Pirton Hill Primary School
Complaints Policy (Autumn 2026)

Originated by: Adapted from the LBC Model Policy
Ratified by Governors: Autumn 2026
Review date: Autumn 2028

1. Overarching Values
Expect:
*We all **expect** to work hard, and meet our own high expectations, in a safe environment with access to high quality resources and opportunities that broaden our horizons.*

Believe:
*We all **believe** in ourselves, and each other, and know that everyone has something special to contribute.*

Achieve:
*We all have the opportunity to **achieve**, and fulfil our potential, regardless of our backgrounds.*

Enjoy:
*We all strive to develop passionate and determined life-long learners who **enjoy** learning, understand how to progress and take pleasure in succeeding.*

2. Aims
2.1 Parents / Carers and the school share the same goal; supporting children's education.

2.2 It is recognised that sometimes questions or concerns arise and this document outlines how the school aims to meet its statutory obligations when responding to complaints from parents of pupils at the school, and others.

2.3 We endeavour to provide the best education possible for all of our pupils in an open and transparent environment. We welcome any feedback that we receive from parents, pupils and third parties, and we accept that not all of this will be positive. Where concerns are raised the school intends for these to be dealt with:

- Fairly
- Openly
- Promptly
- Without Prejudice

In order to do so, the governing board of Pirton Hill Primary School has approved the following procedure which explains what you should do if you have any concerns about the school. All members of staff will be familiar with the procedure and will be able to assist you

3. Legislation and guidance

3.1 This document meets the requirements of section 29 of the Education Act 2002, which requires maintained schools to establish and publish a procedure to deal with all complaints relating to the school and to any community facilities or services that the school provides. It also has regard to the Department for Education (DfE) Best practice guidance for school complaints procedures.

3.2 The policy also addresses the requirements of the current *Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework for group and school-based providers* (effective from 1 September 2026).

3.3 The school will also comply with relevant requirements under the Equality Act 2010, UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), Data Protection Act 2018 and the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025, as applicable to the handling and investigation of complaints.

4. What kind of issue is it?

The school recognises that the nature of complaints can be very different. Being able to identify what kind of issue it is, allows the school to respond correctly and in a timely manner.

- Is it **feedback?**
  You need to be heard
  Sometimes you will want to share your view with the school without needing them to respond, but you expect us to listen and take it on board. *As a school, we also seek feedback on specific issues from time-to-time.*
- Is it a **concern**?
  You need an answer
  A concern is defined as "an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought". *The school will resolve concerns through day-to-day communication as far as possible.*
- Is it a **complaint**?
  You need action
  A complaint is defined as "an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action". *The school intends to resolve complaints informally where possible, at the earliest possible stage.*

5. Which procedure do I need?

5.1 By law, we must use different policies for certain issues. This policy does not cover:

- Pupil admissions; these are subject to separate statutory procedures.
- Pupil suspensions and permanent exclusions; these are subject to separate statutory procedures. Please see the school's Behaviour Policy and the Department for Education guidance on *School suspensions and permanent exclusions*.
- Statutory Assessments of Special Educational Needs; these are subject to separate statutory procedures.
- Staff grievance, capability or disciplinary; these are covered by the school's HR Policies.
- Where the complaint concerns a third party used by the school; please complain directly to the third party themselves.
- Whistleblowing; please refer to the LBC Whistleblowing Policy
- Subject Access Requests and Freedom of Information Requests – please see the school's Data Protection and Freedom of Information policy.

This policy also links to the school's Staff Bullying and Harassment Policy and the school's Social Media Policy.

6. Safeguarding

6.1 Wherever a complaint raises a concern about a child's safety or wellbeing, the school will act without delay in accordance with its safeguarding and child protection procedures. Concerns will be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or their deputy and, where appropriate, referred to children's social care, the police or another relevant agency in accordance with current statutory guidance.

7. Social Media

7.1 In order for complaints to be resolved as quickly and fairly as possible, complainants must not discuss complaints publically via social media such as Whatsapp groups, Facebook and X. Complaints will be dealt with confidentially for those involved, and we expect complainants to observe confidentiality also.

8. Complaints that result in staff capability or disciplinary

8.1 If at any formal stage of the complaint it is determined that staff disciplinary or capability proceedings are necessary in order to resolve the issue, the details of this action will remain confidential to the headteacher and/or the individual's line manager. The complainant is not entitled to participate in the proceedings or receive any detail about them.

9. Principles for investigation

9.1 When investigating a complaint, we will try to clarify:

- What has happened?
- Who was involved?
- What the complainant feels would put things right?

9.2 We also intend to address complaints as quickly as possible. To achieve this, realistic and reasonable time limits will be set for each action within each stage. However, where further investigations are necessary, new time limits will be set, and the complainant will be sent details of the new deadline with an explanation for the delay.

9.3 The school expects that complaints will be made as soon as possible after an incident arises and no later than 3 months afterwards. We will only look at older complaints in exceptional circumstances.

9.4 The school will make reasonable adjustments to enable individuals to raise or participate in a complaint where this is required because of a disability or other relevant accessibility need. Alternative methods of communication may be considered where appropriate.

10. Procedure

10.1 If you need to raise an issue in the first instance, please do so with the relevant member of staff who will be happy to talk to you and seek to establish a solution. If you are not satisfied with this response and believe the issue has not been resolved, please use the following procedure as detailed below.

10.2 Timeline:



Informal and immediate addressing of issues by a relevant staff member

Informal investigation by relevant member of staff (e.g. Phase Leader)
If this does not fix the problem, progress to Stage 2
See page 4 for more information

Formal investigation by Headteacher (or delegated member of the SLT)
If you are still unhappy after the Headteacher replies, progress to stage 3
See pages 4-5 for more information

Formal appeal to a panel of governors
This is the final stage of the school's complaints procedure.
See pages 5-7 for more information

11. Stages of Raising a Concern / Complaint

11.1 Stage 1: Informal Concern

11.1.1 The majority of concerns can be dealt with without resorting to the procedure. Where you have a concern about any aspect of the school or your child's education or wellbeing, raise this with your child's class teacher or the leader responsible for that phase of the school via the phone or in person. Ideally, they will be able to address your concerns on the spot, or they can arrange a meeting with you to discuss the issue. Where parents / carers use Weduc (Reach more Parents), we will aim to respond within 48 hours (*working days only – exc. those that fall in the school holidays*).

11.1.2 A current list of teaching staff including Phase Leaders can be found on our website.

11.1.3 We will aim to fix the problem within 15 school days.

11.1.4 All concerns will be dealt with confidentially, although the staff member may need to take notes if they feel that the matter may need to be taken further or it may arise again in the future. Any such notes will be kept in accordance with the principles of the Data Protection Act 2018. However, such notes would be able to be used as evidence if further investigation was required, or if the concern became a formal complaint.

11.2 Stage 2: Formal Investigation by the Headteacher

11.2.1 Formal complaints must be made to the headteacher (unless they are about the headteacher – *please refer to section 12*) in writing, using our short Formal Complaints Form**.** *(See Appendix 1).*

11.2.2 The school will not normally investigate anonymous complaints.

11.2.3 Parents / carers are asked to keep the details of their complaint under 250 words, with the subsequent boxes limited to 100 words, per section. *Please refer to section 13: The Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)*

11.2.3 The Headteacher (or delegated member of the Leadership Team) will respond in writing within 10 working days (excluding those that fall in the school holidays) of receiving the complaint to acknowledge receipt of the complaint and explain what action will be taken, giving clear timeframes.

11.2.4 The Headteacher (or delegated member of the Leadership Team) will consider all relevant evidence; this may include but is not limited to:

- a statement from the complainant,
- where relevant a statement from an individual who is the subject of the complaint
- any previous correspondence regarding the complaint
- any supporting documents in either case
- interview with anyone related to the complaint.

11.2.5 The Headteacher (or delegated member of the Leadership Team) may decide to have a meeting with the complainant (and where relevant, the subject of the complaint) if they feel that it would be appropriate for the investigation.

11.2.6 After considering the available evidence, the Headteacher (or delegated member of the Leadership Team) can:

- Uphold the complaint and direct that certain action be taken to resolve it
- Reject the complaint & provide the complainant with details of the Stage 3 appeals process
- Uphold the complaint in part: in other words, the Headteacher (or delegated member of the Leadership Team) may find one aspect of the complaint to be valid, but not another aspect. They may direct for certain action to be taken to resolve the aspect that they find in favour of the complainant.

11.2.7 The Headteacher (or delegated member of the Leadership Team) must inform the complainant of their decision in writing within 20 working days (excluding those that fall in school holidays) of having issued written acknowledgement of the receipt of the complaint. They must:

- explain clearly why they have come to the decision that they made;
- detail any agreed actions as a result of the complaint; *and*
- provide the complainant with details of how to progress the complaint to stage three if they are not satisfied, providing them with the contact details of the clerk to the governors.

11.3 Stage 3: Appeal: review by a Panel of the Governing Body

11.3.1 If the complainant wishes to appeal a decision by the Headteacher (or delegated member of the Leadership Team) at stage 2 of the procedure, or they are not satisfied with the action that the Headteacher (or delegated member of the Leadership Team) took in relation to the complaint, the complainant is able to appeal this decision.

11.3.2 The complainant must write to the Clerk (clerk@pirtonhill.co.uk) as soon as possible after receiving notice of the decision, briefly outlining the content of the complaint and requesting that a complaints appeal panel is convened.

11.3.3 The Clerk will fulfil the role of organising the time and date of the appeal hearing, inviting all the attendees, collating all the relevant documentation and distributing this 5 days in advance of the meeting, recording the proceedings in the form of minutes, and circulating these and the outcome of the meeting.

11.3.4 The complainant must request an appeal panel within 4 weeks of receiving the decision or it will not be considered, except for in exceptional circumstances. On receipt of this written notification, the following steps will be followed:

1. The Clerk will write to the complainant within five working days (not including the school holidays) to confirm receipt of the appeal request and detail further action to be taken.
2. The Clerk will convene a panel of three school governors. All three panel members will have no prior knowledge of the content of the complaint.
3. The appeal hearing will take place within 20 working days (excluding those which fall in the school holidays) of receipt of the date of the confirmation letter from the Clerk to the complainant, confirming the appeal.
4. In addition to the panel, the following parties will be invited, where applicable:

- the complainant
- the Headteacher (or delegated member of the Leadership Team) who dealt with the complaint at Stage 2
- where the complaint regards a member of staff, the staff member who is the subject of the complaint.

11.3.5 The complainant is also able to bring a companion with them to the hearing if they wish. Where the subject of the complaint is a member of staff, that staff member is also able to bring a companion with them.

11.3.6 The companion will be a friend or a colleague. Neither party is able to bring legal representation with them. If after the hearing any party feels that legal action is necessary, please see the contact details at the end of the procedure.

11.3.7 The complainant's evidence will be heard separately and independently by the panel. The complainant then leaves the hearing. The evidence of the SLT Member (and the staff member if appropriate) is then heard.

11.3.8 If the attendance of any pupils is required at the hearing, parental permission will be sought if they are under the age of 18. Extra care will be taken to consider the vulnerability of children where they are present at a complaints hearing.

11.3.9 Where the complaint is about a Governor, the complainant may request that the appeal is heard by an entirely independent panel. It is at the discretion of the Governing Board who will notify the Clerk of their decision. Where an entirely independent panel is required, timescales may be affected while the school source appropriate individuals for the review.

11.3.10 The panel can make the following decisions:

- Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part
- Uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- Recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

11.3.11 All parties who attended the meeting will be informed in writing of the outcome of the appeal within 5 working days (excluding those which fall in the school holidays).

11.3.12 This is the final stage at which the school will consider the complaint. If the complainant remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the complaint further, please see the contact details at the end of the document. The school will not consider the complaint beyond this.

12. Complaints against the Headteacher or a Governor

12.1 Complaints made against the Headteacher should be directed to the Chair of Governors (via the clerk - clerk@pirtonhill.co.uk).

12.2 Where a complaint is against the Chair of Governors or any member of the governing board, it should be made in writing to the Clerk to the Governing Board (clerk@pirtonhill.co.uk).

13. Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

13.1 The school recognises that parents and carers may choose to use artificial intelligence (AI) tools, such as ChatGPT, Microsoft Copilot or Google Gemini, to help organise their thoughts or draft correspondence. The use of AI itself is not a reason for a complaint to be rejected or treated as unreasonable.

13.2 However, parents and carers remain responsible for the content of any complaint or correspondence they submit to the school. In most cases, a clear and concise explanation of the concern and what the parent or carer would like the school to do will help the school respond more quickly and effectively.

13.3 If AI is used to help prepare a complaint, parents and carers should check the final version carefully to ensure that it:

- accurately reflects what has happened and their own concerns;
- contains only factual information that they believe to be accurate;
- clearly explains what they are concerned about and what they would like the school to do;
- is written in clear and straightforward language; and
- does not include legislation, legal arguments, quotations or references that are inaccurate, irrelevant or not understood by the complainant.

13.4 Parents and carers should also consider the information they enter into AI tools. They should avoid entering confidential or sensitive personal information about their child, members of staff or other families unless they are satisfied that the AI tool is appropriate for this purpose and understand how the information will be processed and protected.

13.5 Where correspondence is particularly lengthy, unclear, repetitive or contains information that makes it difficult to establish the nature of the complaint, the school may ask the complainant to clarify the specific concerns being raised, the relevant facts and the outcome they are seeking. This is intended to help the school understand and address the underlying concern as efficiently and fairly as possible.

14. Unreasonable, Persistent or Unacceptable Behaviour

14.1 Where a complainant raises an issue that has already been dealt with via the school's complaints procedure, and that procedure has been exhausted, the school will not reinvestigate the complaint except in exceptional circumstances, for example where new evidence has come to light.

14.2 If a complainant persists in raising the same issue, the Headteacher (or delegated member of the Leadership Team) will write to them explaining that the matter has been dealt with fully in line with the school complaints procedure, and therefore the case is now closed. The complainant will be provided with the contact details in this policy, if they want to take it further.

14.3 Unreasonable complaints include the following scenarios:

- The complainant refuses to co-operate with the school's relevant procedures.
- The complainant changes the basis of the complaint as the complaint progresses.
- The complainant seeks an unrealistic outcome.
- Excessive demands are made on the time of staff and governors (for example, through the excessive use of long AI-written communication or substantial AI-generated Data Subject access Requests (DSARs) alongside the complaint) and/or it is clearly intended to aggravate.
- The complainant acts in a way that is abusive or offensive.

The Headteacher (or delegated member of the Leadership Team) will use their discretion to choose not to investigate these complaints further.

14.4 Where the school has decided to take this course of action, they must inform the Chair of Governors that they have done so, explaining the nature of the complaint and why they have chosen not to investigate. If the Chair deems it appropriate to, they can redirect the leader to investigate the complaint. The full complaints procedure will commence from stage one upon this direction.

14.5 If the Chair upholds the Headteacher's decision and the complainant deems this decision to be so unreasonable that no other rational body in the same position would have made that decision, then the complainant may write to the Department for Education (see section 15).

14.6 If the unreasonable behaviour continues then the school will follow the procedure outlined in Appendix 2.

15. Contact details for external organisations if not satisfied with the outcome of the complaints procedure

- If you have any queries regarding any aspect of the complaints procedure, please direct these to the Clerk to the Governors c/o Pirton Hill Primary School.
- If the complainant remains dissatisfied after the school's complaints procedure has been exhausted, they may complain to the Department for Education (DfE) where they believe the school has not followed education legislation or has not handled the complaint in accordance with its published procedure. The DfE does not normally overturn the school's decision.
- Ofsted may consider complaints about matters that affect the whole school. Ofsted does not resolve individual disputes between parents and schools or overturn the outcome of an individual complaint.
- For queries or complaints relating to data protection, including Subject Access Requests, please refer to the school's Data Protection and Freedom of Information Policy.

Relevant legislation and guidance

- *Equality Act 2010*
- *UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)*
- *Data Protection Act 2018*
- *Data (Use and Access) Act 2025*
- *Education Act 2002*
- *Childcare Act 2006 and the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework for group and school-based providers*
- *School suspensions and permanent exclusions – statutory guidance*
- *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026*
- *Department for Education Best practice guidance for school complaints procedures*
- *Parentkind Parent Guide to School Complaints (2026)*

Appendix 1 - Pirton Hill Primary School Formal Complaints Form



Pirton Hill Primary School Formal Complaints Form

Only for use under Stage 2 of the Complaints Procedure

Name	
Name of pupil, year group and your relationship to them (where applicable)	
Contact address	
Contact telephone day	
Contact telephone mobile	
Contact email address	
Details of the complaint	
Action taken so far (including staff member who has dealt with it so far) or solutions offered	
The reason that this was not a satisfactory resolution for you	
What action would you like to be taken to resolve the problem?	

Appendix 2: The school's actions in cases Unreasonable, Persistent or Unacceptable Behaviour

1. In the first instance the school will verbally inform the complainant that his / her behaviour is considered to be becoming unreasonable / unacceptable and, if it is not modified, action may be taken in accordance with this policy. This will be confirmed in writing (Model Letter 1).

2. If the behaviour is not modified the school will take some or all of the following actions as necessary, having regard to the nature of the complainant's behaviour and the effect of this on the school community:

A. Inform the complainant in writing that his/her behaviour is now considered by the school to be unreasonable/unacceptable and, therefore, to fall under the terms of this policy
B. Inform the complainant that all meetings with a member of staff will be conducted with a second person present and that notes of meetings may be taken in the interests of all parties (see Model Letter 2);
C. Inform the complainant that, except in emergencies, all routine communication with the complainant to the school should be by letter only (see Model Letter 2);(in the case of physical, or verbal aggression) take advice from HR / Legal Services and consider warning the complainant about being banned from the school site; or proceed straight to a temporary ban;
D. Consider taking advice from the HR Service on pursuing a case under Anti-Harassment legislation.

MODEL LETTER 1:

INITIAL LETTER INFORMING A COMPLAINANT THAT HIS/HER BEHAVIOUR IS CONSIDERED TO FALL BELOW A REASONABLE/ ACCEPTABLE STANDARD RECORDED DELIVERY

Dear

This letter is to inform you that the school considers your actions in [*describe actions, dates, behaviour*] on ..... when you ..... to be unreasonable/unacceptable.

We would ask you to bear in mind the fact that such behaviour on a school site can be disruptive and distressing to pupils, staff and parents/carers [*delete if behaviour complained of did not occur on school site e.g. persistent use of e-mail, school messaging system, verbally abusive telephone calls*].

We are aware that you have raised some concerns, and would advise you that these are usually dealt with most effectively through the School's Complaints Procedure. At the moment we are dealing with these issues by [*describe actions being taken to resolve concern*].

Please note that the School's Policy for Dealing with Persistent or Vexatious Complaints/Harassment sets out standards of behaviour expected of all people in their dealings with the School. These include:

- behaving reasonably;
- treating others with courtesy and respect;
- resolving complaints using the School's Complaints Procedure;
- avoiding physical and verbal aggression at all times.

The Policy also indicates the steps that we may take if these standards are breached. These include:

- making special arrangements for meetings and communication with the school;
- considering a ban from the school premises;
- considering legal action.

I would ask that you allow the school time to resolve the issues according to the correct procedures, and would assure you that we shall take every step to move this process forward as quickly as possible.

Yours sincerely Headteacher

MODEL LETTER 2:

INFORMING A COMPAINANT THAT HIS/HER BEHAVIOUR IS NOW CONSIDERED TO FALL UNDER THE TERMS OF THE POLICY FOR DEALING WITH PERSISTENT OR VEXATIOUS COMPLAINTS/ HARASSMENT
RECORDED DELIVERY

Dear

You will recall that I wrote to you on [*insert date*] telling you that I felt your behaviour was unreasonable.

I am now writing to inform you that in view of your behaviour on [*date*], when you [*describe actions/behaviour*] it has been decided that the School's Policy for Dealing with Persistent or Vexatious Complaints/Harassment will apply from the date of this letter.

In the circumstances I have made the following arrangements for your future contact with the school: [**Delete A or B as applicable*]

*A For the foreseeable future, should you wish to meet with any member of staff, I would ask you to note:

A. All routine communication, including any request for a meeting between you and the school, will be by letter only. Letters from you need to be addressed to at the school address; email correspondence will not be responded to;
B. An appointment will be arranged and confirmed in writing as soon as possible;
C. A third party from the school will be present;
D. In the interests of all parties, formal notes of this meeting may be made.

*B For the foreseeable future, all meetings arising from any written communication with the school will not be conducted by a member of staff, but will be conducted by …… representing the school. I would ask you to note:

A. All routine communication, including any request for a meeting between you and the school, will be by letter only. Letters from you need to be addressed to at the school address; email correspondence will not be responded to;
B. An appointment will be arranged and confirmed in writing as soon as possible;
C. A third party will be present;
D. In the interests of all parties, formal notes of this meeting may be made.

Exceptionally, these arrangements do not apply to any emergency involving [*insert name of pupil*] – in which case you should contact the school in the usual way.

While these arrangements are in place, with respect to normal access to information available on parents' evenings, this will be provided in a summary written report.

These arrangements take effect immediately. If you wish to make a representation about the contents of this letter, which may include any expressions of regret on your part and any assurances that you are prepared to give about your future good conduct, you can do so by writing to me at the school by [*state ten working days from the date of the letter*]. If on receipt of your comments I consider that the arrangements outlined above should continue, you will be supplied with details of how to review a circumstance of your case.

I do hope that the difficulties we are currently experiencing can soon be resolved.

Yours sincerely
Headteacher