hear the complaint. These governors may be sourced from local schools, the local authority, or the diocese, as appropriate. The panel will conduct a thorough review of the evidence and the previous stages of the complaint process, ensuring an impartial and fair hearing.

8. Referring Complaints on Completion of The Eden School's Complaints Procedure

If the complainant is unsatisfied with the outcome of the school's complaints procedure, they have the right to refer the complaint to an appropriate body, depending on the nature of the complaint:

Complaints to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA):

For complaints regarding compliance with regulations or contractual agreements, the complainant can refer the matter to the ESFA. The ESFA will not overturn a school's decision but will assess whether the school has:

- Breached any clauses in its funding agreement,
- Failed to act in line with its duties under education law,
- Acted unreasonably when exercising its functions.

Should the ESFA find that the school's complaints procedure is not compliant with regulations, the school will be required to correct its procedure accordingly.

For more information or to refer a complaint to the ESFA, visit: www.gov.uk/complain-about-school

Complaints to the Department for Education (DfE):

If the complaint relates to The Eden School failing to meet standards in the following areas, the complainant can refer the issue to the Department for Education (DfE):

- Education,
- Pupil welfare and health and safety,
- School premises,
- Staff suitability,
- Provision of information to parents,
- Spiritual, moral, social, or cultural development of pupils.

The DfE will review reports of significant failures to meet standards and, where necessary, arrange an emergency inspection to address serious concerns.

For more information or to refer a complaint to the DfE, visit: www.gov.uk/complain-about-school

Additional Steps for Other Types of Complaints:

In cases where the complainant is unsatisfied with the school's complaints process but the complaint does not fall under ESFA or DfE purview, it is advisable for the complainant to seek legal advice or use alternative dispute resolution mechanisms if applicable. Independent schools may offer mediation or an external review body as part of their resolution processes.

9. Unreasonable and persistent complaints

At **The Eden School**, we are committed to providing a clear, transparent, and fair process for handling complaints. We believe that all complaints should be handled with care and respect, and we aim to reach a resolution that satisfies all parties involved. However, we recognise that, in some cases, complainants may become unreasonably persistent in their pursuit of an outcome, even after the proper complaints procedure has been followed and concluded.

In handling **unreasonably persistent complaints**, we adhere to the following principles:

1. Definition of Unreasonably Persistent Complaints

A complaint may be considered unreasonably persistent if:

- The complainant continues to pursue the same issue after it has been fully investigated and concluded according to the school's complaints policy.
- The complainant frequently changes the focus of their complaint or raises unrelated concerns, despite being informed that the complaint process for their original complaint has been completed.
- The complainant makes excessive demands on school staff or governors, such as numerous letters, emails, phone calls, or requests for meetings, that are clearly intended to aggravate and cause disruption.
- The complainant seeks an unrealistic outcome that cannot be achieved or insists on having their complaint dealt with in a manner that goes against the school's established procedures.

2. Initial Consideration

When a complaint becomes unreasonably persistent, the school will:

- Review the handling of the original complaint to ensure that it was conducted fairly and in line with the school's policy.

- Communicate clearly with the complainant, explaining that the complaint process has been completed and that the school's decision is final.
- Provide the complainant with information on their options for escalating the complaint externally (e.g., to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) or the Department for Education (DfE)) if they remain dissatisfied.

3. Managing Unreasonably Persistent Complainants

If a complainant continues to pursue their issue despite the school's reasonable efforts to resolve it, the headteacher or a senior member of staff may:

- Limit the frequency and form of communication. This could include only accepting correspondence in writing, limiting responses to one per month, or setting specific times for phone calls or meetings.
- Assign a single point of contact for the complainant to communicate with.
- Decline to accept any further complaints about the same issue.

4. Ceasing Correspondence

In cases where the school has taken every reasonable step to address the complainant's concerns and given a clear statement of its position, the decision may be made to stop responding to the complainant. This will only happen if:

- The school has reason to believe that further correspondence will not provide any additional resolution.
- The complainant's actions are harassing or causing undue stress to school staff or governors.

When this decision is made, the school will notify the complainant in writing, providing the reasons for ceasing further communication and outlining the external steps the complainant can take if they still wish to pursue the matter.

5. Unreasonable Behaviour

In situations where the complainant's behaviour becomes offensive, threatening, or abusive towards school staff, governors, or other members of the school community, the school will take appropriate action. This may include:

- Reporting the behaviour to relevant authorities.
- Seeking legal advice or intervention if necessary.

6. Review and Monitoring

The Eden School will review any decision to classify a complaint as unreasonably persistent or to cease correspondence, ensuring that the decision aligns with our commitment to fairness and transparency. The governing board will be informed of any persistent complaints that reach this stage, and all actions will be recorded in line with data protection regulations.

We strive to maintain an open and respectful dialogue with all members of the school community. While we aim to resolve all complaints in a constructive manner, we are also committed to protecting the wellbeing of our staff and pupils and ensuring that the school can operate efficiently. Therefore, handling unreasonably persistent complaints in this way allows us to focus on the needs of the school community as a whole.

9.1 Unreasonable complaints

Most complaints raised will be valid, and therefore we will treat them seriously. However, a complaint may become unreasonable if the person:

- › 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 complaints investigation process
- › Refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure

- › Insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice
- › Introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account 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 ESFA
- › 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

Please note: the above list is not intended to be exhaustive and is for guidance purposes only. It is at the discretion of the school what is deemed to be unreasonable.

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school 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.

Steps we will take

We will take every reasonable step to address the complainant's comments, and give them a clear statement of our position and their options. We will maintain our role as an objective arbiter throughout the process, including when we meet with individuals. We will follow our complaints procedure as normal (as outlined above) wherever possible.

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, refer them to this policy and remind them to act in accordance with it. For complainants who excessively contact the school causing a significant level of disruption, we may:

- › Give the complainant a single point of contact via an email address
- › Limit the number of times the complainant can make contact, such as a fixed number per term
- › Ask the complainant to engage a third party to act on their behalf, such as [Citizens Advice](#)
- › Put any other strategy in place as necessary

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 school premises and ensuring appropriate measures of support are provided to staff where they are the subject of aggression and/or violence.

9.2 Serial/persistent complaints

If the complainant contacts the school again on the same issue, the correspondence may then be viewed as 'serial' or 'persistent'. We may stop responding to the complainant when the following conditions are met:

- › We have taken every reasonable step to address the complainant's concerns
- › The complainant has been given a clear statement of our position and their options
- › The complainant contacts the school repeatedly, making substantially the same points each time

The case to stop responding is stronger if:

- › The complainant's communications are often or always abusive or aggressive
- › The complainant makes insulting personal comments about or threats towards staff
- › We have reason to believe the individual is contacting the school with the intention of causing disruption or inconvenience

Where we decide to stop responding, we will inform the individual that we intend to do so. We will also explain that we will consider any new complaints they make provided the concerns raised are materially different to those raised previously and/or are unconnected to the previous concern

9.3 Duplicate complaints

If we have resolved a complaint under this procedure and receive a duplicate complaint on the same subject from a partner, family member or other individual, we will assess whether there are aspects that we hadn't previously considered, or any new information we need to take into account.

If we are satisfied that there are no new aspects, we will:

- › Tell the new complainant that we have already investigated and responded to this issue, and that the local process is complete
- › Direct them to the ESFA if they are dissatisfied with our original handling of the complaint

If a duplicate complaint is raised which in the view of the school warrants further consideration, the procedure outlined in section 6 or 7 (as appropriate) will be repeated.

9.4 Complaint campaigns

Where the school receives a large volume of complaints about the same topic or subject, especially if these come from complainants unconnected with the school, the school may respond to these complaints by:

- › Publishing a single response on the school website
- › Sending a template response to all of the complainants

If complainants are not satisfied with the school's response, or wish to pursue the complaint further, the normal procedures will apply.

10. Record keeping and confidentiality

The Eden School will record the progress of all complaints, including details of any actions taken at all stages, the stage at which the complaint was resolved, and the final outcome. The records will also include copies of any letters, emails, and notes related to meetings and phone calls.

These records will be treated as confidential and stored securely. They will only be viewed by those directly involved in investigating or reviewing the complaint, except in the following circumstances:

- **Subject Access Requests (SARs):** Under the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK GDPR, individuals have the right to request access to their personal data. If a SAR is submitted, the school is legally obliged to provide the requested information, barring exemptions related to safeguarding or legal confidentiality.
- **Requests from the Secretary of State or Regulatory Authorities:** If the Secretary of State for Education (or someone acting on their behalf), or regulatory authorities such as the Independent

Schools Inspectorate (ISI) or Ofsted, request access to records, The Eden School is required to provide the relevant information.

- **School Inspections:** During an inspection by the ISI or Ofsted, records relevant to the inspection, particularly those related to safeguarding, education standards, and governance, must be made available.

The details of the complaint, including the names of individuals involved, will not be shared with the entire governing board in case a review panel needs to be convened later. If the governing board has prior knowledge of the substance of the complaint, the school will make reasonable efforts to arrange for an independent panel to hear the complaint.

Complainants also have the right to request an independent panel if they believe there is likely to be bias in the proceedings. The decision to approve this request will be made by the governing board, which will not unreasonably withhold consent.

Records of complaints will be kept securely for as long as necessary in line with data protection law, our privacy notices, and our **Record Retention Schedule**.

11. Learning lessons

The **governing board** will review any underlying issues raised by complaints with the **headteacher** and **senior leadership team**, where appropriate, and respecting confidentiality, to determine whether there are any improvements that the school can make to its procedures or practices to help prevent similar events in the future.

This ensures that the school learns from complaints and takes proactive steps to improve processes while maintaining the confidentiality of the individuals involved.

12. Monitoring arrangements

The **governing board** will monitor the effectiveness of the complaints procedure to ensure that complaints are handled properly. The **governing board** will track the number and nature of complaints and review underlying issues as stated in section 11.

The complaints records are logged and managed by the **school administrator**.

This policy will be reviewed by the **headteacher** every **2 years**.

At each review, the policy will be approved by the **full governing board**.

13. Links with other policies

Policies dealing with other forms of complaints include:

- › Child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures
- › Admissions policy
- › Suspension and permanent exclusion policy
- › Staff grievance procedures
- › Staff disciplinary procedures
- › Special educational needs policy and information report
- › Privacy notices