Complaints Policy

Calcot Infants and Junior Schools

1. Document Control

Adopted / Adopted and Adapted / Schools own: **Adopted & Adapted**

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2. Change History

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7	2025 June	No changes
8	2026 Oct	Amendments

3. Website History

Version	Date on website
8	2026 June

1. Introduction

For the purposes of this policy, “Calcot Schools” refers collectively to Calcot Junior School and Calcot Infant School and Nursery.

Calcot Junior School and Calcot Infant School and Nursery are federated under one governing body. This policy applies to both schools and will be published on the shared website page used by both schools.

Calcot Schools is committed to providing a high-quality education and to working positively with pupils, parents, carers and the wider community.

We recognise that concerns and complaints may arise from time to time. We take complaints seriously and use them as an opportunity to listen, understand concerns, resolve matters where possible and improve our practice.

This policy has been developed with reference to the Department for Education's School complaints procedures: guidance for maintained schools and its model complaints procedure.

The governing body has a legal duty under section 29 of the Education Act 2002 to establish and publish procedures for dealing with complaints relating to the school and to any community facilities or services that the school provides for which there are no separate statutory procedures.

In establishing and publishing this procedure, the governing body has had regard to the Department for Education's best practice guidance for maintained schools and its model complaints procedure, as required by section 29(2) of the Education Act 2002.

Calcot Schools will make reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010 so that disabled complainants and others who need support can access and participate in the procedure. This may include providing information in an alternative format, arranging interpretation or communication support, adjusting meeting arrangements or allowing additional support at a meeting.

2. Definitions

The Department for Education distinguishes between a concern and a complaint.

A concern is an expression of worry or doubt about an issue considered to be important, where reassurance is sought.

A complaint is an expression or statement of dissatisfaction, however made, about actions taken or a lack of action.

Many concerns can be resolved quickly and informally without using the formal complaints procedure.

Where a concern cannot be resolved informally, or where a person wishes to make a formal complaint, the procedure set out in this policy will be followed.

A complainant does not have to complete the informal stage before making a formal complaint.

Anonymous complaints will be considered at the discretion of the Headteacher or Chair of Governors, depending on the subject of the complaint. In deciding whether and how to investigate, the school will consider the seriousness of the issues raised, the credibility of the information and whether sufficient information is available to conduct a fair investigation.

Where information suggests that a child or another person may be at immediate risk, the school will act under its safeguarding or emergency procedures without waiting for the complaints process.

For the purposes of this policy, a “school day” is a day on which the relevant school is open to pupils. School holidays, weekends, bank holidays and staff training days are not counted as school days.

3. Aims of the complaints procedure

- is simple to understand and use;
- is impartial;
- is non-adversarial;
- enables a full and fair investigation;
- respects confidentiality where appropriate;
- addresses all relevant points raised;
- provides an effective and prompt response;
- provides appropriate redress where necessary;
- enables the school to learn from complaints; and
- provides information to school leaders and governors to support school improvement.
- treats all parties with respect and courtesy;
- keeps the complainant appropriately informed about progress; and
- makes reasonable adjustments so that people can participate fairly.

Calcot Schools will seek to resolve complaints at the earliest appropriate stage.

The school will also ensure that complainants are informed of the next stage of the procedure when responding to a complaint.

4. Who can make a complaint?

Anyone may make a complaint about any provision, facility or service provided by Calcot Schools, unless a separate statutory procedure applies.

- parents and carers;
- parents or carers of children who have previously attended the school;
- former pupils;
- members of the public; and
- any other person who wishes to complain about provision, facilities or services supplied by either school.

A person may make a complaint on behalf of someone else where they have the complainant's consent to do so.

Calcot Schools may ask for confirmation of that consent where appropriate.

Where a child or young person wishes to make a complaint, the school will take account of their age, understanding and individual circumstances and provide appropriate support.

5. Scope of this policy

This policy covers complaints about the provision, facilities or services provided by Calcot Schools where there is no separate statutory procedure.

- admissions;
- statutory assessments of special educational needs;
- matters likely to require a child protection investigation;
- suspension and permanent exclusion;
- whistleblowing;

- staff grievances;
- staff disciplinary or conduct matters;
- school reorganisation proposals;
- complaints about the content of collective worship, which should be raised with the local authority, the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education or another relevant body; and
- other matters for which a separate statutory complaints or appeal procedure exists.

Where a complaint falls under another procedure, Calcot Schools will advise the complainant of the appropriate route wherever possible.

5.1 Safeguarding and child protection

Where a complaint raises a concern that a child may be at risk of harm, safeguarding procedures will take priority.

Such matters will be dealt with under Calcot Schools' safeguarding and child protection procedures and relevant statutory guidance.

A complaint about the handling of a safeguarding matter will not prevent the school from taking immediate action where necessary to safeguard a child.

5.2 Allergy safety and medical conditions

Complaints about the school's arrangements for supporting a pupil with an allergy or other medical condition, including the implementation of an individual healthcare plan or the school's allergy safety arrangements, will normally be considered under this complaints procedure.

Where a concern indicates that a pupil may be at immediate medical risk, the school's emergency, medical and allergy safety procedures will take priority. The complaints procedure may subsequently be used to consider how the incident or concern was managed.

Making a complaint will not delay any immediate action required to protect a pupil, provide emergency treatment, notify relevant persons or record and report an allergy-related incident.

5.3Admissions

Complaints about admission decisions or admission appeals are dealt with under the relevant admissions and appeals arrangements.

5.4 Special educational needs

Concerns about statutory assessments of special educational needs should normally be raised with the relevant local authority.

5.5 Exclusions

Complaints about the application of the school's behaviour policy may be made under this complaints procedure.

Complaints or appeals relating to a suspension or permanent exclusion are subject to the separate statutory arrangements.

5.6 Whistleblowing

Staff whistleblowing concerns will be dealt with under Calcot Schools' whistleblowing procedure.

Volunteers and others who raise concerns may use this complaints procedure where appropriate.

5.7 Staff grievances and conduct

Complaints raised by employees about their employment will normally be dealt with under the relevant staff grievance procedure.

Complaints about the conduct of individual members of staff may be dealt with under the school's disciplinary procedures where appropriate.

The complainant will not normally be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a member of staff. They will, however, be informed that the matter is being addressed.

5.8 Services provided by other organisations

Where a complaint concerns a service provided by another organisation using school premises or facilities, the complainant will normally be directed to that organisation's own complaints procedure.

Calcot Schools will take reasonable steps to ensure that external organisations providing services or facilities on school premises have an appropriate complaints procedure in place.

5.9 Curriculum

Complaints about the delivery of the National Curriculum fall within this complaints procedure.

Complaints about the content of the National Curriculum should be directed to the Department for Education.

Complaints about the school's delivery of religious education or relationships and sex education are dealt with under this policy. Complaints about the handling of a parent's or carer's request to withdraw a child from religious education or the daily act of collective worship are also dealt with under this policy.

5.10 Parental responsibility and complaints involving separated parents

The school will apply the law and relevant DfE guidance on parental responsibility. Where parents are separated, the school will not become involved in private disputes or act as an intermediary. Unless a court order limits a person's rights, a parent with parental responsibility may raise a complaint and receive information to which they are entitled. Information about another person will only be disclosed where it is lawful and appropriate to do so.

6. Principles for investigating complaints

When investigating a complaint, Calcot Schools will seek to establish:

- what happened;
- who was involved;
- what the complainant believes went wrong;
- what evidence is available;
- what remains unresolved; and
- what the complainant feels would resolve the matter.

Where appropriate, the school will ask the complainant at an early stage what outcome they are seeking.

An acknowledgement that the school could have handled a situation better does not necessarily constitute an admission of unlawful or negligent action.

All decisions made under this policy will be made in accordance with the principles of administrative law. Decision-makers should ensure that decisions are:

- lawful;

- rational;
- reasonable;
- fair; and
- proportionate.

Decision-makers should also have regard to equality and human rights considerations where relevant.

Decision-makers will also be mindful of the Seven Principles of Public Life: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

There may occasionally be a reasonable need to depart from the published procedure. Any material departure will be recorded, explained to the parties and kept to the minimum necessary to ensure a fair and effective process.

7. Roles and responsibilities

7.1 The complainant

- follow the complaints procedure;
- explain the complaint as fully as possible at the earliest opportunity;
- provide relevant information and evidence;
- cooperate with the school throughout the investigation;
- respond to reasonable requests and deadlines;
- identify, where possible, what outcome they are seeking;
- ask for assistance if required;
- treat all those involved with respect and courtesy;
- respect confidentiality; and
- avoid approaching individual governors about the substance of a complaint.

Complainants should not publish details of complaints or personal information about those involved on social media or other public forums.

Where a complainant requires reasonable adjustments or assistance to participate in the complaints process, they should inform the school.

7.2 The investigator

- establish the facts of the complaint;
- interview relevant individuals where appropriate and make secure notes of meetings;
- consider relevant records, documents and other evidence;
- investigate with an open mind;
- ask appropriate questions and pursue relevant lines of enquiry;
- be fair and impartial;
- persist with questioning where necessary to establish the facts;
- keep the investigation within the agreed timescale wherever possible;
- analyse the information gathered;
- identify the findings of fact;
- prepare a comprehensive written report or conclusion; and
- ensure that the complainant receives a clear written response.

The investigator may interview staff, pupils, children, young people and other relevant individuals where appropriate.

Where a child is involved, the investigator will consider their age, understanding, welfare and ability to participate appropriately.

7.3 Complaints Co-ordinator

- keep the complainant informed of the progress of the complaint;
- liaise with staff, the Headteacher, Chair of Governors and Governance Professional as appropriate;
- ensure that complaints are directed to the appropriate person;
- arrange appropriate support, including interpretation or other reasonable assistance where necessary;
- consider the needs of children and young people who are complainants;
- ensure appropriate records are maintained;
- obtain relevant information from third parties where necessary; and
- monitor progress against the published timescales.

For Calcot Schools, the Governance Professional will normally undertake the formal co-ordination and administration of complaints, unless another person is designated for a particular complaint.

7.4 Governance Professional

- act as a point of contact for the complainant and the Stage 2 panel;
- arrange Stage 2 panels;
- liaise with panel members;
- set dates, times and venues;
- ensure that appropriate accessibility arrangements are made;
- obtain and circulate relevant written material and evidence;
- ensure that parties are aware of relevant procedural requirements;
- ensure that panel members understand their role;
- advise on relevant legal and procedural requirements where appropriate;
- have regard to requirements relating to equality, data protection and freedom of information;
- notify the complainant and relevant parties of the panel's decision;
- arrange for appropriate minutes to be taken;
- circulate the outcome and relevant recommendations where appropriate; and
- maintain the central complaints record.

The Governance Professional will not normally investigate the substance of a complaint unless specifically appointed to do so.

7.5 Chair of the Stage 2 panel

- ensure that the panel is independent and impartial;
- ensure that no panel member has had prior involvement in the complaint;
- ask both parties whether they wish to provide any additional information;
- ensure that the hearing is informal and non-adversarial;
- put the complainant and any child or young person at ease;
- explain the remit of the panel;
- ensure that relevant written material is available to the panel, subject to confidentiality and data protection requirements;
- deal fairly with any new issues which arise during the hearing;
- ensure that both parties have an appropriate opportunity to present their case;
- establish relevant findings of fact;
- ensure that the panel acts independently and with an open mind;

- ensure that conflicts of interest are identified and managed;
- ensure that appropriate minutes are taken; and
- liaise with the Governance Professional regarding the outcome.

8. Informal concerns

Calcot Schools encourages concerns to be raised as soon as possible.

The first point of contact will normally be the child's class teacher.

Where appropriate, the matter may then be escalated to a member of the senior leadership team (SLT) or the Headteacher.

Concerns may be raised:

- in person;
- by telephone;
- by email; or
- in writing.

The school will seek to resolve informal concerns quickly and proportionately. Where an informal concern requires further investigation, the school will explain how it intends to deal with the concern and, where possible, the anticipated timescale.

Where a concern cannot be resolved informally, or the complainant wishes to make a formal complaint, Stage 1 will apply.

9. Formal complaints – the two-stage process

Calcot Schools operates a two-stage complaints procedure:

Stage 1 – Formal investigation by the school.

Stage 2 – Fresh consideration of the complaint by an independent panel of governors.

The second stage will consider the complaint afresh rather than simply reviewing whether the earlier procedure was followed.

A complainant must be given the opportunity to complete the published complaints procedure unless there is clear evidence that the complaint meets the school's published criteria for a serial complaint.

10. Stage 1 – Formal complaint

Formal complaints may be made by letter, email, telephone or in person, or through a third party acting with the complainant's consent. Written complaints are preferred because they provide a clear record. Complaints should be addressed to the Headteacher via the relevant school office and marked Private and Confidential. The school will record a verbal complaint and confirm the substance of it with the complainant.

Calcot Junior School

office@c-jun.w-berks.sch.uk

Calcot Infant School & Nursery

office@c-inf.w-berks.sch.uk

If you are unsure who should receive your concern or complaint, please contact the relevant school office. Staff will ensure that it is passed to the appropriate person without unnecessary delay.

The complaint should normally include:

- a clear description of the complaint;
- relevant dates and events;
- the names of those involved, where known;
- relevant documents or evidence;
- details of any steps already taken to resolve the matter; and
- the outcome being sought.

A complaint may be made verbally where necessary. Calcot Schools will provide reasonable assistance where a complainant has difficulty putting their complaint in writing.

10.1 Acknowledgement

The school will acknowledge receipt of a formal complaint within **5 school days**.

The acknowledgement will normally:

- confirm receipt;
- identify who will investigate the complaint;
- summarise the issues to be considered;
- request any necessary clarification; and
- provide the expected timescale.

10.2 Investigation

The Headteacher or another member of SLT will normally investigate Stage 1 complaints.

Where the complaint concerns the Headteacher, the arrangements in section 16 will apply.

The investigator will undertake a fair and proportionate investigation.

This may include:

- meeting the complainant;
- interviewing relevant staff;
- speaking to pupils or children where appropriate;
- reviewing school records;
- considering written evidence;
- seeking information from relevant third parties;
- checking relevant policies and procedures; and
- identifying any further action required.

The investigator will keep secure notes of relevant meetings and maintain appropriate confidentiality.

The complainant may be accompanied to a meeting by a suitable companion.

The school should be informed in advance of the identity of the companion.

A companion may be a friend, relative, advocate or other suitable supporter. Legal representation is not normally necessary because the procedure is not a legal hearing, but a request for legal representation will be considered case by case. The school may refuse a particular companion where there is a conflict of interest, a risk to confidentiality or another fair and reasonable ground; if so, it will explain this promptly so that an alternative companion can be arranged.

The school may consider mediation where both parties agree that it may help, but mediation will not replace a formal investigation or prevent a complainant from progressing through the procedure.

10.3 Stage 1 outcome

Calcot Schools will aim to provide a full written response within **10 school days** of receiving the formal complaint.

The response will:

- set out the complaint or issues considered;
- explain the investigation undertaken;
- summarise relevant findings of fact;
- provide a decision on each substantive issue;
- explain the reasons for the decision;
- identify any action to be taken, where appropriate; and
- explain how the complainant can progress the complaint to Stage 2.

Where it is not possible to meet the 10-school-day timescale, the complainant will be informed of the reason for the delay and given a revised timescale.

11. Stage 2 – Governor panel

If the complainant remains dissatisfied following Stage 1, they may request that the complaint progresses to Stage 2.

The request should normally be made within **10 school days** of the Stage 1 response.

The request should explain:

- which aspects of the complaint remain unresolved; and
- why the complainant remains dissatisfied.

The complainant does not need permission from the school to progress to Stage 2.

The request should be submitted to the Governance Professional via clerk@c-inf.w-berks.sch.uk

The Governance Professional will acknowledge receipt within **5 school days**.

12. Stage 2 panel

12.1 Composition

The Stage 2 panel will normally consist of three governors.

Governors will be allocated to each complaint on a case-by-case basis.

Panel members must:

- have had no previous involvement in the complaint;
- have no conflict of interest;
- be sufficiently independent of the circumstances;
- be able to consider the complaint objectively; and
- be willing and able to fulfil the responsibilities of a panel member.

Where there are insufficient suitably independent governors available, Calcot Schools will make provision to obtain suitably skilled and independent governors from another school or another appropriate source.

The panel will appoint its own chair.

12.2 Arranging the panel

The Governance Professional will arrange the panel.

The panel will aim to meet within **20 school days** of receipt of the Stage 2 request, where reasonably practicable.

The Governance Professional will offer at least three proposed dates, allowing reasonable notice. If the complainant rejects all proposed dates without good reason, or does not respond within a reasonable period, the Governance Professional may set a date. The panel may then proceed on the written evidence if the complainant does not attend.

The Governance Professional will:

- agree a date, time and venue;
- consider accessibility requirements;
- provide reasonable notice to all parties;
- obtain additional written evidence where necessary;
- set appropriate deadlines for submission of evidence;
- collate relevant papers;
- circulate papers to panel members and relevant parties as appropriate; and
- ensure that all parties understand the arrangements.

The complainant and the school may provide additional written information. Unless the Governance Professional sets different reasonable deadlines, additional material must be received at least **10 school days** before the hearing and the hearing papers will be circulated at least **5 school days** before it. Late material will only be accepted where the panel considers this fair and practical.

Where appropriate, papers will be provided in an accessible format.

13. Stage 2 hearing

The Stage 2 panel will consider the complaint afresh.

The panel will not simply review whether the Stage 1 process was followed.

The hearing will normally be held in private.

The complainant may attend and may be accompanied by a suitable companion.

Neither party is expected to bring legal representation, although the panel chair may agree this where it is appropriate in the circumstances. A staff witness may be accompanied by a trade union representative or other appropriate supporter.

The parties must notify the Governance Professional in advance of any witnesses they wish to call. The panel chair will decide whether a witness is relevant and necessary. Representatives of the media are not permitted to attend.

The school may be represented by appropriate staff.

The panel chair will explain the panel's remit and the procedure for the hearing.

The panel will seek to ensure that the hearing is informal and non-adversarial.

The complainant and school will each have an opportunity to explain their position and provide relevant information.

The panel may:

- ask questions;
- seek clarification;

- consider written evidence;
- hear from relevant witnesses where necessary; and
- consider any further relevant information.

The panel will deal fairly with any new issue arising during the hearing. The Stage 2 panel will not normally consider a genuinely new complaint which has not been considered at Stage 1. Such a complaint will normally be referred for consideration under Stage 1.

The panel will seek to establish relevant findings of fact and determine whether the complaint should be upheld, partially upheld or not upheld.

Once the parties have presented their cases and answered questions, they will normally withdraw while the panel considers the evidence and reaches its decision.

If either party does not attend, the panel will decide whether it is fair to proceed, adjourn or rearrange. In doing so, it will consider the reason given, whether reasonable notice was provided, the effect of delay and whether the complaint can be fairly determined from the available written evidence. The decision and reasons will be recorded in the minutes.

14. Recording Stage 2 meetings

Stage 2 hearings will not normally be electronically recorded.

A request to record a hearing should be made in advance.

The panel will not normally permit recording unless this has been agreed in advance or is required as a reasonable adjustment.

Covert recordings will not normally be accepted as evidence.

The Governance Professional will ensure that appropriate minutes are taken.

Minutes will record the key points considered and the panel's decision-making process but will not normally constitute a verbatim transcript. A copy of the Stage 2 minutes will normally be provided to the complainant, subject to any necessary redactions to protect personal or confidential information.

15. Stage 2 outcome

The panel will normally provide its written decision within 5 school days of the hearing.

The outcome will:

- confirm the issues considered;
- summarise the relevant findings;
- state whether each complaint is upheld, partially upheld or not upheld;
- provide the reasons for the decision;
- identify any recommendations or actions, where appropriate; and
- confirm that the Calcot Schools complaints procedure is complete.

Where appropriate, the panel may:

- recommend action to resolve the complaint;
- recommend changes to school procedures or practice;
- recommend further investigation or action;
- identify lessons to be learned; or
- make recommendations to the Headteacher or governing body.

The outcome and any relevant recommendations will be provided to the complainant and, where appropriate, the person who was the subject of the complaint.

The Headteacher and governing body will be informed of relevant recommendations. A copy of the panel's findings and recommendations will be available for inspection by the Headteacher and governing body, subject to appropriate confidentiality and data protection safeguards.

The Stage 2 decision is the final stage of Calcot Schools' complaints procedure.

16. Complaints about the Headteacher

Where a complaint concerns the Headteacher, the complaint should be submitted to the Governance Professional via the relevant school office and marked Private and Confidential.

The Chair of Governors will normally arrange for a suitably skilled and impartial governor to investigate the complaint at Stage 1. Where the Chair has a conflict of interest or has had prior involvement, another suitably skilled governor will be appointed.

The Headteacher will not investigate a complaint about themselves.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied, Stage 2 will be considered by a panel of governors who have had no previous involvement in the complaint.

17. Complaints about the Chair of Governors or an individual governor

Complaints about the Chair of Governors or an individual governor should be submitted to the Governance Professional via the relevant school office and marked Private and Confidential.

The Governance Professional will arrange for an appropriately skilled and impartial governor, or another suitable independent person where necessary, to investigate the complaint at Stage 1. If the complainant remains dissatisfied, Stage 2 will be heard by a panel whose members have had no prior involvement.

The governor who is the subject of the complaint will not participate in the investigation or Stage 2 panel.

If the complaint concerns the Chair of Governors, the Chair will not be responsible for arranging or determining the complaint.

18. Complaints about the whole governing body

Where a complaint concerns:

- the whole governing body;
- a majority of governors;
- both the Chair and Vice-Chair; or
- circumstances where there are insufficient independent governors,

Calcot Schools will make arrangements to ensure that the complaint can be investigated and considered independently.

This may involve:

- an independent investigator at Stage 1; and
- appropriately independent governors or another suitable independent panel at Stage 2.

The Governance Professional will arrange the appropriate process in consultation with the Chair or, where necessary, another appropriate person.

19. Early Years Foundation Stage complaints

Calcot Infant School & Nursery provides Early Years Foundation Stage provision through its Nursery and Reception provision.

Written complaints relating specifically to Calcot Infant School & Nursery's fulfilment of the Early Years Foundation Stage requirements will be investigated under this policy.

For written complaints concerning fulfilment of EYFS requirements, the complainant will be notified in writing of the investigation outcome within 28 calendar days of the school receiving the complaint, including where it is received during a school holiday. This deadline takes precedence over the general timescale and holiday arrangements in sections 20 and 21.

A written record will be kept of each complaint concerning the school's fulfilment of the EYFS requirements, its outcome and any action taken as a result. The record will be made available to Ofsted on request.

Parents and carers may contact Ofsted if they believe the school is not meeting EYFS requirements. They do not have to wait until the school's complaints procedure has been completed before raising such concerns with Ofsted.

Ofsted

Telephone: 0300 123 4666

Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Safeguarding and child protection concerns will be dealt with under the school's safeguarding procedures.

20. Timescales

Stage	Timescale
Informal concern	As soon as reasonably practicable
Stage 1 acknowledgement	Within 5 school days
Stage 1 response	Aim for within 10 school days
Stage 2 request	Normally within 10 school days of Stage 1 response
Stage 2 acknowledgement	Within 5 school days
Stage 2 hearing	Aim to arrange within 20 school days
Stage 2 outcome	Normally within 5 school days of hearing

Except for the statutory EYFS complaints deadline in section 19, the timescales in this policy are targets rather than absolute deadlines

Where a complaint cannot reasonably be dealt with within the published timescale, the complainant will be informed of the reason for the delay and given a revised timescale.

If the police, local authority safeguarding services, a tribunal or another public body is investigating related matters, the school may adjust or suspend the procedure where continuing could prejudice that work. The complainant will be told what has been decided and, so far as possible, when the procedure is expected to resume.

If legal proceedings are started in relation to the complaint, the school will consider whether it is appropriate to suspend the complaints procedure until those proceedings have concluded. Legal action will not automatically stop the procedure.

Calcot Schools will not operate a blanket policy of refusing to consider complaints solely because they were not made or escalated within a stated period. Individual circumstances will be considered.

21. Complaints made during school holidays

Where a complaint is received during a school holiday, the school will normally treat the complaint as being received on the first school day after the holiday.

Where the nature of the complaint requires an immediate response, the school will take appropriate action without waiting for the end of the holiday period.

The holiday arrangement above does **not** apply to written complaints concerning fulfilment of EYFS requirements. These are treated as received on the actual date of receipt and are subject to the 28-calendar-day deadline in section 19.

22. Time limits for making complaints

Complaints should normally be raised within 3 months of the incident or, where the complaint concerns a series of related incidents, within 3 months of the last incident.

Calcot Schools may consider a complaint made outside this period where:

- there is a valid reason for the delay; and
- it remains possible to investigate the complaint fairly.

Each case will be considered on its circumstances.

23. Withdrawal of a complaint

A complainant may withdraw a complaint at any time.

Where possible, the complainant should confirm the withdrawal in writing.

24. Unreasonable behaviour and persistent complaints

Calcot Schools recognises that people may become frustrated or upset when making a complaint.

The school will not regard a complaint as unreasonable simply because a complainant is persistent, disagrees with the school's decision or continues to seek clarification.

However, there may be circumstances where a person's behaviour becomes unreasonable and significantly affects the school's ability to investigate or respond to a complaint.

Examples may include:

- refusing to explain the complaint despite reasonable assistance being offered;
- refusing to cooperate with the investigation;
- repeatedly changing the basis of the complaint;
- introducing large amounts of irrelevant information;
- making disproportionate demands on staff time;
- repeatedly raising the same complaint after it has been fully investigated;
- insisting on methods of communication which are incompatible with the school's procedures;
- repeatedly contacting staff while a complaint is being investigated;
- seeking an unrealistic outcome;
- using threatening, abusive, offensive or discriminatory language;
- threatening or intimidating staff;
- knowingly providing false information; or
- publishing unacceptable personal information about staff, pupils or others involved in the complaint.

This list is not exhaustive.

The school will consider the individual circumstances of each case.

A complainant will not be treated as unreasonable merely because they make a complaint, disagree with a decision or seek to exercise their right to progress through the complaints procedure.

25. Managing unreasonable behaviour

Where appropriate, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors will seek to discuss concerns about communication or behaviour with the complainant before restrictions are introduced.

Where unreasonable behaviour continues, Calcot Schools may take proportionate steps, including:

- identifying a single point of contact;
- limiting the frequency or method of communication;
- requiring communication to be in writing;
- agreeing reasonable times for communication;
- suggesting that the complainant asks an appropriate third party to communicate on their behalf;
- restricting access to school premises where necessary; or
- taking other reasonable measures to protect staff, pupils and others.

Any restrictions will be confirmed in writing and will be proportionate to the circumstances.

Communication restrictions do not remove any statutory entitlement to pupil information and do not apply to freedom of information or data protection requests, which will be handled under the relevant legal procedures.

If access to school premises is restricted, the individual will be given an opportunity to make representations. The decision will be reviewed by the Chair of Governors or a committee of governors, and any confirmed restriction will state how long it applies and when it will be reviewed.

Serious incidents involving violence, threats or intimidation may be referred to the police.

26. Serial and persistent complaints

The DfE recommends that schools have arrangements for dealing with serial and persistent complaints.

A complaint may be regarded as serial or persistent where:

- the school has taken every reasonable step to address the concerns;
- the complainant has been provided with a clear explanation of the school's position; and
- the complainant continues to contact the school repeatedly about substantially the same matter.

A complaint should not be regarded as serial or persistent before the complainant has had the opportunity to complete the school's published complaints procedure.

Where a complaint is determined to be serial or persistent, the school may decide that further correspondence about the same matter will not receive a substantive response. The designation of a complaint as serial or persistent will relate to the subject matter of the complaint rather than to the complainant as an individual.

The complainant will be informed of this decision.

This will not prevent the complainant from raising a genuinely new complaint.

A complaint will not be labelled serial or persistent merely because the complainant has contacted or referred the matter to their Member of Parliament.

27. Duplicate complaints

Where a complaint has already been investigated and resolved and a substantially identical complaint is subsequently received from another person, Calcot Schools will consider whether:

- new issues have been raised;
- new evidence has been provided; or
- there are matters which were not previously considered.

Where there is no new information or issue, the school may explain that the matter has already been investigated and that the complaints procedure has been completed.

Where a genuinely new issue is raised, it will be dealt with under the appropriate stage of this policy.

28. Complaint campaigns

Where the school receives a large number of complaints about the same issue, Calcot Schools may adopt a proportionate approach.

This may include:

- issuing a common or template response to complainants;
- publishing a single response addressing the issue on the Calcot Schools website;
- responding individually where the circumstances require it; or
- using another appropriate method of communicating the school's position.

29. Recording and confidentiality

Calcot Schools will maintain appropriate records of complaints.

Records may include:

- the complaint;
- correspondence;
- evidence;
- investigation notes;
- meeting notes;
- panel papers;
- minutes;
- decisions;
- recommendations; and
- actions taken.
- the stage at which the complaint was resolved; and
- whether the complaint was upheld, partially upheld or not upheld.

Complaint records will be treated confidentially and stored securely.

Information will only be shared where necessary for the purposes of investigating or responding to the complaint, or where disclosure is required or permitted by law.

Records may also be disclosed where required to the Secretary of State or a person acting on their behalf, to Ofsted in relation to relevant complaints, or in response to a valid freedom of information request or subject access request. Any disclosure will be handled in accordance with the applicable law.

The substance of an unresolved complaint will not normally be shared with the full governing body because governors may be needed for a Stage 2 panel. The exception is a complaint about the whole governing body, where those complained about need sufficient information to respond.

Personal information will be handled in accordance with applicable data protection legislation and Calcot Schools' privacy arrangements. Records will be retained in accordance with Calcot Schools' records retention schedule and will be securely destroyed when they are no longer required.

Individual governors will not normally be provided with details of a complaint before Stage 2 where this could compromise their independence.

Where a governor has had prior involvement in a complaint, they will not normally participate in the Stage 2 panel.

30. Bias and independence

Calcot Schools will seek to ensure that complaints are considered by people who are impartial and have no prior involvement in the matter.

If a complainant believes that there is a risk of bias, they should explain the reasons for their concern when requesting escalation.

A complainant may request an independent Stage 2 panel where they believe there is likely to be bias in the proceedings. The complainant should provide the reasons for their concern. The governing body will consider the request and will not unreasonably withhold consent where there is a genuine concern about bias.

The governing body will not unreasonably withhold consent to an independent panel where there is a genuine concern about bias.

Where necessary, governors from another school or another suitably independent source may be used.

31. Learning from complaints

Complaints can provide valuable information about the effectiveness of school procedures and practice.

Calcot Schools will consider whether complaints identify opportunities to:

- improve communication;
- improve procedures;
- provide additional staff training;
- change or clarify school practice;
- improve information provided to parents and carers; or
- make other improvements.

The fact that a complaint is upheld does not necessarily mean that an individual member of staff has acted improperly.

32. Monitoring arrangements

The governing body will monitor the effectiveness of the complaints procedure.

Monitoring may include consideration of:

- the number and nature of complaints;
- the stage at which complaints are resolved;
- whether published timescales are being met;

- recurring themes;
- underlying issues;
- actions taken as a result of complaints; and
- how effectively complaints are being handled.

Information provided to governors will normally be anonymised or presented in a way that protects confidentiality.

The Governance Professional will maintain the central complaints record.

33. Complaints to the Department for Education

If the complainant believes that the school has not followed its published complaints procedure or has acted unlawfully or unreasonably in exercising its duties under education law they may contact the Department for Education.

The DfE normally expects complainants to complete the school's complaints procedure before contacting it.

The DfE may consider complaints where, for example, a complainant has been prevented from progressing through the published complaints procedure, where a child is at risk of harm or missing education, or where there is evidence that the school has failed to act in accordance with education law or has acted unreasonably in exercising education-related functions. The DfE does not normally act as a further appeal stage on the merits of the school's decision.

Further information and the DfE complaints form are available at: https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school

34. Links with other policies

This policy should be read alongside the following Calcot Schools policies and procedures:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Suspension and Permanent Exclusion Policy
- SEND Policy and SEND Information Report
- Staff Grievance Procedure
- Staff Disciplinary Procedure
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Data Protection and Privacy arrangements
- Records Retention arrangements
- Equality Policy
- Allergy Safety Policy
- Supporting Children with Medical Conditions Policy

35. Policy review

This policy will be reviewed by the governing body at least every two years, or earlier where there are significant changes to legislation, DfE guidance or Calcot Schools' arrangements.

Appendix 1 – Complaints procedure at a glance

Step 1 – Informal concern

First contact: Class teacher or school office.

The school will seek to resolve the concern promptly.

Step 2 – Stage 1 formal complaint

Submit the complaint to the relevant school office by letter, email, telephone or in person. Written complaints are preferred. The school office will ensure that it is passed to the appropriate person.

Acknowledgement: within 5 school days.

Investigation and response: aim for within 10 school days.

Step 3 – Stage 2

If dissatisfied with the Stage 1 response, request Stage 2.

Request: normally within 10 school days.

Acknowledgement: within 5 school days.

Step 4 – Governor panel

Normally three suitably independent governors.

Hearing: aim to arrange within 20 school days.

Outcome: normally within 5 school days of hearing.

Step 5 – End of Calcot Schools' procedure

The Stage 2 decision is the final stage of the school's complaints procedure.

Where appropriate, the complainant may contact the Department for Education.

https://form.education.gov.uk/service/Contact_the_Department_for_Education