



## Langho and Billington St. Leonard's Church of England Primary School

# Complaints Procedure

### 1. 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, may make a complaint to [Langho & Billington St Leonard's CE 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.

In accordance with equality law, we will make 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.

### 2. 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. [Langho & Billington St Leonard's 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, [Langho & Billington St Leonard's CE School](#) will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

### 3. Anonymous complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the headteacher or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

### 4. 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 only if exceptional circumstances apply such as valid reasons for not complaining at the time and if the complaint can still be investigated in a fair manner for all involved.

Langho & Billington St. Leonard’s CofE School intends to address complaints as quickly as possible. To achieve this, reasonable timeframes are set and school will aim to meet these timeframes. Should there be a delay, details of a new deadline and an explanation will be provided.

## 5. 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.

## 6. Scope of this Complaints Procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by [Langho & Billington St Leonard’s CE School](#) other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

Exceptions	Who to contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Admissions to schools</li> <li>● Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs</li> <li>● School re-organisation proposals</li> </ul>	<p>Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with <a href="#">Lancashire County Council</a></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation</li> </ul>	<p>Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.</p> <p>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) at Lancashire County Council.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Exclusion of children from school*</li> </ul>	<p>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>.</p> <p><i>*complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school’s complaints procedure.</i></p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whistleblowing</li> </ul>	<p>We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors.</p> <p>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:  <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus">www.education.gov.uk/contactus</a>.</p> <p>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.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff grievances</li> </ul>	<p>Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff conduct</li> </ul>	<p>Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate.</p> <p>Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary</p>

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	<p>action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities</li> </ul>	<p>Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Curriculum - content</li> </ul>	<p>Please contact the Department for Education at: <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus">www.education.gov.uk/contactus</a></p>

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 [Langho & Billington St Leonard's CE 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.

Arrangements for handling complaints with regard to SEND provision sit within the scope of this policy/procedure. Such complaints should be first raised at the informal level with either the class

teacher or the SENCo (Mrs Cronshaw).

## 7. Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, Langho & Billington St Leonard's CE School wants to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we may 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.

## 8. Withdrawal of a Complaint

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

## 9. Individual Governors

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 Stage 2 of the procedure.

## 10. Principles for investigation

When investigating a complaint, we will try to clarify:

- Specific facts and circumstances of any alleged actions or inactions
- Who was involved
- Reasons for any actions or inaction
- Chronology of events

## 11. How to raise a concern or make a complaint

### Informal Stage

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In the first instance, a concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing, email or by telephone.

Concerns can be raised directly with either the class teacher, phase leader, a senior member of staff or the headteacher (following our communication procedure is the most helpful way of getting your informal complaint resolved quickly). If the complainant is unclear about who to contact in the first instance, they should contact the school office staff who will help to direct the complaint to the most appropriate person.

The informal stage may involve a conversation or a meeting between the complainant and a member of staff. This could be a class teacher, phase leader, senior leader or the headteacher depending upon the complexity of the complaint.

It is always the intention of school staff to resolve complaints as quickly as possible.

Should issues remain unresolved following the informal complaints process, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

## **Stage 1A Formal Complaint (Not about the Headteacher or a Governor) Inform the Headteacher in writing on the complaint form below.**

Formal complaints must be made to the headteacher via the school office. This should be done in writing on the attached Complaint Form below.

This complaint should contain:

- relevant details such as dates, times, witnesses of events
- any relevant documentation
- A statement of what the complainant feels will resolve the complaint

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 5 school 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 will consider whether a face to face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this. Should a meeting be held, the complainant may be accompanied and should inform the school of the companion in advance. School reserve the right to refuse an individual at such a meeting in certain circumstances, for example, if there is a conflict of interest.

Once clarity has been sought, the headteacher will then conduct their investigation.

*Note: The headteacher may delegate the investigation to another member of the school's senior leadership team, however, decisions to be taken will be made by the headteacher.*

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 aim to provide a formal written response within 20 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(s) made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions [Langho & Billington St Leonard's CE School](#) will take to resolve the complaint.

Should the complainant remain dissatisfied with the outcome of the Stage 1A Formal Complaint, the complaint may be escalated to the next stage of the complaints procedure

### **Stage 1B Inform the Chair of Governors in writing**

This letter should outline the complaint as above. In addition, the letter should specify:

- what the complainant feels would resolve the complaint
- how the previous stage has not addressed the complaint sufficiently

## **Stage 1B Formal Complaint (About the Headteacher or a Governor)** **Inform the Chair of Governors in writing on the complaint form below.**

If the complaint is about the headteacher or a member of the governing body who is not the Chair of Governors, a suitably skilled governor such as the vice chair, will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 1A above.

## **Stage 1C Formal Complaint (About the Chair of Governors or Governing Body)** Inform the Clerk to the Governors in writing on the complaint form below.

If the complaint is:

- about the Chair of Governors
- the entire governing body or
- the majority of the governing body

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 according to the timeframes at Stage 1A.

A complainant can proceed to Formal Stage 2 to escalate their complaint should things not be resolved at any of the above at Stage 1.

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## **Stage 2 Formal Complaint** Submit the complaint to a review panel.

Stage 2 Complaints should be in writing and addressed to The Clerk to the Governors, via the school office within **10** school days of receipt of the Stage 1 response. Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.

Following receipt of escalation to stage 2, 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 days.

A meeting with members of the governing body's complaints committee, formed of three, impartial, governors available, will then be convened. These governors will have no prior involvement or knowledge of the complaint.

The Clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within **25** school days of receipt of the Stage 2 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, 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.

Prior to the meeting, the committee will decide amongst themselves who will act as the Chair of the Complaints Committee. If there are fewer than three governors from [Langho and Billington St Leonard's CE School](#) available, the Clerk will source any additional, independent governors through other local schools or through their LA's Governor Services team, in order to make up the committee. Alternatively, an entirely independent committee may be convened to hear the complaint at Stage 2.

The committee 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 committee meeting. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate.

For instance, if a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by union and/or legal representation.

*Note: Complaints about staff conduct will not be handled under this complaints 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, ensuring 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 committee at least 7 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 committee will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

The committee will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. 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. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

The committee will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented by the complainant and representatives of the school. The committee 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 committee 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 Committee will aim to provide the complainant and [Langho and Billington St Leonard's CE School](#) with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 15 school days.

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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 [Langho and Billington St Leonard's 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 and will include details of how to contact the Department for Education if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled.

## **Persistent, serial, unreasonable and/or vexatious complaints**

Where a complainant tries to reopen an issue after the complaints procedure has been exhausted, and the school has done everything it reasonably can in response to a complaint, the Chair of Governors will inform the complainant that the matter is closed.

The school may choose not to respond to any subsequent contact with school about the issue, if the complaint is deemed unreasonably persistent or the complainant's behaviour is deemed unreasonable.

The school may choose not to respond if:

- We believe that there is an intention to cause disruption or inconvenience
- Correspondence is insulting, threatening, abusive or aggressive

We will not normally limit the contact that complainants have with the school, however, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and we will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is offensive, abusive or threatening.

St Leonard's CE School defines unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders our consideration of complaints due to the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with school. Such as if a complainant:

- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought
- 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 expects they are answered to their own timescales
- makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, or 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
- seeks an unrealistic outcome
- makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and/or complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email or by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with
- uses threats or intimidation
- 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.

For complainants who excessively contact school causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan (Single Point of Contact). In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence or continued defamation and slander of staff, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from the School premises and/or consider taking advice on pursuing a case under anti-harassment legislation.

## 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 [Langho and Billington St Leonard's CE School](#). They will consider whether [Langho and Billington St Leonard's 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](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

## Complaint Form

Please complete and return to the headteacher/complaints co-ordinator (delete as appropriate) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

<b>Your name:</b>	
<b>Pupil's name:</b>	
<b>Your relationship to the pupil:</b>	
<b>Contact details:</b>	
<b>This complaint sits within the follow stage of the complaints procedure (Please tick below)</b>	
<b>Stage</b>	<b>Tick ✓</b>
<b>Informal Stage</b>	
<b>Stage 1A Formal Complaint (<u>Not</u> about the Headteacher or a Governor) Inform the Headteacher in writing.</b>	
<b>Stage 1B Formal Complaint (<u>About</u> the Headteacher or a Governor) Inform the Chair of Governors in writing.</b>	
<b>Stage 1C Formal Complaint (<u>About</u> the Chair of Governors or Governing Body) Inform the Clerk to the Governors in writing.</b>	
<b>Stage 2 Formal Complaint Submit the complaint to a review panel.</b>	

**Please detail your specific complaint below:**

**What actions do you feel will resolve the complaint?**

**Signature:**

**Date:**

<b>Office use only</b>
<b>Date complaint received by the complaints co-ordinator</b>
<b>Date acknowledgement sent:</b>
<b>Date:</b>

## 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:

- liaising with the complainant as appropriate to clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.
- providing a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint through:
  - o liaising with the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved
  - o interviewing staff and children/young people and other people relevant to the complaint
  - o consideration of records and other relevant information
  - o analysing information

The investigator will :

- conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning
- keep notes of interviews
- 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.

## **Complaints Co-ordinator** (this could be the headteacher / designated complaints governor or other staff member providing administrative support)

The complaints co-ordinator should:

- ensure that the complainant is updated at each stage of the procedure
- liaise with staff members, headteacher, Chair of Governors, Clerk and LAs (if appropriate) to ensure the smooth running of the complaints procedure
- be aware of issues regarding:
  - sharing third party information
  - additional support. This may be needed by complainants when making a complaint including interpretation support or where the complainant is a child or young person
- keep records.

## **Clerk to the Governing Body**

The Clerk is the contact point 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
- make records of 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
- 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.
- 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

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- 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 (and complaints co-ordinator, if the school has one).

## Committee Member

Committee 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 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

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.

- many complainants will feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting and parents/carers may feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child.
- will take extra care when the complainant is a child/young person and present during all or part of the meeting as the welfare of the child/young person is paramount.

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

Written October 2025 D Lindley (Headteacher)

Ratified by Governors November 2025

This policy will be reviewed every two years.

