



# Complaints Procedure

*This school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment*

**Governor's Committee Responsibility:** Curriculum Community & Student Welfare

**Date Approved:** Summer 2023

**Review Period:** Annually

**Next Review Date:** Summer 2024

## The Limpsfield Grange Values

At Limpsfield Grange we believe in working together to make a difference.

We are a tolerant community; we accept value and understand others.

We care for all members of our community without judgement.

We are responsible for our own learning, behaviour and actions.

We accept that sometimes things go wrong. We work together to take responsibility for our mistakes and for putting things right.

We are a respectful community and we treat others as we would like to be treated, even if they have different views and opinions to our own.

We understand that good behaviour helps us to prepare for life beyond Limpsfield Grange.

We are positive and resilient. We celebrate difference in everything that we do.

We are all proud to be part of the Limpsfield Grange community.

*July 2023*

# Limpsfield Grange School

## Complaints Procedure 2023

Limpsfield Grange School aims to meet its statutory obligations when responding to complaints from parents of students at the school, and others.

When responding to complaints, we aim to:

- Be impartial and non-adversarial;
- Facilitate a full and fair investigation by an independent person or panel, where necessary;
- Address all the points at issue and provide an effective and prompt response;
- Respect complainants' desire for confidentiality;
- Treat complainants with respect and courtesy;
- Make sure that any decisions we make are lawful, rational, reasonable, fair and proportionate, in line with the principles of administrative law.

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

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

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).

### **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 current and past students at the school or members of the public, may make a complaint to Limpsfield 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.

### **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. Limpsfield Grange 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, you will be referred to an appropriate alternative staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, you will be referred to another staff member.

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

### **How to raise a concern or make a complaint**

A concern can be raised in person, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of the person with the concern, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so. Concerns should be raised with your daughter's Form Tutor or subject teacher in the first instance.

If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint, using the Limpsfield Grange Complaint Form (Appendix B). If you require assistance with completing the form, please contact the school office.

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 a later stage of the procedure.

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 investigate anonymous complaints.

### **Timescale for making a complaint**

A complaint must be raised within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents.

### **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.

### Audio or video evidence

Complainants should make sure they obtain informed consent from all parties present before recording conversations or meetings. In line with DfE guidance, we do not normally accept electronic recordings as evidence when we are asked to consider a complaint. We will not accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without informed consent of all parties being recorded.

### Deviation from the procedure

There may be occasions when it is necessary or reasonable to deviate from the published complaints procedure. In these cases, the complainant will be kept informed and reasons for the deviation given.

### Scope of this complaints procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by Limpsfield Grange 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 the relevant local authority
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.
Exclusion of children from school*	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: <a href="http://www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions">www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions</a> . <i>*Complaints about the application of the Behaviour policy (available on the school's website) can be made through the Limpsfield Grange 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 whistle-blowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus">www.education.gov.uk/contactus</a> .  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 Grievance policy and 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: <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus">www.education.gov.uk/contactus</a>

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 this happens, we will inform you of a proposed new timescale.

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

### **Resolving complaints**

At each stage in the procedure, Limpsfield Grange wishes 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 about 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

In addition, mediation can provide a helpful mechanism for discussion when a complaint is raised, and can help to rebuild the relationship between parties once all of the investigative stages of the complaints procedure have been complete.

### Withdrawal of a complaint

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

### Concerns and informal complaints

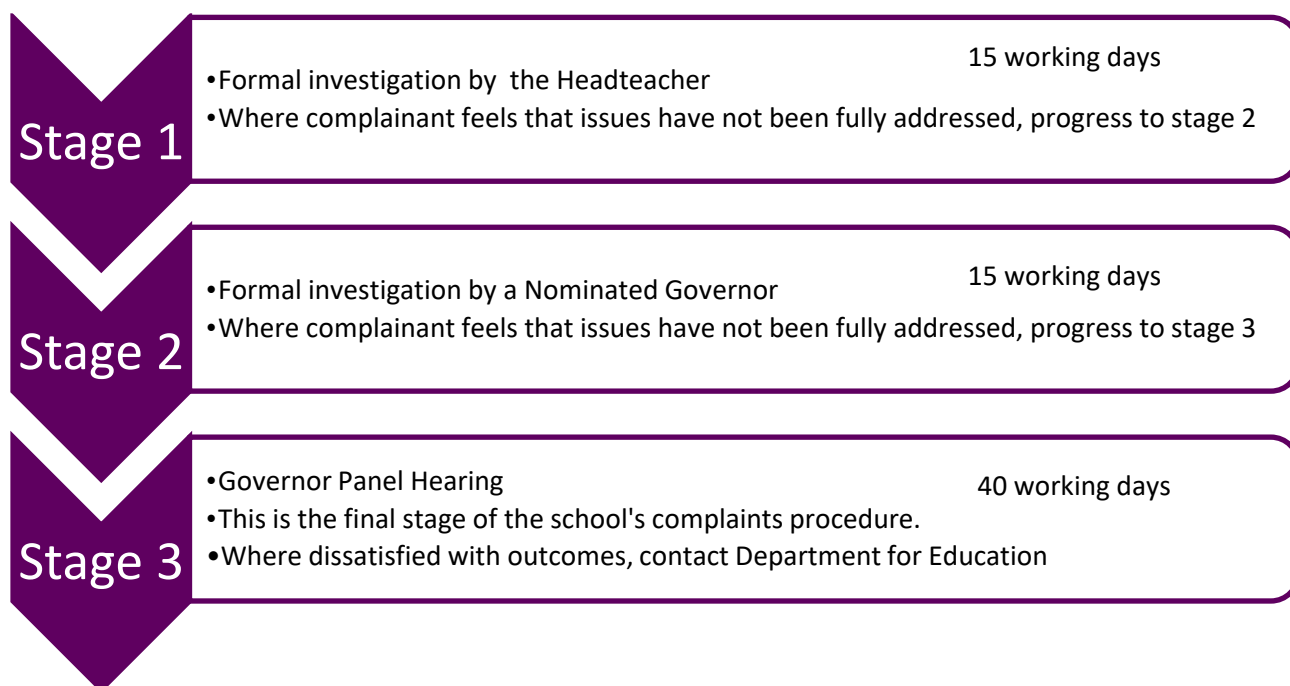
It is to be hoped that most concerns can be expressed and resolved on an informal basis, within 10 school working days.

Concerns should be raised in the first instance with your daughter's Form Tutor or with the subject teacher. 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 a later stage of the procedure.

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

### Formal complaints

Summary of timeline for formal complaints



### Stage 1 Headteacher Investigation

- Acknowledgement of receipt of complaint to be sent within 3 working days of receipt of the complaint.
- Complaint to be investigated and written response to be received by complainant within 15 working days of receipt of the formal complaint.

### **Stage 2 Governor Investigation**

- If the complainant believes that their complaint has not been fully addressed at stage 1, they may request to move to stage 2. This request must be made within 10 working days of the receipt of the outcome letter at stage 1.
- Acknowledgement of receipt of complaint to be sent within 3 working days of receipt of the complaint.
- Complaint to be investigated and written response to be received by complainant within 15 working days of receipt of the stage 2 formal complaint.

### **Stage 3 Governor Panel Hearing**

- If the complainant believes that their complaint has not been fully addressed at stage 2, they may request to move to stage 3. This request must be made within 10 working days of the receipt of the outcome letter at stage 2.
- Acknowledgement of receipt of request to escalate complaint to stage 3 to be sent within 5 working days.
- Hearing to be held within 30 working days of receipt of request to go to stage 3.
- Paperwork for stage 3 hearing to be received from all parties at least 10 working days before the hearing.
- Paperwork for stage 3 hearing to be sent to all parties at least 5 working days before the hearing.
- Outcome letter from panel to be received by complainant within 10 working days of the hearing.

**Note: In all cases, timescales refer to school working days so exclude weekends, school holidays days and INSET working days.**

### **Stage 1 Headteacher Investigation**

Formal complaints must be made to the Headteacher (unless they are about the Headteacher), using the Complaint Form. The form is useful as it ensures that relevant information is communicated at the outset.

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 **3 school working 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 **15 school working 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 Limsfield Grange will take to resolve the complaint.

The Headteacher will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint if they believe it has not been fully addressed at this stage.

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 2.

Complaints about the Headteacher or 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

The complaint will move to stage 2 and will be considered by an independent investigator appointed by the Governing Body. At the conclusion of their investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response to the complainant with a copy to the Headteacher.

### **Stage 2 Governor Investigation**

If the complainant believes that their complaint has not been fully addressed at stage 1, they may request a Governor investigation. This should be done in writing on the Limsfield Grange Complaint Form.

The Chair of Governors may choose to delegate the investigation of the complaint to a Nominated Governor who may, at the sole discretion of the Chair of Governors, be

independent of the school. The investigating Governor will have had no prior involvement in the complaint.

Receipt of the complaint form will be acknowledged. In most cases the complainant will be invited to meet with the Chair of Governors/ Nominated Governor at the outset of the process. The aim of this meeting is to enable the Chair of Governors/ Nominated Governor to understand the scope of the complaint and desired outcomes prior to commencing their investigation.

The Chair of Governors/Nominated Governor will consider all relevant evidence; this may include but is not limited to:

- evidence and outcome from stage 1 investigation if applicable
- a statement from the complainant
- where relevant a meeting with/statement from an individual who is the subject of the complaint
- any previous correspondence regarding the complaint
- any supporting documents from all parties
- interviews with /statements from anyone related to the complaint
- relevant policies and whether they were followed

After considering the available evidence, the Chair of Governors/Nominated Governor may:

- uphold the complaint and direct that certain action be taken to resolve it
- not uphold the complaint and provide the complainant with details of the stage 3 complaint review process
- uphold the complaint in part; the Chair of Governors/Nominated Governor may find one aspect of the complaint to be valid, but not another aspect

The Chair of Governors/Nominated Governor should inform the complainant of their decision in writing within **15 school working days of receipt of the complaint**. They should explain clearly why they have come to the decision that they made. They should detail any agreed actions as a result of the complaint. Finally, they should provide the complainant with details of how to progress the complaint to stage 3 if they believe that their complaint has not been fully addressed, providing them with the contact details of the Clerk to the Governing Body (Appendix A). Should the complaint not be resolved mediation should be considered. This can be arranged through the Area Schools Support Service and will be impartial and objective.

### **Stage 3 Panel Hearing**

If the complainant does not believe that their complaint has been fully addressed at stage 2 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to stage 3. This consists of a panel hearing with at least three Governors who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint or in any previous investigation, with consideration being given to one of whom being an independent Governor. Complainants can request an independent complaints committee if they believe there is likely to be bias in the proceedings. They should

provide evidence of bias in support of their request, as it is the panel's decision whether to agree to it. If the appearance of bias is sufficient to taint the decision reached, then it is recommended that the panel grants such requests.

This is the final stage of the school's complaints procedure.

### **Timeline**

A request to escalate to stage 3 must be made to the Clerk, via the school office, within **10 school working days** of receipt of the stage 2 response. Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply and are explained to the Clerk at the same time that the request for a stage 3 hearing is made.

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

The Clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within **30 school working days** of receipt of the stage 3 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. In this case the panel will meet, with the Clerk and Area Schools Officer in attendance, and consider the complaint on the basis of written submissions from both parties, with neither party being present.

At least **15 school working days** before the meeting, the Clerk will:

- Confirm and notify both parties 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.
- Inform both parties that copies of any further evidence should be submitted to the clerk at least **10 school working days** before the meeting. Any evidence submitted after this, including on the day of the hearing, will only be considered in exceptional circumstances with the agreement of the panel, whose decision is final.
- Any written material will be collated and circulated by the clerk to all parties so that it is received at least **5 school working days** before the date of the meeting. The panel will not accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

### **Attendees at the meeting**

The Clerk will invite the following parties:

- a panel of three Governors, one or more of whom may be independent of the school
- the complainant
- the Headteacher

- investigating member of SLT (if appropriate)
- the investigating Governor who dealt with the complaint at stage 2
- relevant witnesses
- Area Schools Support Service representative (procedural advice).

The complainant may ask to be accompanied to the meeting by a supportive companion, interpreter or advocate. It is not advisable for this person to be a member of the school community, for reasons of confidentiality and to avoid conflict of interest. The complainant must advise the Clerk to the Complaint Review Panel of the name and role of this additional person prior to the hearing, and the Clerk will seek agreement from the chair of the panel. If the additional person is attending as an advocate, they will be presenting the complainant's case and speaking on their behalf, and therefore the complainant will not be able to address the panel directly. If the additional person is attending as a supportive companion, they will not be able to address the panel directly.

As this is not a legal process, neither party may bring legal representation with them except in exceptional circumstances, by prior agreement of the panel.

If the attendance of any students is required at the hearing, parental permission will be sought if the student is under the age of 18. Extra care will be taken to consider the vulnerability of children where they are present at a complaints hearing. The panel should respect the views of the child and give them equal consideration to those of adults. If the child is the complainant, the panel should ask in advance if any support is needed to help them present their complaint. Where the child's parent is the complainant, the panel should give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the meeting, if any, the child needs to attend. However, the parent should be advised that agreement might not always be possible if the parent wishes the child to attend a part of the meeting that the panel considers is not in the child's best interests. The welfare of the child is paramount.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

### **Conduct of the meeting**

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. Financial compensation is not a possible outcome of the process.

The panel hearing will consider the complaint as was submitted at stage 1 and 2. Any new issues will need to be dealt with by a separate complaint procedure.

The panel will not only consider the handling of the complaint at the previous stages, but will also consider those aspects of the original complaint, which the complainant believes have not been fully addressed.

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

The format of the meeting is that the complainant is given a set amount of time to make their case. The panel and the school may then ask the complainant questions for clarification. The school then has the same amount of time to make their case. The panel and complainant then have the opportunity to seek clarification from the school. Both parties then leave the meeting and the panel will deliberate.

The panel will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented, and will come to their decisions on the balance of probabilities. The panel can:

- uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part
- determine that all or part of the complaint is out of their scope to consider

If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the panel 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 panel will provide the complainant and Limpsfield Grange with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, and a copy of the minutes of the panel hearing, within **10 school working days**.

The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the Department for Education if they believe that their complaint has been handled unreasonably or unlawfully by Limpsfield Grange.

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 Limpsfield Grange will take to resolve the complaint.

The panel will ensure that those findings and recommendations are sent by post, electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about, with a copy to the Headteacher.

The complaint investigator/the Chair of the Complaint Review Panel will ensure that a copy of all relevant information relating to the complaint is kept at the school in a secure, confidential\* file, separate from staff and student records. This information should be retained for six years from the date of the complaint, in line with guidance from the Information and Records Management Society ([www.irms.org.uk](http://www.irms.org.uk)) and in accordance with the principles of the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). The complainant should be informed that this will be done.

Limpsfield Grange will act in accordance with the principles of the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations for the implementation of the Complaints Procedure in relation to the retention and deletion of data gathered.

\* Please note that the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under s 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 may request access to complaints documentation.

### **Complaints about Governors**

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire Governing Body or
- the majority of the Governing Body

Stage 3 will be heard by a committee of Governors who are independent of the school.

### **Next Steps**

If the complainant believes that Limpsfield Grange 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 3.

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by Limpsfield Grange. They will consider whether Limpsfield Grange 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](http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus), by telephone on 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:

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

## **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 resolution 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 provide a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint through:

- sensitive and thorough discussion with the complainant to establish their perspective and desired outcomes
- interviewing staff and other people relevant to the complaint
- consideration of records and other relevant information
- analysing information
- liaising with the complainant and the Clerk as appropriate to clarify what the complainant feels would put things right

### **Clerk to the Stage 3 Panel Hearing**

The Clerk is the contact point for the complainant and the panel 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 (if they are invited to attend) 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 panel hearing
- notify all parties of the panel's decision

### **Panel Chair**

The panel's chair, who is nominated in advance of the complaint meeting, will ensure that the meeting is conducted in line with the complaints procedure and best practice principles.

### **Panel Members**

Panel 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 panel if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it
- They should read all documentation and understand the aims and purpose of the meeting.

### **Procedure for managing serial and unreasonable complaints**

Limpsfield Grange is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with our 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.

Limpsfield Grange defines unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the school, such as, if the complainant:

- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
- refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on
- raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales
- makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced
- changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds
- repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed)
- refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education
- seeks an unrealistic outcome
- makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with
- uses threats to intimidate
- uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence
- knowingly provides falsified information
- publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums



Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school that relates to their complaint, while the complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text), as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before determining that they may be acting “unreasonably”.

If the behaviour continues, the Headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact Limpsfield Grange causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will be reviewed after six months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from Limpsfield Grange.

#### **Procedure for managing complaint campaigns**

In the rare event that the school receives a large volume of complaints all based on the same subject, from complainants unconnected with the school, we will either send a template response to all complainants or publish a single response on the school’s website.

#### **Area Schools Support Service**

The role of the Area Schools Support Service is to provide impartial advice and guidance to school staff, Governors and complainants at all stages of the complaints process. For more information see Appendix C.

#### **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 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.

## **Clerk to the Governing Body**

The Clerk is the point of contact 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 (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
- 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
- if a new issue arises everyone is given the opportunity to consider and comment upon it
- 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

### **Committee Member**

Committee members should be aware that:

- the meeting must be independent and impartial and that 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
- many complainants will feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting
- extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child and present during all or part of the meeting, and careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings should ensure that the child does not feel intimidated and that the views of the child and give them equal consideration to those of adults
- the welfare of the child is paramount

If the child is the complainant, the committee should ask in advance if any support is needed to help them present their complaint. Where the child’s parent is the complainant, the committee should give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the meeting, if any, the child needs to attend.

However, the parent should be advised that agreement might not always be possible if the parent wishes the child to attend a part of the meeting that the committee considers is not in the child’s best interests.

**Related Policies**

- Attendance Policy
- Behaviour Policy including guidance on Anti Bullying
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Equality & Diversity Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Lettings Policy
- Lone Working Procedures
- Missing Student Policy and Procedure
- Online Safety & Digital Resilience Policy
- Recruitment and Selection Policy
- Relationships and Sex Education Policy
- Staff Behaviour Policy and Acceptable use of Technology Code of Conduct
- Student Health and Medication Administration Policy
- Whistle-Blowing Policy

**Review**

This policy will be reviewed annually in line with guidance received from Surrey County Council and from the Department of Education.

The Governing Body of Limpsfield Grange School adopted this policy on:

It will be reviewed on:

Signed

Dated

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**Appendix A – School contact details**

<p>Limpsfield Grange School 89 Bluehouse Lane Oxted Surrey RH8 0RZ</p> <p>Tel: 01883 713 928</p> <p><a href="mailto:secretary@limpsfield-grange.surrey.sch.uk">secretary@limpsfield-grange.surrey.sch.uk</a></p>	<p><i>Mrs S Wild, Headteacher</i> <a href="mailto:head@limpsfield-grange.surrey.sch.uk">head@limpsfield-grange.surrey.sch.uk</a></p> <p><i>Mrs J Tanner Chair of Governors</i> <a href="mailto:mrs.tanner@limpsfield-grange.surrey.sch.uk">mrs.tanner@limpsfield-grange.surrey.sch.uk</a></p> <p><i>Clerk to the Governing Body</i> <a href="mailto:clerk@limpsfield-grange.surrey.sch.uk">clerk@limpsfield-grange.surrey.sch.uk</a></p>
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## Appendix B

### Complaint Form

Please complete and return to Headteacher who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

<b>Your name:</b>
<b>Student's name (if relevant):</b>
<b>Your relationship to the student (if relevant):</b>
<b>Address:</b> <b>Postcode:</b> <b>Day time telephone number:</b> <b>Evening telephone number:</b>
<b>Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it.</b>
<b>What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?</b>
<b>Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.</b>
<b>Signature:</b>
<b>Date:</b>
<b>Official use</b>
<b>Date acknowledgement sent:</b>
<b>By who:</b>
<b>Complaint referred to:</b>
<b>Date:</b>