New Moston Primary School

Focused on Growth, Rooted in Pride

New Moston Primary School

Feedback, Concerns and Complaints Policy

Control Sheet		
Policy Name	Feedback, Concerns and Complaints Policy	
Policy Ownership	Peter Stewart – Headteacher	
Version	3	
Original Date Approved	March 2024	
Approval Authority	Full Governing Body	
Last Reviewed Date	June 2026	
Frequency of Review	Every 2 years	
Status	Approved	
Reviewed By	Peter Stewart - Headteacher	
Approved By	Full Governing Body	
Date of Approval	June 2026	
Next Review Date	June 2028	
Website Publication?	Yes	
Amendments and Adaptions		
Date	**Amended by?**	**Amendment Detail/Reason**
June 2026	PS	Full policy revision: introduction of feedback, informal concern, formal concern, formal complaint and appeal stages; strengthened provisions for respectful communication, campaign complaints, social media and artificial intelligence.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This policy has been drawn up in accordance with New Moston Primary School's Vision and Values. Everything we do is underpinned by the school's four values: Growth, Standards, Attitude and Pride and the school's Vision Statement:

We focus on growth as the driving force behind everything we do. Every decision is centred entirely on what's best for our children. With unwavering high standards, a positive attitude, and a deep sense of pride, we are committed to achieving the best possible outcomes for each and every child. We teach them to excel and thrive; prepare them for a lifetime of continuous growth; and nurture them to be successful, confident citizens within our local community and beyond.

Focused on Growth, Rooted in Pride.

1.2 New Moston Primary School is committed to ensuring that all children and young people are provided with a first class educational experience and that we work in a productive and positive partnership with all parents, carers and other members of the public.

1.3 However, if a parent/carer or member of the public feels that a situation has arisen that they are unhappy about, then they have a right to make a complaint. Every complaint made will be taken seriously and dealt with swiftly and professionally. All parents/carers and members of the public will be made aware of this policy if they wish to make a complaint.

1.4 The policy will be relied upon in respect of all concerns or complaints by complainants made against the school **except** in respect of;

(a) Admissions to schools; Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN); School re-organisation proposals - Concerns should be raised direct with local authorities (LA). For school admissions, it will depend on who is the admission authority (either the school or the LA). Complaints about admission appeals for maintained schools are dealt with by the Local Government Ombudsman.

(b) Suspensions and Permanent Exclusions - Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-exclusion

(c) Whistleblowing – The school has an internal whistleblowing procedure for employees and voluntary staff.

(d) Staff grievances and disciplinary procedures - These matters will invoke the school's internal grievance procedures. Complainants will not be informed of the outcome of any investigation.

(e) 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. They should be contacted direct.

(f) 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.

1.5 The Governing Body **expects that most concerns can be resolved informally** and

recognises that the majority of issues raised by complainants or pupils are **concerns rather than complaints.** The school will use its best endeavours to resolve any concerns that are made on this basis.

1.6 The school is committed to taking concerns seriously at the earliest stage, in the hope of keeping the number of formal complaints to a minimum and without the need for formal procedures. It is recognised however that, depending on the circumstances and the nature of the complaint, complainants or pupils may, in appropriate circumstances, wish to or may be asked to follow the formal stages of this policy from the outset.

1.7 If the informal procedures fail to resolve the issue, a formal complaint about any matter (except for those listed in (a) to (e) above), may be made to the Headteacher or other relevant party in the first instance. See Stage 3 below for who to address complaints to, dependent upon the subject of the complaint.

1.8 Every complaint will receive fair and proper consideration and a timely response but in order for the school to investigate a complaint, it needs to be made within 3 months of the incident/issue occurring. If a complaint is older than 3 months it will not normally be investigated, however in exceptional circumstances the school will take a decision on whether to accept or progress with the complaint.

1.9 The school will do all it can to resolve concerns or complaints and to ensure complainants are happy with the education their child receives at the school. Complainants' and pupils can be assured that all complaints and expressions of concern, whether raised informally or formally, will be treated seriously and will be dealt with in a sensitive, impartial and confidential manner. The school will seek to resolve complaints in an open and transparent manner and acknowledge that complaints can foster opportunities for development and improvement. It should also be noted that serial or malicious complaints may incur appropriate action by the school.

1.10 We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

1.11 Correspondence, statements and records relating to complaints will remain confidential except where disclosure is required by law, during an inspection, or under another applicable legal or regulatory obligation.

1.12 It is reasonable and legal for personal information relating to the child/parent to be shared with the One Education Advisor supporting the school in responding to a parental complaint. Normal protocols in ensuring the security of that information should be observed.

1.13 The purpose of this policy is to support respectful, proportionate and constructive resolution. Expectations relating to respectful communication, campaign complaints, social media and messaging groups, and the use of artificial intelligence are set out in Sections 10, 12, 13 and 14 of this policy.

2. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FEEDBACK, CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS

2.1 **Feedback** may be defined as a comment, suggestion, reflection or view shared with the school to help inform improvement, communication or decision-making.

2.2 A **concern** may be defined as an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important, for which reassurance or clarification is sought.

2.3 A **complaint** may be defined as ‘an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action’.

2.4 It is in everyone’s interest that concerns and complaints are addressed at the earliest possible stage. In most cases, concerns can be resolved quickly and effectively through informal discussion with the member of staff closest to the issue. **The school encourages parents and carers to raise concerns in this way in the first instance.**

2.5 The school takes all concerns seriously and will make every reasonable effort to resolve matters promptly, fairly, and in line with our values of high standards, respect, and positive relationships.

2.6 Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need for a formal investigation under this policy. Where a concern cannot be resolved informally, or where the matter is more serious in nature, it may be progressed to the appropriate next stage of this policy.

2.7 The school will not normally accept a matter as a formal complaint unless it has first been considered through the appropriate concern stages, unless the nature of the matter is sufficiently serious to warrant immediate formal investigation.

3. THE STAGED APPROACH

3.1 The school’s complaints process is deliberately staged to support early, proportionate and constructive resolution wherever possible. The school recognises that not every issue raised requires a formal investigation. Some matters are feedback, some are concerns requiring reassurance or clarification, and some require senior leader review before they become formal complaints.

3.2 New Moston Primary School operates a staged approach which includes informal concerns, formal concerns and formal complaints. This allows the school to respond at the most appropriate level, avoid unnecessary escalation, and ensure that formal complaints are reserved for matters that have not been resolved through earlier stages or are sufficiently serious to require formal investigation.

Stage	Name	Managed by	Purpose
Pre-stage	Feedback	Relevant staff / leaders	Comments, suggestions, views or reflections
Stage 1	Informal Concern	Class teacher / office / pastoral / middle leaders	Early resolution, clarification, reassurance
Stage 2	Formal Concern	Senior Leadership Team	Senior review before full complaint
Stage 3	Formal Complaint	Headteacher/Chair of Governors/ Clerk depending on nature of complaint.	Formal investigation and written outcome
Stage 4	Complaints Appeal Panel	Governor panel / independent member	Final school-based review

3.5 For the purposes of this policy, “working days” means school working days during term time and does not include weekends, bank holidays, school holidays or INSET days.

4. PRE-STAGE: FEEDBACK

4.1 New Moston Primary School welcomes feedback from parents, carers, pupils, staff and members of the wider school community. Feedback helps the school to reflect, improve communication, strengthen practice and make informed decisions.

4.2 Feedback may be positive, constructive or critical. It may include comments, suggestions, reflections or views about school life, communication, events, routines, provision, facilities or decisions made by the school.

4.3 Feedback does not usually require a formal response or investigation. Where appropriate, feedback will be considered by the relevant member of staff, middle leader or senior leader.

4.4 Feedback may be provided verbally, by email, through school communication systems, through surveys, or through other methods agreed by the school.

4.5 Where feedback identifies a specific issue affecting a child, family or aspect of school provision, the school may respond to clarify the matter, provide reassurance, explain a decision, or identify any reasonable next steps.

4.6 The school will determine whether feedback should remain as feedback or be treated as a concern. This decision will be based on the nature of the information shared, the outcome being sought, whether a specific issue requires resolution, and whether further action is required.

4.7 Feedback will not automatically be treated as a concern or complaint unless the person raising it clearly identifies a specific issue that requires a response, resolution or further consideration under this policy.

4.8 Where feedback is shared in a way that is disrespectful, unreasonable, abusive, threatening, defamatory, discriminatory or targeted at individual members of staff, the school may manage the matter under the relevant sections of this policy relating to respectful communication, unreasonable conduct or serial/persistent complaints.

4.9 Where several pieces of feedback are received about the same issue, the school may consider them collectively and provide a general response where appropriate. This may include communication through a letter, newsletter, website update, meeting or other suitable method.

4.10 If, after receiving feedback, the person raising the matter remains worried or dissatisfied and is seeking clarification, reassurance or action, the matter may be considered under Stage 1: Informal Concerns.

5. STAGE 1: INFORMAL CONCERNS

5.1 It is expected that most concerns can be raised and resolved informally, without the need to progress to the formal stages of this policy. Concerns may be raised verbally, in writing, by telephone, or through the school's usual communication systems.

5.2 Unless otherwise stated, written communication expressing worry or doubt will normally be treated as a concern rather than a formal complaint in the first instance.

5.3 In most instances, concerns relating to a pupil should be directed to the class teacher, who has responsibility for the day-to-day safety, care and education of the children in their class.

5.4 Where a concern cannot be resolved at this level, or where further support is required, it may be referred to the relevant middle leader. Middle leaders support the resolution of

concerns through clarification, guidance and oversight within their phase or area of responsibility. Up-to-date information about school leadership personnel is available on the school website.

5.5 Where appropriate, concerns may also be raised with a member of the office team, pastoral team, attendance team or another appropriate member of staff, particularly where the matter relates to communication, welfare, attendance, administration or general school organisation.

5.6 School staff will acknowledge and respond to concerns in a timely and proportionate manner. This may include discussion with the parent or carer, checking relevant information, providing reassurance, explaining school decisions, or agreeing appropriate next steps. This process is intended to support early resolution and is not considered a formal investigation under this policy.

5.7 The school will use reasonable endeavours to resolve informal concerns within **10 working days** of the matter being raised. Where this is not possible, including where concerns are raised during or close to school holidays, the school will respond as soon as reasonably practicable and keep the parent or carer informed.

5.8 Informal concerns may be recorded by the school where appropriate, particularly where the concern relates to pupil welfare, safeguarding, attendance, behaviour, repeated issues, communication difficulties, or where further monitoring may be required.

5.9 Where a concern remains unresolved, where the parent or carer remains dissatisfied, or where the school considers that senior leader oversight is required, the matter may be progressed to Stage 2: Formal Concern.

6. STAGE 2: FORMAL CONCERNS

6.1 Where a concern has not been resolved at Stage 1, or where the matter is of a more serious nature, it may be progressed as a formal concern.

6.2 Formal concerns will be managed by a senior leader. At New Moston Primary School, this will typically be the Deputy Headteacher, Associate Deputy Headteacher, Assistant Headteacher for SEND and Inclusion, or the School Business Manager where the concern relates to operational, administrative or organisational matters. The school will determine the most appropriate member of staff to manage the concern based on its nature.

6.3 A formal concern may be raised in person, by telephone, or in writing. Where appropriate, the school may summarise the concern in writing to ensure clarity and accuracy about the issues being considered.

6.4 At this stage, the senior leader will review the concern. This may include considering the actions taken at Stage 1, reviewing relevant communication or records, speaking with relevant staff, and meeting with the parent or carer where appropriate.

6.5 The purpose of this stage is to provide a clear and fair review of the concern, ensure that appropriate actions have been taken, and determine whether any further action is required. This process remains proportionate and is not considered a formal investigation under the formal complaints stage of this policy.

6.6 A written response will normally be provided within 10 working days. Where additional time is required due to the complexity of the concern, the school will keep the complainant informed.

6.7 The response will set out the findings of the review, any actions taken or to be taken, and the rationale for decisions made where appropriate.

6.8 Where the concern is resolved at this stage, no further action will be taken.

6.9 If the concern remains unresolved, or the complainant indicates dissatisfaction with the outcome, the matter may be escalated to Stage 3: Formal Complaint. Formal complaints must be submitted in writing in accordance with this policy.

6.10 The school will not normally progress a matter to Stage 3 unless it has first been considered at Stage 2, unless the nature of the concern is sufficiently serious to warrant immediate escalation.

7. STAGE 3: FORMAL COMPLAINTS

7.1 Where a concern has not been resolved through Stage 1 or Stage 2, or where the matter is sufficiently serious, the complainant may submit a formal complaint.

7.2 Formal complaints must be submitted in writing. This may be by letter, email, or by completing the school's complaint form. Where a complainant requires support to put their complaint in writing, the school will make reasonable adjustments to support this.

7.3 A formal complaint should clearly set out the nature of the complaint, the events, actions or decisions being complained about, who has been involved, what steps have already been taken to try to resolve the matter, and what outcome or resolution the complainant is seeking.

7.4 Formal complaints about school staff, other than the Headteacher, should normally be submitted to the Headteacher.

7.5 Formal complaints about the Headteacher should be submitted to the Chair of Governors via the school office and marked Private and Confidential.

7.6 Formal complaints about the Chair of Governors, an individual governor, the Governing Body, or complaints involving both the Chair and Vice Chair, should be submitted to the Clerk to the Governing Body via the school office and marked Private and Confidential.

7.7 The school will acknowledge receipt of a formal complaint within 5 working days.

7.8 The Headteacher, Chair of Governors, Clerk to the Governing Body, or another appropriate person appointed by the school or Governing Body, will arrange for the complaint to be investigated. The investigator will be determined by the nature of the complaint and the person or people involved.

7.9 The investigation may include reviewing relevant documents and records, speaking to relevant members of staff, meeting with or speaking to the complainant, considering whether school policies and procedures have been followed, and identifying whether any further action is required.

7.10 The investigation will be conducted fairly, proportionately and impartially. The school will seek to establish what happened, whether appropriate action was taken, and whether any learning or improvement is required.

7.11 In most cases, the investigator and/or complaints co-ordinator will meet or speak with the complainant within 10 working days of the formal complaint being received.

7.12 Where a formal complaint is received during a school holiday, or within two working days of its commencement, the school will use reasonable endeavours to meet or speak with the complainant within ten working days of the start of the following term.

7.13 The complainant will normally be informed of the decision in writing no later than 10 working days after the investigator and/or complaints co-ordinator has met or spoken with them. Where additional time is required, the school will inform the complainant of the revised timescale.

7.14 The written response will set out the complaint or complaints considered, the process followed, the findings reached, whether the complaint is upheld, partially upheld or not upheld, any actions the school intends to take where appropriate, and information about how to escalate the complaint if the complainant remains dissatisfied.

7.15 The school will not normally reinvestigate matters that have already been considered unless new and relevant information is provided.

7.16 If the complainant remains dissatisfied following the formal complaint response, they should request that the matter is considered by a Complaints Appeal Panel within 10 working days of receiving the written response.

8. STAGE 4: COMPLAINTS APPEAL PANEL

8.1 If it has not been possible to resolve the matter at Stage 3, the complainant may request that the complaint is considered by a Complaints Appeal Panel.

8.2 The complainant should submit their request in writing within 10 working days of receiving the Stage 3 written response. The request should set out why the complainant remains dissatisfied, which aspects of the Stage 3 response they wish to appeal, and what outcome or resolution they are seeking.

8.3 Within 5 working days of receiving the written request, the Clerk to the Complaints Appeal Panel will acknowledge the request in writing and explain the next steps in the process.

8.4 Where the request is received during school holidays, or within 2 working days of their commencement, the Clerk will acknowledge the request within 5 working days of the start of the next school term.

8.5 The Clerk will seek to convene a Complaints Appeal Panel hearing as soon as reasonably practicable, normally no later than 20 working days after receipt of the written appeal request. Where this is not reasonably practicable, the complainant will be informed of the likely timescale.

8.6 The Complaints Appeal Panel will normally consist of three people. The panel will include members who have not previously been involved in the complaint, and one person who is independent of the management and running of the school.

8.7 The following may attend the Complaints Appeal Panel hearing, submit written representations and address the panel:

- the complainant, who may be accompanied for support;
- the investigator or decision-maker from Stage 3, where appropriate;
- the Headteacher or Chair of Governors, where appropriate;
- any other person whom the panel considers to have a reasonable and relevant contribution to make.

8.8 The Complaints Appeal Panel may request further information in advance of the hearing where this is necessary to consider the appeal fairly. This may include relevant

documents, a chronology of key events, or a written submission setting out the appeal in more detail.

8.9 All written evidence must be sent to the Clerk no later than 10 working days before the hearing. The Clerk will circulate the evidence to relevant parties no later than 5 working days before the hearing.

8.10 The hearing will be held in private and conducted in a reasonably informal manner so that all parties are able to present their case effectively. The Panel Chair will ensure that all parties are treated with respect and courtesy, that the issues are addressed, and that the meeting does not become unnecessarily adversarial.

8.11 The purpose of the panel is to review whether the complaint has been handled fairly and appropriately, consider the evidence presented, reach findings, and determine whether any further action or recommendations are required.

8.12 The panel may decide to uphold, partially uphold, or not uphold the complaint. The panel may also make recommendations to the school where appropriate.

8.13 The Complaints Appeal Panel will seek to reach a decision as soon as possible. The Clerk will send the panel's findings and any recommendations in writing to the complainant, the school, the Governing Body and, where relevant, the person complained about, normally within 10 working days of the hearing.

8.14 The written outcome will set out the reasons for the decision and any recommendations made by the panel.

8.15 The decision of the Complaints Appeal Panel is the final school-based stage of the complaints process.

8.16 The school will keep a written record of the appeal, the panel's decision and any recommendations made. Records will be retained in line with the school's retention policy.

9. WITHDRAWAL OF A COMPLAINT

9.1 A complainant may withdraw their complaint at any stage of the complaints process.

9.2 Where a complainant wishes to withdraw their complaint, the school will ask them to confirm this in writing.

9.3 Where written confirmation is not possible, the school may accept confirmation in person or by telephone. A written record will be made by the school to confirm that the complaint has been withdrawn and the date on which this took place.

9.4 Once a complaint has been withdrawn, the school will not normally take any further action under this policy, unless the matter raises safeguarding, welfare, legal, regulatory or other serious concerns that the school is required to consider or act upon.

9.5 The school may retain records relating to the withdrawn complaint in line with the school's record retention procedures.

10. HANDLING CAMPAIGN COMPLAINTS

10.1 The school may receive a number of complaints that are substantially the same, relate to the same issue, or appear to form part of a coordinated campaign.

10.2 Campaign complaints may include complaints that are:

- based on the same subject or wording;
- submitted using copied, template-based or mass-generated correspondence;
- encouraged through social media, messaging groups or other public forums;
- submitted by individuals who are not directly connected with the school;
- intended to apply collective pressure rather than seek individual resolution.

10.3 Where campaign complaints are received, the school will determine the most appropriate and proportionate way to respond. This may include providing a single response, using a template response, arranging a group meeting, communicating with an agreed representative, or publishing a general response through the school's usual communication channels.

10.4 The school will not normally investigate each campaign complaint separately where the substance of the complaint is the same and the issues can be addressed through a single response.

10.5 Where an individual complainant raises specific personal circumstances or information that is materially different from the wider campaign complaint, the school may consider that matter separately under the appropriate stage of this policy.

10.6 Campaign complaints must still be raised respectfully and in line with this policy. The school may take appropriate action where a campaign involves abusive, threatening, defamatory, discriminatory, harassing or unreasonable conduct towards the school, staff, governors, pupils or families.

10.7 Where complainants remain dissatisfied with the school's response to a campaign complaint, they may follow the next steps set out in this policy once the school's complaints process has been completed.

11. SERIAL, PERSISTENT, VEXATIOUS OR UNREASONABLE COMPLAINTS

11.1 The school is committed to dealing with complaints fairly, thoroughly and respectfully. Complainants will not be treated as unreasonable simply because they have raised a complaint, challenged a decision, or remain dissatisfied with an outcome.

11.2 However, there may be occasions where the school considers the nature, frequency, tone or manner of communication to be unreasonable, persistent, vexatious or disproportionate.

11.3 A complaint may be considered serial or persistent where the same issue is repeatedly raised after it has already been considered under the appropriate stages of this policy, and where the school has provided a clear response or decision.

11.4 A complaint may be considered vexatious or unreasonable where it includes one or more of the following features:

- repeated complaints about the same issue without new or relevant information;
- excessive, lengthy or frequent correspondence which places unreasonable demand on school time;
- refusal to accept reasonable explanations, decisions or outcomes;

- changing the substance of a complaint while the matter is being considered;
- seeking unrealistic or disproportionate outcomes;
- making complaints in a way that appears intended to cause disruption, pressure or annoyance;
- using abusive, threatening, discriminatory, defamatory or harassing language;
- targeting individual members of staff, governors, pupils or families;
- pursuing a complaint in a way that is unnecessarily adversarial or disproportionate.

11.5 The school will not normally mark a complaint as serial, persistent, vexatious or unreasonable before the complainant has had the opportunity to complete the school's complaints procedure.

11.6 Where the school considers that correspondence has become serial, persistent, vexatious or unreasonable, the school may take proportionate action. This may include:

- limiting the number or frequency of responses;
- identifying a single point of contact;
- requesting that communication is made in writing only;
- declining to respond to repeated points that have already been answered;
- setting clear expectations for future communication;
- confirming that the matter is closed under the school's complaints procedure.

11.7 Any decision to apply formal communication restrictions will normally be made by the Headteacher or Chair of Governors, as appropriate. The complainant will be informed in writing of the reasons, the arrangements being applied, the duration or review date, and how genuinely new concerns may be raised.

11.8 The school will not refuse to accept new complaints from a complainant. However, the school may decline to consider a new complaint where it is substantially the same as a matter already considered, unless new and relevant information is provided.

11.9 Under no circumstances will a complaint be treated as serial, persistent, vexatious or unreasonable simply because a complainant has exercised their right to refer a matter to their MP or to the Department for Education.

11.10 Where communication becomes abusive, threatening, harassing, discriminatory or unsafe, the school may take further appropriate action in line with relevant school policies, legal duties and safeguarding responsibilities.

12. EXPECTATIONS FOR RESPECTFUL COMMUNICATION

12.1 New Moston Primary School is committed to resolving concerns and complaints in a fair, respectful and constructive manner. The school expects all parties involved in the complaints process to communicate with courtesy, honesty and respect.

12.2 The purpose of this policy is to support resolution, not conflict. Concerns and complaints are best addressed through direct communication with the school, clear explanation, careful listening and a shared focus on the best interests of children.

12.3 Complainants are expected to:

- raise concerns through the appropriate school channels;
- explain the issue clearly and accurately;

- respond reasonably to requests for information or clarification;
- engage constructively with meetings, discussions and agreed next steps;
- treat staff, governors, pupils and families with respect;
- be clear about the outcome or resolution they are seeking.

12.4 The school will not accept communication that is abusive, threatening, discriminatory, defamatory, harassing, deliberately misleading or personally targeted at individual members of staff, governors, pupils or families.

12.5 The school recognises that complainants may feel upset, frustrated or strongly about an issue. However, this does not remove the expectation that communication remains respectful, proportionate and appropriate.

12.6 Complainants should not seek to apply pressure to the school by encouraging others to contact staff, governors or the school about the same issue, unless the matter is being raised as a legitimate campaign complaint in line with this policy.

12.7 Where several people share similar concerns, the school may decide to manage communication through an agreed representative, a single point of contact, a group meeting, or a shared written response. This will be determined by the school based on the nature of the issue and the most proportionate way to respond.

12.8 Where communication becomes unreasonable, excessive, aggressive, targeted or disproportionate, the school may set clear boundaries for future contact. This may include identifying a single point of contact, limiting the frequency or method of communication, requesting that communication is made in writing, or declining to respond to repeated points that have already been addressed.

12.9 These expectations apply to all forms of communication, including face-to-face conversations, telephone calls, letters, emails, online forms, social media, messaging groups and any other written or verbal communication.

12.10 The school will continue to consider legitimate concerns and complaints fairly. However, it reserves the right to take appropriate action where communication or conduct falls below the standards expected of members of the school community.

13. SOCIAL MEDIA, MESSAGING GROUPS & PUBLIC COMMUNICATION

13.1 New Moston Primary School recognises that parents, carers and members of the wider community may use social media, messaging groups and online platforms to communicate, share views and seek support.

13.2 However, concerns and complaints should be raised directly with the school through the appropriate channels set out in this policy. The school will not normally treat social media posts, online comments, group messages or public discussions as formal complaints.

13.3 The school's approach reflects wider guidance, including Parentkind's Parent Guide to School Complaints (https://www.parentkind.org.uk/assets/parents-resources/Parent-Guide-to-School-Complaints.pdf), which encourages concerns to be raised clearly, calmly and through the appropriate school channels, and notes that sharing complaints on social media can be harmful and does not lead to quicker resolution.

13.4 Parents and carers should not use social media, messaging groups or public forums to:

- target individual members of staff, governors, pupils or families;

- make personal, abusive, threatening, discriminatory, defamatory or harassing comments;
- publish allegations before the school has had the opportunity to consider or respond to them;
- encourage others to contact the school in order to apply pressure;
- organise collective action against individual members of staff;
- share confidential, sensitive or identifiable information about pupils, families, staff or school matters.

13.5 Where several parents or carers share a similar concern, the school may manage this through an agreed representative, a group meeting, a single written response, or communication through the school's usual channels. This will be determined by the school based on the nature of the issue and the most proportionate way to respond.

13.6 Where online or public communication becomes unreasonable, targeted, defamatory, abusive, harassing or harmful to the school community, the school may take appropriate action. The school may set proportionate communication boundaries or manage unacceptable conduct separately from the substance of the complaint. Wherever reasonably possible, legitimate complaint issues will continue to be considered through the appropriate procedure.

13.7 The school remains committed to considering legitimate concerns and complaints fairly. However, public pressure, online discussion, repeated group messaging or social media activity will not determine the outcome of a complaint. Complaints will be considered on the evidence available, the facts established and the school's professional judgement.

14. THE USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN COMPLAINTS

14.1 New Moston Primary School recognises that artificial intelligence tools are increasingly available and may be used by parents, carers or members of the public to support written communication. The school does not prohibit the use of artificial intelligence. However, the school's clear preference is for concerns and complaints to be raised in a human-centred, direct and proportionate way.

14.2 The school believes that most concerns are best resolved through honest conversation, clear explanation, careful listening and respectful dialogue between the people directly involved. Communication should be clear, specific and in the complainant's own words wherever possible.

14.3 Artificial intelligence may be used to help a complainant organise their thoughts, check spelling, improve clarity or structure information. However, it should not replace genuine personal engagement with the school or create a barrier to simple, constructive resolution.

14.4 Artificial intelligence should not be used to create unnecessary complexity, excessive formality, exaggerated language, legalistic wording, or correspondence that does not accurately reflect the complainant's own experience, understanding or desired outcome.

14.5 The school may ask a complainant to restate their concern in plain language where correspondence appears to be overly complex, generic, copied, template-based, mass-produced, AI-generated or difficult to understand. This may include asking the complainant to clarify:

- what has happened;

- who was involved;
- when the issue occurred;
- what steps have already been taken;
- how the issue has affected the child or family;
- what outcome or resolution is being sought.

14.6 The school may pause progression of a complaint where the information provided is unclear, excessively lengthy, generic, copied, template-based, mass-produced or does not allow the school to identify the specific concern being raised. In these circumstances, the complainant will be asked to provide a clear and concise summary before the matter is progressed.

14.7 The school may treat the use of artificial intelligence, copied correspondence, online templates or mass-generated complaints as unreasonable where these are used to:

- misrepresent events;
- make allegations without reasonable basis;
- exaggerate or overstate concerns;
- duplicate matters already being considered;
- pursue complaints on behalf of others without proper authority;
- overwhelm school processes;
- create unnecessary workload through excessive or repetitive correspondence;
- escalate matters in an unreasonable, vexatious or unnecessarily adversarial manner.

14.8 The complainant remains fully responsible for all content submitted to the school, including where artificial intelligence has been used. Complaints must be accurate to the best of the complainant's knowledge and must not include false, misleading, abusive, threatening, discriminatory, defamatory or harassing content.

14.9 The use of artificial intelligence does not alter the school's complaints process, timescales or decision-making. Complaints will be considered on the substance of the concern, the evidence available, the facts established and the school's professional judgement. The school will not treat artificially generated volume, tone, length or formality as adding weight to a complaint.

14.10 Where the school believes that the use of artificial intelligence has contributed to communication becoming unreasonable, disproportionate, unnecessarily formal, adversarial or difficult to manage, the school may manage the matter under the sections of this policy relating to respectful communication, campaign complaints, social media, serial complaints or unreasonable conduct.

15. RECORD KEEPING AND CONFIDENTIALITY

15.1 The school will keep a written record of formal concerns and formal complaints, including the stage at which they were resolved and any actions taken by the school.

15.2 Records may include complaint forms, written correspondence, notes of meetings or telephone calls, investigation records, panel papers, decisions, recommendations and any agreed actions.

15.3 Records will be kept securely and retained in line with the school's record retention procedures.

15.4 Complaints will be handled confidentially and shared only with those who need to know in order to consider, investigate, respond to, or advise on the complaint.

15.5 Correspondence, statements and records relating to complaints will remain confidential except where disclosure is required by law, as part of an inspection, by relevant regulations, or where another legal obligation applies.

15.6 It may be necessary and appropriate for personal information relating to a child, parent or carer to be shared with relevant advisers supporting the school in responding to a complaint. Where this happens, normal data protection and information security procedures will be followed.

15.7 The school will keep a record of the outcome of formal complaints, including whether the complaint was upheld, partially upheld or not upheld, and whether the complaint progressed to the final school-based stage.

15.8 Information relating to staff conduct, disciplinary matters, safeguarding matters or other confidential internal processes will not normally be shared with complainants. Where appropriate, complainants may be informed that the matter has been considered and that appropriate action has been taken, but details of any confidential staff or safeguarding processes will remain private.

15.9 Complaint records may be reviewed by the Headteacher, senior leaders, governors or relevant advisers for the purpose of monitoring compliance with this policy, identifying patterns, improving practice and ensuring appropriate follow-up action.

16. NEXT STEPS BEYOND THE SCHOOL

16.1 The decision of the Complaints Appeal Panel is the final stage of the school's complaints procedure.

16.2 If the complainant believes that the school has not handled the complaint in accordance with its published procedure, has failed to carry out a duty under education law, or has acted unreasonably in the exercise of its duties, they may refer the matter to the Department for Education.

16.3 The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of the complaint or overturn the school's decision. It will consider whether the school followed the correct procedure and complied with relevant education legislation and statutory duties.

16.4 A complaint should normally be referred to the Department for Education only after all stages of the school's complaints procedure have been completed.

16.5 Information about referring a complaint to the Department for Education is available through the government's online school complaints service (https://www.gov.uk/complain-to-dfe)

16.6 Once the school's complaints procedure has been completed, the Chair of Governors may confirm that the matter is closed. The school will not normally enter into further correspondence about the same issue unless significant new and relevant information is provided.

17. MONITORING & LEARNING FROM COMPLAINTS

17.1 The school will maintain a record of formal concerns, formal complaints, outcomes, actions taken and whether matters progressed to the Complaints Appeal Panel.

17.2 The Headteacher will review complaint records periodically to identify recurring issues, emerging themes, procedural weaknesses or opportunities for improvement.

17.3 Where a complaint identifies that practice, communication, systems or procedures could be improved, the school will consider appropriate action. This may include staff guidance, training, policy review, changes to procedures or further monitoring.

17.4 The Governing Body will receive an anonymised overview of formal complaints at least annually. This will include the number and nature of complaints, the stages at which they were resolved, any recurring themes and any actions taken.

17.5 Governors will not normally receive personal or identifying information unless this is necessary for them to carry out a specific responsibility under this policy.

17.6 Monitoring information will be used to check that complaints are handled fairly, consistently and within the timescales set out in this policy.

17.7 The purpose of monitoring is not to attribute blame, but to support accountability, organisational learning and continuous improvement.

17.8 The school will review this policy in line with the review cycle shown on the control sheet, or earlier where monitoring, legislation, guidance or experience indicates that changes are required.

18. EQUALITY AND REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS

18.1 The school is committed to ensuring that the complaints procedure is fair, accessible and applied without discrimination.

18.2 The school will have due regard to its duties under the Equality Act 2010 and will consider reasonable adjustments where a complainant would otherwise be placed at a substantial disadvantage.

18.3 Reasonable adjustments may include:

- support to put a concern or complaint in writing;
- providing information in an accessible format;
- interpretation or communication support;
- allowing additional time where appropriate;
- adjusting the arrangements or location of a meeting;
- permitting an appropriate person to accompany or support the complainant.

18.4 Requests for reasonable adjustments should be raised with the school as early as possible. The school will consider each request according to the complainant's circumstances and the practical requirements of the complaints process.

18.5 Reasonable adjustments support access to the procedure but do not alter the substance of the complaint, the evidence considered, or the standards of respectful communication expected under this policy.

18.6 The school will also ensure that the welfare, communication needs and best interests of any child involved in the complaints process are appropriately considered.

19. RELATED POLICIES AND GUIDANCE

19.1 This policy should be read alongside other relevant school policies and statutory guidance, including:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy;
- Staff Code of Conduct;
- Whistleblowing Policy;
- Behaviour Policy;
- SEND Policy and Information Report;
- Equality Policy;
- Data Protection and Records Retention Policies;

- Admissions and Exclusions guidance, where relevant;
- Complaints procedures operated by external providers using the school site.

19.2 This policy has been informed by the One Education Complaints Policy and Procedure and by wider guidance for schools and parents, including Parentkind's *Parent Guide to School Complaints (*https://www.parentkind.org.uk/assets/parents-resources/Parent-Guide-to-School-Complaints.pdf).

19.3 Where a concern or complaint falls outside the scope of this policy, the school will signpost the complainant to the most appropriate policy, procedure, organisation or statutory route.

19.4 In the event of any conflict between this policy and statutory requirements, current legislation and statutory guidance will take precedence.

19.5 This policy has also been developed with reference to the Department for Education's guidance on complaints procedures for maintained schools and maintained nursery schools. This guidance is available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-complaints-procedures

Appendix A – Policy Links to Values

Policy Value Links	
Policy Name:	**Feedback, Concerns and Complaints Policy 2026**

Our School Vision
We focus on growth as the driving force behind everything we do. Every decision is centred entirely on what's best for our children. With unwavering high standards, a positive attitude, and a deep sense of pride, we are committed to achieving the best possible outcomes for each and every child. We teach them to excel and thrive; prepare them for a lifetime of continuous growth; and nurture them to be successful, confident citizens within our local community and beyond. **Focused on Growth, Rooted in Pride.**

Values	Links to this policy
GROWTH	The policy supports growth by treating feedback, concerns and complaints as opportunities to reflect, learn and improve. It enables the school to identify patterns, strengthen practice and make changes that support better outcomes for children and families.
STANDARDS	The policy sets clear standards for how feedback, concerns and complaints will be raised, considered, investigated and resolved. It promotes fair, consistent, timely and proportionate decision-making at every stage of the process.
ATTITUDE	The policy promotes a constructive and respectful attitude by encouraging honest dialogue, careful listening and cooperation. All parties are expected to communicate calmly, accurately and respectfully, with a shared focus on finding an appropriate resolution.
PRIDE	The policy supports pride in the school community by promoting transparency, accountability and positive relationships. Concerns are handled professionally and with integrity, helping to maintain trust and confidence between the school, children and families.

Appendix B – Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Child/Pupil	The child's welfare and best interests will remain central throughout the complaints process. Children should be listened to where appropriate and their views given due consideration. They should not be exposed to adult disputes, unnecessary detail, sensitive information, or conversations that may cause distress or place them in conflict with staff, parents or carers. Where a child is involved in a meeting or investigation, this will be handled sensitively and only where it is appropriate and in their best interests.
Complainant	To raise the matter as early as possible; explain the concern or complaint clearly and accurately; identify the outcome sought; provide relevant information; respond reasonably to requests; cooperate with the process; and treat all parties with respect.
Member of staff receiving feedback or an informal concern	To listen carefully, clarify the issue, respond proportionately, record the matter where appropriate, seek support where needed, and refer the concern to the appropriate middle or senior leader if it cannot be resolved.
Middle Leader	To support the resolution of informal concerns within their phase or area of responsibility; review relevant information; provide clarification and guidance; and determine whether senior leader oversight is required.
Senior Leader managing a formal concern	To review the concern fairly and proportionately; consider actions already taken; review relevant records; speak with those involved where appropriate; provide a written response; and determine whether any further action is required.
Headteacher	To provide overall oversight of the complaints process; ensure the policy is applied fairly and consistently; determine the appropriate person to manage or investigate complaints; investigate or arrange the investigation of formal complaints about staff; ensure appropriate records are maintained; keep the Governing Body informed of themes and patterns; and ensure that any learning arising from complaints informs school improvement. Where the complaint is about the Headteacher, responsibility will pass to the Chair of Governors.
Chair of Governors	To arrange the consideration or investigation of complaints about the Headteacher; ensure an appropriate and impartial process is followed; liaise with the Clerk and relevant advisers; and avoid prior involvement where this could compromise participation in the later appeal process.
Complaints Co-ordinator	To oversee the complaints process; ensure the complainant is kept informed; appoint an appropriate investigator where required; support compliance with timescales and procedures; maintain records; and liaise with staff, governors, advisers and the Clerk.
Investigator	To consider the complaint openly, fairly and impartially; clarify the issues and desired outcome; review relevant records and evidence; speak with relevant parties; establish the facts as far as reasonably practicable; identify appropriate actions; and provide a clear written outcome.

Clerk to the Complaints Appeal Panel	To act as the main point of contact for the appeal; arrange the date, time and venue; ensure the process is accessible; receive and circulate written evidence; provide procedural advice; record the proceedings; and communicate the panel's decision.
Chair of the Complaints Appeal Panel	To explain the purpose and remit of the panel; ensure the hearing is fair, respectful and non-adversarial; give all parties an opportunity to present their case; ensure the relevant issues are considered; support the panel in reaching clear findings; and liaise with the Clerk.
Complaints Appeal Panel Members	To act independently and impartially; declare any prior involvement or conflict of interest; consider the evidence carefully; ask appropriate questions; reach findings based on the information presented; and make recommendations where appropriate.
Governing Body	To ensure that the school has an effective complaints procedure; monitor formal complaints and outcomes; review themes and patterns; hold leaders to account for compliance; and ensure that learning from complaints informs school improvement.

APPENDIX C – STAGE 3: FORMAL COMPLAINT FORM

YOUR NAME	
RELATIONSHIP WITH SCHOOL (e.g. Parent, local resident)	
PUPIL'S NAME	
YOUR ADDRESS	
TEL NUMBER:	
EMAIL ADDRESS	

Please give concise details of your complaint (including dates, names of those involved, witnesses, etc) to allow the matter to be fully investigated. Please use additional pages if necessary.

What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint? (ie. who have you spoken with or written to and what was the outcome?)

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.

Signed: _____ **Date: _____**

School Use Only			
Date Form Received	**Received By:**	**Date Acknowledgement was sent:**	**Acknowledgement sent by:**
Outcome and Action Taken			
Complaint Referred to:		**Date:**	

COMPLAINTS FLOWCHART

Is the matter within the scope of this policy?

Signpost to the appropriate procedure (e.g. admissions, suspensions/permanent exclusions, safeguarding, whistleblowing, staff grievance, external provider complaint)

PRE STAGE: FEEDBACK
Comments, suggestions, reflections or views shared with the school.
Managed by: Relevant staff / leaders
Outcome:

Feedback considered and responded to where appropriate; or

Progressed to Stage 1 if clarification, reassurance or action is sought.

STAGE 1: INFORMAL CONCERNS
Concern raised with class teacher / office team / pastoral team / relevant staff / middle leader.
Outcome:

Concern resolved informally; or

Progressed to Stage 2 if unresolved, more serious, or senior leader oversight is required.

Timescale:
School will use reasonable endeavours to resolve within 10 working days.

STAGE 2: FORMAL CONCERNS
Concern reviewed by a senior leader.
Managed by:
Deputy Headteacher, Associate Deputy Headteacher, Assistant Headteacher for SEND and Inclusion or School Business Manager (where appropriate)
Outcome:

Concern resolved with written response; or

Progressed to Stage 3 if unresolved or the complainant remains dissatisfied.
Timescale:
Written response normally within 10 working days.

STAGE 3: FORMAL COMPLAINTS
Formal complaint submitted in writing.
Sent to:
Headteacher (complaints about staff)
Chair of Governors (complaints about the Headteacher)
Clerk to the Governing Body (complaints about the Chair / a governor / the governing body)

Process:
Complaint acknowledged Investigator appointed Complaint investigated Written outcome provided
Timescales:
Acknowledgement within 5 working days; Meeting / discussion with complainant normally within 10 working days; Written response normally within 10 working days after the meeting / discussion
Outcome:
Complaint upheld / partially upheld / not upheld
If dissatisfied, complainant may request Stage 4.

STAGE 4: COMPLAINTS APPEAL PANEL
Complainant requests appeal in writing.
Timescale:
Request must be made within 10 working days of the Stage 3 outcome
Panel: Three panel members, No prior involvement, One independent member

Process: Appeal hearing arranged Evidence considered Findings and recommendations issued in writing
Outcome:
Complaint upheld / partially upheld / not upheld
This is the final school-based stage.

NEXT STEPS BEYOND THE SCHOOL

If the complainant believes the school has not followed its published procedure, has failed to carry out a duty under education law, or has acted unreasonably, they may refer the matter to the Department for Education.