Complaints Policy	
Date of last review	**September 2026**
Next review due date	**September 2027**
Approved by Governing Body	

'Empowering children through sustainable, diverse, arts-enriched education'

Complaints Policy

We aim to ensure that Thornhill Primary School is a happy, safe and caring school so that our pupils benefit from the best possible education. Governors and Staff are committed to working with parents and carers to this end. The vast majority of concerns and complaints can be resolved informally, often straight away by the class teacher or a member of the Leadership Team. However, we recognise that there may be times when parents, carers and other stakeholders have concerns or complaints which they wish to bring to our notice.

The aim of this Complaints Policy is to deal with complaints effectively. This policy applies to complaints against the school and its operations, including the actions of personnel and the content and delivery of the curriculum.

The Governing Body takes complaints against the school very seriously. An outline of any formal complaints which are upheld will be reported to the Governing Body by the Head Teacher (upheld at stage 2) or to the Chair of Governors (upheld at Stage 3).

General Principles
All complaints will be dealt with in a transparent way and in a timely and fair manner. If the procedure is invoked, the complainant will be kept informed of the progress of their complaint. At each stage we will promptly consider ways in which the matter can be resolved.

At the end of the process, the aim is to ensure that if the complaint is not upheld, the complainant understands and accepts the schools' actions and procedures.

If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, one or more of the following will be offered:

- An apology
- An explanation
- An admission that the matter could have been handled differently or better.
- An assurance that the event complained of will not recur and an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again.
- An undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint.

It should be noted that an acceptance that the school could have handled the matter better is not an admission of negligence.

At each stage the person investigating the complaint will:

- Establish what has happened so far and who was involved.
- Clarify the nature of the complaint.
- Meet with or contact the complainant.
- Clarify with the complainant what might put things right.
- Interview with an open mind those involved or those complained of (allowing them to be accompanied).
- Respect people's desire for confidentiality
- Ensure that all paperwork is retained.

Each of these stages will be conducted in a timely fashion and unnecessary lapses will be avoided as far as possible.

Stages of the Policy

It is expected that most concerns can minor complaints can be resolved quickly and informally.

Stage 1
If you do have a complaint or concern, speak to your child's class teacher in the first instance.
If the matter cannot be resolved in this way and in a timely fashion, then it will be necessary to proceed to the formal stage.
If the complaint is about the Head Teacher, you should proceed to Stage 3 and write to the Chair of Governors.
If the complaint is about an organisational matter, please put it in writing to the Head Teacher in the first instance.

Stage 2
You, the complainant must write to the Head Teacher describing your complaint.
The Head Teacher will investigate the matter and respond in writing as soon as possible, but within ten working days.
If the matter is not resolved to the satisfaction of both parties, then it will be necessary to proceed to the next stage.

Stage 3
You, the complainant must now write to the Chair of Governors stating the nature of the complaint. You will receive an acknowledgement within five school days.
The Chair will then convene a Governing Body Complaints Panel. A meeting will be arranged, within fifteen school days or as soon as possible, to resolve the complaint. The time and date of the meeting will be arranged by the Clerk to the Governing Body at a time to suit everyone. You may bring someone to support you to the meeting if you wish. The Panel's decision will be sent to you within five school days.

Roles and responsibilities

The Governing Body Complaints Appeal Panel
The Governing Body Complaints Appeal Panel will be made up of between 3 to 5 members.
No person involved should have previous involvement in the complaint. It is important, should a complaint reach the appeal stage that the governing body is impartial and independent and is seen to be so. Individual complaints should not be considered by the full governing body. The findings of the Governing Body Complaints Appeal Panel are final.

The role of the clerk
The clerk would be the contact point for the complainant and be required to:
- set the date, time and venue of the hearing, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible;

- collate any written material and send it to the parties in advance of the hearing (recommended at least five school days in advance);
- meet and welcome the parties as they arrive at the hearing;
- record the proceedings;
- notify all parties of the panel's decision.

As best practice, the Clerk should share copies of the panel meeting minutes with all parties involved in the panel hearing, providing a reasonable opportunity for the minutes to be agreed and if necessary, challenged.

The role of the Chair of the Governing Body or the nominated governor
The nominated governor role:

- Check that the correct procedure has been followed;
- If a hearing is requested, notify the clerk to arrange the panel.

The role of the Chair of the Panel
The Chair of the Panel has a key role, ensuring that:

- the remit of the panel is explained to the parties and each party has the opportunity of putting their case without undue interruption;
- the issues are addressed;
- key findings of fact are made;
- parents and others who may not be used to speaking at such a hearing are put at ease;
- the hearing is conducted in an informal manner with each party treating the other with respect and courtesy with the opportunity to state their case and ask questions;
- the panel is open minded and acting independently;
- 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;
- written material is seen by all parties. If a new issue arises it would be useful to give all parties, the opportunity to consider and comment on it.

The Local Authority
Occasionally, parents who have been through the school complaints procedure contact the Local Authority (LA) with their complaint. If an Officer has not already been involved with the conducting of the complaint, then the school will be contacted so that the LA can be satisfied that the school has acted fairly.

The Secretary of State
All complaints should be resolved within the school, supported by the LA. The Secretary of State will only intervene if it finds that the Governing Body of the school has failed to carry out their lawful duties or has acted unreasonably.