



Complaints & Resolutions Policy

October 2026

Introduction

Our Board of Trustees has adopted this procedure to deal with concerns or complaints from members of the school community or the general public.

Aims and Objectives

Our school aims to be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaint and to resolve it through open dialogue and mutual understanding.

Careful consideration will be given to all concerns and complaints and we will deal with them as swiftly as possible. We will provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed.

In all cases we will put the interests of the child above all other issues.

Our procedure is underpinned by the following framework of principles:

- To encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible.
- To be easily accessible and publicised.
- To be simple to use and understand.
- To be impartial.
- To be non-adversarial.
- To allow swift handling with established time limits for action and keeping people informed of progress.
- To ensure a full and fair investigation by an independent person where necessary.
- To respect people's desire for confidentiality, wherever possible. Some information sharing may be necessary to carry out a thorough investigation.
- To address all points of issue, providing an effective response and appropriate redress where necessary.
- To provide information to the school's senior management team so that services can be improved.

Areas not covered by this procedure

This procedure does not replace statutory procedures for matters such as school admission appeals, exclusion reviews or appeals, staff grievances and disciplinary matters. Complaints about the way the school has handled an issue relating to one of these areas may still be considered under this procedure where appropriate.

Where a matter is subject to a separate statutory process, the school will explain the appropriate route to the complainant. Complaints about special educational needs or disability provision will not automatically be excluded from this procedure; however, this procedure cannot replace any separate statutory appeal or tribunal rights.

Safeguarding concerns will be dealt with promptly under the school's safeguarding procedures and referred to the appropriate agency where necessary. A complaint involving a safeguarding concern may also be considered under this procedure where appropriate, but this must not delay action to protect a child.

Complaints about staff employment matters will be handled through the relevant internal procedures, as appropriate. The school will explain the process being followed where it is able to do so, while respecting staff confidentiality.

All other complaints will be handled by the school according to the arrangements set out below.

Stage 1 – Initial concerns

If you have any concerns about the school or the education we are providing, please discuss the matter with the class teacher, Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher at the earliest opportunity.

Complainants should not approach individual Trustees to raise concerns or complaints, even informally. Trustees do not normally investigate individual complaints themselves, and this could affect their ability to consider a complaint at Stage 3 of the procedure.

It is not appropriate to publicise concerns on social networking sites. Please speak or write to someone at the school at your earliest convenience so that the matter can be addressed directly.

The school considers all concerns seriously. Many problems can be resolved through discussion and a shared understanding of the issues. Staff want to know if there is a problem so they can help to resolve it.

Appointments to see the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher must be made through the school office.

Your concern will be taken seriously and you will be treated respectfully if you approach the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher. However, if you do not feel comfortable raising the issue with the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher, please contact the Chair of the Board of Trustees through the school office.

Stage 2 – Formal procedure

Most concerns are resolved at Stage 1. However, if you remain dissatisfied and wish to take the matter further, you may make a formal complaint.

Where the complaint relates to a pupil at the school, you will normally be asked to complete the complaint form (found under 'useful forms' on the school website). For other matters, the complaint may be submitted in a letter or email setting out the details of the complaint.

A formal complaint should normally be made in writing. If you need support to do this, or cannot reasonably make a complaint in writing because of a disability or other relevant circumstance, please contact the school. We will consider reasonable adjustments and alternative ways of recording your complaint. You will not be prevented from making a complaint solely because you cannot complete the form.

Time scales

Complaints should normally be raised within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents has occurred, within three months of the last incident. This helps ensure that evidence is available and recollections are reasonably clear.

The school will consider complaints received outside this timeframe where there are exceptional circumstances or where it is appropriate to do so. Any decision to decline a complaint because of delay will be made fairly, taking account of the circumstances and whether a proper investigation remains possible.

Anonymous complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Headteacher or Chair of Trustees, as appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants investigation, taking account of the seriousness of the issues raised and any information available.

Policy for dealing with complaints campaigns

The school is committed to giving careful consideration to all concerns raised and complaints received.

If the school receives a large volume of complaints all based on the same subject, or from complainants unconnected to the school, it may have become the focus of a complaints campaign. If the Headteacher and Chair of Trustees conclude that this is the case, a template response may be sent to complainants addressing the common issues raised.

The school will consider any individual information or circumstances that are relevant to a particular complaint and will not use a campaign response to prevent a complainant from accessing the published procedure.

Complaint form

The aim of the form is to ensure each party has a clear and common understanding of the complaint. It includes a section on what actions might resolve the problem. It can be used by anyone making a complaint about the operation of the school which is not covered by an alternative procedure.

We are happy to provide the assistance of someone unconnected with the complaint if you would like support in completing the form.

The form at Appendix One should be returned to the Headteacher, marked Private and Confidential, via the school office unless:

- The complaint is about the Headteacher. In this case, it should be returned to the Chair of the Board of Trustees at the school address, marked Private and Confidential – For Immediate Attention.
- The complaint is about the Chair of the Board of Trustees, an individual Trustee or the whole Trust Board. In this case, it should be addressed to the Clerk to the Trust Board at the school address, marked Private and Confidential – For Immediate Attention.

Where the complaint concerns more than one of these individuals, or there is a potential conflict of interest, the complaint will be referred to an appropriate person who is not implicated in the complaint.

You will receive an acknowledgement of receipt of your formal complaint within five school days.

Investigation

An investigation will be carried out into the complaint and the way it has been handled by the school. This will include a review of relevant documentation and information and seeking the views of relevant people where necessary.

The person undertaking the investigation will normally write to you with the outcome within 15 school days of receiving the complaint. Complaints received outside term time will normally be treated as received on the first school day after the holiday period.

If it is not possible to meet the published timescale, the school will explain the reason for the delay, provide an updated timescale and keep the complainant informed of progress.

If, at any time, it becomes apparent that the complaint is a disciplinary or capability issue, the matter will be dealt with under the appropriate procedure rather than the complaints procedure. You will be notified that this is the case, where appropriate. However, you are not entitled to confidential information about the procedure followed or its outcome in relation to an individual member of staff.

If, following the outcome of the investigation, you feel your concern has not been resolved, you may refer your complaint to Stage 3 of the procedure. You must make this request in writing within 15 school days of the Stage 2 outcome. If you need a reasonable adjustment to make this request, please contact the school. A complainant who remains dissatisfied will not be prevented from progressing to Stage 3 because the school disagrees with their complaint or its findings.

Stage 3 – Panel hearing

At this stage, the complaint will be considered by a panel, which will meet to consider the complaint and make a final decision on behalf of the Board of Trustees.

The panel will consist of at least three people who have not been directly involved in the matters complained about. At least one panel member will be independent of the management and running of the school. The panel will be impartial and will have no detailed prior knowledge of the complaint.

The Clerk to the Trust Board will arrange the hearing and advise on procedure. The panel will elect its own chair, who will manage the hearing and ensure that both parties have a fair opportunity to present their case.

The meeting will normally take place within 15 school days of your request.

You will have the opportunity to submit written evidence about the complaint before the meeting and to attend, accompanied by a friend or representative if you wish, to put your case. The school's representative will be given the same opportunity to present the school's response.

The school will make reasonable efforts to accommodate the needs of participants, including considering reasonable adjustments to the hearing arrangements where required.

Appendix Two outlines the process that will normally be followed at a panel hearing.

Outcome of the panel hearing

The panel will write to you with its conclusion within five school days of the meeting. The outcome will explain the panel's decision and the reasons for it, and will include any recommendations or actions arising from the complaint, where appropriate. The panel's decision concludes the school's internal complaints procedure.

If you remain dissatisfied, you may complain to the Department for Education (DfE) if you believe the school has not followed its published procedure or has failed to comply with relevant requirements. The DfE considers whether the school has handled the complaint properly; it does not normally reinvestigate the original complaint or substitute its own decision for the panel's decision.

Information about how to complain to the DfE is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/complain-to-dfe>

Serial or persistent complaints

The school is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with our school. In a small minority of cases, people pursue complaints in a way that is unacceptable or that can impede an investigation. This can have significant resource implications for the school.

Such behaviour may occur while a complaint is being investigated or after the school has concluded its investigation.

The school may consider behaviour unreasonable where it hinders the consideration of a complaint, for example where a complainant:

- Refuses to articulate their complaint or specify its grounds or the outcome sought, despite offers of assistance.
- Refuses to cooperate with the complaints investigation process.
- Refuses to accept that certain issues are outside the scope of the complaints procedure.
- Insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways that are incompatible with the published procedure.
- Introduces trivial or irrelevant information and insists that it is taken into account and commented on.
- Makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues.
- Changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds.
- Repeatedly makes the same complaint despite previous investigations or responses concluding that it has been addressed.
- Refuses to accept the findings of an investigation where the published procedure has been followed.
- Seeks an unrealistic outcome.
- Makes excessive demands on school time through frequent, lengthy or complicated contact 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.

Disagreement with the school's decision, persistence in raising a legitimate concern, or making a complaint that is ultimately not upheld will not, by itself, be treated as unreasonable behaviour. Any decision to restrict contact will be based on the behaviour and its impact, not simply on the fact that a person has complained.

Whenever possible, the Headteacher or Chair of Trustees will discuss concerns with the complainant informally before considering behaviour unreasonable.

If the behaviour continues, the Headteacher or appropriate person will write to the complainant explaining the concern and asking them to change their behaviour.

For complainants whose excessive contact causes significant disruption, the school may specify methods of communication and limit the frequency of contact through a communication plan. Any such plan will be proportionate, will not prevent the complainant from raising a new complaint or receiving information to which they are entitled, and will be reviewed at an appropriate interval. The school will continue to consider new issues and relevant information.

In such cases, the school will have regard to relevant Department for Education guidance.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the school may inform the police and communicate its actions in writing. This may include restricting an individual's access to the school site where appropriate.

Monitoring and review

The Board of Trustees monitors the complaints procedure to ensure that complaints are handled properly.

The Headteacher logs formal complaints received by the school and records how they were resolved and any action taken by the school as a result.

The Trust will maintain written records of formal complaints, the steps taken to investigate and resolve them, and any action taken in response. Records will be handled confidentially and retained in accordance with the Trust's record-retention arrangements and applicable data protection requirements.

Trustees examine the complaints log annually and consider whether changes to the procedure are needed. Information shared with Trustees will be handled appropriately to protect the confidentiality of complainants, pupils and staff.

Stage 1 – Initial concern

Raise the concern with the class teacher, Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher, or contact the Chair of the Board of Trustees if appropriate.

If the matter is not resolved:

Stage 2 – Formal complaint

Submit the complaint in writing, normally using the complaint form. The school acknowledges receipt within five school days, investigates and normally provides an outcome within 15 school days.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied:

Stage 3 – Panel hearing

Request a panel hearing within 15 school days of the Stage 2 outcome. An impartial panel, including at least one member independent of the management and running of the school, considers the complaint and provides its outcome, normally within five school days of the hearing.

External escalation

After completing the school's procedure, a complainant may contact the Department for Education where they believe the school has not followed its procedure or complied with relevant requirements.

Appendix One – At the panel hearing

The following is the process that will normally be followed at a panel hearing:

- After introductions, the complainant will be invited to explain their complaint and will then be followed by their witnesses, if any.
- The panel may ask questions of the complainant and their witnesses.
- The school's representative will be invited to explain the school's actions and will then be followed by the school's witnesses, if any.
- The complainant may ask questions of the school's representative and witnesses through the panel chair, as directed by the chair.
- The panel may ask questions at any point.
- The complainant will be invited to sum up their complaint.
- The school's representative will be invited to sum up the school's actions and response.
- The panel chair will explain that the panel will provide its written outcome, normally within five school days of the hearing.
- The parties will withdraw while the panel considers the complaint and reaches its decision.
- The Clerk will remain available to support the panel on procedural matters.
- The panel will consider the complaint impartially, reach its own conclusions and record its decision and reasons. The panel may make recommendations or identify actions for the school or Trust, where appropriate.