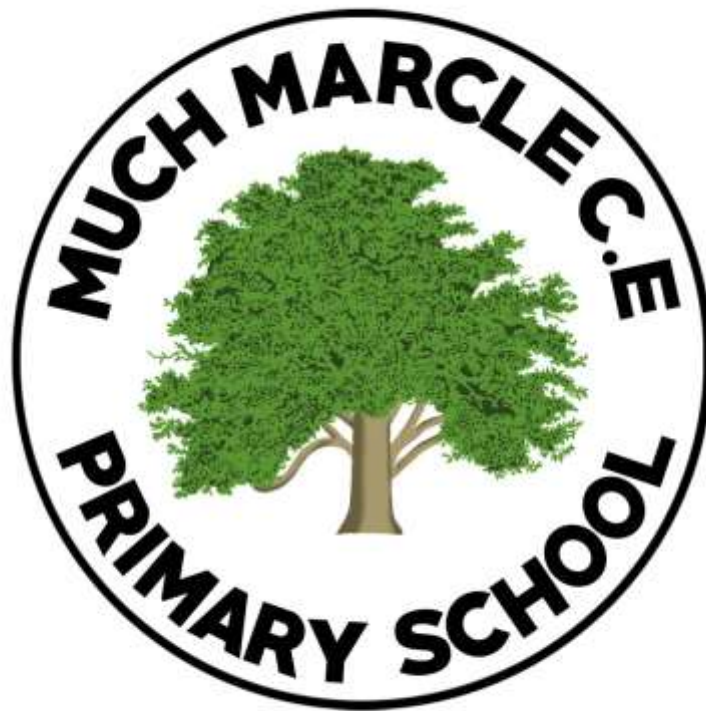


Much Marcle CE Nursery and Primary School

Complaints Policy



Date Reviewed	Reviewed By	Next Review
August 2022	Laura Davies and Governors	August 2024

COMPLAINTS POLICY

Under Section 29 of the Education Act 2002, governing bodies of all maintained schools and governor run nursery schools in England are required to have in place a procedure to deal with complaints relating to the school and to any community facilities or services that the school provides. The law also requires the complaints procedure to be published. In addition, the governing body must hear formal complaints from parents and others about the school's curriculum, according to procedures set up by the Department for Education.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Much Marcle CE Nursery & Primary School aims to be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaint. We give careful consideration to all complaints, and deal with them as swiftly as possible. We aim to resolve any complaint through dialogue and mutual understanding. In all cases, we put the interests of the child above all else. We provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed, and then resolved.

INTRODUCTION

Much Marcle CE Nursery & Primary School strive to provide a good education for all of our children. The Headteacher and staff work very hard to build positive relationships with all parents and carers. However, the school is obliged to have procedures in place in case there are complaints by parents or carers. The following policy sets out the procedures that the school follows in such cases.

If any parents or carers are unhappy with the education that their child is receiving, or have any concerns relating to the school, we encourage them to make an appointment to discuss those concerns with the child's class teacher immediately.

If the discussion with the class teacher does not resolve concerns raised then, in accordance with this complaints policy, the complainant should follow the process detailed in **Appendix B**.

Parents and carers have the right, as a last resort, to appeal to the Secretary of State for Education, if they still feel that their complaint has not been properly addressed.

In addition, any person, including members of the general public, may express a concern or make a complaint about any provision of facilities or services that Much Marcle CE Nursery & Primary School provides, unless separate statutory procedures apply, for example admissions or exclusions procedures. The school does not limit concerns or complaints to parents or carers of children that are registered at the school.

The difference between a 'concern' and a 'complaint'

DfE guidance on developing and applying complaints policies and procedures strongly encourages schools and governing bodies to differentiate between concerns and complaints, and in both cases, to keep procedures for dealing with them as informal as possible.

Schools need to be clear about the difference between a concern and a complaint. At Much Marcle CE Nursery & Primary School, concerns and complaints are defined as:

- 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 the interests of everyone that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to invoke these formal procedures. The school takes informal concerns as seriously as formal complaints and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

However, there will be occasions when complainants want to raise their concerns or complaints formally. In these instances, the school's formal complaints procedure should be invoked and will be followed through the various stages.

The school may decline to investigate a matter if it is not very recent and the complaint could reasonably have been expected to be raised earlier. The normal expectation is that a complaint will be raised within **three months** of the alleged subject matter of the complaint though it will be important to judge whether or not the nature or seriousness of the allegation merits a more flexible approach.

It is in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. The experience of the first contact between the complainant and the school can be crucial in determining whether the complaint will escalate. Therefore, all staff are aware of the procedures in order to respond appropriately to complaints.

The purpose of the Complaints Policy is to:

- resolve concerns or complaints;
- give complainants a means to raise issues of concern or complaint and to have them addressed;
- inform complainants of the most appropriate person to whom a concern or complaint should be raised;
- encourage all parties to raise and respond to concerns or complaints as quickly as possible so that they may be dealt with while the matter is fresh in peoples' minds;
- stress that at all stages of this policy the discussions, consideration and hearings will be investigatory rather than adversarial in their nature.

The vast majority of disagreements between schools and parents/carers are resolved during routine day-to-day school business by means of communication, negotiation and mediation. However, from time to time, disagreements can develop into formal complaints. The initial advice that the Department for Education always give to parents/carers is that they should arrange to meet with the Headteacher with the aim of resolving any perceived problems. Very often, this direct practical approach means that the complaint goes no further.

These key messages deal with complaints but the underlying principle is that concerns ought to be handled, if at all possible, without the need for formal procedures. The requirement to have a complaints procedure need not in any way undermine efforts to resolve the concern informally. In most cases, the class teacher will receive the first approach. If possible, it is beneficial for staff to seek to resolve issues on the spot, including apologising where necessary.

Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints will not be investigated under this procedure unless there are exceptional circumstances. Such circumstances would include serious concerns such as Child Protection issues or bullying allegations, where the school will involve external agencies or else conduct its own internal review to test whether there is any corroborative evidence which might trigger a formal investigation.

Occasionally, there may be complaints where the individual complainant does not wish to be identified at the preliminary stage. As far as possible, these should be dealt with under this procedure. However, there may be circumstances where confidentiality cannot be guaranteed because of the seriousness of the complaint. In addition, the wish of the individual complainant to remain anonymous may limit the ability of the school to fully investigate the nature of the complaint or take any action once an investigation is complete. The complainant should be informed if their desire for confidentiality inhibits the full investigation of the complaint. This does not affect any obligations the school may have regarding Child Protection Procedures, Special Educational Needs Procedures, etc.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Clearly, all the matters contained within this area of work – whether it is an informal concern, a formal complaint, or the ensuing investigation and final report – are strictly confidential and protected in legislation and good practice guidance. On no account should any of the issues raised during an investigation be discussed with any unauthorised parties.

Where the first approach has been made to a governor, the next step is to refer the complainant to the Headteacher, who will advise on the appropriate procedure. If the complaint is against the Headteacher, the complainant should be referred to the Chair of Governors.

Governors should not act unilaterally on an individual complaint outside the formal procedure or be involved in the early stages of a complaint or concern in case they are needed to sit on a panel at a later stage in the procedure.

TIMESCALES

At each stage, it is advisable to discuss and agree timescales with the complainant. Some complaints are more complex than others and, as such – to allow for a thorough investigation to be done – may require more time. The important point to be made here is to keep the various parties informed, especially the complainant, if agreed timescales become unreasonable. However, as a rule of thumb, the following may be useful:

- Informal Stage (School: Class Teacher followed by Headteacher) 2/3 working days
- Formal Stage 1 (Headteacher / Chair of Governors) 10 working days

- Formal Stage 2 (Governors)

20 working days

Any reference to days is normal working days, excluding school holidays. It is good practice to keep all parties, especially the Headteacher and the complainant, informed of progress at all stages.

COMPLAINTS RECEIVED OUTSIDE OF TERM TIME

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

SCOPE OF THIS COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by Much Marcle CE Nursery & Primary School, other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures (**Appendix A** refers).

WITHDRAWAL OF A COMPLAINT

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

THE ROLE OF THE INDIVIDUAL GOVERNOR

No individual governor may deal with either a concern or a complaint. A parent/carer may approach a governor to ask what they should do if they have a concern or a complaint. Governors should not get into discussion with a parent/carer but should advise them only of the procedure to follow, i.e., to contact either the designated teacher with responsibility for their child or the Headteacher.

If the situation is such that the governor has to listen in order to help to direct the concern or complaint, they must accept that this will prejudice their impartiality if the issue develops and they must inform the chair of the governing body immediately.

SELECTING THE MOST APPROPRIATE PROCEDURE

In order to avoid future disputes, all stages of the procedure, however informal, must be properly documented and recorded. **Appendix B** provides a simple list of the sequence of events to be followed.

Initial Concerns – Informal Resolution

Most concerns or complaints can be handled without the need for formal procedures and this should be the objective of all parties involved in the Initial Concerns - Informal Resolution process.

The person who has the concern or complaint should raise it with the class teacher responsible for their child as soon as possible, and certainly within 5 school days of the incident, so that the matter may be discussed and resolved while it is still fresh in everyone's mind, which is ideally within 10 school days of the incident.

Should the person raising the concern or complaint be unable to resolve the matter with the pupil's class teacher, the matter should be referred to either the Headteacher, or in the absence of the Headteacher, the Deputy Headteacher, who will seek to resolve the matter. If the complaint is about the Headteacher, the Chair of Governors will undertake this informal stage, prior to any investigation.

If the matter is satisfactorily resolved at this stage for the parties concerned, the matter is considered closed. Any documents should be filed and retained.

THE FORMAL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Stage One

If neither the Headteacher nor the person raising the concern or complaint considers that the Informal Resolution process is resolving the matter, the complainant should be given a copy of the Complaints Policy. Should the complainant subsequently wish to raise a formal complaint, they must do so using the Notification of Concern or Complaint form (**Appendix C**) within 5 school days of receipt of the Complaints Policy. The school has no obligation to investigate a concern or complaint until this form has been completed and received by the school.

Formal complaints should be made to the Headteacher (unless the complaint is about the Headteacher) using Appendix C and sent to admin@muchmarcle.hereford.sch.uk or, it may be done in person. The Headteacher will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email).

Following receipt of the Notification of Concern or Complaint form, the Headteacher, will attempt to resolve the complaint by meeting with the complainant – the Stage One Meeting. This meeting will normally be held within 10 school days of receipt of the Notification of Concern or Complaint form.

Where the complaint concerns the Headteacher, it will immediately be referred to the chair of the governing body. The chair (or nominee) will then conduct the Stage One process and have a meeting with the complainant and investigate the complaint. **It is important to meet personally, so that the complainant knows they are being listened to and, that the complaint is being taken seriously.** In exceptional circumstances, the Chair of Governors will have discretion to waive the requirement for a personal meeting.

The chair of the governing body will consider the evidence of the complaint, in confidence and without reference to any other member of the governing body. If the complaint is serious or complex, advice may be sought from Governor Services or the school's legal service provider.

The Chair of Governors (or other person carrying out Stage One) will send to the complainant, and the Headteacher, a written 'Note of Meeting' within 10 school days of the Stage One meeting taking place, or longer if advice is required. This note will summarise the conclusions reached and inform the complainant that they may appeal the conclusions and take the complaint to Stage Two.

Should either the complainant or the Headteacher be dissatisfied with the outcome of the chair of the governing body's investigation, they may ask for the matter to be referred to a panel of the governing body by writing to the clerk of the governing body setting out the reasons for the referral, within 10 school days of the Stage One meeting.

Stage Two – Complaint heard by Governing Body’s Appeal Panel

General

The complainant should write to the clerk to the governing body stating that they wish to appeal the conclusions reached under Stage One.

The clerk to the governing body will then convene a Governing Body Appeal Panel to hear the complaint. The panel should sit within 20 school days of receipt of the complainant’s wish to appeal. If it is not possible for a panel to sit within 20 school days then, the complainant will be notified and a date agreed.

If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates, without good reason, the clerk will decide when to hold the meeting. It will proceed in the complainant’s absence on the basis of written submissions from both parties.

The panel of governors, which must be impartial (and must be seen to be so), should consist of 3 members of the governing body. No governor may sit on the panel if they have had any prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it. Neither the Headteacher nor the chair of the governing body should be a member of this panel. The panel should elect their own chair. The panel may have the assistance of an external advisor to advise on procedure.

The panel will decide whether to deal with the complaint by inviting parties to a meeting or through written representations, but in making their decision, they will be sensitive to the complainant’s needs.

Remit of the Appeal Panel

The Appeal Panel can:

- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;
- uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
- decide on the appropriate action to resolve the complaint;
- recommend changes to the school’s systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

It is important that the appeal hearing is independent and impartial and that it is seen to be so.

The Hearing

The aim of the hearing, which will be heard in private, is to resolve the complaint, and to achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. However, it is recognised that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the hearing does not find in their favour.

The panel accepts that complainants may feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting. The chair of the panel should ensure that proceedings are as welcoming as possible. Care should be taken to ensure that the layout of the room is informal and the tone of the meeting is not adversarial.

If the complainant is invited to attend the meeting, they may wish to invite someone along to provide support. This could be a relative or friend. Generally, we do not encourage either party to invite legal representatives to the panel meeting. Should any witnesses be required, a written request should be made to the panel.

Legal Representation

In the event that a complaint progresses to a committee of members of the school governors, we recommend that neither the complainant nor the school bring legal representation. These committees are not a form of legal proceedings. The aim of the governors committee should be:

- reconciliation
- to put right things that may have gone wrong

We recognise there are occasions where legal representation may be appropriate.

For example, if a school employee is a witness in a complaint, they may be entitled to bring union or legal representation.

If a complainant commences legal action against the school in relation to their complaint, you should consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure, until those legal proceedings have concluded.

Governors sitting on the panel will be aware of the school's Complaints Procedure.

Roles and Responsibilities

The school will ensure that the meeting is clerked.

Role of the clerk to the panel

- Ensure that all parties have a copy of the Complaints Procedure.
- Set the date, time and venue for the hearing, ensuring that arrangements are the most convenient to all parties.
- The venue should be accessible.
- Ten school days before the hearing, collect any written evidence of other documentation for use at the hearing, together with the names of any witnesses that the complainant or the school may wish to call.
- Collate all written material and send it to the parties, to arrive at least 5 school days prior to the hearing.
- Meet and welcome the parties as they arrive for the hearing.
- Record all proceedings.
- Notify, in writing, all parties of the panel's decision, within 5 school days following the hearing.

The role of the chair of the panel is to ensure that:

- the remit of the panel is explained to the parties and that each party has the opportunity to put their case without undue interruption;

- the issues are addressed;
- parents / carers and others who may not be used to speaking at such a hearing are put at their ease;
- the hearing is conducted in an informal manner with each party treating the other with dignity and respect;
- the panel is open-minded and acts accordingly;
- no member of the panel has a vested interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure;
- each side is given the opportunity to state their case and to ask questions;
- written material has been supplied to all parties;
- if a related issue arises at the hearing, all parties are given the opportunity to adjourn to consider the related issue and then comment on it;
- any new issues raised at the hearing are referred to a fresh process, to be dealt with separately from this panel meeting;
- any procedural issues that arise are determined by the panel.

Check List for Panel Hearing

The panel will take account of the following:

- the hearing is as informal as possible;
- witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing in which they give their own evidence;
- after an introduction by the chair of the panel, the complainant is invited to explain their complaint, and to be followed by their witnesses;
- the headteacher may question both the complainant and the witnesses after each has spoken, but only to clarify what they are saying.
If the chair of the governing body or his nominee has conducted stage one of the procedure, then that person should take this role at the hearing, but in such a case, the Headteacher may be called as a witness;
- the Headteacher is then invited to explain the school's actions and be followed by the school's witnesses;
- the complainant may question both the Headteacher and the school's witnesses after each has spoken;
- the panel may ask questions at any time up to this point, after which they may ask no further questions;
- the complainant is then invited to sum up their complaint;
- the Headteacher is then invited to sum up the school's actions and response to the complaint;
- the chair explains that both parties will receive the written decision of the panel from the clerk within 5 school days;
- both parties leave together whilst the panel decides on the issues. The clerk and any advisor to the panel may remain with the panel during their discussion, but conclusions and recommendations are the responsibility solely of the panel members.

Procedure for Hearing When School and Complainant do not attend Stage Two Together

Where it is considered appropriate for the complainant and the school not to attend the Stage Two panel hearing together, the procedure will be:

- each party will attend the Appeal Panel separately and will not meet before or after their attendance(s) at the panel hearing. Separate waiting rooms must be provided;
- the hearing is as informal as possible;
- witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing in which they give their evidence;
- as part of the introduction to each party, the chair of the panel will explain how the hearing will operate and that they will receive the written decision of the panel from the clerk within 5 school days;
- after introduction, the complainant is invited to explain their complaint and to be followed by their witnesses;
- the panel may ask questions at any time;
- the complainant then leaves the panel meeting;
- the headteacher then attends the panel hearing and, after introduction, is invited to make the school's response to the complaint, and to be followed by their witnesses;
- the panel may ask questions at any time;
- the Headteacher then leaves the panel hearing;
- the panel may then recall either party to resolve any discrepancies in the material presented to them;
- when the panel is satisfied that they have a proper understanding of the complainant's position and the school's response, both parties will be advised that their participation in the hearing is complete and that they should leave;
- the panel then decides on the issues. The clerk and any advisor to the panel may remain with the panel during their discussion, but conclusions and recommendations are the responsibility only of the panel members.

Notification of the Panel's Decision

The chair of the panel will ensure that the complainant and the school is notified in writing of the panel's decision, with reasons clearly defined, within 5 school days.

If the complainant requires clarification concerning points in the letter, this will be provided by the chair of the panel.

In case the complainant is not satisfied that the complaints procedures were conducted properly and fairly, the letter will include details of how to contact the Department for Education if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled.

There is no specific format required when putting the conclusions of an investigation into a report or letter to the complainant, however, the following might be useful:

1. Indicate what evidence had been taken into account. It is important to include all interviews and the main reports, letters and so on.
2. An outline of the complaint.
3. General findings, outlining the views from various parties.
4. Conclusion.
5. As raised in the previous point, recommendations may be made. If these are appropriate, then these should be in a separate section in the report or letter.

NEXT STEPS

If the complainant believes the school did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or, they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact the Department for Education after they have completed Stage 2.

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by Much Marcle CE Nursery & Primary School. They will consider whether Much Marcle CE Nursery & Primary School has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint.

The complainant can refer their complaint to the Department for Education online at:

www.education.gov.uk/contactus, by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:

Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

Monitoring and Review

This policy is monitored by the governing body, and will be reviewed every two years, or earlier if necessary.

Appendix A

Scope of the Complaints Procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by Much Marcle CE Nursery & Primary School other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

Exceptions	Who to contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admissions to schools • Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs • School re-organisation proposals 	<p>Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with Herefordshire Local Authority.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation 	<p>Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.</p> <p>If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclusion of children from school 	<p>Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whistleblowing 	<p>We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors.</p> <p>The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus.</p> <p>Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the LA or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff grievances 	<p>Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff conduct 	<p>Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate.</p> <p>Complainants will not be informed of any</p>

	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.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Curriculum - content 	Please contact the Department for Education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority (LA) safeguarding teams or Tribunals, this may impact on our ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations.

If a complainant commences legal action against Much Marcle CE Nursery & Primary School in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure in relation to their complaint until those legal proceedings have concluded.

Appendix B

CONCERN/COMPLAINT – SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

Initial Concern – Informal Resolution

Concern/Complaint raised with class teacher within 5 school days of incident.

1. Discussed and resolved within 10 school days of incident – no further action.
2. Not resolved with class teacher - escalated to Headteacher.
3. Discussed and resolved with Headteacher – no further action.
4. Not resolved with Headteacher – escalated to Formal Procedures – Formal Resolution.

Formal Procedures – Formal Resolution

1. Copy of Complaints Policy given to complainant.
2. Formal complaint to be raised within 10 days of receipt of policy using official form (**Appendix C**)
3. Sent to Headteacher or Chair of Governors.
4. If first approach made by complainant to governor, complainant to be referred to Complaints Coordinator – advised about appropriate procedure.

Stage 1

Either: after receipt of Notification of Complaint form – meeting between complainant and Headteacher, within 5 days after receipt

Or: if circumstances appropriate or concern/complaint about Headteacher - straight to chair of governing body/nominee - meeting between complainant and chair/nominee within 5 days after receipt.

1. Headteacher or Chair of Governors/nominee sends written Note of Meeting within 5 days of meeting;
2. Complainant may appeal (Stage 2) but must do so within 10 days of meeting.

Stage 2 – Complaint heard by Governing Body’s Appeal Panel

1. Complainant to write to clerk to governors within 10 days of stage 1 meeting.
2. Governing Body Appeal Panel convened – to hear appeal within 20 days of receipt of complainant’s wish to appeal.
3. Parties notified of panel’s decision within 5 days after the hearing.
4. Complainant satisfied – end of process.
5. Complainant not satisfied that procedures were conducted properly - contact the Department for Education after completion of Stage 2.

Appendix C

NOTIFICATION OF CONCERN / COMPLAINTS FORM

To: Headteacher / Chair of Governors,

Much Marcle CE Nursery & Primary School, Much Marcle, Ledbury, Herefordshire, HR8 2LY.

admin@muchmarcle.hereford.sch.uk

Name:	
Child's Name:	
Your relationship to the child:	
Address:	
Postcode:	
Daytime telephone number:	Evening telephone number:
Please give details of your complaint:	

**What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint?
(Who did you speak to and what was the response?)**

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.

Signature:

Date:

Appendix D

Managing Serial and Unreasonable Complaints

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

Much Marcle CE Nursery & Primary School defines unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the school, such as, if the complainant:

- 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;
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure;
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice;
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on;
- raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales;
- makes unjustified complaints 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 that 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 and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with;
- uses threats to intimidate;
- uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence;

- knowingly provides falsified information;
- publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school that relates to their complaint, while the complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text), as it could delay the outcome being reached.

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 ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact Much Marcle CE Nursery & Primary 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 be reviewed after six months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from Much Marcle CE Nursery & Primary School.

Vexatious Complainants

If properly followed, a good complaints procedure will limit the number of complaints that become protracted. However, sometimes a complainant finds it difficult to accept that this is the end of the procedure (this may apply to any of the stages but this is particularly the case at Stage 2) and it may be necessary to make very clear that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

Should this not stop the complainant from repeatedly trying to re-open the same issue, then there should be some consideration to initiating the vexatious complaint process with the appropriate legal advice.