



Harrietsham Church of England Primary School

Complaints Policy and Procedures

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Date approved by Governing Body:	September 2026
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Review date:	September 2027

Harrietsham Church of England Primary School

Complaints Policy

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School Context:

Harrietsham CEP Vision Statement

We are a warm, welcoming, and inclusive school rooted in our rural community. Like the mustard seed we grew from tiny beginnings and our branches are now spread wide –providing support and taking our values beyond the school gates. All those in our community feel safe and nurtured - able to flourish and grow academically, spiritually, emotionally and physically to achieve their full God-given potential.

“Nurtured we flourish”

We are a nurturing school. As such we believe in, and follow, **The Six Principles of Nurture** in all of our practice.

1. Children's learning is understood developmentally.
2. The classroom offers a safe base.
3. The importance of nurture for the development of wellbeing.
4. Language is a vital means of communication.
5. All behaviour is communication.
6. The importance of transition in children's lives.

Our Values

The roots of our vision are in the parable of the Mustard Seed.

'The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches'.

Matthew 13 31-32

In order to grow and reach our potential, everything that we do in school is driven by our vision and underpinned by our core Christian values of:

Love, Fellowship and Forgiveness

Aims

The school's vision and values have shaped this policy as we welcome everyone into our secure, caring and inclusive environment, enabling them to flourish.

At Harrietsham CEP we value every God given life - every child is valued and respected.

We recognise that at times individuals may have concerns or complaints which need to be addressed in a process which is fair for all whatever their ability, aptitude, gender, race or faith.

The aim is always for an agreed solution to be found thus allowing the situation to be resolved, so that all may flourish within the school's supportive and caring environment.

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 Harrietsham Church of England Primary School about any provision of facilities or services that we provide.

Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as appeals relating to exclusions or admissions), we will use this complaints procedure.

The Difference Between a Concern and a Complaint

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

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

It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage.

Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. Harrietsham Church of England Primary School takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

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

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

How to Raise an Informal Concern

We have an open-door policy at the school and members of staff are always available to speak with you at the beginning and end of the school day.

An informal concern can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. The form in Appendix 1 may be useful if you wish to raise your concern in writing.

Concerns: Concerns should be raised with the class teacher in the first instance. Please see Appendix 2 in order to establish the correct person to raise a concern with.

At this stage informal mediation may be offered. While this can be useful in helping the school and complainants reach an agreement and move forward, there are times when it may not be the most appropriate course of action.

Mediation can:

- Provide a helpful mechanism for discussion when a concern is raised.
- Help to rebuild the relationship between all parties.

It should not be used as a substitute for an investigation during the formal stages of the complaints procedure.

If neither the complainant nor the school considers that mediation will serve any practical purpose at this point, the complainant will not be prevented from moving to the next investigative stage of the complaints procedure.

How to Make a Formal Complaint

Complaints: If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

A formal complaint should be made in writing, for clarity, so that we are clear on the points that you are seeking to complain about. The template in Appendix 3 of this policy may be used as a guide. If you are unable to record a complaint in writing, please ask to speak with the Headteacher and she will support you with this.

Formal complaints may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

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 Jackie Chambers (Headteacher) via the school office or via email to headteacher@harrietsham.kent.sch.uk. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

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

Complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor or the whole Governing Body should be addressed to Mrs Debbie Stryzyk (the Clerk to the Governing Body) via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

For ease of use, a template complaint form is included at the end of this procedure (Appendix 3). If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office. You can also ask third party organisations like the Citizens Advice to help you.

In accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments, if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure. For instance, providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

Anonymous Complaints

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

Time Scales

You must raise the complaint within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

Complaints Received Outside of Term Time

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

Scope of this Complaints Procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by Harrietsham Church of England Primary 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 Kent County Council.

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• 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: Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) - Kent Safeguarding Children Multi-Agency Partnership) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Kent Safeguarding Children Multi-Agency Partnership (KMSCP: Home - Kent Safeguarding Children Multi-Agency Partnership).
• 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 (available via school website) can be made through the school's complaints procedure.</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: https://www.gov.uk/contact-dfe 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 staff 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: https://www.gov.uk/contact-dfe

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 Harrietsham Church of England Primary School in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure in relation to their complaint until those legal proceedings have concluded.

If a complainant contacts Harrietsham Church of England Primary School again in relation to their complaint, the correspondence may then be viewed as 'serial' or 'persistent' and Harrietsham Church of England Primary School will not respond but will continue to complete the initial complaints procedure in full.

Duplicate Complaints

After closing a complaint at the end of the complaints procedure, if the school receive a duplicate complaint from:

- A spouse
- A partner
- A grandparent
- A child

the school will inform the new complainant that the school has already considered that complaint and the local process is complete. The school should advise the new complainant to contact the Department for Education should they be dissatisfied with the school's handling of the original complaint. Any new aspects to the original complaint will be investigated and dealt with to the full extent of the complaints procedure.

Resolving Complaints

At each stage in the procedure, Harrietsham Church of England Primary School wants to resolve the complaint.

If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- An explanation.
- An admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better.
- An assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur.
- An explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made.
- An undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint.
- An apology.

Withdrawal of a Complaint

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

The Complaints Process:

Stage 1

Formal complaints must be made to the Headteacher (unless they are about the Headteacher), via the school office or via the Headteachers email: headteacher@harrietsham.kent.sch.uk.

A formal complaint should be made in writing, for clarity, so that we are clear on the points that you are seeking to complain about. The template in Appendix 3 of this policy may be used as a guide. If you are unable to record a complaint in writing, please ask to speak with the Headteacher and she will support you with this.

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 7 school days.

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

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

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

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

At the conclusion of their investigation, the Headteacher will provide a formal written response within 20 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint.

If the Headteacher is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions Harrietsham Church of England Primary School will take to resolve the complaint.

The Headteacher will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1.

If the complaint is about the Headteacher, or a member of the Governing Body (including the Chair or Vice-Chair), a suitably skilled governor will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 1.

Complaints about the Headteacher must be made to the Chair of Governors, via the school office.

Complaints about the Chair of Governors, or any 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 1 may be considered by a suitably skilled and impartial member of the Governing Body or, if there are no suitably skilled and impartial members, it could be considered by an independent investigator appointed by the Clerk on behalf of the Governing Body or support could be sought from the Canterbury Diocese to provide an impartial investigator.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the chosen investigating body will provide a formal written response to the complainant and Governing Body.

Stage 2

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 1 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 2 – a meeting with members of the Governing Body's Complaints Committee, which will be formed of the first three, impartial, governors available. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.

A request to escalate to Stage 2 must be made to the Headteacher or Clerk of the Governing Body, in writing and via the school office, within 7 school days of receipt of the Stage 1 response. Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

The Headteacher will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 7 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 20 school days of receipt of the Stage 2 request. If this is not possible, the Clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates, without good reason, the Clerk will decide when to hold the meeting. It will then proceed in the complainant's absence on the basis of written submissions from both parties.

The Complaints Committee will consist of at least three governors with no prior involvement or knowledge of the complaint. Prior to the meeting, they will decide amongst themselves who will act as the Chair of the Complaints Committee. If there are fewer than three governors from Harrietsham Church of England Primary School 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 2.

Complainants can request an independent complaints committee if they believe there is likely to be bias in the proceedings. Complainants should provide the Clerk with evidence of bias in support of their request. The Governing Body will err on the side of caution if the appearance of bias may be sufficient to taint any decision reached.

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.

When the complainant attends the meeting, they may bring someone along to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. The Department for Education recommend that neither the complainant nor the school bring legal representation.

These committees are not a form of legal proceedings.

The aim of the governors committee should be:

- Reconciliation.
- To put right things that may have gone wrong.

The Department for Education recognises 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 these meetings.

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 7 school days before the meeting.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 5 school days before the date of the meeting. The committee will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

The committee will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

The committee will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented.

The committee can:

- Uphold the complaint in whole or in part.
- Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.

If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the committee will:

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

The Chair of the Committee will provide the complainant and Harrietsham C of E Primary School with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 15 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 Harrietsham C of E Primary School.

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 heard by a committee of independent governors convened by the Clerk from either impartial members of the GB or from another local maintained school, local governing board members and governors/trustees from within academies or multi academy trusts (academy governors should seek guidance and understanding from the Clerk on the different legislative framework that may need to be taken into consideration during the complaint's hearing at the appeal stage), an associate member of another Governing Body or from an entirely independent committee.

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 systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

The Chair of the Committee will provide the complainant and Harrietsham Church of England Primary School with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 15 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 Harrietsham Church of England Primary School together with a written record of the panel's findings and decision, subject to data protection requirements.

Complaint Campaigns

Occasionally, you may become the focus of a campaign and receive large volumes of complaints:

- All based on the same subject.
- From complainants unconnected with the school.

Following an internal investigation into the subject matter by the Senior Leadership Team, the school will respond either by:

- Sending a template response to all complainants or
- Publishing a single response on the school's website.

If complainants in this case remain dissatisfied they may refer to the "Next Steps" at the end of this policy.

Next Steps

If the complainant believes the school did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure, or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact the Department for Education after they have completed Stage 2.

The Department for Education will normally consider whether the school has followed its published complaints procedure, complied with relevant education legislation and acted reasonably in handling the complaint. The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by Harrietsham Church of England Primary School.

The complainant can refer their complaint to the Department for Education:

- **Online:** <https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school>
- **Telephone:** 0370 000 2288
- **Writing:**

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

Policy for Managing Serial, Persistent and Unreasonable Complaints

Harrietsham Church of England Primary School is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain. Anyone has the right to raise a new complaint at any time.

We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with the school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

The school defines serial, persistent and unreasonable complaints as 'those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contact with the school, hinder our consideration of their or other people's complaints'.

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

- 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 while still wishing their complaint to be resolved;
- Refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaints procedure;
- Insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice;

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- 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;
- Makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced;
- Changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds;
- Repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed);
- Refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education;
- Seeks an unrealistic outcome;
- Makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy, 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.

A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if the person making the complaint does so either face-to-face, by telephone or 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.

Complainants should limit the numbers of communications with a school while a complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text) as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking including suggesting that the complainant asks a third party to act on their behalf such as the local Citizen's Advice.

If the behaviour continues, the Headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and asking them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact the school causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication (such as restrict the complaint to a single point of contact via an email address) and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will usually be reviewed after 6 months.

In response to any serious incident of harassment, aggression or violence, the concerns and actions taken will be put in writing immediately (including the decision to stop responding) and the police informed. This may include barring an individual from school premises.

Barring from the School Premises

Although fulfilling a public function, schools are private places. The public has no automatic right of entry. Schools will therefore act to ensure they remain a safe place for pupils, staff and other members of their community.

If an individual's behaviour is a cause for concern, a school can ask him / her to leave school premises.

In serious cases, the Headteacher or the Local Authority can notify them in writing that their implied licence to be on school premises has been temporarily revoked subject to any representations that the person may wish to make.

Schools should always give that person the opportunity to formally express their views on the decision to bar in writing. Anyone wishing to complain about being barred can do so, by letter or email, to the Chair of Governors. The decision to bar should then be reviewed, taking into account any representations and either confirmed or lifted. If the decision is confirmed the person should be notified in writing, explaining how long the bar will be in place and when the decision will be reviewed, usually after 6 months.

Complaints about barring cannot be escalated to the Department for Education. Once the school's own complaints procedure has been completed, the only remaining avenue of appeal is through the Courts; independent legal advice must therefore be sought.

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.
- The school requests that complainants respect confidentiality and avoid sharing information that may identify children, families or staff while a complaint is being investigated.

Investigator

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

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

The investigator should:

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

The Headteacher or Complaints Committee will then determine whether to uphold or dismiss the complaint and communicate that decision to the complainant, providing the appropriate escalation details.

Complaints Co-ordinator (Headteacher)

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 UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK 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 UK 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.

The committee chair is responsible for ensuring:

- 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.

Monitoring and Review

The Governing Body will review this policy annually or sooner if required by changes in legislation, guidance, diocesan requirements or local procedures.

Appendix 1: Concern Form

Please complete and return to Harrietsham Church of England Primary School 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:
Please give details of your concern including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it.

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

Signature:

Date:

Official use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By who:

Concern referred to:

Date:

Appendix 2: Parent – School Communication Stages

At Harrietsham Church of England Primary School, we value the importance of effective communication with our families because of the support it provides our children. The flowchart below is designed to support effective communication and provide clarity when you need to contact the school. This tiered approach aims to support both families and staff to resolve any concerns efficiently and effectively.

Tier 1		
This is the first point of contact between families and the school. The table below clarifies whether the communication requires the attention of your child's class teacher or if the school office is more appropriate. Teachers are available most days before and after school and appointments can be made in person, via the school office (office@harrietsham.kent.sch.uk) or via Dojo.		
Class Teacher	School Office	
	Tel: 01622 859261 office@harrietsham.kent.sch.uk	
Please contact your child's Class Teacher in the first instance if the query concerns:	Please contact the office if your query concerns:	
• Home-learning queries • Behaviour issues/concerns • Learning and academic progress queries • Home/pastoral/friendship concerns • School trips and visits	• School events information/ changes to usual school day (please check diary dates first) • Reporting an absence / attendance queries • Payment queries • Medication/injuries/appointments • School meal queries	

Tier 2		
If further support is required, the following members of staff are available to support. This can be organised through the school office, or in collaboration with the teacher currently dealing with the query.		
Inclusion Team	Pastoral Team	Middle Leaders
Mrs Racheal Hancock – Inclusion Assistant racheal.hancock@harrietsham.kent.sch.uk Mrs Rebecca Evans – Inclusion Leader rebecca.evans@harrietsham.kent.sch.uk	Mrs Amy Smith – FLO amy.smith@harrietsham.kent.sch.uk Mrs Jo Griffin – Pastoral Leader joanne.griffin@harrietsham.kent.sch.uk	Ms Nicki Pittam – Upper School Leader nicki.pittam@harrietsham.kent.sch.uk Mr Ben Walker – Lower School Leader ben.walker@harrietsham.kent.sch.uk
Please contact the Inclusion Team if your query concerns:	Please contact the Pastoral Team if your query concerns:	Please contact our Middle Leaders if your query concerns:
• Escalated SEND or Pupil Premium concerns • Initial complaints re. SEND concerns or practice • Ongoing SEND correspondence	• Escalated parent and family support - Pastoral Care • Safeguarding Concerns • Escalated behaviour concerns	• Specific learning difficulties / queries related to Upper or Lower School

'Nurtured We Flourish'

Tier 3

Having followed Tier 1 and 2, if a matter needs further attention, it can be brought to the Deputy Headteacher.
This can be organised through the school office or in collaboration with the member of the leadership team currently dealing with the query.

Deputy Headteacher

Mrs Samantha Fenner
samantha.fenner@harrietsham.kent.sch.uk

Any escalated concerns can be raised with the DHT.
Before requesting an appointment, please ensure that you have followed the steps in this flowchart.

Tier 4

Having followed Tier 1-3, if a matter needs further attention, it can be brought to the Headteacher.
This can be organised through the school office or in collaboration with the member of the leadership team dealing with the query.

Headteacher

Mrs Jackie Chambers
headteacher@harrietsham.kent.sch.uk

In addition to concerns escalated through Tiers 1 -3, the following queries can be raised directly with the Headteacher.
Before requesting an appointment, please ensure that you have followed the steps in this flowchart.

- Issues which relate to serious Safeguarding concerns.
- Issues which relate to the conduct of a staff member.
- Requests for school appeals or reference requests can be made directly to the Headteacher.

Tier 5

Having followed Tiers 1-4, if the unlikely situation arises where you are still not satisfied that your concerns have been successfully resolved, our Chair of Governors is available to offer further support.

Chair of Governors

Mrs Rebecca Emson
rebecca.emson@harrietsham.kent.sch.uk

To contact Mrs Emson directly, please access our school's complaint policy via the school website.
Alternatively, a printed copy can be obtained from the school office.

Guidelines for Parent and Staff Communication

The purpose of this document is to serve as a general guide for ensuring effective communication between all stakeholders at Harrietsham Church of England Primary School. Communication refers to both the sending and receiving of information, such as email and notes, and verbal communications such as telephone conversations and face – to - face meetings.

In order to ensure a successful exchange of information, it is important that all parties follow a few key principles.

These principles are in line with our school rules and have been outlined below:

- **Ready:**

- Request a meeting – please don't demand.
- Be ready not just to provide information, but to listen to the other parties observations and perspectives.
- Enter the exchange with an open mind and assume a shared best interest for our children.
- Be prepared to work collaboratively to solve problems.

- **Respectful:**

- Maintain respectful and open communication.
- Always use a respectful and polite tone.

- **Safe:**

- Threats, raised voices and / or inappropriate language will not be tolerated toward staff members and may result in a ban from the school site.
- Recognise that confidentiality may limit information that can be shared from school to parents, including support offered for other pupils' behaviours.

Please follow the steps outlined in this document when raising concerns with the school and do not direct complaints or grievances towards other parents.

Time to Respond to Communication

School staff will make every effort to respond as soon as possible to parent communications, with the understanding that the teaching day sometimes precludes immediate responses. We aim to respond to all concerns within 2 working days; most will be responded to within 24 hours. Be mindful that teachers and staff may need some time to collect needed information before responding in full. All concerns should be responded to in full within 5 working days.

Appendix 3: Complaint Form

Please complete and return to Harrietsham Church of England Primary School 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:
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: