



Complaints Policy

Approved and Adopted

Policy Author:	Headteacher
Approved by:	Full Governing Body
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Governors' complaints policy statement

Cranbourne accepts its responsibility to parents and acknowledges that they have the right to ask questions of the school and to raise legitimate concerns about their child's education. Other adults and children have a right to query or to complain about the school's relevant activities. The vast majority of these communications are likely to be resolved through the normal procedures, such as speaking to a tutor, subject teacher or senior member of staff. In some cases, dissatisfaction remains and the parent needs access to a more formal procedure. Both the more common queries and the more unusual, but probably more serious, complaints are dealt with via the school's Complaints Policy.

The word 'complaint' is used below for all levels of such communication. The word 'complainant' is used to cover adults and children who have made a complaint.

The school will:

- Attempt to resolve all concerns through rapid and preferably informal means
- Do its best to fully investigate a complaint, to rectify the problem (if the complaint is upheld) and to prevent a recurrence of the problem, all within a reasonable timescale. The complainant will normally be informed of the outcome of the procedure.
- Ensure that the complaints procedure is fair, confidential and equally accessible to all, including people with disabilities, special needs, or where there may be a language barrier.
- Keep an appropriate record of all complaints.
- Indicate other sources of advice where appropriate
- Resist complaints of a vexatious, abusive, malicious or anonymous nature.

Main complaints policy

1. Introduction

Cranbourne is dedicated to providing the best possible education and support for its pupils. This means having a clear, fair and efficient procedure for dealing with any complaints to or against the school, so that any issues that arise can be dealt with as swiftly and effectively as possible.

This policy explains the steps that will be followed whenever an issue arises that causes concern. Any person, including members of the general public, may make a complaint about provision of facilities or services that our school provides, unless separate statutory procedures apply.

This procedure does not apply to complaints about:

- Admissions to school
- Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN)
- School re-organisation proposals
- Matters likely to require a Child Protection investigation

- Exclusion of children from school
- Whistleblowing
- Staff grievance and disciplinary procedures
- Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use the school's premises or facilities

In these cases, there are other separate and statutory procedures.

The school will not respond to anonymous complaints under this policy, however, the headteacher and / or chair of governors will consider whether the issue and fear of identification are genuine, or the issue is one of child protection.

For more information on our school's provision for protecting our pupils, please refer to our **child protection** policy which is available on the school website.

If we cannot meet the timescales set out in our policy, we will provide a clear explanation of the reason for this along with details of the indicative timescales.

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. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

2. When an issue or concern first arises

If you have a concern that you would like to take up with the school you should initially inform a member of staff either in person, over the telephone (01256 868600)

or in writing. When sending emails to the General Enquiries Account, please state FAO in the subject line of email e.g. FAO Name of Member of Staff (gen.enquiries@cranbourne.hants.sch.uk). You may wish to approach your child's form tutor first as they will be best placed to help you directly or by letting you know which other member of staff you should be speaking to.

We encourage parents to approach staff with any concerns they may have and aim to resolve all issues with open dialogue and mutual understanding. We will take your concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

Governors reserve the right to refer complaints that are taken straight to them back to the Headteacher if it does not warrant the governing body's involvement at that point (i.e. the Headteacher has not yet considered the complaint at stage 1).

2.1 Initial informal meeting

When a concern has been received, you may receive a telephone call from the member of staff or headteacher to discuss your concerns, or you may be invited to attend a meeting with a member of staff or the headteacher to discuss your concerns

If invited to a meeting, you are welcome to bring a friend, partner or, in the case of a pupil who has raised a concern, a parent along for support. It may be appropriate for a pupil to attend the meeting if their parent has raised a concern, depending on the nature of the issue.

Staff have a responsibility to ensure that you understand any future points of action that have been agreed and will make a record of what has been discussed, as well as any outcomes and a plan of action, if one has been agreed.

There is no prescribed timescale for resolution at this stage given the importance of dialogue and informal discussion, although we expect to resolve most issues within **10 school days**.

3. Formal Complaints

All staff will do their best to ensure your concerns are dealt with appropriately and efficiently, but if an agreement cannot be reached informally, or if you are dissatisfied with the outcome, you can make a formal complaint to the Headteacher via her PA s.owen@cranbourne.hants.sch.uk, by telephoning the school, or in person.

If your complaint is about the headteacher you should make your complaint in writing to the chair of governors. It is preferable for you to make your formal complaint in writing by email to (governors@cranbourne.hants.sch.uk), but complaints can be made in person or by telephone.

If your complaint is about a governor, please direct your complaint to the Headteacher via the Headteacher's PA (s.owen@cranbourne.hants.sch.uk), by telephoning the school, or in person.

For ease of use, a template complaint form is included at the end of this procedure. 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.

In order to ensure complaints are dealt with efficiently and effectively, Cranbourne deals with formal complaints in two stages.

3.1 Stage 1 – Complaint heard by the Headteacher

If you feel that your concern has not been dealt with as you would like, are unhappy with the outcome of your informal meeting or feel that the issue is serious enough that it warrants it, you can make a formal complaint to the headteacher. It is preferable for you to make your formal complaint in writing and we provide a proforma for you to complete which can be found in appendix 1 of this policy, but complaints can also be made in person, by telephone or by email to the Headteacher's PA, Suzanne Owen (s.owen@cranbourne.hants.sch.uk).

The headteacher will acknowledge your complaint in writing or offer a full response within **5 school days**. If further investigation is required, the headteacher will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within 5 school days and will advise you that a full response will be provided within **20 school days**.

The headteacher may invite you to attend a meeting to discuss your complaint and possible solutions, or to explain what has happened or will happen as a result of your complaint.

The headteacher will keep a record of all interactions with you and other staff, meetings and decisions made in reference to your complaint.

If your complaint is about a member of staff, the headteacher will talk to that employee and invoke the relevant procedure if required. It will not be appropriate to inform you of the outcome of any investigation in relation to an individual member of staff.

The headteacher will respond to you in writing within **20 school days** of receiving your complaint outlining their full response to your concern, and any action that has or will be taken. If the headteacher is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.

If the headteacher has decided not to take any further action, they will explain what they have decided and how they reached the decision. You will also be advised of your right to take the matter further if you are not satisfied with the headteacher's response.

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 1.

Complaints about the headteacher or member of the governing body must be made to the Clerk via email governors@cranbourne.hants.sch.uk, a letter addressed to the Clerk to Governors, or by telephoning the school.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire governing body or
- the majority of the governing body

- 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.

3.2 Stage 2 – complaint heard by the governing body’s complaints panel

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint, you should write to the clerk to governors within **10 school days**¹ of the outcome of stage 1, explaining your concern and the steps that have resulted in you taking this course of action. You can contact the Clerk by sending an email to governors@cranbourne.hants.sch.uk or by telephoning the school office. The clerk to governors will acknowledge receipt of your request within **5 school days**.

The complaints panel will usually be convened within **20 school days** of receiving the request for your complaint to be considered by the governing body’s complaints panel.

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.

Where the complainant is invited to attend the meeting of the complaints panel and where it is not possible to find a mutually convenient date for all parties within 20 days, all reasonable steps will be taken to agree a time and date mutually convenient to all parties as close to this time frame as possible.

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 main function of the complaints panel will be to:

- a) ensure the complaint has been properly handled by the headteacher/chair of governors
- b) ensure that a sufficient comprehensive investigation was carried out
- c) ensure that the correct procedure / policies were followed.

The panel will also review whether the headteacher/governor appointed to deal with complaints against the Headteacher acted reasonably.

The committee can:

- uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.

¹ Exceptions to this time frame may be considered

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 clerk to governors will arrange and facilitate the meeting of the complaints panel. You are entitled to an independent panel to hear your complaint and the complaints panel will consist of the first three, impartial, governors available. The three members of the panel will not have prior knowledge or involvement in the matter.

If there are fewer than three governors from Cranbourne 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 committee. Alternatively, an entirely independent committee may be convened to hear the complaint at Stage 2.

The chair of the panel will be nominated from within the group of panel members. All panel members will have access to, and will be familiar with, this complaints policy. The clerk to governors will confirm to all parties in writing, the date, time and venue for the meeting.

The clerk to governors will request that you supply any paperwork you feel the panel will require to consider your complaint fully. The headteacher (Governor or independent investigator) will also be requested to supply copies of their responses to the previous stages of the procedure, and any further paperwork they consider the panel will require to consider the complaint fully. Copies of all paperwork will be distributed to all parties by the clerk to governors at least **3 school days** in advance of the meeting.

You are welcome to bring a friend or partner for support to the meeting and the chair of the panel will ensure the meeting is conducted within a relaxed atmosphere whilst keeping to the formal agenda. The headteacher is also invited to bring a representative or member of staff for support.

No previously undisclosed evidence relating to the complaint should be introduced during the meeting.

The clerk will inform you (and the headteacher and / or governor/ or independent investigator) in writing of the panel's decision within **5 school days** of the meeting. The letter will include a summary of the issues, an outline of the main points of discussion, the reasons for the decision and the proposed actions or outcome. The panel may suggest you meet with the headteacher and / or governor again to agree a way forward.

The letter may set out recommendations which will be made to the governing body.

The letter will include details of how to contact the Department for Education if you are dissatisfied with the way your complaint has been handled by Cranbourne.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire governing body or
- the majority of the governing body

Stage 2 will be heard by a committee 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 Cranbourne will take to resolve the complaint.

4. Next Steps

If you believe the school did not handle your complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, you can contact the Department for Education after the completion of Stage 2.

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

You can refer your 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.

5. Unreasonable Complaints

Cranbourne 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 the school. Operating from a position of mutual respect, 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.

Cranbourne defines unreasonable complaints as “those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with the school, hinder our consideration of their or other people’s complaints”.

A complaint may be regarded as unreasonable when the person making the complaint:

- 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 while still wishing their complaint to be resolved
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaints' procedure
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the school's complaints procedure or with good practice
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant expects to be taken into account and commented on, or raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales
- makes unjustified comments 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 complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed)
- refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into a 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 school
- time by frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with

A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if the person making the complaint does so either face-to-face, by telephone or in writing or electronically:

- maliciously
- aggressively
- using threats, intimidation or violence
- using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language
- knowing it to be false
- using falsified information
- publishing unacceptable information in a variety of media such as in social media websites and newspapers

Complainants should limit the numbers of communications with the school while a 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 headteacher or a governor will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking.

If the behaviour continues the headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and asking them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact Cranbourne causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will usually be reviewed after 6 months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the concerns and actions taken will be put in writing immediately and the police informed. This may include banning an individual from Cranbourne.

6. Governing Body review and monitoring of complaints

The headteacher will report annually to the governing body on the number of formal complaints received and the levels at which they have been resolved. No details identifying the complaint, or any member of staff will be published.

The governing body will review and evaluate all complaints no matter how far they are taken or what the outcome to ensure that similar problems are avoided in the future or to see if they could have been managed any more efficiently.

7. Staff Complaints

Staff who have a concern about a colleague or volunteer at the school should refer to the **whistleblowing** policy which is available in the staff handbook.

The procedure for dealing with any other staff complaint or employment grievance is set out in the school's **staff discipline, conduct and resolving work place issues** policies which are available in the Virtual Staffroom.

8. Complaints Policy Review

The governing body of Cranbourne will review this policy every 2 years, or sooner if there are any legislative changes. The governing body of Cranbourne will also review this policy following a complaint panel meeting to ensure that it met the requirement to provide a clear, fair and efficient complaints procedure.

Date of issue: 25th November 2025

Review date: November 2026

Complaints Form

Name of complainant:	
Contact details:	Address:
	Telephone:
	Email:
Outline of your complaint and how it has affected you (the complainant) / pupil:	
Have you discussed the matter already with a member of staff, if so, who? What was the outcome?	

What would you like to happen as a result of your complaint?	
Signature:	
Date:	

For school use:

Date received:	
Date acknowledged and by whom:	
Summary of action taken:	