Purley Partnership Federation

Purley Nursery School
Achieving and growing together

Christ Church Primary School
Nurturing lifelong learners with God's guidance

Complaints Policy

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As a Church of England School, Christian values are at the heart of all that is done by Christ Church School. Both schools in the Purley Partnership Federation, value our relationship with parents and all members of the school and local community. If you have a concern, we want to know about it so that it can be dealt with immediately. Most concerns can be dealt with easily and quickly, but to ensure all concerns are handled effectively the Governing Body has adopted a complaints policy and procedure.

The Schools' Complaints Procedure is devised with the intention that it will:

- usually be possible to resolve problems by informal means;
- be simple to use and understand;
- treat complaints confidentially;
- allow problems to be handled swiftly;
- inform future practice so that a problem is unlikely to recur;
- reaffirm the partnership between parents, staff and governors as we work together for the good of the pupils in the school;
- ensure that the school's attitude to a pupil will never be affected by a parental complaint;
- discourage anonymous complaints;
- actively encourage strong home-school links;
- ensure that any person complained against has equal rights with the person making the complaint;
- be subject to a regular review cycle.

WHO CAN MAKE A COMPLAINT

This complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children that are registered at the schools. Any person, including members of the public or volunteers at the schools, may make a complaint to the Federation Schools about any provision of facilities or services that we provide. Unless the subject of a complaint should instead be dealt with under separate statutory procedures (detailed at the end of this document), we will use this complaints procedure.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A CONCERN AND A FORMAL COMPLAINT

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

It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints 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. Purley Partnership Federation takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve any matter as quickly as possible.

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, the Executive Headteacher/ Head of School will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, the Executive Headteacher/ Head

of School will refer you to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important.

We understand however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, the Purley Partnership Federation will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

Those with a concern or a complaint should not approach individual governors with them. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at Stage 2 of the procedure.

HOW DO I RAISE A CONCERN?

Concerns are the first stage in the complaint process and we make every effort to resolve concerns as quickly as possible.
A concern may be raised in person, in writing, or by telephone. A concern may also be raised by a third party acting on behalf of the individual, provided the school has appropriate written consent.

Concerns should be raised with either the class teacher/key worker, or the Executive Head teacher/ Head of School. If the concern remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

We would like you to tell us about your concern so that we can discuss with you how best to resolve it. The majority of concerns can be resolved informally by speaking to a member of staff. We welcome suggestions for improving our work in the school. Whatever your concern, please know that we shall treat it as strictly confidential.

Be assured that our support and respect for you and your child in the school will not be affected in any way; please do not delay telling us of your concern. It is difficult for us to properly investigate an incident which is more than a day or two old.

After hearing your concern we will act as quickly as we can; we will let you know the timescale within which you may expect a response. Please allow time for any action we may take to be effective.

Please contact your child's class teacher or other appropriate member of staff and arrange a time when you can discuss your concern. It may be possible for you to see the member of staff straight away but normally it is better to make an appointment so that you can sit and talk things through. It may be possible to give a response immediately, but where any investigation or information is required, a response will be given within five days.

HOW DO I RAISE A FORMAL COMPLAINT?

If you have not been able to resolve your concern informally, or the circumstances justify it, you may raise a formal complaint. Complaints against school staff (except the Executive Head Teacher) should be made in the first instance, to the Executive Head Teacher at Christ Church School/ Head of School at Purley Nursery School via the relevant school offices using the school complaints form**.**

Complaints against the Head of School at Purley Nursery School should be addressed to the Executive Head Teacher at Christ Church School via the Christ Church School office using the school complaints form.

Complaints against the Executive Head Teacher at Christ Church School should be addressed to the Chair of Governors, via the Christ Church School office using the school complaints form. Complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor or the whole governing body should be addressed to the Clerk to the Governing Body, via the Christ Church School office using the school complaints form. Any

other complaints should be addressed to the Executive Head Teacher at Christ Church School/ Head of School at Purley Nursery School via the relevant school offices using the school complaints form.

All such complaints should be marked as 'urgent and confidential'. If you require help in completing the school complaints form, please contact the relevant school offices, and assistance will be provided to you. The member of staff who supports you will, of course, keep this confidential and will not discuss this with anyone. You can also ask third party organisations like 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.

ANONYMOUS COMPLAINTS

The Purley Partnership Federation will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. Either the Executive Head Teacher at Christ Church School, Head of School at Purley Nursery School or Chair of Governors (depending on who is the subject of the complaint) will determine whether or not the complaint warrants an investigation.

TIMESCALES FOR COMPLAINTS

You must raise the complaint within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. The Purley Partnership Federation will only consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

A complaint submitted outside the three-month time limit will only be accepted where clear evidence shows that the complainant was unable to raise the matter earlier due to one or more of the following exceptional circumstances:

1. **Serious illness or medical incapacity.** The complainant or the person directly involved was suffering from a serious medical condition, hospitalisation, or long-term incapacity that prevented them from raising the complaint.
2. **Significant personal circumstances** Events such as bereavement, domestic crisis, or a legally recognised traumatic incident that directly impacted the complainant's ability to act.
3. **Ongoing external investigation.** The complaint was subject to an active police, safeguarding, or regulatory investigation which prevented the matter from being raised with the school earlier.
4. **Newly discovered evidence.** The complainant could not reasonably have known the key facts at the time of the incident, and the new evidence is material to the complaint.
5. **The school's own actions caused a delay** The complainant made reasonable attempts to raise the issue earlier, but delays by the school prevented the complaint from being submitted within the timeframe.

COMPLAINTS RECEIVED OUTSIDE OF TERM TIME

The Purley Partnership Federation will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period (when the relevant school opens for educational sessions).

SCOPE OF THIS COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of facilities or services at Purley Partnership Federation other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

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 the allegations

against staff policy or staff disciplinary procedures, if appropriate, but outcomes will not be shared with them. Safeguarding allegations against staff will be handled under the school's Child Protection Policy.

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 this happens, we will inform you of a proposed new timescale.

If a complainant commences legal action against Purley Partnership Federation 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.

RESOLVING COMPLAINTS

At each stage in the procedure, the Purley Partnership Federation 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 of the findings of the investigation;
- 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.

Please note that in certain circumstances, for example, if the outcome of an investigation is related to safeguarding or employment law, full details of the outcome of an investigation may not be shared with the complainant.

WITHDRAWAL OF A COMPLAINT

If a complainant wishes to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing to the school office.

STAGE 1

Formal complaints must be made to the Executive Head Teacher at Christ Church School/ Head of School at Purley Nursery School via the relevant school offices. This must be submitted in writing using the Purley Partnership Federation complaints form. If you require help in completing the complaints form, please contact the relevant school office, and assistance will be provided to you.

The Executive Head Teacher at Christ Church School/ Head of School at Purley Nursery School will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 3 school days. Within this response, the Executive Head Teacher/ Head of School will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The Executive Head Teacher/ Head of School can consider whether a face to face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

Note: The Executive Head Teacher/ Head of School 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 Executive Head Teacher/ Head of School (or investigator) will:

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

At the conclusion of their investigation, the Executive Head Teacher/ Head of School will provide a formal written response within 15 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint. If the Executive Head Teacher/ Head of School 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 that the Purley Partnership Federation will take to resolve the complaint.

The Executive Head Teacher/ Head of School will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1.

If the complaint is about the Executive Head Teacher/ Head of School, 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 detailed above at Stage 1. Complaints about the Executive Head Teacher/ Head of School or member of the governing body must be made directly to the Clerk, via the relevant school office. The complaint should be marked as 'urgent and confidential'.

If the complaint is: jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair; the entire governing body; the majority of the governing body; or other circumstances justify it, Stage 1 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.

It is to be hoped that most concerns can be expressed and resolved on an informal basis.

- Concerns should be raised with either the class teacher, subject leader, senior Leader or Headteacher. Complainants should not approach individual Governing Body members 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.
- At the conclusion of their investigation into concerns raised, the appropriate person investigating will provide an informal response within 5 school days of the concern being raised.
- If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

STAGE 2

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 1 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 2 – a meeting with members of the governing body's complaints panel, which will be formed of three impartial governors.This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.

A request to escalate to Stage 2 must be made to the Clerk to the Governors, via the relevant school office marked 'urgent and confidential', within 10 school days of receipt of the Stage 1 response.

The Clerk to the Governors will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 3 school days. Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

The Clerk to the Governors will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within 20 school days of receipt of the Stage 2 request. If this is not possible, the Clerk to the Governors will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed. If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates without good reason, the Clerk 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.

The complaints panel will consist of at least three governors with no prior involvement or knowledge of the complaint. Prior to the meeting, they will decide amongst themselves who will act as the chair of the complaints panel. If there are fewer than three governors from the Purley Partnership Federation available, the Clerk will source any additional, independent governors through another local school or through their LA's Governor Services team, in order to make up the panel. Alternatively, an entirely independent panel may be convened to hear the complaint at Stage 2.

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.

If the complainant is invited to attend the meeting, they may bring someone along to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. The role of this person is to provide support but not to speak for the person unless invited by the panel. If professional support e.g. an interpreter is required, the complainant must advise the panel at least 7 days in advance, to allow the schools to make their best endeavours to make the necessary arrangements. Generally, we do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the panel meeting. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate, with the consent of the chair of the panel. If a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by a union representative or friend.

Note: 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. Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

At least <10 school days before the meeting, the Clerk 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
- request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the panel at least 10 school days before the meeting.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 5 school days before the date of the meeting. The panel will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

The panel 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, in which case all parties must be told about it beforehand and consent of all parties attending must be sought before recordings of meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

The panel will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The panel 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 panel 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 panel will provide the complainant and the Purley Partnership Federation School with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 3 school days. 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 the Purley Partnership Federation.

If the complaint is: jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair; the entire governing body; the majority of the governing body; or other circumstances justify it, Stage 2 will be heard by a panel of independent governors. 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 Purley Partnership Federation will take to resolve the complaint. The response will also advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied.

- Formal complaints must be made to the Headteacher (unless they are about the Headteacher), in writing on the school's complaints template, and submitted via the school office, either in person or via email: office1@christchurch.croydon.sch.uk and office@purley.croydon.sch.uk
- The Headteacher or a nominated Complaints Coordinator will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 5 school days.
- The Headteacher may 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.

Note: The Headteacher may delegate the investigation to another member of school staff 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 20 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint. 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 the 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. However, the outcome letter will not include, under any circumstances, information about any disciplinary action taken (or not taken) against staff or pupils. Disciplinary processes relating to staff or pupils are confidential and will not be shared with complainants. The school will only confirm that appropriate action has been taken in line with school policies and statutory requirements.
The Headteacher will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2.

Stage 2: Complaints about the Headteacher
If the complaint is about the Headteacher, the formal complaint must be submitted in writing on the school's official Complaints Form, addressed to the Chair of Governors, and submitted via the school office, either in person or at the address (office1@christchurch.croydon.sch.uk and office@purley.croydon.sch.uk.) The Chair will appoint a suitably skilled member of the Governing Body to carry out all Stage 2 actions.

Stage 2: Complaints about the Chair of Governors, Vice-Chair or Governing Board Member/s
If the complaint is about the Chair of Governors, Vice-Chair, or an individual Governing Body member, the formal complaint must be submitted in writing on the school's official Complaints Form to the Clerk to the Governing Body, via the school office, either in person or via the school office email office1@christchurch.croydon.sch.uk and office@purley.croydon.sch.uk . The Clerk will arrange for a suitably skilled member of the Governing Body to complete all Stage 2 actions.
If the complaint is about:

- both the Chair and Vice-Chair, or
- the entire Governing Body, or
- a majority of Governing Body members,

then the complaint must still be submitted in writing on the Complaints Form via the school office, addressed to the Clerk. In these circumstances, Stage 2 will be escalated to and managed by the Southwark Diocesan Board of Education (SDBE) or the Local Authority (LA), who will appoint an appropriate independent person to carry out the investigation and Stage 2 actions.

Stage 3 - Panel Hearing
If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 2 and wishes to take the matter further, they may request that the complaint be escalated to Stage 3. Stage 3 is a panel hearing consisting of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, including one panel member independent of the management and running of the school. This is the last stage of the complaints procedure and any decision at this stage is final.
A request to escalate to Stage 3 must be submitted in writing to the Clerk via the school office office1@christchurch.croydon.sch.uk and office@purley.croydon.sch.uk , within 10 school days of receiving the Stage 2 response and must include the original Complaints Form.
Requests received outside the 10-day timeframe will only be considered where exceptional circumstances have prevented the complainant from submitting the request sooner (see previous exceptional circumstances).
Upon receipt of a Stage 3 request, three governors who have not previously been involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, will review the request to determine whether the grounds for appeal have been met. A panel hearing will be convened only where these representatives of the Governing Body are satisfied that:

- the correct procedure was not followed at Stage 2; or
- new, relevant, and significant information has come to light that was not available at Stage 2; or
- the outcome at Stage 2 is clearly unsupported by the evidence considered; or
- there has been a demonstrable procedural or administrative error.

If the complaint was about the Headteacher and therefore investigated by the governing body the decision to proceed to stage three will be made by either the SDBE or LA.

If the Governing Body (or SDBE/LA) determines that the grounds for appeal have not been met, the Clerk will write to the complainant to explain that the matter will not proceed to a panel hearing and that the Stage 2 outcome represents the school's final response.
Where the Governing Body (SDBE/LA) agrees that grounds for appeal are met, the Clerk will:

- record the date the Stage 3 request was received;

- acknowledge receipt in writing (letter or email) within 5 school days;
- convene a panel hearing within 20 school days of receiving the request, or provide an anticipated date where this is not possible and keep the complainant updated.

If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates, without good reason, the Clerk 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.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire Governing Body or
- the majority of the Governing Body

Stage 3 will be heard by an independent panel.

At least 7 school days before the meeting, the Clerk 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
- request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the committee at least 5 school days before the meeting.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 3 school days before the date of the meeting. The panel will not accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

The panel 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 and minuted. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not 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.

If the complainant is invited and present, 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 panel hearing. For instance, if a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by their union representative.

The panel will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The panel 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 panel 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 Panel will provide the complainant and the school with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 15 school days.

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

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 panel will ensure that those findings and recommendations are sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about. Furthermore, they will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Headteacher.

A written record will be kept of all complaints, and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing, along with what actions have been taken, regardless of the decision.

All correspondence statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential, except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 requests access to them.

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 the Purley Partnership Federation. They will consider whether the Purley Partnership Federation 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.

SERIAL AND UNREASONABLE COMPLAINTS – *Previously commonly known as vexatious*

Purley Partnership Federation 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 schools. 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.

Purley Partnership Federation defines unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the schools, 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 or a similar complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed) or makes serial complaints
- 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 either schools' 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 Executive Head Teacher / Head of School or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before making a formal determination that a complaint is *'serial and unreasonable'.*

If the behaviour continues, the Executive Head Teacher / Head of School will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact either school within the Purley Partnership Federation 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 **either school within the Purley Partnership Federation.**

Managing Serial and Persistent Complaints

We recognise that despite all stages of the complaint procedure having been followed, there may be a situation when a complainant remains dissatisfied. If a complainant tries to re-open the same issue, we will inform them that the procedure has been completed and that the matter is now closed.

If the complainant makes contact again on the same issue, the correspondence may then be viewed as 'serial' or 'persistent' and the school may choose not to respond. A complaint will not be marked as 'serial' before the complainant has completed the procedure.

A complainant will not be marked as 'serial' for exercising their rights to refer their complaint to their MP. Regardless of which stage the complaint has reached.

For further information on serial, persistent or vexatious complaints, see Persistent & Vexatious Complaints Policy

PURLEY PARTNERSHIP FEDERATION SCHOOLS

SCHOOL COMPLAINTS FORM

Please complete and return to the Executive Head Teacher of Christ Church School /Head of School at Purley Nursery School via the relevant school office 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: **Postcode:** **Day time telephone number:** **Evening telephone number:**

Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it and any relevant dates.
What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.
Signature: **Date:**
Official use
Date acknowledgement sent:
By whom:
Complaint referred to:
Date:

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 Executive Head Teacher / Head of School or complaints panel that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.

  The Executive Head Teacher/ Head of School or complaints panel 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

The complaints co-ordinator, usually the Executive Head Teacher/ Head of School, should:

- ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure
- liaise with staff members, Executive Head Teacher/ Head of School, Chair of Governors, Clerk and

LAs (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 and report to the governing body as necessary through the HT report to the Governors regarding the general nature and whether or not this was resolved within the timescales.

CLERK TO THE GOVERNING BODY

The Clerk is the contact point for the complainant and the panel 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 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 panel's decision.

COMPLAINTS PANEL CHAIR

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

- both parties are asked (via the Clerk) 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 panel 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 state 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 panel is open-minded and acts independently
- no member of the panel 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 Clerk (and complaints co-ordinator, if the school has one).

COMPLAINTS PANEL MEMBER

Panel 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 panel 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 panel 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 panel 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 panel 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 panel considers is not in the child/young person's best interests.
- The welfare of the child/young person is paramount.

SCOPE OF THIS COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by Purley Partnership Federation, other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

Exceptions	Who to contact
• Admissions to schools • Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs • Schools re-organisation proposals	Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or schools re-organisation proposals should be raised with Purley Partnership Federation.
• Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance. 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). https://www.croydon.gov.uk/children-young-people-and-families/child-protection-and-safeguarding/report-concern-about-child
• Exclusion of children from school*	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions. **complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure. Please see* Behaviour, discipline and anti-bullying policy
• Whistleblowing	We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors. 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. 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 Local Authority (LA) or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.
• Staff grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the Purley Partnership Federation internal grievance procedures.
• Staff conduct	Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the Purley Partnership Federation internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate. Complainants will not be informed of any 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.
• 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.
• 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, 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 Purley Partnership Federation 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.