River Bank
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Complaints Policy and Procedure

River Bank Primary School

October 2026

Availability of the Complaints Policy and Procedure

This policy and procedure is available on request to pupils, the parents of pupils and prospective pupils of River Bank Primary School. While pupils may themselves raise concerns and complaints under this policy and procedure, the School will involve parents should this occur. Copies are available from:

The Headteacher
River Bank Primary School,
Bath Road
Luton
LU3 1ES

A copy of our complaints procedure is also available from the school's office, and on the school's website (www.riverbankprimary.org).

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. River Bank Primary 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, River Bank Primary will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

Scope of this Complaints Procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by River Bank Primary School, 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 Luton Borough Council
• Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance. If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) on **01582 548069**
• Exclusion of children from school	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions. Please see further information in the school's Internal Exclusion, Suspension and Permanent Exclusion Policy.
• 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 whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus. Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain directly 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 internal grievance resolution 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: www.education.gov.uk/contactus

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 a complainant commences legal action against River Bank Primary School in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure in relation to their complaint until those legal proceedings have concluded.

Complaints Policy and Procedure

The school expects that most concerns can be resolved informally and will use their best endeavours to resolve any complaints that are made informally, or any concerns that are raised, on that basis.

If informal procedures fail to resolve the issue, a formal complaint about any matter not involving the exceptions listed above, must be given in writing to the headteacher and will be dealt with under this Complaints Policy and Procedure.

Every complaint shall receive fair and proper consideration and a timely response. Please refer to the following guidelines for the specific timescales. We will do all we can to resolve your concern. Parents can be assured that all complaints and expressions of concern, whether raised informally or formally, will be treated seriously and confidentially.

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

Resolving Complaints

At each stage in the procedure, River Bank Primary 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.

Withdrawal of a Complaint

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

Time scales

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. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

Stage One - Informal Resolution

1. It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.

2. If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their child's class teacher. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the class teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult the year lead / assistant headteacher / deputy headteacher / headteacher as appropriate.

3. Complaints made directly to the headteacher will usually be referred to the relevant class teacher unless the headteacher deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.

4. The class teacher will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received on CPOMS (school system for recording contact with parents, behaviour and safeguarding concerns). If there are ongoing concerns these should also be recorded on CPOMS. These records will be kept for one (1) year after the pupil leaves the school.

5. The school will use its reasonable endeavours to resolve any informal complaints within ten (10) working days of them being raised, except where they are raised in school holidays or within two (2) working days of their commencement, where the school will use its reasonable endeavours to resolve them as soon as possible after commencement of the new term (usually within ten (10) working days).

6. Should the matter not be resolved as referred to in paragraph 5 above, or in the event that the class teacher and the parents fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage Two of this Procedure.

Stage Two – Formal Resolution

1. If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis (as set out in paragraphs 5 and 6 above), then parents should put their complaint in writing to the headteacher marked as private and confidential (unless the complaint is about the headteacher). Parents should also identify how they wish their complaint to be resolved.

2. 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.

3. Complaints about the headteacher or member of the governing body must be made to the Clerk, via the school office marked as private and confidential.

4. If the complaint is:

   - jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
   - the entire governing body or
   - the majority of the governing body

   Stage 2 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.

5. If the complaint is not in the categories mentioned in sections 2 and 3 above, the headteacher will delegate responsibility for undertaking investigation of the complaint to a member of senior staff where appropriate, or will deal with the matter personally.

6. The headteacher will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

7. In most cases, the headteacher will meet or speak with the parents concerned to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

8. The headteacher will use reasonable endeavours to speak to or meet parents within ten (10) working days of the formal complaint being received, except where the complaint is received in school holidays or within two (2) working days of their commencement, where the headteacher will use his/her reasonable endeavours to speak or meet with parents as soon as possible after the commencement of the new term (usually within ten (10) working days).

9. It may be necessary for a member of senior staff to carry out further investigations.

10. The headteacher will keep a written record of all meetings on CPOMS and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

11. Once the headteacher is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made. Parents will be informed of this decision in writing, giving reasons for the decision. The written decision should be provided no later than ten (10) working days after speaking or meeting with parents to discuss the matter (pursuant to paragraph 5 above). The headteacher may also arrange to meet with parents to explain the decision.

12. The school will keep a written record of all formal complaints on CPOMS, including records of meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint, and the school's decision, which record will be kept for one (1) year after the pupil leaves the school. This record will state if complaints were resolved at the preliminary hearing or if they were taken to appeal.

13. Where parents are dissatisfied with the outcome of the school's response to their formal complaint, the parents have the opportunity to have their complaint considered by an independent Complaints Panel (please see Stage Three for further details).

Stage Three – Panel Hearing

1. If parents seek to invoke Stage Three following failure to reach an earlier resolution and where dissatisfied with the headteacher's decision in respect of their formal complaint, the parents may, in writing addressed to the Chair of Governors, request that their complaint be further considered by a Complaints Panel set up for this purpose.

2. This request for further assessment of the complaint will, for the purposes of this procedure, be known as an 'appeal'.

3. Parents must lodge their appeal in writing and within ten (10) working days of the date of the school's decision made in accordance with the Stage Two Procedure. The parents should provide a list of their complaint(s) made against the school and which they believe to have been resolved unsatisfactorily by the Stage Two Procedure, along with the remedies sought in respect of each.

4. The Complaints Panel is only obliged to consider the complaint(s) lodged in this 'initial submission' although they may use their discretion to consider other relevant and related matters that may subsequently arise.

5. Where an appeal is received by the Chair of Governors, he/she will refer it without delay to the school. The school will, within five (5) working days, refer the matter to the Clerk to the Board of Governors who will act as Clerk to the Complaints Panel. Where the appeal is received by the school during school holidays, or within two (2) working days of their commencement, the school has five (5) working days upon commencement of the school term to refer the matter to the Clerk.

6. The Clerk provides an independent source of advice on procedure for all parties.

7. Once an appeal has been received by the Clerk, he/she will acknowledge the appeal in writing within five (5) working days, and inform the parents of the steps involved in this Complaints Procedure.

8. The Clerk will then endeavour to convene an independent Complaints Panel hearing as soon as possible to consider the matter, normally no later than twenty (20) school days after receipt by the school of parents' written notice that they wish to invoke the Stage Three Procedure, dependent upon the availability of the Panel members.

9. The Complaints Panel will consist of the Chair of Governors, a member of the Governing Body who has not previously been involved in the complaint, and one person independent of the management and running of the school. The process used for selecting an independent person will conform to any relevant guidance issued by the Department for Education (DfE).

10. The following are entitled to attend a hearing, submit written representations and address the Panel:

    a) The parent/s and/or one representative;
    b) The relevant headteacher and/or one representative; and
    c) Any other interested person whom the Complaints Panel considers to have a reasonable and just interest in the appeal and whose contribution would assist the Panel in their decision-making. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.

14. Where the Complaints Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. In such cases all parties will be given the opportunity to submit written evidence to the Panel in support of their position, including:

    a) documents in support of complaint(s),
    b) chronology and key dates relating to complaint(s), and
    c) written submission setting out the complaint(s) in more detail.

    This evidence will be considered by the Panel, along with the initial submission that was lodged by the parents.

15. Evidence will be initially sent to the Clerk, who will then circulate the documentation to all parties, including the Panel members, along with an order of proceedings. All written evidence must be received by the Clerk no later than ten (10) working days in advance of the hearing. The Clerk will distribute the written evidence to the relevant parties no later than five (5) working days in advance of the Panel hearing.

16. It is for the Panel to decide how to conduct the proceedings of the appeal, which should be reasonably informal so that all parties can present their case effectively. If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further

investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.

17. After due consideration of all the facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision, and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within ten (10) working days of the hearing. The decision reached by the Complaints Panel is final.

18. Any decision reached that may have financial implications for the school will need the appropriate approval from the relevant authorities e.g. the Board of Governors, although any such approval must be compatible with the decision of the Complaints Panel.

19. The Panel's findings will be sent by the Clerk in writing to the parents, the headteacher, the school Governors and, where relevant, the person complained of. The letter will state any reasons for the decision reached and recommendations made by the Complaints Panel.

20. The school will keep a record of all appeals, decisions and recommendations of the Complaints Panel, which record will be kept for one (1) year after the pupil leaves the school.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied at the conclusion of stage 3, they are able to contact the Department for Education customer help portal:

https://customerhelpportal.education.gov.uk/

Vexatious or unreasonable Complainant

During the process for handling a complaint or after the proper procedures have been followed, a complainant (and/or anyone acting on their behalf) may be deemed to be a vexatious or unreasonable complainant if they meet any or all of the following criteria:

(a) persist in pursuing a complaint where the school's complaints procedure has been fully and properly implemented and exhausted (e.g. where several responses have been provided)

(b) change the substance of a complaint or continually raise new issues or seek to prolong contact by continually raising further concerns or questions upon receipt of a response.

(c) are unwilling to accept documented evidence of action

(d) are unwilling to accept that the Governing Body has reached a final decision on a chosen course of action

(e) deny receiving an adequate response in spite of correspondence specifically answering their questions

(f) persist in pursuing a matter when they have already exhausted other statutory routes

(g) do not clearly identify the precise issues which they wish to be investigated, despite reasonable efforts to help them specify their concerns

(h) continue to seek to pursue a complaint where the concerns identified are not within the remit of the Governing body to investigate

(i) focus on a trivial matter to an extent which is out of proportion to its significance and continue to focus on this point.

(j) have in the course of addressing a complaint, had an excessive number of contacts with the school placing unreasonable demands on staff time. A contact may be in person or by telephone, letter, or e-mail.

(k) have threatened or used physical violence towards staff at any time. This will in itself cause personal contact with the complainant and/or their representatives to be discontinued and the complaint will, thereafter, only be continued through written communication. All such incidences will be documented. Any complainant who threatens or uses actual physical violence towards staff will be regarded as a vexatious complainant and will receive written confirmation of the same. This will also inform the complainant of the action to be taken with regard to any further communication received

(l) have harassed or been personally abusive or verbally aggressive on more than one occasion towards staff dealing with the complaint. All instances of harassment, abusive or verbally aggressive behaviour will be documented.

(m) are known to have recorded meetings or telephone conversations or circulated such records to third parties without the prior knowledge and consent of other parties involved

(n) make unreasonable demands and fail to accept that these may be unreasonable, for example, insist on responses to complaints or enquiries being provided more urgently than is reasonable or within the complaints procedure or normal recognised practice

Where a complainant has been identified as vexatious or unreasonable, the clerk will notify the complainant, in writing, of the reasons and what action will be taken. This notification may be copied for the information of others already involved in the complaint or matters closely related to it.

It may be decided to deal with complainants in one or more of the following ways:

(a) withdraw contact with the complainant either in person, by telephone, by email, by letter or any combination of these, provided that at least one form of contact is maintained. If staff are to withdraw from a telephone conversation with a complainant there will be an agreed statement available for them to use at such times.

(b) to restrict contact to liaison through a designated member of staff.

(c) notify the complainant in writing that the Governing Body has responded fully to the points raised and has tried to resolve the complaint but there is nothing more to add and continuing contact on the matter will serve no useful purpose. The complainant should be notified that

any form of contact, either orally or in writing, in relation to their complaint, or any further complaints relative to the same period of time, or the same or similar issues as an earlier complaint, is at an end, and that further contact received will be acknowledged but not answered.

(d) temporarily suspend, for a period to be specified to the complainant, all contact with the complainant, provided that the Governing Body shall not, withdraw or not provide any services to which the complainant or his/her family are entitled to receive.

Copies of all decisions relating to the categorisation of a person as a vexatious or unreasonable complainant will be retained on a central register of such decisions.

Complainants will be notified of the review procedure regarding decisions relating to the categorisation of a person as a vexatious or unreasonable complainant.

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be annually reviewed by the Full Governing Body.

Signed: 

Adopted: October 2026

Review Date: October 2027

Appendix One

River Bank Primary School Complaint Form

Please complete and return to …… (insert name of staff member) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:	
Pupil's name	
Your relationship to the pupil:	
Address: **Postcode:**	
Day time contact number:	
Evening Contact number:	
Please give details of your complaint. (continue on a separate page if necessary)	
What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint. (e.g. 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 Acknowledgement sent:	
By who:	
Complaint referred to:	
Date:	

Appendix Two

Complaints Flowchart Summary for Dealing with Complaints

