Policy Review and Monitoring

This policy is due to be reviewed at the time stated, unless circumstances determine that this policy needs to be reviewed at an earlier time.

Signed:	**Chair of Governors**	**Headteacher**
	Mr J Orchard	*Mr K Stroud*

COMPLAINTS POLICY

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1. Introduction

1.1 We recognise that, from time to time, parents, pupils or members of the community may have minor concerns about a school-related matter. We encourage people to come to us with these concerns so that they can be addressed. Usually, we would anticipate that such concerns can be resolved quickly and easily with the appropriate member of school staff. However, where such concerns are either more significant or not immediately/easily resolved, this may lead to a complaint. Relatively few complaints lead to a formal process, but where they do, the Governing Body seeks to ensure, through this policy, that proper procedures are in place, are publicised, understood and followed.

1.2 A complaint is "an expression of dissatisfaction in relation to the school a governor or a member of its staff that requires a response from the school". The school is committed to dealing fairly, honestly, consistently, appropriately and effectively with complaints. We aim to clarify any issues about which you are not sure. If possible, we will put right any mistakes we have made and we will apologise. We aim to learn from mistakes and use that experience to improve what we do.

1.3 Initially, complaints may be raised verbally or in writing to the school and considered at Stage 1 of the procedure below. Similarly, the school's response to a complaint may also be verbal or written as appropriate to the situation. However, should the complainant wish to progress beyond Stage 1, this *must* be set out in writing (preferably using the form provided in Appendix A) and the school will provide a formal written response to a complaint in line with this procedure from Stage 2 onwards.

1.4 This procedure supports our commitment in dealing with complaints effectively and is a way of ensuring that anyone with an interest in the school, including pupils, can raise a complaint, with confidence that it will be heard and, if well-founded, addressed in an appropriate and timely fashion.

2. When this procedure applies or does not apply

2.1 If you are approaching us with an enquiry or making a request of us, this procedure does not apply. If you are not happy with our response to any enquiry or request, then you may raise a complaint with us using this procedure.

2.2 When you raise a complaint with us, we will usually respond in the way we explain below.

2.3 If your complaint relates to matters that are not decided by the school, we will give you information on which organisation or who to contact.

2.4 If your complaint relates to matters that are handled by other procedures, we will explain to you how it will be dealt with. For example, if a complaint raises issues about staff capability, staff grievance, staff discipline or child protection, then action must be taken under those procedures. Separate procedures also exist to deal with complaints about school admissions (Voluntary-aided schools only) or exclusion, additional learning needs provision, school organisation proposals, religious worship, and the delivery of the curriculum.

2.5 If your complaint is about another body as well as the school (for example, the local authority), we will work with that body to decide how to handle your complaint.

2.6 We understand that sometimes, a complainant may wish to be supported by another adult. In such instances, we will need written confirmation that the complainant is prepared for us to communicate with their representative and work with them on your behalf. *(See page 1 of Appendix A)*

3. What you can expect from us

3.1 We will consider all your complaints in an open and fair way. Every effort will be made to investigate and decide quickly. We will take your complaints seriously and, where we have made a mistake, we will learn from them.

3.2 We believe that all complainants have a right to be heard, understood and respected. At all times, the school will respect the rights and feelings of all those involved with a complaint. We understand that delay causes irritation, anxiety, loss of confidence in the school, and can mean that a problem goes unaddressed for longer than necessary.

3.3 Your complaint will be dealt with on a sensitive basis and we will make every effort to protect sensitive information. However, there may be occasions when the person dealing with your complaint will need to consider whether anyone else within the school needs to know about your complaint, so as to address it appropriately. If a complaint raises issues about staff discipline, conduct or capability then those procedures should apply and the individual should be told the substance of the accusation being made unless there are exceptional reasons such as evidence of criminal activity, in which case the police should be informed.

3.4 When responding to complaints, the school will provide as much information as reasonably possible. However, information relating to other children, families, staff members or third parties may be withheld where disclosure would breach confidentiality, safeguarding requirements, employment duties or data protection legislation.

3.5 If you are a pupil under the age of 16 and wish to raise a complaint, we may ask for your permission before we inform or involve your parent(s) or carer(s).

If you are a pupil under the age of 16 and the school receives a complaint from your parent(s) or carer(s), the school will consider whether the nature of the issues raised is such that you should be made aware before any

investigation of the issues begins. If you are a pupil under the age of 16 and you are involved in a complaint made by other parties, we may ask your parent(s) or carer(s) to become involved and attend any discussion or interview with you having first considered your rights under the General Data Protection Act/Data Protection Act 2018.

3.6 If you are a pupil over the age of 16 and wish to raise a complaint, the school will not usually inform or involve your parent(s) or carer(s) unless you expressly ask us to but there may be other occasions which the school considers it reasonable or necessary to do so in any event. If you are a pupil over the age of 16 and the school receives a complaint from your parent(s) or carer(s), the school will consider whether the nature of the issues raised is such that you must be informed and your permission must be sought before any investigation of the issues begins. If you are a pupil over the age of 16 and you are involved in a complaint made by other parties, we will not inform your parent(s) or carer(s) or ask them to become involved unless you expressly ask us to do so but there may be other occasions which the school considers it reasonable or necessary to do so in any event.

3.7 If the timescales, as provided for in section 6 of this policy, for dealing with your complaint need to be extended, we will contact you and explain why.

3.8 We may ask for advice from the local authority or diocesan authority, where appropriate.

3.9 If your complaint raises issues that must be dealt with differently than as set out in this procedure, we will contact you to explain why this is so and will inform you what steps will be taken.

3.10 The Governing Body will keep the records of documents used in any examination, or formal investigation, of a complaint under stage 2 or 3 in accordance with the School's retention policy. This may be retained for longer in the case of contentious disputes.

3.11 Complaints that are made anonymously will be recorded but examination or formal investigation will be at the discretion of the school depending on the nature of the complaint.

3.12 Where a complaint is considered to have been raised only to cause harm or offence to any individual/s or the school, the Governing body will ensure that records are kept of how it has been examined, any actions taken and, if applicable, the reasons for no actions being taken.

4. What we expect from you

4.1 We believe that all persons raising a complaint have a right to be heard, understood and respected. School staff and governors have the same right - we expect you to be polite and courteous. We will not tolerate actions or behaviours that are aggressive, abusive or unreasonable. We have a separate policy to manage situations where we find that a person's actions are unacceptable. Your written complaint should describe your dissatisfaction in detail. It should provide specific information which can be investigated and considered. Complaints should be made promptly; it is not reasonable for people to make complaints a long time after the event. Usually a complaint should be made within 10 schools days; this can be extended in more complex matters.

5. Being clear about your complaint

5.1 It is recommended that you use the complaint form, Appendix A to record your complaint so that there is clarity regarding all matters requiring examination and for which a response is required.

5.2 If you chose not to complete the form, we may need to contact you to clarify any appropriate aspects that are not detailed in your written communication. If you are a pupil, we will explain the form to you, help you to complete it and give you a copy.

5.3 Complaints will normally be limited to matters directly affecting the complainant and/or their child. The school will not generally investigate concerns raised on behalf of other pupils or families unless there are safeguarding reasons or other exceptional circumstances that require it to do so.

5.4 The school reserves the right not to progress examination of a complaint if it has not been possible to obtain suitable and necessary clarifications on any appropriate aspects. This will be explained to you in writing and a record kept by the school.

6. Dealing with your complaint

6.1 The chart in Appendix B summarises what will normally happen when you raise a complaint. There are up to three stages. All complaints will be considered initially at stage 1. Most complaints can be resolved at stages 1 or 2.

6.2 If the person dealing with your complaint at stage 1 considers that you have highlighted issues of a serious nature, that person will inform the headteacher and your complaint may be escalated for immediate consideration under stage 2. If applicable, we will contact you and inform you that this has happened.

6.3 You can be supported by a relative or companion at any time during the process but you will be expected to speak for yourself. However, if you are a pupil, we recognise that it may be reasonable for your relative / companion to speak on your behalf and/or to advise you. It is important to note that throughout the procedure, the school may keep a record; to monitor the progress of a complaint, to be clear of its nature and risk, and to document what needs to be done and what has been done.

Stage 1 – Informal resolution

6.4 Most complaints can be resolved quickly and satisfactorily by talking to a teacher. If you are a pupil, you may choose to raise your complaint with your class teacher or other appropriate member of staff.

6.5 You should raise your complaint as soon as you can and, normally, within 10 school days of the occurrence to which it relates or receiving a response from us to an enquiry or request with which you are dissatisfied. The longer you leave it, the harder it might be for those involved to deal with it effectively.

6.6 We will try to let you know what we have done or are doing about your complaint within 10 school days, but if this is not possible, we will contact you to inform you of the need to extend this.

Stage 2 – Formal resolution

6.7 If you feel that your complaint has not been dealt with appropriately or satisfactorily under stage 1, you should put the matter to the headteacher as a written complaint, preferably using the complaint form Appendix A.

6.8 If your complaint is about the headteacher, you should write to the chair of governors, at the school's address.

6.9 We would expect you to do this within 5 school days of receiving the school's response to your complaint under stage 1, as it is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as soon as possible.

6.10 If you need help to put your complaint in writing, contact the headteacher and appropriate support will be discussed with you.

6.11 If you are not the person raising a complaint but are involved in any other way with a complaint, the headteacher will explain what information we may need from the complainant in order to deal with you. We may inform you about what will happen and the help that may be available to you.

6.12 Normally, the headteacher will contact you within 10 days of receiving your written complaint and may invite you to discuss your complaint at a meeting. The arrangements for the investigation of your complaint will be discussed with you along with the expected timescale for the investigation. The headteacher will provide you with a written response to your complaint, normally within 10 school days of the investigation being completed. If this is not possible, the headteacher will contact you within that same timeframe to explain the reason/s and to set out the likely extended timeframe.

Stage 3 – Investigation by the complaints committee of the Governing Body

6.13 As the school is committed to dealing with complaints effectively, it is anticipated that it will be rare for a complaint to progress any further than stage 2, but the final stage in our procedure is investigation by the complaints committee of the Governing Body.

6.14 A designated individual will undertake the administration of the arrangements under stage 3, including contact/correspondence with you. This designated individual will normally be the clerk to the Governing Body.

6.15 If you still feel that your complaint has not been dealt with fairly after stage 2, you should write to the chair of governors, at the school's address, setting out your reasons for asking the Governing Body's complaints committee to investigate your complaint. We would normally expect you to do this within 5 school days of receiving the school's response under stage 2. The complaints committee will not consider any complaint that has not already been considered under stages 1 and 2, therefore, you do not have to write down details of your complaint again.

6.16 If you prefer, instead of writing, you may request a discussion with the chair of governors. We would normally expect you to do this within 5 school days of receiving the school's response under stage 2. The chair of

governors will write down what is discussed and what, in your own words, would resolve the problem. You will be asked to read the notes or will have the notes read back to you and then be asked to sign them as a true record of what was said.

6.17 The complaints committee will thoroughly and objectively consider your complaint. This will include a full review of the investigation conducted at stage 2 and the findings of that investigation. Where necessary, additional information will be sought, and matters may be re-investigated. A meeting will be held with involved parties. Further information may be sought after the meeting in order for a determination to be made.

6.18 You will be contacted regarding the arrangements for how your complaint will be dealt with and you will be sent a letter confirming those arrangements. The letter will record what has been agreed with you and the arrangements for the meeting with involved parties, including who will be involved.

6.19 The complaints committee will aim to meet with involved parties within 15 school days of receiving your letter or the signed discussion notes being received. If this is not possible, you will be contacted so a revised timescale will be agreed with you. If the timescale for the meeting needs to be changed, to allow for the availability of people, the gathering of specific information or seeking advice on certain matters, you will be contacted and new meeting date will be agreed with you.

6.20 Normally, in order to deal with the complaint as quickly as possible, the complaints committee will not wish to reschedule the meeting more than once. If a meeting has to be scheduled more than once, based upon your request or subsequent failure to attend, the committee may consider it reasonable to make a decision on the complaint in your absence in order to avoid further delays.

6.21 Should the complainant fail to attend the stage 3 meeting(s), or fail to provide the committee with sufficient information to progress with their consideration, the committee may decide to consider the complaint on the basis of the information available, or decide not to consider the complaint due to lack of information.

6.22 The letter referred to in paragraph 6.18 will inform you of the date by when any additional written information/documentation that you wish to be considered by the complaints committee, must be received. This will be a date in advance of the meeting as the complaints committee must have time to review that information and conduct such enquiries as may be necessary for its investigation before the meeting takes place. Information submitted to and considered by the complaints committee may be shared with all parties involved in the meeting. At all times, people's rights to privacy of information will be protected.

6.23 The letter will also outline what will happen at the meeting. Generally, you may expect all persons involved in the complaint to be present at the meeting. However, any involved person who has concerns about such an arrangement may contact the person dealing with the complaint and make a request for the complaints committee to consider meeting with parties separately.

6.24 At the meeting, the chair of the complaints committee will ensure that:

- everyone is introduced;
- the meeting is conducted with respect and courtesy and the meeting does not become confrontational;
- involved parties have the opportunity to speak and ask questions, without interruption; and
- everyone is aware that the decision of the committee is final.

6.25 Procedurally, the chair will:

- ask you to outline the issues of your complaint. You may refer to written information and documentation that you have already submitted. However, as this information will already have been reviewed by the committee, you should expect that it will not be necessary, or may not be feasible in the time allowed for the meeting, for you to read and/or present that information in full detail;
- ask the headteacher (or whoever is representing the school) to explain findings of fact and any actions taken by the school at stages 1 or 2. The headteacher may also refer to written evidence and documentation that has already been requested by or submitted to the committee;
- ask any witnesses to speak, if relevant;
- invite committee members to ask questions of any person present; and
- ensure that all persons present are made aware of what will happen after the meeting.

6.26 After the meeting, the complaints committee will consider all the information received, in private. If the committee determines that it has received all the information necessary to conclude its investigation and make a decision on your complaint, the chair of the complaints committee will normally write to you within 10 school days of the meeting to explain the outcome. If the committee feels that further information is required to complete its investigation, you will be contacted and informed of this and a different timescale will be agreed with you.

6.27 Records of all conversations and discussions will be kept for the purpose of future reference and review by the full Governing Body in accordance with paragraph 3.9.

6.28 The complaints committee of the Governing Body is the final arbiter of complaints and there is no further appeal once this stage has been completed.

6.29 Once all stages of the complaints procedure have been completed, the complaint will be regarded as concluded. The school is not obliged to reconsider matters that have already been investigated and determined unless significant new evidence is presented that was not reasonably available during the original investigation.

7. Special circumstances

7.1 Where a complaint is made about any of the following, the procedure will be applied differently. In all cases, the school and Governing Body will ensure that complaints are dealt with in an unbiased, open and fair way.

The headteacher

7.2 The complaint will be referred to the chair of the Governing Body to deal with. The chair of the Governing Body may alternatively delegate the matter to another governor for investigation. This takes the place of stage 2 of the standard procedure. If necessary, the subsequent and final stage in the procedure will be stage 3 - investigation by the complaints committee of the Governing Body.

A governor or group of governors

7.3 The complaint will be referred to the chair of the Governing Body for investigation. The chair of the Governing Body may alternatively delegate the matter to another governor not subject to the complaint for investigation. This takes the place of stage 2 of the standard procedure. If necessary, the subsequent and final stage in the procedure will be stage 3 - investigation by the complaints committee of the Governing Body.

The chair of governors, or both the headteacher and the chair of the Governing Body

7.4 The vice chair of the Governing Body will be informed and will investigate the complaint or may delegate the matter to another governor for investigation. This takes the place of stage 2 of the standard procedure. If necessary, the subsequent and final stage in the procedure will be stage 3 - investigation by the complaints committee of the Governing Body.

Both the chair and vice chair of the Governing Body

7.5 The complaint will be referred to the clerk to the Governing Body who will inform the chair of the complaints committee of the Governing Body (who are not the chair and vice chair of the Governing Body). This takes the place of stage 2 of the standard procedure. If necessary, the subsequent and final stage in the procedure will be stage 3 - investigation by the complaints committee of the Governing Body.

The whole Governing Body

7.6 The complaint will be referred to the clerk to the Governing Body who will inform the headteacher, the chair of governors, the local authority and, where appropriate, the diocesan authority. The authorities will usually agree arrangements with the Governing Body for independent investigation of the complaint.

8. Sources of help and advice

8.1 If you are a young person and need assistance, MEIC is a national advocacy and advice helpline for children and young people, established by Welsh Government.

8.2 Advice and support can also be accessed from the Children's Commissioner for Wales.

9. Consultation

9.1 The Governing Body has consulted with staff, pupils and parents/carers on this policy and will consult further if any amendments are made in the future.

Appendix A

School Complaint Form

Your details

Surname	
Forename(s)	
Title: Mr/Mrs/Ms/Other	
Address and postcode	
Daytime telephone number	
Mobile telephone number	
e-mail address	
How would you prefer us to contact you?	

If you are making a complaint on behalf of someone else, please provide that person's details.

Person's surname	
Person's forename(s)	
Person's title: Mr/Mrs/Ms/Other	
Person's address and postcode	
What is your relationship to the person?	
Why are you making a complaint on the person's behalf?	

Please provide information on separate sheets of paper, if necessary.

Please outline the complaint. (What do you think the school has done wrong or has not done?)

Please describe how this has affected you (or the person on whose behalf you are acting).

When did you (or the person on whose behalf you are acting) first become aware of the problem?

Have you (or the person on whose behalf you are acting) already raised your complaint with a member of staff / the school? If so, please give brief details of how and when?

If you (or the person on whose behalf you are acting) first became aware of the problem more than three months ago and you have not already raised your complaint with a member of staff / the school, please give the reasons.

What do you (or the person on whose behalf you are acting) think should be done to put matters right?

Your signature: _____ Date:

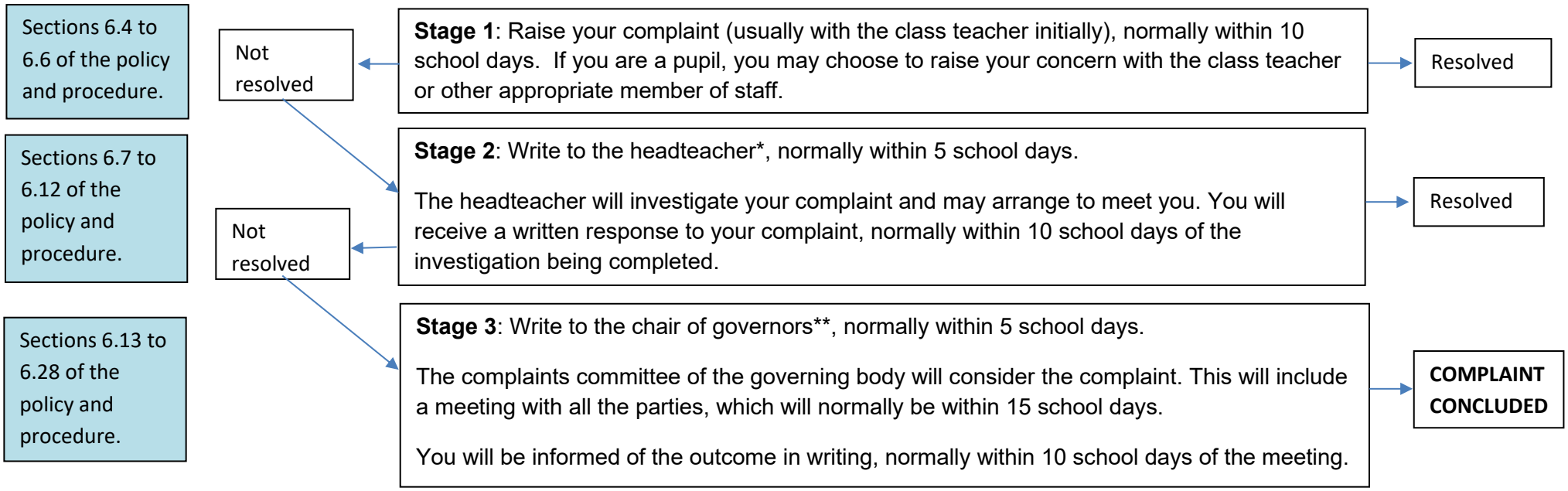
If you are raising making the complaint on behalf of another person, that person must also sign this form.

Signature: _____ Date:

Appendix B: Summary of the procedure for dealing with complaints

Summary of the procedure for dealing with complaints.

This procedure will apply if you raise a complaint about the school, provided that the complaint does not require consideration under other procedures, e.g. statutory procedures.



NOTES: It is in everyone's best interest for concerns and complaints to be resolved as soon as possible but all timescales shown are flexible. The school will agree different timescales with you, when necessary, to ensure that adequate time is allowed for a thorough examination of the issues and with the aim of achieving an answer to the problem.

* If the complaint is about the headteacher, you should write to the chair of governors via the school's address.
** If the complaint is about the chair of governors, you should write to the vice chair of governors, via the school's address.