



**AVON HOUSE
PREPARATORY SCHOOL**



**CELEBRATING & SUPPORTING
EVERY CHILD**

Avon House School

**Complaints Procedure (33a)
(Whole School including EYFS)**

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This complaints procedure follows the DfE and ISBA's model complaints procedures and is updated annually or as required.

In line with the Independent School Standards regulations, we are required to publish the number of complaints registered under the formal Complaints Procedure for the last academic year.

In the academic year 2024/2025 the school had no stage 3 panel complaints

Dealing with complaints

Avon House School takes great care with the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents of pupils at the School do wish to make a complaint it is our intention that the complaint will be treated seriously and dealt with promptly, impartially and sensitively. Parents can be assured that any concerns and complaints raised will not adversely affect a pupil or their opportunities at school.

We welcome suggestions for improving our work in school. Be assured that, no matter what you want to tell us, our support and respect for your child will not be affected in any way. Please tell us of your concern as soon as possible. The school keeps a written record of all complaints that are made. These complaints are recorded whether they are resolved at preliminary level or for complaints that go to a panel hearing. It is difficult for us to investigate an incident or problem properly if it took place some time ago. We do appreciate the assistance we receive from parents in addressing any problems that arise.

We receive very few complaints. Problems sometimes arise from misunderstandings which are easily addressed. Most concerns and complaints can be sorted out quickly by speaking with your child's class teacher. When parents and teachers treat each other with mutual respect and support, this provides a very good role model for all our pupils. This policy is made available on the school website or can be requested from the school office.

If, having spoken to the class teacher, you still have concerns, you should see the Head of Department or the Deputy Head who will investigate the problem and discuss their findings with you so that we can find a way forward together which serves the best interest of both the school and your child. In the unlikely event of the problem remaining unresolved you can make an appointment to see the Head Teacher.

Parents can request from the school office the number of complaints there were in the previous school year.

The school will observe confidentiality at all times in the complaints process, however the school cannot guarantee confidentiality where the Secretary of State or a school inspector may request access or where any other legal obligation prevails.

Definition of a complaint

A 'complaint', within the terms of the procedures described here is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, by a person or persons with a legitimate interest in the school but not being employed at the school, about the standard of teaching of members of the teaching staff, or about the conduct, actions or omissions of members of the teaching or non-teaching staff employed at the school. If a member of the school staff has a child at the school they should follow the school's complaints procedures.

Use of the Complaints Procedure

Although this Procedure is made available to parents of prospective pupils, it is not available for use by them; it may only be used by parents of current pupils. Complaints by parents of former pupils will be dealt with under this Complaints Procedure only if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil to which the complaint relates was still registered as a pupil at the School. "Parent(s)" means the holder(s) of parental responsibility for a [current] [or prospective] pupil about whom the complaint relates. We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Head or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

How to raise a concern or make a complaint

Concerns should always be raised either with the class teacher, Head of Department or a Senior member of staff. If the matter remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint. Complainants should not approach The Head or Governing body as this may prevent them from considering complaints at stages 2 and 3 of the procedure.

In accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments, if required, to enable the complainant to access and complete this procedure. For example, hosting meetings in accessible locations, providing translated text.

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views.

If a complaint commences legal action against the school in relation to their complaint, the school will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure in relation to their complaint until those legal proceedings have concluded.

Timeframes

You must raise the complaint within three months of an incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last incident that occurred. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame only if exceptional circumstances apply. For the purposes of this procedure, working days refers to Monday to Friday during term time, excluding bank holidays. This means during school holidays it may take longer to resolve a complaint although the school will do what is reasonably practicable to avoid undue delay.

The procedure to be followed in the event of a complaint being made is summarized in the following stages:

Stage 1: Informal Resolution

- Parents should contact their child's teacher in the first instance in person, by email, by telephone or by letter.
- A stage 1 complaint will be dealt with within five working days. It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- Parents discuss concerns with the class teacher. It is then recorded on CPOMS.
- If the teacher is unable to deal immediately with the matter, a clear note is made, including complainant's name, phone number and date, and the parent is contacted as soon as the matter has been investigated. The teacher may also consult a Deputy Head at this stage.
- The teacher ensures that the parent is clear what action or monitoring of the situation has been agreed. The issue is clearly recorded in the school Complaints book which is kept in the Head Teacher's office.
- If no satisfactory solution has been found, parents are asked if they wish their concern to be considered further.

Stage 2: Formal Resolution (Referral to the Head Teacher)

- If it has not been possible to achieve an informal resolution of the concern acceptable to the complainant, the complainant will be encouraged to make a formal complaint in writing to the Head Teacher. The complaint should include full details, including names and dates where appropriate.
- A meeting is arranged with the complainant to clarify and supplement any information given within 10 working days of the referral.
- The Head Teacher investigates further, interviewing witnesses as appropriate. If the complaint centres on a pupil, the pupil would normally be interviewed with the Head Teacher and a member of staff who is not directly involved or, where appropriate, the pupil's head of house who acts as an advocate.
- Where more than one person is involved they will normally be interviewed separately.

The Head Teacher keeps written records of meetings, telephone conversations and other documentation. The complaints log, notes of meetings and outcomes are kept as a record in the Head Teacher's office in a secure cabinet. This log then forms the basis for the annual return of complaints.

- Once all relevant facts have been established, the Head Teacher responds. If the complaint was in writing, a written response will be sent within 10 working days of the meeting with the complainant.
- If the complainant is not satisfied, they are advised to write to the Governors.

Although this should typically resolve the complaint, the option is available for the complainant to refer the complaint to Stage 3 if they are not satisfied with the outcome. If the complaint is against the Head Teacher, the Stage 2 procedures are carried out by one of the Governors, who will be appointed by the Clerk to the Governors.

If the complainant is not satisfied by the outcome Stage 2, a letter should be sent to the Clerk to the Governors setting out the grounds for the complaint in writing.

The letter should be delivered to the school office marked for the attention of the Clerk to the Governors marked 'Confidential'.

Complaint about the Head

If the complaint is about the Head Teacher the parents should write to the Chair of Governors by post to Avon House School 490 High Road, Woodford Green, Essex. IG8-0PN. If you wish to email the complaint details can be obtained from the school office.

Stage 3: Review by the Governors (Panel hearing)

- The Clerk to the Governors will record the date the complaint was received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (this can be done by email) within 5 working days and then schedule a panel hearing within 20 working days providing this is in term time. If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates, the Clerk will decide when to hold the hearing. It will then proceed in the complainants' absence on the basis of written submissions from both parties.
- The Clerk arranges to convene a panel selected from members of the Governing Body plus an independent assessor. The independent assessor will be someone with no connection to Avon House School or the complainant. The members should not be directly involved in matters detailed in the complaint and they should elect a Chair for the group. All relevant documentation regarding the complaint should be given to the members of the panel as soon as possible.
- The Clerk to the Governors will collate a pack of all relevant documentation, including a chronology and send it to all panel members.
- The complainants may bring a friend or relative to the panel hearing to provide support. Legal representation will not be appropriate. Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.
- The panel will not view any new complaints raised at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint. New complaints must be dealt with under stage one of the procedures.
- The Head Teacher may be invited to attend the meeting in order to clarify the facts about the previous investigation.
- It is the responsibility of the Chair of the panel to ensure that the meeting is properly minuted.

Panel decision

- After the meeting, the panel will consider the evidence and a written decision will be sent to the Head Teacher, complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about. They should be given a copy of the findings within 15 working days and a copy will be kept in school.
- The panel will decide whether to uphold the complaint in whole or in parts or dismiss the complaint in whole or in parts.

- A written decision will also be sent to all parties, who must acknowledge receipt within 10 working days. For this purpose, the school reserves the right to insist on collection of a hard copy, delivery receipt or such other confirmation of delivery as may be necessary.
- This concludes the school's internal complaints procedure and the complainant may, if they remain dissatisfied with the outcome, notify the school that they wish to proceed to Stage 4.

Stage 4: Beyond the Governing Body

Complaints can be taken to the Secretary of State for Education under Education Act 1996 on the grounds that a Governing Body or LEA is acting or proposing to act unreasonably or has failed to discharge its duties under the Act.

Vexatious Complaints

Where repeated attempts are made by a parent to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages, this can be regarded as vexatious and outside the scope of this policy. If the complainant believes the school did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published Complaints Procedure, or that it 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 Two or Stage Three. The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by the school. They will consider whether the school has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint.

With regard to pupils in EYFS, a record of complaints will be kept for at least three years.

Parents with pupils in the EYFS may refer complaints to OFSTED via their website <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/about-us/contact-us/contact> or in writing to:
Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD.

and / or

the Independent Schools' Inspectorate (Tel: 020 7760 0100)
ISI, Cap House, 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA.

if they believe that the school is not meeting EYFS requirements.

Complaints that the school is not fulfilling EYFS requirements will be investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days and such complaints are available to Ofsted and ISI upon request.

Withdrawal of a complaint

If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, this must be done in writing.

Recording of Complaints

The panel will ensure that written records of all complaints made at this stage are kept in the Complaints Log for at least three years, whether they are resolved following a formal procedure or proceed to a panel hearing. Action taken by the school as a result of the complaint will be recorded and kept regardless of whether it has been upheld. The panel's finding and recommendations will be available for inspection on the school premises by the chair of Governors or the Head Teacher. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except when the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

A log is kept of all formal complaints and contains details of how they were resolved. The log is reviewed at the end of every term and a register is kept on the system.

Our school website includes information in the policies section regarding how to access the complaints numbers, categorized under Early Years, Pre-Prep, Prep and Whole School.

Complaints/Concerns Raised in the School Holidays

If a complaint is raised in the holidays the following applies:

Stage 1 – The parents should expect a resolution within 10 working days of the start of the next term

Stage 2 – The parents should expect a resolution within 20 working days of the start of the next term

Stage 3 – The parents should expect a panel hearing with 20 working days of the start of the next term

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
- 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.

Clerk to the Governors

The Clerk is the contact point for the complainant and the committee and should:

- ensure that all people involved in the complaint procedure are aware of their legal rights and duties, including any under legislation relating to school complaints, education law, the Equality Act 2010, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)
- set the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
 - collate any written material relevant to the complaint and send it to the parties in advance of the meeting within an agreed timescale record the proceedings
- circulate the minutes of the meeting.

Panel Chair

The panel'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 everyone is treated with respect and courtesy
- complainants who may not be used to speaking at such a meeting are put at ease. This is particularly important if the complainant is a child/young person
- the remit of the committee is explained to the complainant
- written material is seen by everyone in attendance, provided it does not breach confidentiality or any individual's rights to privacy under the DPA 2018 or GDPR.
- 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 involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure

Reviewed November 2021 Governors

Reviewed August 2022 AC

Reviewed February 2023 AC

Reviewed August 2023 AC

Reviewed August 2024 AC

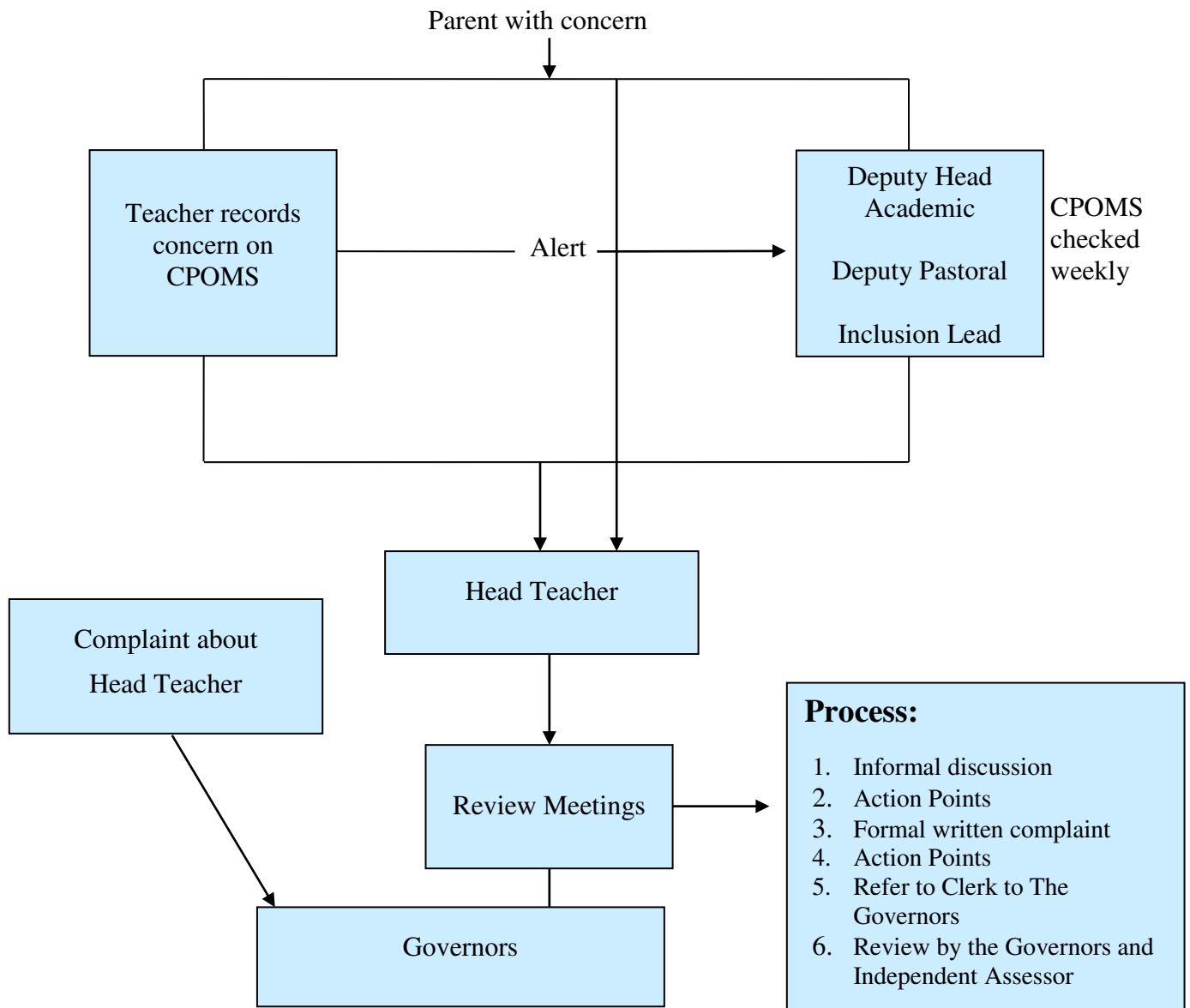
Reviewed August 2025 AC

Reviewed November 2025 AC/ Governors

Reviewed December 2025 Governors

Appendix I

Complaints Procedure Flowchart (Whole School including EYFS)



Appendix II

Complaints Form

Name of pupil or adult involved:

Name of parent/carer:

Year:

Date:

Those present at complaints meeting:

Please state your complaint from the pupil's perspective:

When did this occur?

Who was present?

Have there been other incidents (please state):

Have these incidents been reported and/or recorded?

Do you know any reason for this behaviour?

What action would you like taken?

Parent/carers should be aware that in a complaint situation the parent/carers of the other children involved will be invited to state their version of events and this may differ considerably from your own.

Action points taken by the school:

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Date of review: