

Mason Moor Primary School,  
Nursery, The Ark & Pathways  
SEN Units



# Complaints Policy

## Complaints Policy & Procedure 2025-2028

Approved by:	Governing Body	Approval date:	September 2025
Last review date:	September 2025	Contact:	<a href="#">Headteacher</a>
Review updates:	September 2026	Approvers signature:	Chair of Governors

## Mason Moor Primary School's mission statement:

---

*At Mason Moor Primary School, no child is left behind. **Where you live, and your current personal circumstances, do not dictate your destiny.** Every member of staff is aligned to our three core values; drivers for everything we do. Central to our philosophy on improving life-chances, is the relentless pursuit of the value 'nurture' – a continuous focus on positive regard for all.*

## Our values:

---



### Nurture

We demonstrate and live this value through building unconditional positive praise for all who work at Mason Moor.

*"No significant learning can occur without a significant relationship" (James Comer)*



### Grow

We demonstrate and live this value through opportunities to grow – for example through our Character Development Curriculum and wider enrichment enabling all pupils to grow as confident, articulate individuals.



### Achieve

We ensure that there are no perceived (or real) ceiling limits placed on a child's potential. To this end, we expect staff to be every child's champion. Children here are developed to feel self-worth, to know their place in the world and to know they matter.

Every child deserves a champion. An adult who will never give up on them, who understands the power of connection and who insists that they become the best they can possibly be.

## 1. Policy statement

At Mason Moor Primary School we believe that:

- We work in partnership with parents and partners and seek to improve our school by paying close attention to their concerns;
- All complaints should be fully investigated;
- Parents should receive prompt feedback;
- Urgent complaints should receive immediate attention;
- Complaints, wherever possible, should be resolved through open, informal discussion between the parent and the Class Teacher.

## 2. Complaints Procedure

**A Concern or 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. Schools take concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

**Escalation of Concerns/Complaint**

Parent expresses dissatisfaction and want to talk to the school	Speaks to Class Teacher	Class Teacher records concerns on the proforma – issue is hopefully resolved.
Parent makes a formal complaint to the school	Escalated to Deputy Headteacher	AHT investigates and responds with a letter to the parent outlining the steps taken to move forward.
Parent is still unhappy with the outcome from the Deputy Headteacher	Escalates to Head of School	HoS invites the parent in – recorded on the proforma - responds with a letter to the parent outlining the steps taken to move forward.
Parent unhappy with outcome from Head of School - escalates to Executive Headteacher	Executive Headteacher meets with the parent and those involved to seek resolution. A written outcome to the parent follows.	
Escalates to Chair of Governing Body	In extreme circumstances, the CoG or a representative will meet with the parent. A hearing will take place with a written outcome.	

## Levels of complaint

### Informal – with the Class Teacher

- If parents have any concerns about their child's educational progress they should first discuss their concerns with the Class Teacher. This usually enables the problem to be sorted out swiftly and to everyone's satisfaction. Class Teachers will share concerns/complaints, as appropriate, with a member of the Senior Leadership Team and/or Headteacher.
- If, following discussion with the Class Teacher, the parent is still not satisfied; they may wish to bring their concerns to the attention of the Senior Leadership Team. Full investigation and discussion should enable most complaints to be resolved at this stage.
- Expressions of concern may be verbal but a complaint should be in writing.

### Formal – Complaint Escalates to the Deputy Headteacher or Head of School

- Where complaints cannot be resolved informally, the matter may then be considered to be the subject of a formal complaint and the complainant may then refer it to the Deputy Headteacher.
- The formal complaint should be made in writing and a suggested format for the complaint is provided in Appendix 1.
- Acknowledgement of receipt of this complaint will be made within **5 school days**.
- The Senior Leader will fully investigate the complaint and respond, in writing, within **10 school days**.

### Final stage of a complaint –Chair of Governors

- Where complaints cannot be resolved by the Executive Headteacher the matter may then be considered to be the subject of a formal complaint to the Governing Body.
- If any complaint is received by individual Governors, including the Chair, before the above stages have been completed, those Governors should refer the parent to the Teacher, Senior Leadership Team or Headteacher.
- A formal complaint to the governors will need to be in writing to the Clerk or Chair of the Governing Body. A suggested format for making a formal complaint is provided in Appendix 1. Acknowledgement of receipt of the complaint will be made within **5 school days**.
- Depending on the nature of the complaint, it may be that action will need to be taken by the Chair before the panel meets. This may include the resolution of the complaint without proceeding to a governors' panel hearing.
- A panel of Governors will be established to investigate and hear the complaint. The panel will not previously have been involved in any detailed discussion of this complaint.
- Urgent cases will be considered as a priority and the time between receipt of the complaint and the panel hearing should not normally exceed **15 school days**.
- The complainant may wish to make an oral presentation in support of their complaint and may wish to be accompanied by a friend or representative.
- The panel will consider the complaint and the chair of the panel will notify the complainant, in writing, of the panel's decision within **5 school days**.

## Timescales

These guidelines have been written to ensure that all complaints will be dealt with as quickly and efficiently as possible by the school. The length of the period of time to respond to and resolve complaints will vary with the gravity and complexity of the complaint and the urgency with which it needs to be settled. The intention is that all complaints should be settled within a period which is considered reasonable by all parties and where appropriate indicative timescales have been identified.

### 3. Nature of complaint

Complaints vary in severity and scope. This is why, in the first instance the team at Mason Moor Primary School attempt to resolve the matter informally.

Complaints about the education provided for pupils will be considered as complaints about the Governing Body's responsibilities in respect of the school curriculum, but will not cover complaints about the actions of individual Teachers or the Headteacher.

If, in the course of consideration of a complaint, the Headteacher and/or Governing Body conclude that disciplinary or other proceedings should be initiated, they should take separate action as appropriate.

Complaints to Ofsted are rare but should be a last resort having exhausted the scope of the complaints policy. Typically, Ofsted will ask the complainant if you have escalated the complaint through the school and to the Governing Body. They will ask for outcome information and will often check this with the school and their records.

### 4. Policy Monitoring & Review

#### Recording complaints

- The Headteacher will monitor all written complaints and keep a copy of all relevant correspondence.
- If there are a number of complaints about the same issue, or a rise in the number of complaints overall, the Headteacher will ensure a full investigation is undertaken.

#### Governing Body review

- The Governing Body will monitor the level and nature of all written complaints and review the outcomes on a regular basis to ensure the effectiveness of the procedure and make changes where necessary. The process of listening to, and resolving complaints should contribute to school improvement.
- Wherever practicable, complaints information shared with the whole Governing Body will not name individuals.

### 5. Dealing with Vexatious or Unreasonable Complaints

Mason Moor Primary School is committed to working openly and constructively with parents and carers and welcomes feedback and challenge when concerns arise. However, the school reserves the right to manage complaints that are deemed to be vexatious, unreasonable or persistent, including instances where concerns are aired publicly on social media or other platforms prior to being raised directly with the school through the complaints procedure. Such actions can limit the school's ability to investigate matters fairly, protect confidentiality and resolve issues promptly.

Parents and carers are strongly encouraged to follow the staged complaints procedure outlined in this policy. Experience shows that bypassing these stages, including escalation to external bodies or public forums before allowing the school the opportunity to respond, does not typically result in quicker or more meaningful outcomes. In many cases, this can delay resolution, restrict the school's ability to respond in detail, and place unnecessary strain on constructive relationships.

Where a complaint is considered vexatious or where communication becomes excessive, repetitive or abusive, the school may place reasonable limits on contact, respond in writing only, or conclude correspondence where all appropriate stages of the procedure have been exhausted. Any such action will be proportionate, documented and reviewed by senior leaders and, where appropriate, the Chair of the Governing Body, ensuring that concerns are still handled fairly and in line with statutory guidance.

## 6. Complaints Relating to Specialist SEN Provisions (The Ark and Pathways)

Complaints relating specifically to Mason Moor Primary School's specialist SEN provisions, The Ark and Pathways, will follow the same principles and stages outlined within this complaints procedure, with a small but important variation to reflect the specialist nature of these provisions.

In such cases, the Deputy Headteacher will act as the first point of formal investigation, prior to escalation to the Head of School and, where necessary, the Executive Headteacher.

**In order to ensure transparency, appropriate oversight and effective resolution, a copy of any complaint relating to the SEN units will be shared at the initial stage with Southampton City Council's SEN Team, specifically Ali Clark, who oversees these provisions.** This enables the local authority to maintain oversight of commissioned provision and to offer advice and guidance to both the school and the family, supporting a fair, informed and proportionate resolution of concerns.

## 7. Use of Social Media and Public Commentary

The school recognises that parents and carers may use social media and online platforms to share experiences; however, Mason Moor Primary School strongly advises that concerns or complaints relating to the school are raised directly with the school in the first instance, in line with this complaints procedure. Publicly airing concerns before engaging with the school can significantly limit the school's ability to investigate matters thoroughly, respond fairly, and resolve issues in a timely and constructive manner.

The school will not engage in public discussion of individual cases and has a duty to protect the confidentiality, welfare and reputation of pupils, families and staff. The publication of information that identifies individuals, shares confidential or sensitive information, or makes allegations about named staff or pupils is not appropriate for the public domain and may constitute a breach of confidentiality, data protection, or defamation law. Where such content is posted, the school may request its removal and, if necessary, seek advice from the local authority, governing body or legal advisers. In serious cases, the school reserves the right to take appropriate action to safeguard individuals and the school community.

Parents and carers are therefore encouraged to follow the school's established complaints procedure, which provides a fair, structured and effective route for concerns to be heard and addressed.

## Appendix 1 – Formal complaint form

If making a complaint in writing the following form identifies the key information required.

Name:	
Pupils name:	
Relationship to the pupil:	
Address:	
Day time telephone:	
Evening telephone:	
Please give details of your complaint.	
What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint? (i.e. Who did you speak to and what was the response?)	
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 note of receipt sent:	
Sent by:	
Complaint referred to:	
Date:	

## The Complaints Panel

- The Governing Body will nominate a number of members with delegated powers to hear a formal complaint.
- The panel will consist of an uneven number of governors, usually 3.
- No Governor may sit on the panel if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or the circumstances surrounding it.
- In deciding the make-up of the panel, every effort will be made to try and ensure that it is a cross-section of the categories of Governor and sensitive to the issues of race, gender and religious affiliation.
- The complaints panel will select their own Chair.

## The Remit of the Complaints Panel

- It is important that the panel hearing is independent and impartial and that it is seen to be so.
- The aim of the hearing, which needs to be held in private, will always be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. However, it is recognised that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the hearing does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations which will satisfy the complainant that his or her complaint has been taken seriously.
- The panel can:
  - Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;
  - Uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
  - Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
  - Recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to mitigate against problems of a similar nature reoccurring.

## The Role of the Clerk

- The complaints panel will normally be clerked by the Clerk to the Governors unless that person is either unavailable or part of the complaint. In such cases alternative clerking arrangements will be made.
- The clerk will be the contact point for the complainant and will be required to:
  - **Set the date, time and venue of the hearing, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible;**
  - **Collate any written material and send it to the parties in advance of the hearing;**
  - **Meet and welcome the parties as they arrive at the hearing;**
  - **Record the proceedings;**
  - **Notify all parties of the panel's decision.**

*\* Taken from the Complaints Procedure Toolkit (Department for Education, 2011)*

## The Role of the Chair of the Complaints Panel

The Chair of the panel will ensure that:

- The remit of the panel is explained to the parties and each party has the opportunity of putting their case without undue interruption;
- The issues are addressed;
- Key findings of fact are made;
- The panel seeks to assist parents and others who may not be used to speaking at such a hearing to feel at ease;
- The hearing is conducted in an informal manner with each party treating the other with respect and courtesy;

- The panel is open minded and acting independently;
- No member of the panel has a vested interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure;
- Each side is given the opportunity to state their case and ask questions;
- Written material is seen by all parties and if any new and relevant issue arises give all parties the opportunity to consider and comment on it;
- Notify the complainant of the panel's decision, in writing. The letter will also explain if there are any further rights of appeal and, if so, to whom they need to be addressed.

### **Checklist for a Complaints Panel Hearing**

The panel needs to take the following points into account:

- The hearing should be as informal as possible.
- Witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing in which they give their evidence.
- After introductions, the complainant is invited to explain their complaint, and be followed by their witnesses.
- The Headteacher may question both the complainant and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The Headteacher is then invited to explain the school's actions and be followed by the school's witnesses.
- The complainant may question both the Headteacher and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The panel may ask questions at any point.
- The complainant is then invited to sum up their complaint.
- The Headteacher is then invited to sum up the school's actions and response to the complaint.
- Both parties leave together while the panel decides on the issues.
- The Chair explains that both parties will hear from the panel within a set time scale.