



COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURES

**Ratified by the Governing Body
July 2026
Next Review Due Summer 2027**

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Allerton Grange Complaints Policy Statement

This policy statement sets out the school's approach to dealing with concerns and complaints. Further details of how we handle them are contained in our policy, which you can obtain on the school website or on request from the school office.

Our commitment

- We value good home/school relations and will, therefore, do everything we can to establish and maintain them. This includes seeking to resolve any concerns or complaints promptly, and to the satisfaction of all concerned.
- We welcome feedback on what parents and others feel we do well, or not so well, as a school. We will consider carefully all feedback, whether positive or negative, and will review our policies and practices accordingly.
- We will treat all concerns and complaints seriously and courteously and will advise parents and others of the school's procedures for dealing with their concerns. In return, we expect parents and other complainants to behave respectfully towards all members of the school community. In particular, any disagreement with the school should not be expressed inappropriately or in front of students.
- All school staff and members of the governing body will receive a copy of this policy statement to familiarise themselves with the school's procedures for dealing with concerns and complaints, to which they will have access as required. The policy is available on request and also on the school's website.
- The school's procedures will be reviewed and updated as necessary.
- Staff and governors will receive training in handling concerns and complaints as appropriate. This may be on an individual basis, or as a group activity for all staff, or for specific groups, such as administration staff or members of the governing body.
- Whilst we will seek to resolve concerns and complaints to the satisfaction of all parties, it may not be possible to achieve this in every case. We will, therefore, use our option to close a complaint once all the stages of the school's procedures have been exhausted, if this appears to be appropriate.
- The government, school and local authority advocate resolution of concerns and complaints at school level wherever possible, in the interests of maintaining good home/school relations.

1. **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 Allerton Grange 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.

2. The Department for Education (DfE) outlines the key difference between a **concern** and a **complaint**.

- A **concern** is an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought. This would not normally constitute grounds regarding a formal complaint.
- A **complaint** is a clear statement of dissatisfaction, about actions taken or a lack of action.

3. In accordance with equality law, we may consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure. If you feel you need assistance in respect of any disability or other circumstances, please inform the school as early as possible.

4. Before deciding to proceed with a formal complaint (Stage 1 onwards), it may be helpful to consult with the **Framework for Informed Decision-Making**. This outlines decisions that all schools are reasonably and lawfully allowed to make without stakeholder approval. In the interests of transparency, it is likely that 'agreeing to disagree' may be the only outcome in situations where complaints are centred around areas covered with this protocol. For information, this is attached as **Appendix One** to this policy.

5. Complaints made outside of term time will be considered as if they have been received on the first school day after the holiday period (*as per DfE Guidance*). This will also apply where a complaint is received **within two days** of the end of a term and/or there is insufficient time to proceed with any actions outlined within this policy.

6. If it becomes necessary to alter the time limits and deadlines set out within this procedure, complainants will be advised accordingly and given an explanation as to why this has been the case and provided with revised timescales. If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority safeguarding teams or tribunals/courts, 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.

7. We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints (*as per DfE Guidance*).

8. Complaints about staff conduct will not generally be handled under the Complaints Policy & Procedure. Complainants will be advised that any staff conduct complaints will be considered under the Staff Disciplinary Policy & Procedure, if appropriate. Unfortunately, we will not be able to share the outcome of this process.

9. We respectfully ask that you raise the complaint **within three months** of the incident. Where a series of associated incidents have occurred within three months of the last of these incidents, we will only consider complaints outside of this time in exceptional circumstances (*as per DfE Guidance*).

10. In accordance with DfE Guidance, complainants will be given the opportunity to complete the complaints procedure in full, unless there is evidence that the complaint is vexatious, unreasonable or meets the DfE criteria for serial complaints. This would only be actioned when agreed between the Headteacher and Chair of Governors. Details regarding the closure of complaints are outlined at the end of this policy.

11. Complainants should not approach governors directly to raise complaints. They have no power to act collectively or individually, and prior knowledge of a case may prevent them from hearing the complaint at Stage 2 of the procedure. The exception to this is complaints about the Headteacher, which should be addressed to the Chair of Governors (*as per DfE Guidance*).
12. Where a complaint is raised but we do not have clarity from the complainant on the issues and/or desired outcomes, we will inform the complainant what information we need to progress the complaint and pause this procedure until reasonable clarity is achieved.
13. In line with DfE guidance, if the complaint is about the Headteacher, or a member of the governing board (including Chair or Vice Chair), a suitably skilled governor or appropriate independent person will be appointed to complete all actions at Stage 1 of this policy. A committee of members of the governing board would consider the complaint at Stage 2.

Complaints about the Headteacher should be addressed to the Chair of Governors, via the school office. If the complaint is:

- Jointly about the Chair or Vice chair or
- The entire governing board or
- The majority of the governing board

Such complaints should be addressed to the Clerk to the Governing Body (Mrs B Manfredi), beverleymanfredi@allertongrange.com.

Stage 1 will be considered by an independent investigator appointed by the Chair of Governors or appropriate governing body member. At the end of their investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response. Actions would be taken with advice from the Clerk to the Governing board or Complaint's Co-ordinator who will take into account the nature of the complaint and consider the latest DfE 'Best Practice Guidance for School Complaints Procedures'.

14. Where a complainant seeks an unreasonable outcome to the complaint we will, for transparency, inform the complainant of this. We will indicate that it is not realistic for the complaints procedure to be used as a means to achieve this outcome. Unreasonable outcomes may include (but are not limited to):
 - a) Seeking dismissal of staff or a particular behaviour sanction which would not be proportionate with Allerton Grange School's disciplinary or behaviour policies.
 - b) Demanding compensation.
 - c) Unilateral demands that Allerton Grange School cannot accommodate.
 - d) Retroactive changes.
 - e) Immediate resolution.
 - f) Face to face or written apology.
15. Our staff will not respond to communications or complaints that are abusive, threatening, or rude. We will listen to concerns and deal with complaints as outlined in this policy, but these should be addressed in a manner which is respectful and appropriate. **(Please refer to our separate Communications Policy).**
16. **Agreed Communications Plans (per DfE Guidance)**

In accordance with the Department for Education (DfE) guidance, when communication with parents or carers becomes complex or repetitive, the school may implement an agreed communications plan. The plan will clearly outline how and when contact will occur, ensuring that both parties understand and manage expectations. This approach is designed to streamline communication and prevent unnecessary or excessive contact.
17. **Withdrawal of a Complaint**

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

18. Scope of this Complaints Procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services b Allerton Grange School, 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	Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with complaints.children@leeds.gov.uk
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. Please contact our Safeguarding Team (Child Protection - Policies - Allerton Grange School) If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding lado@leeds.gov.uk or contact Duty and Advice - Report a child protection concern
Exclusion of children from school*	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions. <i>*complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure. Policies - Allerton Grange School</i>
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 Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.
Staff grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.
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.
National Curriculum - content	Please contact the Department for Education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus

Allerton Grange School's Procedures for Dealing with Complaints

Complaints will usually be handled under the following general procedures.

To ensure you receive an effective response to your complaint, it will be helpful if you:

- Work positively with the school in seeking a solution to the complaint.
- Respond promptly to request for information or meetings.
- Be specific about your preferred outcome.

The procedure is divided into three stages:

- **The informal stage** aims to resolve the concern through informal contact at the appropriate level in school.
- **Stage one** is the first formal stage at which written complaints are considered by the Headteacher. If the complaint is about the Headteacher, the Chair of Governors will appoint a suitably qualified governor to consider the complaint.
- **Stage two** is the final stage of the Complaints Procedure within school. It involves the complaint being considered by an appeal panel of governors.

Each stage is explained as follows:

Informal Stage *(Your initial contact with the school)*

1. Many concerns will be dealt with informally when you make them known to us. The first point of contact should be your child's Form Tutor / Head of Year / Key Stage Manager or Leader.
2. Once your concern is made known to us, we will contact you usually by telephone, or in writing, as soon as possible.
3. Any Actions or monitoring of the situation that has been agreed, will be communicated clearly and we may choose to confirm this in writing.
4. If necessary, we will contact appropriate people who may be able to assist us with our enquiries into your concern.
5. We will normally update you on the progress of our enquiries **within 10 school days**.
6. If, following informal attempts to compromise or seek a mutually acceptable outcome, you are still dissatisfied it is possible to essentially 'agree to disagree'.
7. You can also request that it becomes a formal complaint which is then dealt with at the next stage.

Stage 1 – Formal Consideration of your Complaint

We encourage an open dialogue and value the right of our community to raise complaints and express concerns. However, we respectfully ask that you carefully consider your desired outcome before proceeding to the formal stages of this policy. Investigations take a considerable amount of time, we have limited capacity within school, and we passionately believe that our efforts are often best spent focusing on ensuring that our students are happy, safe and make progress.

We also readily acknowledge that, whilst we always try to serve our community and maintain the highest standards of conduct, from time-to-time mistakes are made. Also, in the context of such a large community (we are a school of 1700 students) it is not always possible to secure agreement on every issue and, as such, disagreements are unfortunately inevitable: although it is never our intention to disappoint.

For these reasons, we ask members of our community to work with us to find a resolution within the informal stage wherever possible.

This stage in our procedure deals with written complaints. It applies where you are not happy with the informal approach to dealing with your concern, as outlined above:

1. Stage 1 complaints should be set out using the form **Appendix Two** and emailed to agadmin@allertongrange.com. This must be completed within 10 school days of the receipt of the informal procedure resolution. The complainant should:
 - Explain the nature of the complaint and why they consider that the issues have not been resolved at the informal stage.
 - Be very clear about what actions they believe would put things right.
2. We will acknowledge your complaint in writing as soon as possible after receiving it (normally **within 3 school days**). We will enclose a copy of these procedures with the acknowledgement letter.
3. The complaint will be investigated by the Headteacher (or senior leader appointed by the Headteacher). At the discretion of the Headteacher, it may also be appropriate to invite a suitably qualified independent person, governor or staff member to carry out the investigation.
4. Normally we would expect to respond in full **within 20 school days**, but if this is not possible, we will write to explain the reason for the delay and be clear as to when we hope to be able to provide a full response. We will, however, always respond as soon as we can.
5. As part of our consideration of your complaint, we may invite you to a meeting to discuss the complaint and gather further information if required. If you wish, you can ask someone to accompany you to help you explain the reasons for your complaint.
6. The Headteacher or Investigating Officer may also be accompanied by a suitably qualified person to advise, guide and support.
7. Following the meeting, the Headteacher, or appointed Investigating Officer may talk to witnesses and take statements from others involved. If the complaint centres on a student, we will consider if it is necessary to talk to the student concerned and, where appropriate, others present at the time of the incident in question.
8. We will always take into account what is in the best interest of the child when making any decision regarding them in an investigation. We will inform a parent if we consider this to be necessary. We may

also choose to invite parents or a suitable member of staff to be part of any discussion with the child, if we believe that the student needs particular support or reassurance.

9. If the complaint is against a member of staff, it will be dealt with under the school's internal confidential procedures, as required by law. As such, the outcome cannot be shared externally, but the school will offer assurances that appropriate procedures have been followed.
10. Once we have established all the relevant facts, we will respond to your complaint with a formal resolution. This will usually be in writing and will provide an explanation of the Headteacher's or Investigating Officer's findings and conclusions. Outcomes to a complaint may include:
 - a) A finding that the complaint requires no further action.
 - b) A finding that there is insufficient evidence to reach a conclusion.
 - c) An acknowledgement that the situation could have been handled differently (this is not the same as an admission of negligence).
 - d) An apology.
 - e) Acceptance that this is a disagreement rather than a complaint and no mutually acceptable outcome can be reached other than, perhaps, "agree to disagree".
 - f) An explanation of the actions taken to ensure that it will not happen again.
 - g) An undertaking to review current procedures or protocols.
11. The person investigating your complaint may decide that we have done all we can to resolve the complaint. The desired outcome set out by the complainant is not achievable, reasonable or that school has no moral or statutory obligation to enact. In such cases, the school will inform the complainant that no further action can be taken by the school in terms of further investigation or to secure agreement.
12. We may invite you to a meeting to discuss any of the above outcomes as part of our commitment to building and maintaining good relations with you.
13. If you are unhappy with these conclusions, you may wish to proceed to stage 2, as described below.

Please note: When a situation is investigated, conclusions will be drawn based upon the 'balance of probabilities'.

The 'onus of proof' is not the same as that followed by police in criminal proceedings. Professional opinion of the Investigating Officer will be used to draw 'highly likely' conclusions.

On occasions where there is an ongoing police investigation, any consideration of a complaint will be put on hold until the outcome of the police investigation is known.

Stage 2 – Consideration by an Appeal Panel

1. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the formal resolution, they have a right to present their arguments in front of a specifically convened appeal panel.
2. Any appeal must be emailed to the Clerk to the Governing Body beverleymanfredi@allertongrange.com within 10 school days of the Stage One resolution.
3. This panel will consist of three governors that have no prior knowledge of the case.
4. It would be helpful to governors if the complainant is specific about why they remain dissatisfied and any update as to the desired outcome they are seeking. (Given time constraints and limited resources within schools, complainants are respectfully asked to consider carefully if any constructive remedy is indeed possible).
5. In exceptional circumstances, the Chair of Governors may choose to invite a Governor from another school to join the panel.
6. Once the school has made reasonable attempts to source a mutually convenient date and time for the panel hearing, or where the complainant does not attend at an agreed time, the proceedings will go ahead in their absence. This will conclude the internal complaints procedure.

The Governors' Appeal Panel operates according to the following Formal Procedures

1. The Chair of Governors will arrange a panel of three Governors and ensure that the panel hearing takes place within **25 school days**. *Due to the limited daytime availability of governors, arranging panel meetings can be challenging. As such, please note that we are only able to rearrange a hearing date on one occasion, unless there are extenuating circumstances. Further delays can result in the process exceeding the specified timeframe. If the complainant is unable to attend the second date offered, the hearing will proceed in their absence.
2. You will be asked whether you wish to provide any further written documentation in support of your appeal.
3. The Headteacher or Investigating Officer will respond to the concerns raised and inform the panel about the process at Stage 1. The panel can request additional information from other sources if necessary.
4. You will be informed, at least five school days in advance, of the date, time, and place of the meeting. You will also receive relevant correspondence or reports regarding Stage 1 that do not compromise confidentiality, and you will be asked whether you wish to submit further written evidence to the panel. Please note that it may be agreed by both parties that you do not need to attend the panel hearing, if it is deemed that there is sufficient written information to consider how the complaint process has been followed.
5. The letter will explain what will happen at the panel meeting and it will state that you are entitled to be accompanied. The choice of person to accompany you is your own, but it is usually best to involve someone in whom you have confidence. They are there to give you support but also to witness the proceedings and to speak on your behalf if you wish. You must alert the panel to who will be accompanying you, in writing, two days before the meeting. Please note that this is not a legal hearing or court case and, as such, any accompanying person is not there to act in a legal capacity.

6. The Investigating Officer may, with the agreement of the Chair of the panel, invite relevant witnesses directly involved in matters raised by you to attend the meeting.
7. The Chair of the panel will bear in mind that the nature of the meeting can be intimidating for you and will do their best to put you at ease.
8. As a general rule, no new evidence or witnesses should be introduced into the meeting. If either party wants to do this, the meeting may be adjourned at the discretion of the Chair, so that the other party has a fair opportunity to consider and respond to the new evidence. Reasons for disaffection will not normally be considered if this has not been put in writing as part of the complaint.
9. The complaints panel will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties involved.
10. The Chair of the panel will ensure that the meeting is properly minuted. Please understand that any decision to share the minutes with you, the complainant, is a matter for the panel's discretion and you do not have an automatic right to see or receive a copy. Since such minutes usually name individuals, they are understandably of a sensitive and, therefore, confidential nature. For the purpose of accuracy, meetings may be recorded.
11. During the meeting, you can expect there to be opportunities for:
 - a) The panel to hear you explain your complaint, desired outcome and argument for why it should be heard at stage 2.
 - b) The panel to hear the Investigating Officer's case in response.
 - c) You to raise questions via the Chair.
 - d) You to be questioned by the Investigating Officer through the Chair.
 - e) The panel members to be able to question you and the Investigating Officer.
 - f) You and the Headteacher / Investigating Officer to make a final statement (optional).
12. In closing the meeting, the Chair will explain that the panel will now consider its decision and that written notice of the decision will be sent to you and the Headteacher within five school days. All participants other than the panel and the administrator will then leave.
13. The panel will then consider the complaint and all the evidence presented in order to:
 - a) Reach a unanimous, or at least a majority, decision on the case; either to uphold the complaint in whole or in part or dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.
 - b) Decide on the appropriate action to be taken, if the complaint is upheld in whole or in part.
 - c) Recommend, where appropriate, to the Governing Board, changes to the school's systems or procedures to improve future practice.
14. The chair of the panel will send you and the Headteacher a letter outlining the decision of the panel.
15. We will keep a copy of all correspondence and notes on file in the school's records but separate from students' personal records.
16. The complaints Governor will periodically review any Stage 2 complaints to ensure that all procedures outlined within this policy are followed.
17. Meetings are not permitted to be recorded by complainants or their representatives. The school may make an official recording or written record for administrative purposes. Any requests to record a meeting will be considered on a case-by-case basis, where reasonable adjustments may be required.

A record of the written complaint and the outcome will be maintained and made available to Ofsted if requested.

Closure of Complaints

1. Very occasionally, the Headteacher, in consultation with the Chair of Governors, will feel that, regrettably, they need to close a complaint where the complainant is still dissatisfied.
2. We will do all we can as reasonably expected to help to resolve a complaint against the school but sometimes it is simply a case of “agreeing to disagree”. This could be where the complaint falls under those areas that are set out in **Appendix One** below (given that the school is legally and reasonably allowed to make such decisions and actions without consultation or agreement).
3. If a complainant persists in making representations to the school – to the Headteacher, Chair of Governors or anyone else – this can be extremely time-consuming and can detract from our responsibility to look after the interests of all the children and staff in our care.
4. For this reason, we are entitled to close correspondence (including personal approaches, as well as emails, letters and telephone calls) on a complaint where we feel that we have taken all reasonable action to resolve it and that the complaint has exhausted our official process.
5. Closure of a complaint may occur if the complainant refuses to come into school to discuss the complaint or provide sufficient information to allow the complaint to be investigated fully and effectively.
6. In exceptional circumstances (as outlined in the policy), the Headteacher in consultation with the Chair of Governors may decide that every reasonable action has been undertaken to resolve the complaint and that a Complaints Appeal Panel would not help to move things forward.
7. Closure of the complaint can occur if it is regarded as unreasonable, vexatious (see following page), or operates in a manner that is abusive, harassing or outside the expected behaviours set out in our published Communications Policy.

Unreasonable Complaints

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE FOLLOWING IS TAKEN DIRECTLY FROM DfE GUIDANCE (Model policy for managing serial and unreasonable complaints).

A complaint may be regarded as unreasonable when the person making the complaint:

1. Refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance.
2. Refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved.
3. Refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a Complaints Procedure.
4. Insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice.

5. Introduces trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant expects to be taken into account and commented on, or raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales.
6. Makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues and seeks to have them replaced.
7. Changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds.
8. Repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed).
9. 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.
10. Seeks an unrealistic outcome.
11. Makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone, while the complaint is being dealt with.
12. A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if the person making the complaint does so either face to face, by telephone, in writing or electronically:
 - Maliciously
 - Aggressively
 - Using threats, intimidation or violence
 - Using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language
 - Knowing it to be false
 - Using falsified information
 - Publishing unacceptable information in a variety of media such as in social media websites and newspapers

In summary, complaints with the following characteristics may be deemed 'vexatious':

- a) Obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious.
- b) Insistence on pursuing unmeritorious complaints and / or unrealistic outcomes.
- c) Insistence on pursuing meritorious complaints in an unrealistic manner.
- d) Complaints which are designed to cause disruption or annoyance.
- e) Demands for redress that lack any serious purpose or value.

In such cases, the school may write to the complainant to inform him / her that the complaint is deemed to be vexatious, and the school will not respond to any further correspondence on this issue or any closely related issue.

Complaint Campaigns

Where the school receives a number of complaints all based on the same subject which, in its reasonable opinion, may be deemed a 'complaint campaign', it will deal with the complaints in the following way: individual responses will not be sent to complainants in such cases. Instead, either a template response will be sent to all complainants, or a single response will be published on the school's website at the discretion of the Headteacher or Chair of Governors.

Serial or Persistent Complaints

If, at any level, a complainant or connected party attempts to reopen an issue or a closely related issue that has already been dealt with under this complaints procedure, the school may write to the complainant to inform him/her that the procedure has been exhausted and the matter closed; that continued correspondence on the same matter is vexatious, and that the school will not respond to any further correspondence on this issue or a closely related issue.

Legal Frameworks

This document meets the requirements of section 29 of the Education Act 2002, which states that schools must have and make available a procedure to deal with all complaints relating to their school and to any community facilities or services that the school provides.

It is also based on guidance for schools on complaints procedures from the Department for Education (DfE), including the model procedure, and model procedure for dealing with serial and unreasonable complaints.

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 Allerton Grange School. They will consider whether Allerton Grange 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: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:

Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD.

Overview of general 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 anyone else 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 course of action to resolve issue.
- 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 support officer / clerk to the governing body / governor or other staff member providing administrative support for complaints as appropriate)

This person would be the contact point for the complainant and the committee, and should:

- ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure
- liaise with relevant staff members, headteacher, chair of governors, clerk, investigating officer and external agencies (as 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
 - 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 the agreed timescale
 - notify all parties of the committee’s decision
 - circulate the notes of the meeting if requested.
- 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)
 - make a record of the process (this may include recording the meeting for accuracy. However, under data protection laws, we are not obliged to share recorded material with the complainant.

Committee Chair

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

- both parties are asked (via the school complaints coordinator) 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 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
- take notes of the meeting
- they liaise with the clerk and/or complaints co-ordinator.

Committee Members

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 1

Framework for Informed Decision-Making

At Allerton Grange School, we are committed to building strong, respectful relationships with parents, carers, and visitors to create a supportive, inclusive, and thriving learning environment. Our goal is to work in partnership with families and the wider community to help every student achieve their full potential, both academically and personally. The trust, support, and cooperation of our parent and carer community are essential to the continued success of our school. At AGS we strive to make sound, well-informed decisions, but recognise we may not always get everything right. We are committed to learning, improving, and acting with integrity. Above all, we ask for kindness and mutual respect. Working together positively enables us to provide the best possible education and experience for all Allerton Grange students.

Where appropriate, we aim to work collaboratively with parents and carers to uphold the highest standards across the school. We value open communication and the home-school relationship, and we regularly seek views from our community. We are also committed to transparency in our rationale behind key decisions where it is reasonable to do so. However, due to the size and complexity of our school, it is important to recognise that not every decision can be consulted on or agreed by all. In some cases, decisions are made that are not open to negotiation, and parental agreement is not required.

By choosing Allerton Grange School for your child, you acknowledge that schools (not just Allerton Grange) hold the right to make key decisions affecting the operation, policies, and strategic direction of the school. This position is supported by law:

1. Education Act 2002

- **Section 21** gives governing bodies responsibility for the conduct of the school, including setting the strategic direction, ensuring accountability, and overseeing financial performance.
- Schools have the legal authority to create and implement policies, including behaviour, uniform, curriculum, and more.

2. School Standards and Framework Act 1998

- This Act provides the framework for the organisation and management of schools in England.
- **Section 88** gives governing bodies the right to set admissions arrangements (within statutory criteria), reinforcing that schools are autonomous institutions with their own decision-making powers.

3. The Education and Inspections Act 2006

- Reinforces the duty of governing bodies to promote high standards and make decisions to improve school performance.
- Encourages autonomy and self-governance of schools, especially around discipline policies and behaviour.

Below are some examples of areas where the school may make decisions without needing to seek parental agreement. This list is not exhaustive:

- Class groupings, teacher allocation, setting arrangements, form groups, support staffing, or exam tier entry.
- Behaviour (PPD) and Uniform Policies, including associated sanctions such as detentions or internal isolations (we appreciate your understanding that this applies to all pupils without exception; unless pre-agreed reasonable adjustments are in place for those with a disability as outlined in the Equality Act 2010).
- The design and implementation of our rewards systems.

- Curriculum content, teaching methods, and the selection of resources.
- Quality Assurance processes, homework expectations, and feedback approaches.
- The range and structure of our extra-curricular offer.
- Timing of INSET/Training Days and key calendar events.
- Curriculum pathways and option choices, including restrictions due to pupil needs or timetable constraints.
- School policies and protocols as determined by the Senior Leadership Team and Governing Body.
- Allocation of resources, including staffing, based on the best interests of pupils and school-wide priorities.
- School trip planning, including destination choice, costings, and schedule.
- Health and safety policies, risk assessments, and safeguarding protocols.

We will always listen to concerns raised with the school, provided they are communicated in a respectful and constructive manner (in accordance with our published **Communications Policy**). However, please be aware that listening to concerns does not guarantee that a decision will be changed. Disagreement with a decision does not imply a lack of appreciation for parental/carers views, but we may need to respectfully agree to disagree.

We also want to be clear that decisions will not be revisited simply due to disagreement voiced via social media, group chats, co-signed letters, or petitions. The volume or intensity of feedback does not determine the validity or appropriateness of a decision. No individual or group has the authority to demand changes or override professional judgements made by staff. All decisions are made with the best interests of students, the school community, and the effective running of Allerton Grange School in mind. Our leadership team acts in line with Department for Education (DfE) guidance, legal responsibilities, and professional expertise.

Following our Complaints Procedure will only result in a decision being changed if it is found that the school has acted unlawfully or outside it's agreed policies.

Where appropriate, we will inform parents and carers without overwhelming families with information, but not every operational or internal matter will be shared or opened for discussion. Please note that some plans may change due to unforeseen circumstances. We will always aim to communicate any changes in a timely and clear manner and ask for your understanding.

Appendix 2

Complaint Form

Please complete and return to Allerton Grange School to the school office marked for the attention of the Headteacher, agadmin@allertongrange.com as appropriate who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:
Pupil's name (if relevant):
Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):
Address:
Postcode:
Day time telephone number: Evening telephone number: Email address:
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: