



Complaints Policy

O you who believe, uphold justice and bear witness to Allah, even if it is against yourselves, your parents, or your close relatives. Whether the person is rich or poor, Allah can best take care of both. Refrain from following your own desire, so that you can act justly- if you distort or neglect justice, Allah is fully aware of what you do.

Quran 4:135

Approved by:	Governing Board	Last reviewed: Autumn 2023
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1. Introduction & purpose

We believe that Noor ul Islam Primary School provides a good education for all our children, and that the Headteacher and other staff work very hard to build positive relationships with all parents. If any parent is unhappy with the education that their child is receiving, or has any concern relating to the school, we encourage you to talk to the child's class teacher immediately.

To ensure the school is a positive environment that is conducive to learning, a complaints procedure is in place for parents should the need arise. The following policy sets out the procedure that the school follows in such cases.

This document provides information about:

- How a complaint can be made about certain services provided by the school.
- The nature of complaints considered under this policy.
- How a complaint will be handled.
- How matters can be escalated if the complainant is not satisfied with outcomes.
- Timeframe in which complaints will be dealt with.

2. Who is the Procedure for?

The procedure is for parents, carers and members of the public to use to raise informal and formal general comments or complaints with the school and the Governing Board.

3. The difference between a complaint and a concern

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

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

Concerns should be raised with either the class teacher or the Headteacher. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint. If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, we will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, we will refer you to another staff member.

It is in everyone's interest that complaints and concerns 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. We take complaints and concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

4. Types of complaints outside the scope of this policy

Whilst this policy covers all complaints about any provision of school facilities or services. Certain complaints are outside the scope of this policy. These are complaints about:

- Admissions
- Safeguarding matters
- Suspension and permanent exclusions
- Whistleblowing
- Staff grievances
- Staff discipline

The above type of complaints have separate policies and procedures in place.

Please note that we will not normally investigate *anonymous* complaints or complaints made only *verbally*, as such complaints will not allow the school to seek further information or have in place full details of the complaint to look into. However, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether such complaints warrant an investigation.

5. Vexatious Complaints:

There may be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedures having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the Chair of the Governing Body is able to inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

6. Timescales

Complaints should be considered, and resolved, as quickly and efficiently as possible. Complaints should therefore be raised within 2 weeks of the event taking place, except in exceptional and mitigating circumstances. However, where further investigations are necessary, new time limits can be set and the complainant sent details of the new deadlines and an explanation for any delay.

We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period. A school day is defined as any day that the school is open for teaching of all students.

You can withdraw your complaint at any time by confirming this in writing.

7. Complaint stages

There are 4 stages within this complaints policy, they are as follows:

Stage One: INFORMAL COMPLAINT. The complaint is heard informally by a staff member (not the subject of the complaint): Where a complainant feels that a situation has not been resolved through contact with the class teacher or office staff, or that their concern is of a sufficiently serious nature, they should make an appointment to discuss it with *a senior leader and/or Headteacher*. Management considers any such complaint very seriously and will work to bring an amicable solution to the issue at hand. Most complaints are normally resolved by this stage.

Stage Two: FORMAL COMPLAINT TO HEADTEACHER The complaint is formally heard by the Headteacher. If the complaint is about the Headteacher, this should move directly to Stage Three. Should a complainant wish for this to be a **formal complaint** then it must be in written format via letter or email. The letter or email should also clearly state the fact that it is a formal complaint. In the absence of a written complaint, the school will consider this to be informal. The formal complaint will be acknowledged within two working days and resolved within 10 working days.

Stage Three: FORMAL COMPLAINT TO CHAIR OF GOVERNORS The complaint is formally heard by the Chair of Governors. Should a complainant feel that the issue with the school has not been

resolved despite the intervention of the school management, then a formal complaint in writing or by email can be made to the Chair of Governors. In such an eventuality the procedure will be as outlined in this policy. Chair of governors can delegate to another governor to carry out the investigation.

Stage Four: HEARING AT AN APPEAL PANEL If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 3 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 4 – a meeting with members of the Governing Body’s Complaints Committee, which will be formed of the first three, impartial, Governors available. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.

Full details of the 4 stages and the process are set out in **Appendix 1**.

8. Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, the school wants to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- An explanation.
- An admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better.
- An assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur.
- An explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made.
- An undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint.
- An apology.

9. How to submit a complaint

You can submit your complaint by:

- Completing the **Complaint Form** in **Appendix 2**. Please put the completed form in a sealed envelope, addressing it to the Headteacher and marking it as ‘Private and Confidential’, and hand it either to the school office or the Headteacher / Deputy Headteacher, or
- Email your completed **Complaint Form** to primary.school@noorulislam.org.uk, addressing it to the Headteacher and marking it as ‘Private and Confidential’.

If the complaint involves or are about the Headteacher, the complaint should be addressed to the Chair of Governors and be sent via the school office/email.

Complaints against school staff (except the Headteacher) should be made in the first instance, to the Headteacher.

Complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual Governor or the whole Governing Board should be addressed to the Office to the Governing Board via the school office/email.

Complainants should not approach individual Governors to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at Stage 3 of the procedure.

10. Monitoring and review

The governors monitor the complaints procedure, in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The Headteacher logs all complaints received by the school and records how they were resolved. The governors are made aware of complaints every term through the Governing Body meetings. Governors examine this log on an annual basis.

This policy is made available to all parents, so that they can be properly informed about the complaints process. It is also available on the school website.

Governors will review this policy at least every two years.

Further information and advice can be found on the Department For Education's School Complaints Toolkit 2014 (August 2014) which can be found on the following link:
https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/id/eprint/20660/2/School_Complaints_Toolkit_2014.pdf

Appendix 1 – Complaints stages and process

STAGE 1: INFORMAL COMPLAINT

An Informal Complaint will be looked into by a senior member of staff and a response will be provided according to Section 8 (*Resolving complaints*).

Other than in exceptional circumstance, the school will advise the complainant of the outcome via writing within 10 school days.

STAGE 2: FORMAL COMPLAINT TO HEADTEACHER

Where the complainant is not satisfied with the response to the informal complaint made in Stage 1, the complainant can escalate the matter by putting in a Formal Complaint, which would be considered by the Headteacher (unless the complaint is about the Headteacher).

The Headteacher will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The Headteacher can consider whether a face-to-face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

The Headteacher may delegate the investigation to another member of the school's senior leadership team but not the decision to be taken.

During the investigation, the Headteacher (or investigator) will:

- If necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish.
- Keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the Headteacher will provide a formal written response within 15 school days of the date of receipt of the Stage 2 request. If the headteacher is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions the school will take to resolve the complaint.

The Headteacher will advise the complainant how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2.

If the complaint is about the Headteacher, or a member of the Governing Body (including the Chair or Vice Chair), a suitably skilled Governor will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 2.

If the complaint is:

- Jointly about the Chair and the Vice Chair, or
- The entire Governing Body, or
- The majority of the Governing Body.

Stage 2 will be considered by an independent investigator appointed by the Governing Body. At the conclusion of their investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response.

STAGE 3: FORMAL COMPLAINT TO CHAIR OF GOVERNORS

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 2 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 3 – to be dealt with by the Chair of Governors.

The written notification should make clear the grievance and state that it is to be formally considered under these arrangements. The Governors will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 7 working days and aim to resolve the issue within 21 working days.

The Chair of Governors will then endeavour to resolve the complaint by working with the school Headteacher and the complainant.

A request to escalate to Stage 3 must be made to the school, via the school office / email, within 15 school days of receipt of the Stage 2 response. Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

The school office manager or any member of the school leadership team will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 5 school days.

The office will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within 10 school days of receipt of the Stage 3 request. If this is not possible, the office will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

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

Complainant must respond to the outcome of an investigation within 15 days after receiving a response from the governor.

STAGE 4: HEARING AT AN APPEAL PANEL

The independently led complaints panel will be led by one independent person as well as two other school governors who have previously not been involved with the subject of the complaint.

The Headteacher and the Chair of Governors should not be members of the independently led complaints committee, which must act and be seen to remain impartial.

The aim of the hearing will be to resolve the complaint, where appropriate, and achieve reconciliation between school and the complainant. However, it is recognised that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome, should the hearing not result in the decision they wanted.

Prior to the meeting, they will decide amongst themselves who will act as the Chair of the Complaints Committee.

The Committee 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.

If the complainant is invited to attend the meeting, they may bring someone along to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. Generally, we do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the committee meeting. However, there may be occasions when legal

representation is appropriate. For instance, if a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by union and/or legal representation.

Complaints about staff conduct will not generally be handled under this complaints procedure. Complainants will be advised that any staff conduct complaints will be considered under staff disciplinary procedures, if appropriate, but outcomes will not be shared with them.

At least 15 school days before the meeting, the Office will confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that, if the complainant is invited, the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 10 school days before the date of the meeting. The committee will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

The committee will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

The committee will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The committee can:

- Uphold the complaint in whole or in part.
- Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.

If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the committee will:

- Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint.
- Where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

The Chair of the Committee will provide the complainant and the school with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 10 school days of the Committee meeting.

The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the Department for Education if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by school.

If the complaint is:

- Jointly about the Chair and Deputy Chair, or
- The entire Governing Body or
- The majority of the Governing Body.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions the school will take to resolve the complaint.

The response will also advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied.

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 4.

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

Appendix 2 - Complaint form

Please complete and return to either the Headteacher / Office / Complaints Co-ordinator / Chair of Governors (delete as appropriate) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:	
Pupil's name (if relevant):	
Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):	
Address:	
Contact number:	
Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it.	
What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?	
Date:	

Official Use	
Date acknowledged:	
By who:	
Complaint referred to (if relevant)	
Action taken:	
Outcome:	
Signed off by: (Headteacher / Deputy Headteacher / SLT Member)	
Date:	

If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office. You can also ask third party organisations like the Citizens Advice to help you. In accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure. For instance, providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

Appendix 3 – Roles and responsibilities

Complainant

The complainant will receive a more effective response to the complaint if they:

- Explain the complaint in full as early as possible.
- Co-operate with the school in seeking a solution to the complaint.
- Respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint.
- Ask for assistance as needed.
- Treat all those involved in the complaint with respect.
- Refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality.

Investigator

The investigator's role is to establish the facts relevant to the complaint by:

- Providing a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint through:
 - Sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved.
 - Interviewing staff and children/young people and other people relevant to the complaint.
 - Consideration of records and other relevant information.
 - Analysing information.
- Liaising with the complainant and the complaints co-ordinator as appropriate to clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.

The investigator should:

- Conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning.
- Keep notes of interviews or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of the meeting.
- Ensure that any papers produced during the investigation are kept securely pending any appeal.
- Be mindful of the timescales to respond.
- Prepare a comprehensive report for the Headteacher or Complaints Committee that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.

The Headteacher or Complaints Committee will then determine whether to uphold or dismiss the complaint and communicate that decision to the complainant, providing the appropriate escalation details.

Complaints Co-ordinator

This could be the Headteacher / designated complaints Governor or other staff member providing administrative support. The Complaints Co-ordinator should:

- Ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure.
- Liaise with staff members, Headteacher, Chair of Governors and Office and Local Authority (if appropriate) to ensure the smooth running of the complaints procedure.
- Be aware of issues regarding:
 - Sharing third party information.
 - Additional support. This may be needed by complainants when making a complaint including interpretation support or where the complainant is a child or young person.
- Keep records.

Office

The office is the contact point for the complainant and the Committee and should:

- Ensure that all people involved in the complaint procedure are aware of their legal rights and duties, including any under legislation relating to school complaints, education law, the Equality Act 2010, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).
- Set the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties (if they are invited to attend) and that the venue and proceedings are accessible.
- Collate any written material relevant to the complaint (for example; Stage 1 or 2 paperwork, school and complainant submissions) and send it to the parties in advance of the meeting within an agreed timescale.
- Record the proceedings.
- Circulate the minutes of the meeting.
- Notify all parties of the Committee's decision.

Committee Chair

The Committee's Chair, who is nominated in advance of the complaint meeting, should ensure that:

- Both parties are asked (via the Office) to provide any additional information relating to the complaint by a specified date in advance of the meeting.
- The meeting is conducted in an informal manner, is not adversarial, and that, if all parties are invited to attend, everyone is treated with respect and courtesy.
- Complainants who may not be used to speaking at such a meeting are put at ease. This is particularly important if the complainant is a child/young person.
- The remit of the Committee is explained to the complainant.
- Written material is seen by everyone in attendance, provided it does not breach confidentiality or any individual's rights to privacy under the DPA 2018 or GDPR.

- If a new issue arises it would be useful to give everyone the opportunity to consider and comment upon it; this may require a short adjournment of the meeting.
- Both the complainant and the school are given the opportunity to make their case and seek clarity, either through written submissions ahead of the meeting or verbally in the meeting itself.
- The issues are addressed.
- Key findings of fact are made.
- The committee is open-minded and acts independently.
- No member of the committee has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure.
- The meeting is minuted.
- They liaise with the Office (and Complaints Co-ordinator, if the school has one).

Committee Member

Committee Members should be aware that:

- The meeting must be independent and impartial, and should be seen to be so.
- No Governor may sit on the Committee if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it.
- The aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant.
- We recognise that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the meeting does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations.
- Many complainants will feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting.
- Parents/carers often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child.
- Extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child/young person and present during all or part of the meeting.
- Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings should ensure that the child/young person does not feel intimidated.
- The committee should respect the views of the child/young person and give them equal consideration to those of adults.
- If the child/young person is the complainant, the committee should ask in advance if any support is needed to help them present their complaint. Where the child/young person's parent is the complainant, the committee should give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the meeting, if any, the child/young person needs to attend.
- However, the parent should be advised that agreement might not always be possible if the parent wishes the child/young person to attend a part of the meeting that the committee considers is not in the child/young person's best interests.

The welfare of the child/young person is paramount.