Matthew Arnold Primary School

Complaints Procedure

Date: September 2026

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 Matthew Arnold Primary 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.

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. Matthew Arnold Primary School takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

How to raise a concern

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

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, the Head Teacher, will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, the Head Teacher 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, Matthew Arnold Primary School will attempt to resolve the issue through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

How to make a complaint

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 (below).

Complaints against school staff (except the headteacher) should be made in the first instance to the Headteacher via the school office***.*** Please mark as Private and Confidential.

Complaints that involve or are about the headteacher should be addressed to the Chair of Governors via the school office. Please mark as Private and Confidential.

Complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor or the whole governing body should be addressed to the School Business Manager via the school office. Please mark as Private and Confidential.

For ease of use, the complaint form is also included at the end of this document. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office. You can also ask third party organisations like Citizens Advice to help you.

Generally, you will receive a more effective response to a complaint if you:

- 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.

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

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

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.

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.

Scope of this Complaints Procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by Matthew Arnold 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 Liverpool City Council, Cunard Building, Liverpool
• Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and 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). Contact Liverpool City Council.
• Exclusion of children from school*	Further information about raising concerns about an exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions.

	**complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.* .
• 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 direct 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 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 Matthew Arnold 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.

Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, Matthew Arnold 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.

Stage 1

Complaints must be made to the headteacher (unless they are about the headteacher), in writing (preferably on the Complaint Form),via the school office.

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 can 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
- keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

Note: recordings or transcripts of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded will not be accepted as evidence.

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 Matthew Arnold Primary 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 at Stage 1.

If the complaint is:

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

the Stage 1 process 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 where it will be considered by a governing body committee, formed by three impartial governors. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.

A request to escalate to Stage 2 must be made via the School Business Manager, within 5 school days of receipt of the Stage 1 response.

The School Business Manager 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.

Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

The complaints committee will consist of at least three governors with no prior involvement or knowledge of the complaint. They will aim to meet within 15 school days of receipt of the Stage 2 request. If there are fewer than three governors from Matthew Arnold Primary School available, the School Business Manager will source additional, independent governors through another local school or through the LA's Governor Services team, in order to make up the committee. Alternatively, an entirely independent committee may be convened to consider the complaint at Stage 2.

The committee will decide whether to deal with the complaint

- through consideration of written submissions, or
- by inviting relevant parties to a meeting.

Note: whichever process is decided upon, recordings or transcripts of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded will not be accepted as evidence.

Note: The committee will 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.

If the complaint is:

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

The Stage 2 process will be heard by a committee of independent governors.

Consideration of Written Submissions

The School Business Manager will invite submission of any further written material for the committee to consider at least 5 school days before the committee meets, to be circulated to the committee within 3 days of its meeting.

Complaints Committee Meets with Complainant

If the complainant is invited to attend a meeting, they may bring someone along to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. In line with Department for Education guidance, we do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives: this is not a formal legal process, and the committee is not required to engage with legal arguments. The meeting is intended simply as a mechanism for resolution and reconciliation

Note: If a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, s/he may wish to be supported by union and/or legal representation.

Note: Complaints about staff conduct will not generally 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 5 school days before the complaints committee convenes, the School Business Manager will:

- confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that 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 5 school days before the meeting.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 3 school days before the date of the meeting.

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.

Outcome

The committee will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. 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 provide the complainant and Matthew Arnold Primary School with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it in writing within 5 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 Matthew Arnold Primary School.

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 Matthew Arnold Primary School will take to resolve the complaint.

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 Matthew Arnold Primary School. They will consider whether Matthew Arnold Primary 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

Managing Serial and Unreasonable Complaints

Matthew Arnold Primary School is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with our school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

Serial and unreasonable complaints till be dealt with in line with our **Policy for Managing Serial and Unreasonable Complaints** which is available on our website.

Matthew Arnold Primary School Complaint Form

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.

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: