ANTON INFANT SCHOOL

ANDOVER

COMPLAINTS POLICY

THIS POLICY WAS PREPARED BY L SKEATES

AGREED BY STAFF IN AUTUMN 2026

APPROVED BY GOVERNORS IN AUTUMN 2026

DATE FOR REVIEW: AUTUMN 2028

Signed: _____ (Headteacher)

Signed: _____ (Chair of Governors)

Date: _____

1. Introduction:

Anton Infant School is dedicated to providing the best possible education and support for its pupils. This means having a clear, fair and efficient procedure for dealing with any complaints to or against the school, so that any issues that arise can be dealt with as swiftly and effectively as possible. We urge parents to come to speak to their child's class teacher if any issues arise rather than discussing on social media platforms or outside of school with other parents.

This policy explains the steps that will be followed whenever an issue arises that causes concern. Any person, including members of the general public, may make a complaint about provision of facilities or services that our school provides, unless separate statutory procedures apply.

This procedure does not apply to complaints about:

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 Hampshire County Council https://www.hants.gov.uk/educationandlearning
• 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) via this link https://www.hants.gov.uk/socialcareandhealth/childrenandfamilies/contacts
• Exclusion of children from school*	Further information about raising concerns about 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 (protected	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

Exceptions	Who to contact
disclosures)	matters relating to education for whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: https://www.gov.uk/contact-dfe 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 Hampshire County Council (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

The school will not respond to anonymous complaints under this policy, however, the Headteacher and / or Chair of Governors will consider whether the issue and fear of identification are genuine or the issue is one of child protection.

For more information on our school's provision for protecting our pupils, please refer to our Child Protection Policy which is available at www.antoninfantschool.com/ and from the school office.

If we cannot meet the timescales set out in our policy, we will provide a clear explanation of the reason for this along with details of the indicative timescales.

2. The difference between a concern and a complaint

A concern may be defined as '*an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'*.

A complaint may be defined as '*an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action*'.

It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. Anton Infant School takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, the Headteacher, will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, the Headteacher will refer you to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important.

We understand however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, Anton Infant School will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

3. 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.

We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

4. When an issue or concern first arises:

If you have a concern that you would like to take up with the school you should initially inform a member of staff either in person, over the telephone or in writing. We advise that you approach your child's class teacher first as they will be best placed to help you directly or by letting you know which other member of staff you should be speaking to. We have a communication policy to support you with this which can be found here https://www.antoninfantschool.com/_site/data/files/policies/C6ACE2A72E3CDFB05377F2F35CDDF4A7.pdf
This contains a clear communication flow chart which can also be found in Appendix 2 of this policy.

We encourage families to approach staff with any concerns they may have and aim to resolve all issues with open dialogue and mutual understanding. We will take your concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

The Chair of Governors reserves the right to refer complaints that are taken straight to them back to the appropriate member of staff if it does not warrant the governing body's involvement at that point.

4.1 Initial informal meeting

When a concern has been raised, you may receive a telephone call from the member of staff or Headteacher to discuss your concerns, or you may be invited to attend a meeting with a member of staff or the Headteacher.

If invited to a meeting, you are welcome to bring a friend, partner or, in the case of a pupil who has raised a concern, a parent or family member along for support. It may be appropriate for a pupil to attend the meeting if their parent has raised a concern, depending on the nature of the issue.

Staff have a responsibility to ensure that you understand any future points of action that have been agreed and will make a record of what has been discussed, as well as any outcomes and a plan of action, if one has been agreed.

All staff will do their best to ensure your concerns are dealt with appropriately and efficiently, but if an agreement cannot be reached, or if you are dissatisfied with the outcome, you can make a formal complaint to the Headteacher. If your complaint is about the Headteacher you should make your complaint in writing to the Chair of Governors. You should submit your formal complaint in writing.

There is no prescribed timescale for resolution at this stage given the importance of dialogue and informal discussion, although we expect to resolve most issues within **10 school days**.

5. Formal Complaints Procedure:

In order to ensure complaints are dealt with efficiently and effectively, Anton Infant School deals with formal complaints in three stages.

5.1 Stage 1 – Complaint heard by the Headteacher

If you feel that your concern has not been dealt with as you would like, are unhappy with the outcome of your informal meeting or feel that the issue is serious enough that it warrants it, you can make a formal complaint to the Headteacher. We ask that you to make your formal complaint in writing and we provide a proforma (Appendix 1) for you to complete which can be accessed via the school office.

The Headteacher will acknowledge your complaint in writing or offer a full response within **5 school days**. If further investigation is required, the Headteacher will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within 5 school days and will advise you that a full response will be provided within **20 school days**.

The Headteacher may invite you to attend a meeting to discuss your complaint and possible solutions, or to explain what has happened or will happen as a result of your complaint.

The Headteacher will keep a record of all interactions with you and other staff, meetings and decisions made in reference to your complaint.

If your complaint is about a member of staff, the Headteacher will talk to that employee and invoke the relevant procedure if required. It will not be appropriate to inform you of the outcome of any investigation in relation to an individual member of staff.

The Headteacher will respond to you in writing within **20 school days** of receiving your complaint outlining their full response to your concern, and any action that has or will be taken. If the Headteacher has decided not to take any further action, they will explain what they have decided and how they reached the decision. You will also be advised of your right to take the matter further if you are not satisfied with the Headteacher's response.

5.2 Stage 2 – Complaint heard by the Chair of Governors

If, having spoken to the Headteacher, you are dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint, you should write to the Chair of Governors within **10 school days**[1], explaining your concern and the steps that have resulted in you taking this course of action.

The Chair of Governors will acknowledge your complaint in writing or offer a full response within **5 school days**. If further investigation is required, the Chair of Governors will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within 5 school days and will advise you that a full response will be provided within **20 school days**.

The Chair of Governors may invite you to attend a meeting to discuss your complaint and possible solutions, or to explain what has happened or will happen as a result of your complaint.

The Chair of Governors will explain that the governing body has a strategic role, and is responsible for the school's strategic framework and the Headteacher is responsible for the internal organisation, management and control of the school and for advising on and implementing the governors' policies. The Headteacher is solely responsible for making day-to-day decisions.

This stage offers an opportunity for achieving conciliation between all parties and discussions between the Chair of Governors and the Headteacher will be key to resolving the complaint and agreeing a way forward. The Chair of Governors will decide what powers are available to governors in respect of the particular complaint. In reaching this decision, the Chair of Governors will determine to what extent the issues relate to responsibilities that:

(a) are delegated to the Headteacher by the governing body; or
(b) fall within the governing body's remit only; or
(c) are within the Headteacher's terms and conditions of employment and relate to the internal organisation, management and control of the school.

[1] Exceptions to this time frame may be considered

For delegated responsibilities and matters within the remit of the governing body, the Chair of Governors may look at the whole issue afresh. If the matter relates to the Headteacher's conduct, the Chair of Governors will decide whether the matter should be dealt with through the Complaints Procedure or Staff Disciplinary Procedure. Advice may be sought from the Local Authority and/or Education Personnel Services. For matters that are the Headteacher's responsibility, the Chair of Governors is empowered only to look at whether the Headteacher's decision or action was reasonable in the light of the information available at the time.

The Chair of Governors will keep a record of all interactions with you and any decisions made in reference to your complaint.

If the Chair of Governors has decided not to take any further action, they will explain what they have decided and how they reached the decision. You will also be advised of your right to take the matter further if you are not satisfied with the Chair of Governor's response.

5.3 Stage 3 – Complaint heard by governing body's complaints panel

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint, you should write to the clerk to governors within **10 school days**[2] of the outcome of stage 2, explaining your concern and the steps that have resulted in you taking this course of action.

The clerk to governors will acknowledge receipt of your request within **5 school days**.
The complaints panel will usually be convened within **20 school days** of receiving the request for your complaint to be heard by the governing body's complaints panel. Where it is not possible to find a mutually convenient date within that timescale, all reasonable steps will be taken to agree a time and date mutually convenient to all parties.

The main function of the complaints panel will be to:

a) ensure the complaint has been properly handled by the Headteacher (and Chair of Governors)
b) ensure that a sufficient comprehensive investigation was carried out
c) ensure that the correct procedure / policies were followed.

The panel will also review whether the Headteacher (and Chair of Governors) acted reasonably.

The clerk to governors will arrange and facilitate the meeting of the complaints panel. You are entitled to an independent panel to hear your complaint and the complaints panel will consist of three governors who have no former knowledge or involvement in the matter being considered. The chair of the panel will be nominated from within the group of panel members. All panel members will have access to, and will be familiar with, this complaints policy. The clerk to governors will confirm to all parties in writing, the date, time and venue for the meeting at least **10 school days** in advance.

[2] Exceptions to this time frame may be considered

The clerk to governors will request that you supply any paperwork you feel the panel will require to consider your complaint fully. The Headteacher (and Chair of Governors) will also be requested to supply copies of their responses to the previous stages of the procedure, and any further paperwork they consider the panel will require to consider the complaint fully. Copies of all paperwork will be distributed to all parties by the clerk to governors at least **3 school days** in advance of the meeting.

You are welcome to bring a friend or partner for support to the meeting and the chair of the panel will ensure the meeting is conducted within a relaxed atmosphere whilst keeping to the formal agenda. The Headteacher (and Chair of Governors if attending) is also invited to bring a representative or member of staff for support.

No previously undisclosed evidence relating to the complaint should be introduced during the meeting.

The clerk will inform you (and the Headteacher and / or Chair of Governors) in writing of the panel's decision within **5 school days** of the meeting. The letter will include a summary of the issues, an outline of the main points of discussion, the reasons for the decision and the proposed actions or outcome. The panel may suggest you meet with the Headteacher and / or Chair of Governors again to agree a way forward.

The letter may set out recommendations which will be made to the governing body.

The panel's decision is the final stage in the complaints procedure. If you feel the school has acted unreasonably or has not followed the correct procedures in relation to your complaint, you may write to the Secretary of State using the following contact details:

https://www.gov.uk/contact-dfe

6. Unreasonable Complaints:

Anton Infant 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 the school. Operating from a position of mutual respect, 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.

Anton Infant School defines unreasonable complaints as "those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with the school, hinder our consideration of their or other people's complaints".

A complaint may be regarded as unreasonable when the person making the complaint:

- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
- refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved

- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaints procedure
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the school's complaints procedure or with good practice
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant expects to be taken into account and commented on, or raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales
- makes unjustified comments about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced
- changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds
- repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed)
- refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into a complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education
- seeks an unrealistic outcome
- makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with

A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if the person making the complaint does so either face-to-face, by telephone, in writing or electronically:

- maliciously
- aggressively
- using threats, intimidation or violence
- using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language
- knowing it to be false
- using falsified information
- publishing unacceptable information in a variety of media such as in social media websites and newspapers

Complainants should limit the numbers of communications with a school while a complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone or email) as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking.

If the behaviour continues, the Headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and asking them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact Anton Infant School causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will usually be reviewed after 6 months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the concerns and actions taken will be put in writing immediately and the police informed. This may include banning an individual from Anton Infant School.

If we receive large volumes of complaints:

- all based on the same subject
- from complainants unconnected with the school

We may, if this is appropriate, send a template response to all complainants or publish a single response on our school website.

7. Governing Body review and monitoring of complaints:

The Headteacher will report annually to the governing body on the number of formal complaints received and the levels at which they have been resolved. No details identifying the complaint or any member of staff will be published.

The governing body will review and evaluate all complaints no matter how far they are taken or what the outcome to ensure that similar problems are avoided in the future or to see if they could have been managed any more efficiently.

8. Staff Complaints:

Staff who have a concern about a colleague or volunteer in school should refer to the whistleblowing policy which is available in the school office and on the public server.

The procedure for dealing with any other staff complaint or employment grievance is set out in the school's code of conduct policy which are available in the school office and on the school shared drive.

9. Complaints Policy Review:

The governing body of Anton Infant School will review this policy every 2 years, or sooner if there are any legislative changes. The governing body of Anton Infant School will also review this policy following a complaint panel meeting to ensure that it met the requirement to provide a clear, fair and efficient complaints procedure.

Appendix 1

Complaints Form

Name of complainant:	
Contact details:	**Address:**
	Telephone:
	Email:
Outline of your complaint and how it has affected you (the complainant) / pupil:	
Have you discussed the matter already with a member of staff, if so, who? What was the outcome?	
What would you like to happen as a result of your complaint?	
Signature:	
Date:	

For school use:

Date received:	
Date acknowledged and by whom:	
Summary of action taken:	

Appendix 2

Communication Flowchart

