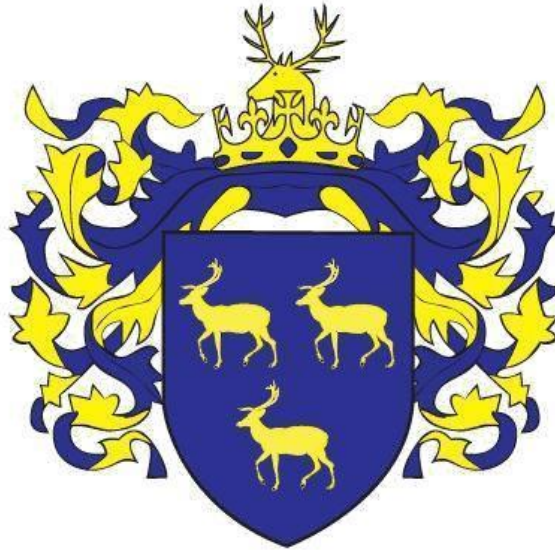


Green Meadow Independent Primary School



Complaints Policy

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Green Meadow Independent Primary School

Complaints Policy

Introduction

We believe that our school provides a good education for all children, and that the headteacher, management team, teachers and other staff work very hard to build a positive relationship with all parents/guardians. However, the school is obliged to have procedures in place in case there are complaints. The following policy sets out the procedure that the school follows in such cases.

Aims and objectives

Our 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 and, in all cases, we put the interests of the child above all other issues. We will provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed, and then resolved.

General Principles

The following procedures should not be used for complaints that fall under existing statutory procedures and are therefore covered by other documentation:

- Curriculum
- Sex Education
- Admissions
- Exclusions
- Special Educational Needs
- Staff Grievances

1. Publicity

Parents can raise concerns by contacting their child's class teacher, a member of the management team or the headteacher. If the concern is not resolved informally parents may lodge a formal complaint. The procedure for lodging a formal complaint is contained within this policy. The policy is available for all parents and on the school website. A leaflet is available for new parents explaining this process in detail. (Appendix C)

2. Procedures should be as speedy as possible - consistent and fair to all concerned

Each stage of the procedure will have known time limits. Where it is not possible to meet these, the complainant will be kept informed of progress.

3. Support for complainant

At any stage of the procedure parents can be accompanied by a legal representative and they will be told where they can go for information or advice if required.

4. Support for a person complained against

Staff who may be questioned as part of the investigation of a complaint will be treated fairly and they will always have the opportunity to put their case. A legal representative or trade union representative may accompany them at any stage. The complaints procedure is distinct from formal disciplinary proceedings for staff and this will need to be made clear to all concerned. However there may be occasions where a complaint leads to a disciplinary procedure which puts the complaints process on hold. If so, the complainant should be informed of this, without going into details, and updated regularly on likely further delay. After the disciplinary process is completed it will be necessary to decide what further response to the complainant is required.

5. Confidentiality

All concerns and complaints will be treated with discretion. It will be made clear to parents that making a complaint will not result in their child being penalised. Complainants will, however, be made aware that some information will have to be shared with those involved in order that the complaint can be investigated. Anonymous complaints will normally be disregarded unless they relate to a serious issue. The headteacher and management team will decide whether the gravity of an anonymous complaint warrants an investigation.

6. Redress

If the outcome of the complaints procedure shows the school is at fault, redress will be in the form of an acknowledgement that the complaint is valid. It may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- an apology;
- an explanation;
- a promise that the event complained of will not recur;
- an undertaking to review school policies or practices in the light of the complaint.

Fear of litigation will not prevent the school from admitting to parents when mistakes have been made, but advice will be sought from the Insurance policy if it is possible that the parent might take legal action.

7. Staff Awareness and Training

All staff are aware of the procedures, as potentially many will be involved with handling complaints, especially at the informal level. Staff have clear information about which staff have which responsibilities so that parents do not get continually passed from one to another. The management team will deal with all complaints.

8. Record Keeping

Complaints are recorded and monitored regularly by staff using a standard proforma (Appendix E). Records of these are kept in the child's class file. The headteacher keeps a central file for complaints which are not resolved immediately and therefore investigated by her and the management team and are reviewed termly. Recording begins at the point when an initial concern or complaint cannot be resolved immediately but needs some investigation and/or consultation with others in school and a subsequent report back to the parent.

9. A Staged Approach

The head teacher and the management team at Green Meadow School have adopted a staged approach to the complaints procedure, as follows:

Stage 1: The First Contact

There needs to be clarity as to the difference between a concern and a complaint. Taking informal concerns seriously at an early stage will reduce the number that develops into formal complaints. There are many occasions where concerns are resolved straight away through the Class Teacher, headteacher or management team, depending on who is approached first. Parents must feel able to raise concerns with members of staff without any formality, either in person, over the telephone or in writing. On occasion it may be appropriate for someone to act on behalf of a parent and this must be taken into consideration. It may be unclear at first whether a parent is asking a

question or expressing an opinion rather than making a complaint. A parent may want a preliminary discussion about an issue to help decide whether he or she wishes to take it further.

Stage 2: Referral to the head teacher

At this stage it has become clear that the concern is a definite complaint and should be investigated according to school guidelines to ensure consistency and to make sure that nothing happens which could make it difficult for later stages to proceed smoothly. In some cases the headteacher/management team may already have been involved in looking at the matter; in other cases it may be her first involvement and it may be appropriate to delegate the investigation at this

stage to another member of staff. NB In some cases headteacher will have been already involved at Stage 1, or the complaint may be against them, in which cases Stage 2 should be carried out by the one of the management team. In other cases, where the headteacher has delegated the investigation at Stage 2 to another member of staff, she is advised to become involved if the parent is not satisfied, before the Stage 2 process is completed and the matter referred to the management body.

What if my complaint is about a staff member from the management team?

You should still contact the management team and address the complaint to a member of staff you are happy to deal with it, who will investigate your concerns.

Green Meadow School Complaints Procedure

In order to investigate your complaint as fully as possible the management team at Green Meadow Independent Primary School have implemented a staged approach.

Stage 1: The first contact

1.1 Parents are always welcome to discuss any concerns with the appropriate member of staff, who will clarify with the parent the nature of the concern and reassure them that the school wants to hear about it. The member of staff may explain to the parent how the situation happened. It can be helpful at this point to identify what sort of outcome the parent is looking for.

If the member of staff first contacted cannot immediately deal with the matter; s/he will make a clear note of the date, name and contact address or phone number.

All members of staff will know how to refer, if necessary, to the person with responsibility for the particular issue raised by the parent. S/he will check later to make sure the referral has been dealt with.

If the matter is brought to the attention of the headteacher she may decide to deal with concerns directly at this stage if the complaint is more serious; if the complaint is against the headteacher the parent will be advised to contact the Management Team.

The member of staff dealing with the concern will make sure the parent is clear what action (if any) or monitoring of the situation has been agreed, putting it in writing if appropriate.

Where no satisfactory solution has been found within ten days, parents will be advised that if they wish their concern to be considered further they should write or e-mail the headteacher.

Stage 2: Referral to the Management Team for investigation

2.1 A member of the management team will acknowledge the complaint in writing within three working days of receiving the written complaint. The acknowledgement will give a brief explanation of the school's complaints procedure and a target date for providing a response to the complaint. This should normally be within ten working days. If this proves impossible, a letter will be sent explaining the reason for the delay and giving a revised target date.

2.2 The Management Team will provide an opportunity for the complainant to meet her to supplement any information provided previously. It will be made clear to the complainant that if s/he wishes s/he might be accompanied to any meeting by a legal representative who can speak on his/her behalf.

2.3 If necessary a member of the management team will interview witnesses and take statements from those involved. If the complaint centres on a pupil, the pupil should also be interviewed. Pupils should normally be interviewed with parents/guardians present, but if this would seriously delay the investigation of a serious/urgent complaint or if the pupil has specifically said that s/he would prefer that parents or guardians were not involved, another member of staff with whom the pupil feels comfortable should be present. If a member of staff is complained against, they must have the opportunity to present their case (see General Principles).

The management Team will keep written records of meetings, telephone conversations and other documentation.

Once all the relevant facts have been established as far as possible, the Management Team will then produce a written response to the complainant, including a full explanation of the decision and the reasons for it. Where appropriate, this will include what action the school will take to resolve the complaint. The complainant will be advised that should s/he wish to take the complaint further s/he should notify the headteacher within two weeks of receiving the letter.

Stage 3: Review by the Headteacher

The headteacher will write to the complainant to acknowledge receipt of the written request for her to review the complaint.

The headteacher may ask to meet you to discuss the problem.

The headteacher will conduct a full investigation of the complaint and may interview any members of staff or pupils involved.

You will receive a written response to your complaint.

Stage 4: Referral to Complaints Board Panel

If the parents do not wish to accept the decision of the Headteacher they may appeal to a Complaints Board Panel. This must be done in writing within ten working days of the

communication of the Stage 3 decision to them. The complainant will be informed how to do this. The Panel will consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school. The Complaints Panel will acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within ten working days.

If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than three days prior to the hearing.

The parents/guardians may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.

If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents'/guardians' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.

Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out and by whom.

After due consideration of all the facts they consider relevant, the Panel will make a finding and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within ten working days of the Hearing. The Panel will write to the parents/guardians informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel's findings and, if any, recommendations, will be sent in writing by email or otherwise to the complainant, (where relevant) the person complained about, and the Headteacher. The Panel's findings and, if any, recommendations, will be made available for inspection on the school premises by the Head.

Serial or Persistent Complaints

If the complainant contacts the school repeatedly about the same matter then such communications may be viewed as 'serial' or 'persistent' and the school may choose not to respond. However, schools must not mark a complaint as 'serial' before the complainant has completed the procedure.

The decision to stop responding should never be taken lightly. A school needs to be able to say yes to all of the following:

- The school has taken every reasonable step to address the complainant's needs;
- The complainant has been given a clear statement of the school's position and their options (if any); and
- The complainant is contacting the school repeatedly but making substantially the same points each time.
- The case is stronger if the school agrees with one or more of these statements:
- The school has reason to believe the individual is contacting them with the intention of causing disruption or inconvenience
- Their letters/emails/telephone calls are often or always abusive or aggressive.

- They make insulting personal comments about or threats towards staff.

The application of a 'serial or persistent' marking should be against the subject or complaint itself rather than the complainant

Where the Management Team and/or Headteacher, judges a complaint to be serial or persistent they should take appropriate action which may include rejecting the complaint and/or restricting contact between the complainant and the school.

The Management Team or Headteacher, as appropriate, should write to the complainant and explain this decision and the reasons for it and what action will follow, if applicable.

Where a complainant seeks to reopen a matter which is the same as, or similar to, a matter previously considered under the procedure, the Management Team or Headteacher has the right to inform him/her that the procedure has been exhausted and the matter is closed.

The Policy for Persistent Complainants and Harassment has been published as an addendum to this policy (Appendix A).

Green Meadow Independent Primary School

Persistent Complaints and Harassment Policy

1. Aims of the policy

- To uphold the standards of courtesy and reasonableness that should characterise all communication between the School and persons who wish to express a concern or pursue a complaint.
- To support the well-being of pupils/students, staff and everyone else who has legitimate interest in the work of the School, including parents.
- To deal fairly, honestly and properly with persistent complainants and those who harass members of staff in school while ensuring that other stakeholders suffer no detriment.

2. Human Rights

2.1 In implementing this policy the School will seek to ensure that its actions are in accordance with its obligations under the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Convention Rights embodied within it in order to protect the Human Rights of both persistent complainants and all other stakeholders.

3. Who is a persistent complainant?

3.1 For the purpose of this policy, a persistent complainant is a parent/carer or member of the public who complains about issues, either formally or informally, or frequently raises issues that the complainant considers to be within the remit of the School and whose behaviour is unreasonable. Such behaviour may be characterised by any of the following:

- a) Actions which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious
- b) Prolific correspondence or excessive e-mail or telephone contact about a concern or complaint
- c) An insistence upon pursuing unmeritorious complaints and/or unrealistic or unreasonable outcomes
- d) An insistence upon pursuing meritorious complaints in an unreasonable manner

3.2 For the purpose of this policy, harassment is the unreasonable pursuit of such actions as in (a) to (d) above in such a way that they:

- a) Appear to be targeted over a significant period of time on one or more members of school staff and/or
- b) Cause ongoing distress to individual member(s) of school staff and/or
- c) Have a significant adverse effect on the whole/parts of the school community and/or are pursued aggressively

3.3 Actions or behaviour that fall into any of the categories described in 3.1 and 3.2 above, or any other harassing or persistently unreasonable behaviour, may render an individual liable to become subject to this Policy.

4. Parents' expectations of the School

4.1 Parents/carers/members of the public who raise either informal or formal issues or complaints with the School can expect the School to:

- a) Regularly communicate to parents/carers in writing (i) how and when problems can be raised with the School, (ii) the existence of the School's complaints procedure and (iii) the existence of the Persistent Complaints/Harassment Policy
- b) Respond within a reasonable time

- c) Be available for consultation within reasonable time limits bearing in mind the needs of the pupils/students within the school and the nature of the complaint
- d) Respond with courtesy and respect
- e) Attempt to resolve problems using reasonable means in line with the School's Complaints Procedure
- f) Keep complainants informed of progress towards a resolution of the issues raised

5. The School's expectations of parents/ carers/members of the public

5.1 The School can expect parents/carers/members of the public who wish to raise problems with the School to:

- a) Treat all school staff with courtesy and respect
- b) Respect the needs and well-being of pupils/students and staff within the School
- c) Avoid any use, or threatened use, of violence to people or property
- d) Avoid any aggression or verbal abuse
- e) Recognise the time constraints under which members of staff in schools work and allow the School a reasonable time to respond
- f) Recognise that resolving a specific problem can sometimes take some time
- g) (In the case of a complaint) follow the School's Complaints Procedure

6. The School's actions in cases of persistent complaint or harassment

6.1 The School will take the following consecutive steps as necessary if the complainants behaviour is not modified:

- a) inform the complainant orally or in writing that his/her behaviour is considered to have become unreasonable/unacceptable and may be considered to fall under the terms of this policy
- b) Inform the complainant in writing that his/her behaviour is now considered by the School to have become unreasonable/unacceptable and warn of further sanctions under the Policy
- c) Inform the complainant in writing that his/her behaviour is now considered by the School to fall under the terms of this policy and that the complaint will not be investigated further until it is pursued in a manner the school considers to be reasonable.

6.2 As appropriate this may additionally result in the school:

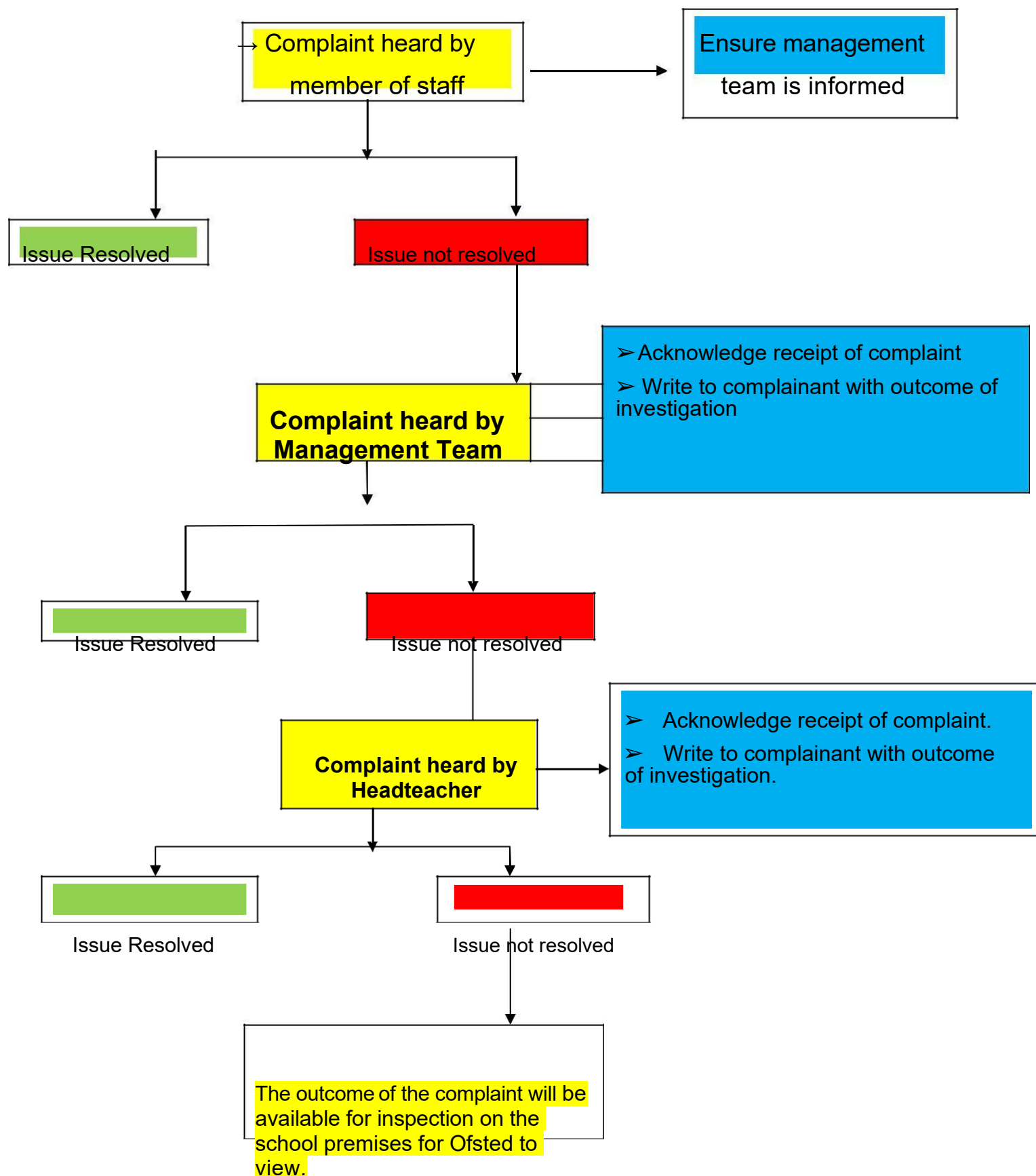
- a) Informing the complainant that all meetings with a member of staff will be conducted with a second person present and that notes of meetings may be taken in the interests of all parties
- b) Informing the complainant that, except in emergencies, all communication from the complainant to the school should be carried out in writing
- c) (In the case of physical or verbal aggression) consider warning the complainant about being banned from the School site; or proceeding straight to a temporary ban.

6.3 Legitimate new complaints, if not pursued in a harassing or unreasonable way, will still be considered even if the person making them is, or has been, subject to the Harassment/Persistent Complaints Policy.

6.4 If a complainant's harassing/persistent complaining behaviour is modified and the complaint still lies within the time limit specified in the School's Complaints Procedure, the School will use its discretion and may resume investigation of the complaint.

GREEN MEADOW INDEPENDENT PRIMARY SCHOOL

Appendix B Flowchart of complaints



PLEASE ENSURE THAT ALL COMPLAINTS ARE DEALT WITH SWIFTLY

Appendix C

Concerns and Complaints about the School

Guidance Notes for Parents

If you have a concern or complaint

We would like you to tell us about it. We welcome suggestions for improving our work in school. Be assured that no matter what you want to tell us, our support and respect for you and your child in school will not be affected in anyway. Please tell us of your concern as soon as possible. It is difficult for us to investigate properly an incident or problem that happened some time ago.

What to do first

Most concerns and complaints can be sorted out quickly by speaking with your child's Class Teacher. If you have a complaint that you feel should be looked at by the headteacher in the first instance, you can contact her straightaway if you prefer. It is usually best to discuss the problem face to face. You may need an appointment to do this, and you can make one by ringing or calling into the school.

All staff will make every effort to resolve your problem informally. They will make sure that they understand what you feel went wrong, and they will explain their own actions to you. They will ask what you would like the school to do to put things right. Of course, this does not mean that in every case they will come round to your point of view but it will help both you and the school to understand both sides of the question. It may also help to prevent a similar problem arising again.

What to do next

If you are dissatisfied with the Teacher's initial response you can make a complaint to the management team. This should be made in writing. You can contact them by telephoning the school office (01942 671138 or 01942 678803) or e-mailing the Management Team directly: greenmeadowhead@gmail.com

You may also find it helpful at this stage to have a copy of the full statement of the General Complaints Procedures as this explains in detail what procedures are followed. This is available from the school office. The management team may ask to meet you to discuss the problem. The management team will conduct a full investigation of the complaint and may interview any members of staff or pupils involved. You will receive a written response to your complaint.

If you are still unhappy

The problem will normally be solved by this stage. However, if you are still not satisfied you may wish to contact the headteacher. The headteacher may ask to meet you to discuss the problem. The headteacher will conduct a full investigation of the complaint and may interview any members of staff or pupils involved. You will receive a written response to your complaint.

GREEN MEADOW INDEPENDENT PRIMARY SCHOOL

Appendix D- Formal Complaints Form

Please complete and return to management team/headteacher who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken	
Your Name	
Pupil's Name	
Your relationship to the Pupil	
Address	
Postcode	
Daytime Tel Number	
Evening Tel Number	
Please give details of your complaint here (please continue on a separate sheet if necessary)	
What actions, if any have you 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?	
Are you attaching any paperwork?	
Signature	
Date	
For Office Use only	
Date acknowledgement sent	By Whom
Complaint referred to:	Date:

GREEN MEADOW INDEPENDENT PRIMARY SCHOOL

Appendix E – Record Keeping Form

Notes from Parent Meeting (Telephone/Face to Face)	
Name of Parent: Name of Child: Class: Teacher:	
Date:	
Notes:	Actions:
	Follow up:
Completed by:	Date :
Copies to:	