



Moordown St John's Church of England Primary School

Policy and Procedures for Complaints

**“A Christian community where commitment
to educational excellence changes lives”**

Article 3 - The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all actions concerning children.

Article 4 - Governments must do all they can to fulfil the rights of every child.

Article 29 - Education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full.

Date ratified by Chair of Effective Resourcing Working Group: *24 January 2018*

Review Date: October 2018
(*Policy Review in progress Nov 18*)

A copy of this policy in an alternative format, such as large print or different language,
may be provided on request from the school office.

MOORDOWN ST JOHN'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

POLICY AND PROCEDURES FOR COMPLAINTS

RATIONALE

As a Church of England Primary School, we seek to further the work of Christ by expecting, nurturing and demonstrating the Fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5) in our day to day lives. The Fruits of the Spirit include Love, Joy, Peace, Goodness, Kindness, Patience, Gentleness, Faithfulness and Self-control.

At Moordown St. John's we also aim to honour and fulfil the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

'Rights' are things every child should have or be able to do. All children have the same rights. These rights are listed in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Almost every country has agreed to these rights. All the rights are connected to each other, and all are equally important. Sometimes, we have to think about rights in terms of what is best for children in a situation, and what is critical to life and protection from harm. As children grow, they have more responsibility to make choices and exercise their rights.

This policy refers directly to the following articles:

Article 3 – The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all actions concerning children.

Article 4 – Governments must do all they can to fulfil the rights of every child.

Article 29 – Education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full.

S U C C E S S

SUCCESS (Skills, Understanding, Creativity, Curiosity, Enjoyment, Spirituality, Security) is at the centre of our school's ethos and identity.

S – **Skills** that embed knowledge for a life full of learning and healthy relationships

U – **Understanding** how knowledge and concepts can be applied and built upon to achieve deep learning

C – **Creativity** to use skills and knowledge imaginatively to express oneself and solve problems

C – **Curiosity** to explore, investigate and understand the world

E – **Enjoyment** of life and of learning

S – **Spirituality** where faith is nourished, respected, challenged and lived

S – **Security** in themselves and who they are to reach their full potential

The Legal Framework

It is a statutory requirement for all academies to have a complaints procedure in place that complies with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2014, Schedule 1, Part 7.

General Principles

- This procedure is intended to allow a pupil, parent or people who are not parents of attending pupils at the academy, to raise a concern or complaint relating to the academy, or the services that it provides. Our prospectus contains the following statement on complaints:
“We aim to provide the best possible service to parents and pupils. Should you have any concerns about school life then we ask that you share your concerns initially with your child’s class teacher, then the appropriate Key Stage leader or Deputy Head and finally the Headteacher. If your concerns cannot be satisfactorily dealt with then you can take the matter to the School Board of Directors and the Education Funding Agency. There is a leaflet in our school reception and on our website detailing our complaints procedure”
- In the event that these initial approaches fail to resolve a complaint this policy lays out the procedures that should be followed to allay any concerns about a particular issue.
- We welcome suggestions for improving our work. Be assured that, no matter what you want to tell us, our support and respect for your child will not be affected in any way. Please tell us of your concern as soon as possible. It is difficult for us to investigate an incident or problem properly if it took place some time ago
- An anonymous concern or complaint will not be investigated under this procedure, unless there are exceptional circumstances. An ‘exceptional circumstance’ will be decided by the Headteacher and/or the Chair of Directors.
- To enable a proper investigation to take place, concerns or complaints should be brought to the attention of the academy as soon as possible. In general, any matter raised more than 3 months after the event being complained of, will not be considered, unless there are exceptional circumstances. Again an ‘exceptional circumstance’ will be decided by the Headteacher and/or the Chair of Directors.

Complaints Framework

Our Complaints Procedure will:

- encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible;
- be easily accessible and publicised;
- be simple to understand and use;
- be impartial;
- be non-adversarial;
- allow swift handling with established time-limits for action and keeping people informed of the progress;
- ensure a full and fair investigation by an independent person where necessary;
- respect people’s desire for confidentiality;
- address all the points at issue and provide an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary;
- provide information to the school’s senior management team so that services can be improved.

Complaints’ Coordinator

Every academy should have a named person to receive, record and monitor complaints. For our academy this will be the Headteacher.

Investigating Complaints

At each stage the person investigating the complaint (the Complaints Coordinator) will:

- establish what has happened so far, and who has been involved
- clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved
- meet with the complainant or contact them (if unsure or further information is necessary);

- clarify what the complainant feels would put things right;
- interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
- conduct the interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning;
- keep notes of the interview

Resolving Complaints

At each stage in the procedure the academy will keep in mind ways in which a complaint can be resolved. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid either in whole or in part. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

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

Complainants will be encouraged to state what actions they feel might resolve the problem at any stage. An admission that the academy could have handled the situation better is not the same as an admission of negligence.

An effective procedure will identify areas of agreement between the parties. It is also of equal importance to clarify any misunderstandings that might have occurred as this can create a positive atmosphere in which to discuss any outstanding issues.

Time Limits

Complaints need to be considered and resolved as quickly and efficiently as possible. Our complaints procedure has realistic time limits for each action within each stage. However, where further investigations are necessary, new time limits can be set and the complainant sent details of the new deadline and an explanation for the delay.

Complaints will not be considered under this procedure if:

- You have not identified any specific actions of which you might complain.
- Your concerns are presented as conclusions rather than specific actions of which you complain.
- The concerns that you identify relate to historical actions and any evidence which might have enabled an objective investigation of your complaint is no longer available.
- The concerns that you raise do not fall within the scope of this procedure.
- You have not identified any potential sources of evidence which might allow the matter to be investigated.

Unreasonable persistent complaints and unreasonable complainant behaviour

There are rare circumstances where the academy may deviate from the Complaints Procedure set out in the remainder of this policy. These include, but are not necessarily limited to:

1. Where the complainant's behaviour towards staff or panel members is unacceptable, for example, is abusive, offensive or threatening;
2. Where, because of the frequency of their contact with the academy, the complainant is hindering the consideration of their or other people's complaints and/or the proper running of the academy;
3. Where the complainant's complaint is clearly vexatious and/or has patently insufficient grounds;
4. Where the complainant's complaint is the same, similar to or based on the same facts of a complaint which has already been considered in full by the academy.

In these circumstances, the academy may:

- a. Inform the complainant that their behaviour is unacceptable or unreasonably persistent and ask them to change it;

- b. Restrict the complainant's access to the academy e.g. requesting contact in a particular form (for example, letters only), requiring contact to take place with a named person only, restricting telephone calls to specified days and times or banning the complainant from the academy's premises;
- c. Conduct the panel based on the documentary evidence only i.e. not hold a hearing;
- d. Refuse to consider the complaint and refer the complainant directly to Stage 4.

In all cases the academy will write to tell the complainant why we believe his or her behaviour is unacceptable or unreasonably persistent, what action we are taking and the duration of that action.

Where the behaviour is so extreme that it threatens the immediate safety and welfare of staff or panel members, the academy will consider other options, for example reporting the matter to the police or taking legal action. In such cases, we may not give the complainant prior warning of that action.

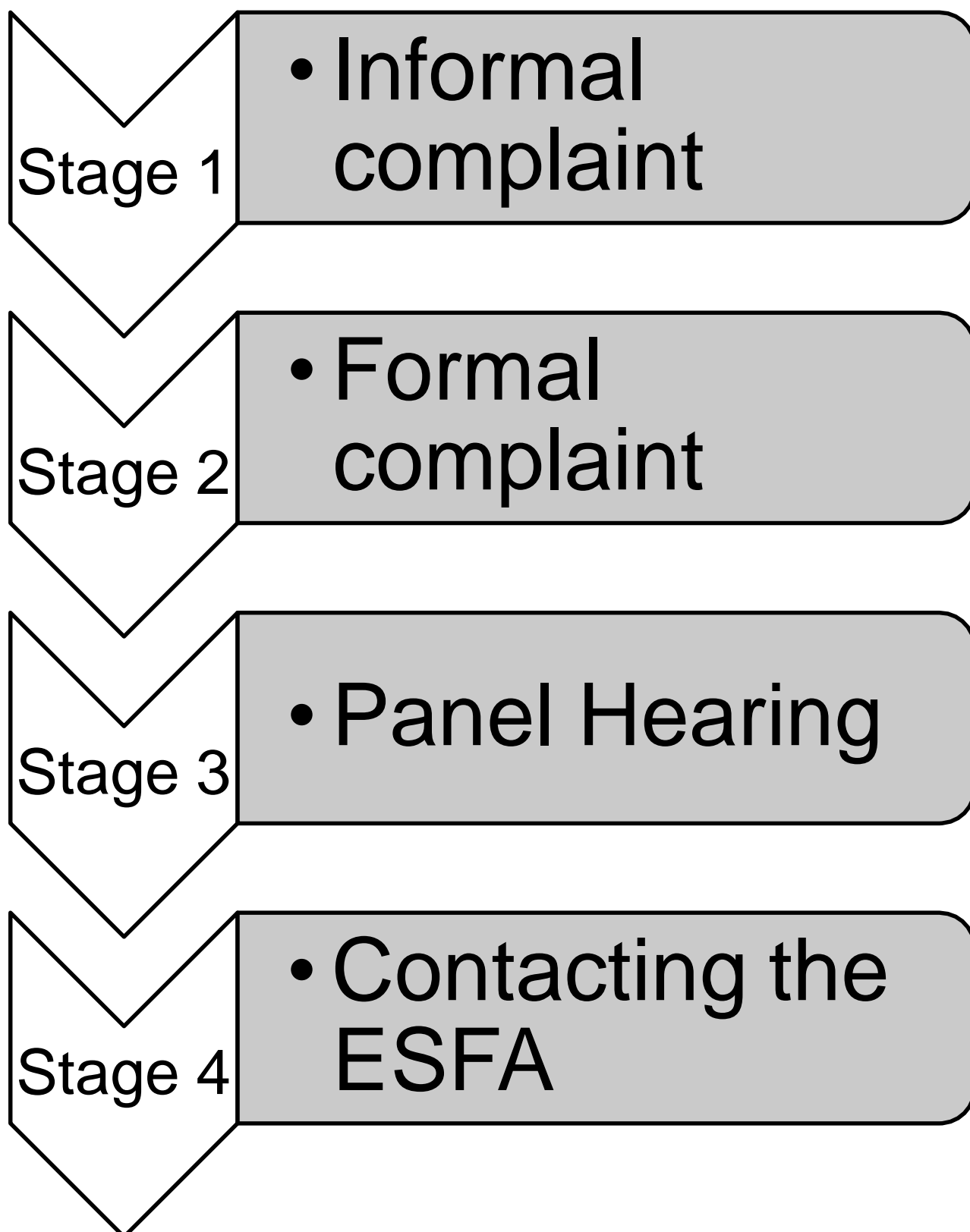
Additional Notes

The academy should ensure that a copy of all correspondence and notes are kept on file in the academy's records. An Individual Record Sheet / Log of Actions form (Appendix A) should be completed by the academy detailing the complaint, the actions taken as a result of the complaint and the findings of any investigations. The Complaints' Register / Summary Log (Appendix B) will also be completed by the academy to summarise the relevant dates/actions/findings.

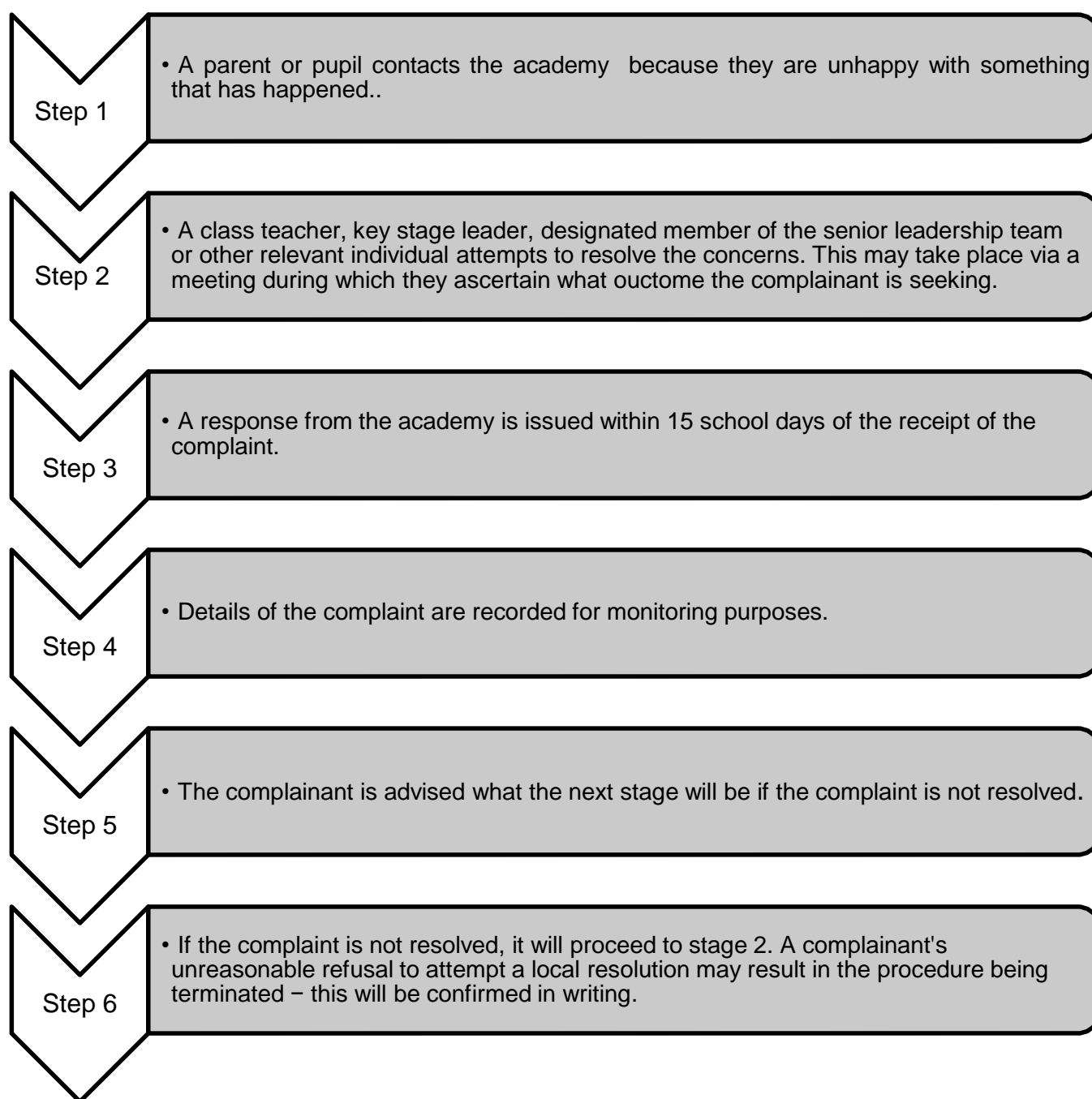
These records should be kept separately from the pupil's personal records but may, if considered appropriate by the Headteacher, be passed on to any future schools/academies that the pupil may attend i.e. in the case of an aggressive parents or bullying incident or to relevant agencies e.g. Children's Services.

Please see overleaf for an 'At-a-Glance' guide to our complaints' procedure.

Complaints procedure at-a-glance



Stage 1 – Informal complaint

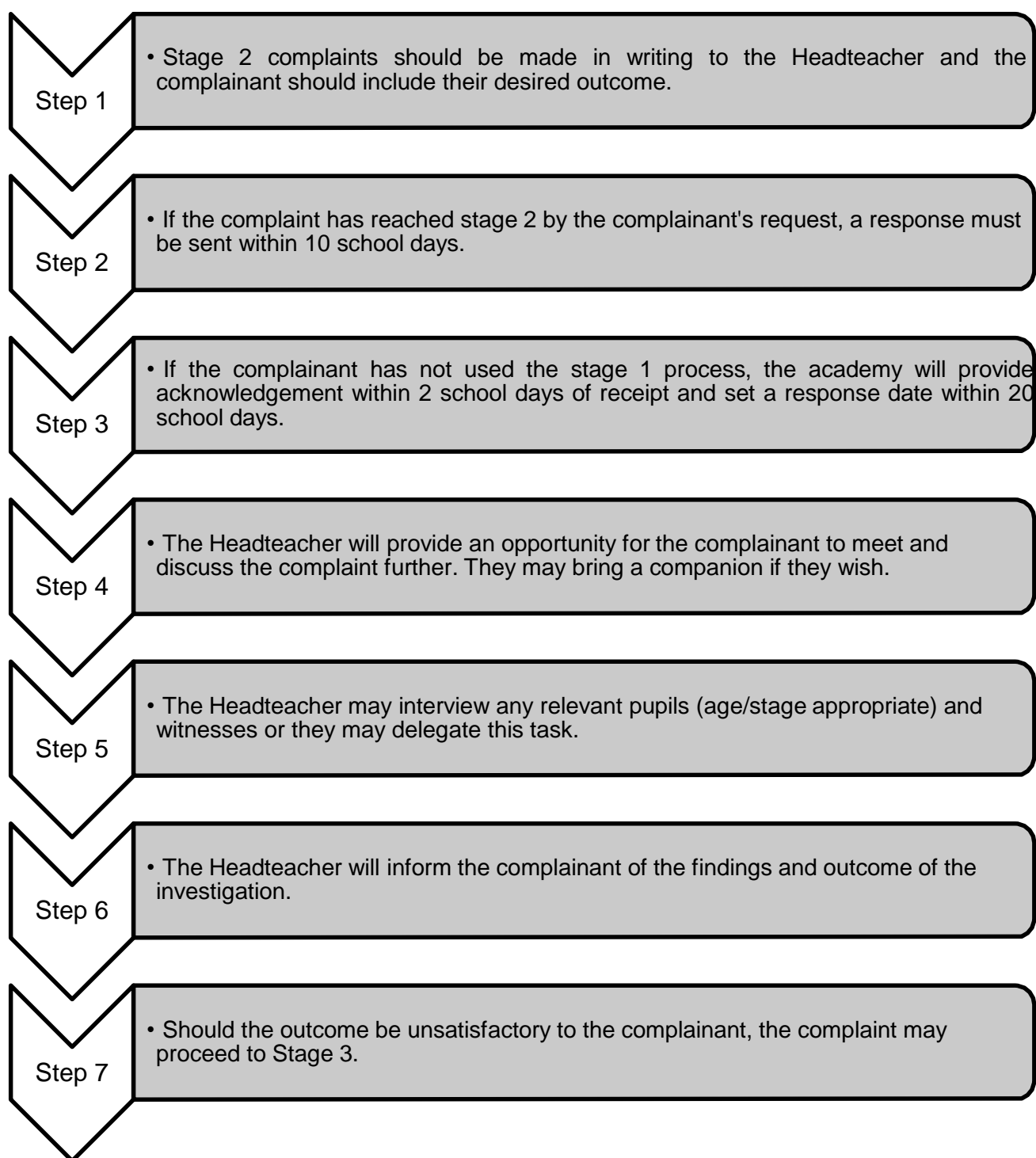


Considerations

If the complaint is centered on a class teacher or any individual in a leadership or management role, it will be proceed directly to stage 2, as it would be inappropriate for someone other than the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher to respond. The Headteacher can escalate the complaint to stage 2 at any time if they deem it appropriate.

Complainants will be provided with written responses where appropriate and if requested.

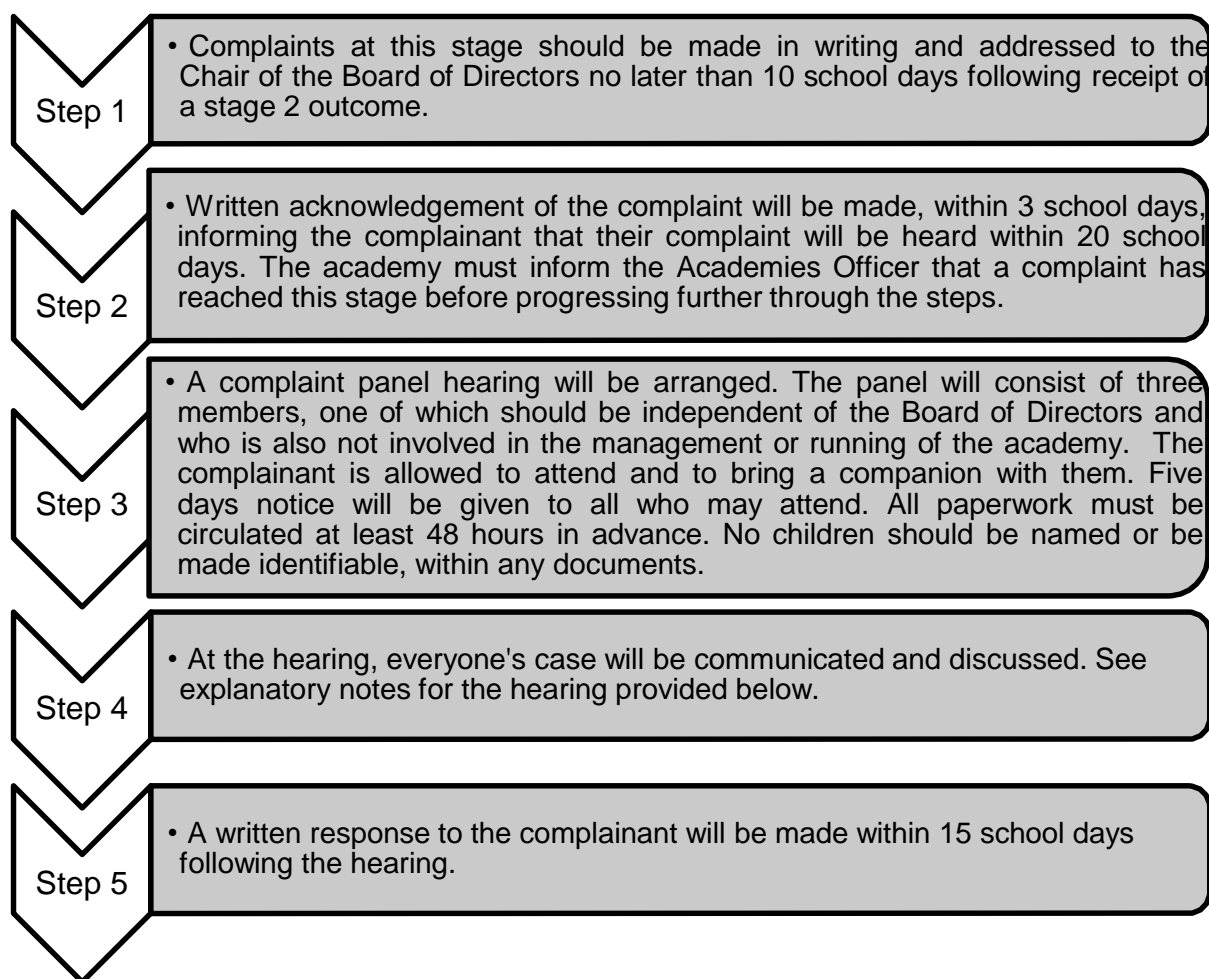
Stage 2 – Formal complaint



Considerations

Complaints will not be progressed to Stage 3, unless Stage 2 has been undertaken. However, should the complaint be regarding the Headteacher, it may be prudent for it to proceed directly to Stage 3 and the complaint addressed to the Chair of the Board of Directors, in place of the Headteacher.

Stage 3 – A Panel Hearing



If the complainant is not satisfied about the handling of their complaint, please see Stage 4.

Explanatory notes for the hearing:

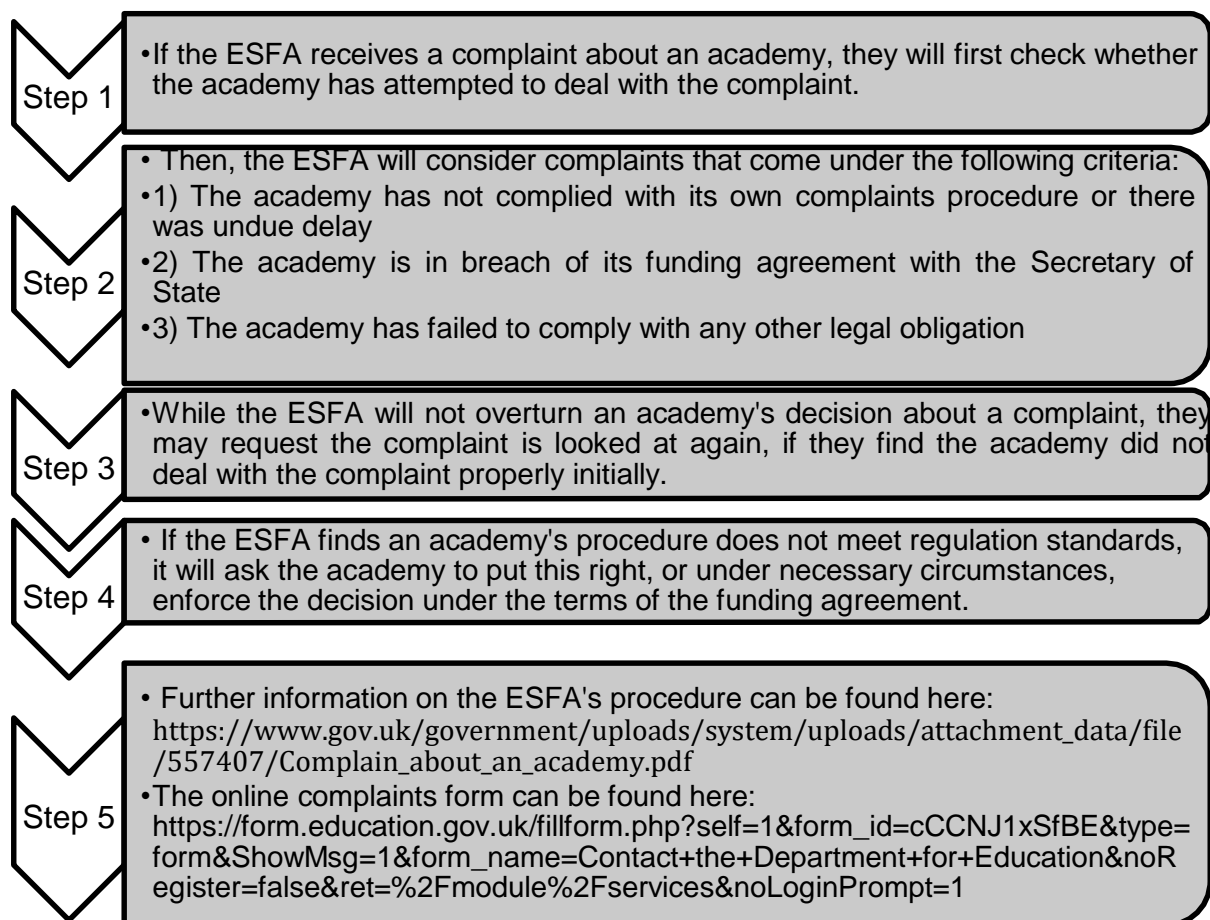
- The complainant explains their complaint and the Headteacher explains the academy's response
- The Headteacher is able to question the complainant about the complaint and the complainant is able to question the Headteacher about the academy's response
- Panel members are provided with an opportunity to question both the complainant and the Headteacher
- Documentary evidence is considered
- Final statements may be made by both the complainant and the Headteacher

If either party wishes to introduce previously undisclosed evidence or witnesses, it is in the interests of natural justice to adjourn the meeting so that the other side has time to consider and respond to the new evidence. This may result in the meeting being re-arranged and concluded on another date.

After all evidence has been presented, the Chair of the Panel will explain to the complainant and the Headteacher that the Panel will now consider its decision, and a written decision will be sent to both parties within 15 school days.

The Panel will: (a) reach a unanimous, or at least a majority, decision on the complaint and (b) decide upon the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint and (c) where appropriate, suggest recommended changes to the academy's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not arise again.

Stage 4 – Contacting the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)



Policy Review

This policy was carefully considered and ratified by the Effective Resourcing Working Group at its meeting on 24 January 2018.

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis, with the next review taking place during October 2018. However, this will be brought forward should changes in protocol be recommended by the Education and Skills Funding Agency, the Department for Education and/or the Diocese.

Signed:

Date: 24 January 2018

Chair, Effective Resourcing Working Group

MOORDOWN ST JOHN'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

Appendix A – Complaints' Procedure: Individual Record Sheet / Log of Actions

ACADEMIC YEAR 20 / 20		Ref No:
Date	Details / Activity / Actions	

Ref No	Complainant's Name	Brief summary of complaint <i>Full details on complaints' record sheet</i>	Stage	Dates			Resolved?	Brief summary of actions / findings/further details	Date closed
				Stage Commenced	Acknowledgement issued	Response/ findings issued			
			1 Informal				YES / NO		
			2 Formal				YES / NO		
			3 Panel				YES / NO	Referred to ESFA? YES / NO	
			1 Informal				YES / NO		
			2 Formal				YES / NO		
			3 Panel				YES / NO	Referred to ESFA? YES / NO	
			1 Informal				YES / NO		
			2 Formal				YES / NO		
			3 Panel				YES / NO	Referred to ESFA? YES / NO	