

DIRECTORS' REPORT SPRING TERM 2019	ITEM NO 13	FOR INFORMATION/ ACTION	ATTENTION OF: All governors
TITLE	School complaints - new DfE guidance		
SUMMARY	New Department for Education (DfE) guidance and model policies		
KEY ACTION POINTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review your school complaints procedures/policy in the light of the new guidance • Ensure your procedure/policy is published on the school website. 		
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The DfE have published new guidance and model policies for school complaints aimed at maintained schools <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-complaints-procedures>

Please note, academies and free schools must also have a written complaints procedure, which is available on request to parents. The DfE recommend that it is published online. Further information <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complain-about-an-academy/complain-about-an-academy>

In accordance with Section 29(1) of the Education Act 2002, all maintained schools and maintained nursery schools must have and publish procedures on the school website to deal with all complaints relating to their school and to any community facilities or services that the school provides, for which there are no separate (statutory) procedures.

The DfE have produced new guidance to share and encourage best practice and help schools avoid common pitfalls. They have also published a non-statutory model policy and an additional policy for managing serial and unreasonable complaints.

As the duty to establish procedures for dealing with complaints lies with governing boards, you must tailor the policy to your individual school. You should make sure that your complaints procedure:

- Is simple to understand and use
- Is impartial
- Is non-adversarial
- Enables a full and fair investigation
- Where necessary respects confidentiality
- Addresses all the points at issue and provides an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary
- Provides information to the school's senior management team so that services can be improved.

To make sure your complaints procedures are effective, we recommend that:

- Ask the complainant at the earliest stage what they think might resolve the issue - an acknowledgement that the school could have handled the situation better is not the same as an admission of unlawful or negligent action
- When responding to a complaint, advise the complainant of any escalation options at each stage of the procedure e.g. when communicating the outcome of stage one, include details of stage two
- Wherever possible, procedures state what you 'will' do rather than what you 'should' or 'may' do
- Try to avoid using ambiguous language in your complaints procedures, as not doing something the procedure states the school should or may do, can lead to further complaints.

We recommend that you review and revise as appropriate your school complaints policy/procedure considering the new guidance and model policies particularly to incorporate a serial complaints policy into your complaints procedure. If you choose to adopt the DfE or any other model policies, please make sure you tailor them to your school.