



Macaulay CE Primary School Complaints Policy and Procedure 2025-2026

I know who I am

Our vision is to:

Create a nurturing community in the belief that every individual is uniquely and wonderfully created by God

Celebrate and adapt to the holistic needs of each child, inspiring them to fulfil their God-given potential

Join with families and church to guide and equip our children with the attitudes, skills and beliefs to participate thoughtfully in their wider communities

As a Church of England School, Christian values are at the heart of all we do. We value our relationship with parents and all members of the school and local community. If you have a concern we want to know about it so that it can be dealt with immediately. Most concerns can be dealt with easily and quickly, but to ensure all concerns are handled effectively the Governing Body has adopted a complaints policy and procedure.

The School's Complaints Procedure is devised with the intention that it will:

- ♦ usually be possible to resolve problems by informal means;
- ♦ be simple to use and understand;
- ♦ treat complaints confidentially;
- ♦ allow problems to be handled swiftly;
- ♦ inform future practice so that a problem is unlikely to recur;
- ♦ reaffirm the partnership between parents, staff and governors as we work together for the good of the pupils in the school;
- ♦ ensure that the school's attitude to a pupil will never be affected by a parental complaint;
- ♦ discourage anonymous complaints;
- ♦ actively encourage strong home-school links;
- ♦ ensure that any person complained against has equal rights with the person making the complaint;
- ♦ be subject to a regular review cycle.

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 or volunteers at the school, may make a complaint to **Macaulay CE Primary School** about any provision of facilities or services that we provide. Unless the subject of a complaint should instead be dealt with under separate statutory procedures (detailed at the end of this document), we will use this complaints procedure.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A CONCERN AND A FORMAL 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 formal 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 complaint's procedure. **Macaulay CE 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, **Macaulay CE School** will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined in this complaint's procedure.

Those with a concern or a complaint should not approach individual governors with them. Governors have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at Stage 2 of the procedure.

HOW DO I RAISE A CONCERN?

Concerns should be raised with either the class teacher or headteacher. If the concern remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

We would like you to tell us about your concern so that we can discuss with you how best to resolve it. The majority of concerns can be resolved informally by speaking to a member of staff.

We welcome suggestions for improving our work in the school. Whatever your concern, please know that we shall treat it as strictly confidential.

Be assured that our support and respect for you and your child in the school will not be affected in any way; please do not delay telling us of your concern. It is difficult for us properly to investigate an incident which is more than a day or two old.

After hearing your concern, we will act as quickly as we can; we will let you know the timescale within which you may expect a response. Please allow time for any action we may take to be effective.

Please contact your child's class teacher or other appropriate member of staff and arrange a time when you can discuss your concern. It may be possible for you to see the member of staff straight away but normally it is better to make an appointment so that you can sit and talk things through. It may be possible to give a response immediately, but where any investigation or information is required, a response will normally be given within 5 days.

HOW DO I RAISE A FORMAL COMPLAINT?

If you have not been able to resolve your concern informally, or the circumstances justify it, you may raise a formal complaint. Complaints against school staff (except the headteacher) should be made, in the first instance, to the headteacher via the school office, using the school complaints form.

Complaints against the headteacher should be addressed to the Chair of Governors, via the school office, using the school complaints form. Complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor or the whole governing body should be addressed to the Clerk to the Governing Body, via the school office, using the school complaints form. Any other complaints should be addressed to the headteacher via the school office, using the school complaints form.

All such complaints should be marked as 'urgent and confidential'. If you require help in completing the school complaints form, please contact the school office, and assistance will be provided to you. You can also ask third party organisations like 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

The school will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. Either the headteacher or Chair of Governors (depending on who is the subject of the complaint) will determine whether or not an anonymous complaint warrants an investigation.

TIMESCALES FOR COMPLAINTS

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. The school will only consider complaints made outside this time frame in exceptional circumstances.

COMPLAINTS RECEIVED OUTSIDE OF TERM TIME

The school will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period (when the school is open for educational sessions).

RESOLVING COMPLAINTS

At each stage in the procedure, **Macaulay CE 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.

Please note that, in certain circumstances, for example if the outcome of an investigation is related to safeguarding or employment law, full details of the outcome of an investigation may not be shared with the complainant.

WITHDRAWAL OF A COMPLAINT

If a complainant wishes to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing to the school office.

STAGE 1

Formal complaints must be made to the headteacher, via the school office. These must be submitted in writing using the school complaints form. If you require help in completing the school complaints form, please contact the school office, and assistance will be provided to you.

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 days. In 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 will 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;
- collate any relevant documents;
- 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 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 **Macaulay CE 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 detailed above at Stage 1. Complaints about the headteacher or a member of the governing body must be made directly to the Clerk, via the school office. The complaint should be marked as 'urgent and confidential'.

If the complaint is: jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair; the entire governing body; the majority of the governing body; or other circumstances justify it, Stage 1 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.

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 panel, which will be formed of three impartial governors. This is the final stage of the complaint's procedure.

A request to escalate to Stage 2 must be made to the Clerk, via the school office marked 'urgent and confidential', within 10 school days of receipt of the Stage 1 response.

The Clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 3 school days. Requests received outside this time frame will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

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 expected 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 panel 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 panel. If there are fewer than three governors from **Macaulay CE 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 panel. Alternatively, an entirely independent panel may be convened to hear the complaint at Stage 2.

The panel 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.

If the complainant is invited to attend the meeting, they may bring someone along to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. Generally, we do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the panel meeting. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate, with the consent of the chair of the panel. If a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by a union representative or friend.

Note: Complaints about staff conduct will not generally be handled under this complaint's 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.

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, seeking to ensure 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 panel at least 10 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 panel will not normally accept as evidence recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

The panel will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint. 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, in which case all parties must be told about it beforehand and the consent of all parties attending must be sought before recordings of meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

The panel will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The panel 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 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 arising in the future.

The Chair of the panel will provide the complainant and **Macaulay CE School** with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 3 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 **Macaulay CE School**

If the complaint is: jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair; the entire governing body; the majority of the governing body; or other circumstances justify it, Stage 2 will be heard by a panel of independent governors. 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 **Macaulay CE School** will take to resolve the complaint. The response will also advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied.

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 not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by **Macaulay CE School**. It will consider whether **Macaulay CE School** 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, by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:

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

Macaulay CE School Complaints Form

Please complete and return to the headteacher via the school office 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 and any relevant dates.

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: