



Complaints Policy

July 2019

COTTERIDGE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Cotteridge School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

General Principles: This procedure is intended to allow the raising of concerns or complaints relating to the school. An anonymous concern or complaint will not be investigated under this procedure, unless there are exceptional circumstances. School will endeavour to learn from upheld complaints. To enable a proper investigation, concerns or complaints should be brought to the attention of the school as soon as possible. In general, any matter raised more than 3 months after the event, will not be considered.

Raising a concern or complaint

1) Informal Stage

It is normally appropriate to communicate directly with the member of staff concerned, usually the class teacher. This may be by letter, by telephone or in person by appointment, requested via the school office. Many concerns can be resolved by simple clarification or the provision of information, and it is anticipated that most complaints will be resolved by this informal stage.

If the complainant feels that the complaint is unresolved they should then speak to a member of the Senior Leadership Team. This is still deemed to be part of the 'informal stage'. These can be contacted through the School Office.

2) Formal Stage

If your concern or complaint is not resolved at the informal stage you may choose to put the **complaint in writing** to the Senior Leadership Team, who will be responsible for ensuring that it is investigated appropriately. If the complaint is about the Head teacher, the **written** complaint should be addressed to the clerk to the Governing Body, for the attention of the Chair of the Governing Body. The Chair will pass the complaint to a member of the Governing Body's Complaints Panel who will review the complaint and seek a resolution. Formal written complaints should include details which might assist the investigation, such as names of potential witnesses, dates and times of events, and copies of any relevant documents.

In some instances, the Senior Leadership Team or Governors Complaints Panel may invite the complainant to a meeting to clarify their concerns and to explore resolution. If the invitation is accepted, the complainant may be accompanied by a friend, to assist them in explaining the nature of their concerns.

The Senior Leadership Team or the Governing Body's Complaints Panel will respond in writing within 5 working school days of receiving the formal complaint. We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period. This response may inform that the matter has been concluded. In other cases, it may inform that a more detailed investigation is needed and provide an anticipated timeline.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the manner in which the process has been followed, they may request that the governing body reviews the process. Any such request must be made in writing to the Clerk to the Governing Body, within 10 school days of receiving notice of the outcome, and include a statement specifying any perceived failures to follow the procedure.

3) Review Process

Any review of the process followed by the school will be conducted by a panel of 3 members of the Governing Body Complaints Panel who have not yet been involved in the complaint. This will usually take place within 10 school days of receipt of the request. The review will normally consider all written evidence, although in some circumstances the Complainant and other involved parties may be granted permission to speak in person.

The complainant (who may be accompanied by a friend if they wish) and representative(s) from the school (who may also be accompanied by workplace colleagues or representatives from their professional associations) **may** be invited to attend this meeting in order to clarify the matter. As the panel meeting is intended to be investigatory, rather than adversarial, the persons giving evidence or making representations to the panel will normally attend separately. When the panel has collected sufficient information, it will deliberate and then inform the complainant, the head teacher and the governing body of the outcome, in writing.

The complainant and the school representative(s) will be informed in writing of the outcome, usually within 5 school days of the panel meeting.

The matter will then be closed as far as the school is concerned.

If the Complainant still believes the issue to be unresolved, the Governors will advise them on how the complaint can be referred to the Local Authority.

Serial and Unreasonable Complaints

Cotteridge Primary 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.

Cotteridge Primary 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 applying an '*unreasonable*' marking.

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 Cotteridge Primary School 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 Cotteridge Primary.

Date policy adopted by Governing Body: 8th July 2019
Policy will be reviewed summer 2021