



Holmer Green Senior School

Complaints Policy

April 2026

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Aims

Our school aims to meet its statutory obligations when responding to complaints from parents of pupils at the school.

When responding to complaints, we endeavour to:

- Keep the safety of our students at the forefront of our thinking
- Be open and accountable
- Act fairly and proportionately
- Be impartial, unbiased and fair
- Facilitate a full and fair investigation by an independent person or panel
- Address all the points at issue and provide an effective and prompt response
- Where possible, respect complainants' desire for confidentiality, but complainants should know that this is not always possible and is often detrimental to achieving a mutually acceptable solution
- Treat complainants with respect
- Keep complainants informed of the progress of the complaints process
- Consider how the complaint can feed into Academy improvement evaluation processes

In light of this, we strive to ensure that our handling of complaints is a mark of the importance that we put on honouring and respecting those people that we serve. We endeavour to support the [Parent Guide to School Complaints](#). The policy set out below is designed to help us in this task.

We try to resolve concerns or complaints by informal means wherever possible. Where this is not possible, formal procedures will be followed.

Complainants will have access to a three-stage process in line with Department for Education (DfE) guidance.

We will monitor complaints so that we can learn from them and make improvements to systems and processes.

The school will aim to give the complainant the opportunity to complete the complaints procedure in full.

To support this, we will ensure we publicise the existence of this policy and make it available on the school website.

Throughout the process, we will be sensitive to the needs of all parties involved, and make any reasonable adjustments needed to accommodate individuals.

In brief

This policy explains the complaints process for Holmer Green Senior School. It is based on the DfE best practice guide. The policy has been updated following feedback from those involved in handling complaints and following changes in DfE guidance.

Legislation and guidance

This document meets the requirements set out in part 7 of the schedule to [the Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), which states that we must have and make available a written procedure to deal with complaints from parents of pupils at the school.

It is also based on guidance published by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) on [creating a complaints procedure that complies with the above regulations](#), and refers to [good practice guidance on setting up complaints procedures](#) from the Department for Education (DfE).

Definitions and scope

Definitions

The DfE guidance explains the difference between a concern and a complaint:

- A **concern** is defined as “an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought”. The school will resolve concerns through day-to-day communication as far as possible
- A **complaint** is defined as “an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action”

Scope

The school intends to resolve complaints informally where possible, at the earliest possible stage.

There may be occasions when complainants would like to raise their concerns formally. This policy outlines the procedure relating to handling such complaints.

This policy does not cover complaints procedures relating to:

- Admissions
- Statutory assessments of special educational needs (SEN) (see [SEND Code of Practice](#) p246 and 247)
- Safeguarding matters
- Exclusion
- Whistleblowing
- Staff grievances
- Staff discipline

Please see our separate policies for procedures relating to these types of complaint. Concerns from parents of children with special educational needs (SEN) about the school’s support should first be made to the special educational needs coordinator

(SENCO); they will then be referred to this complaints policy if they are not resolved under the SEN policy. Our SEN policy and information report includes information about the rights of parents of pupils with disabilities who believe that our school has discriminated against their child.

Complaints about services provided by other providers who use school premises or facilities should be directed to the provider concerned.

Roles and responsibilities

Complainant

The complainant will receive a more effective response to the complaint if they:

- explain the complaint in full as early as possible
- co-operate with the school in seeking a solution to the complaint
- respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint
- ask for assistance as needed
- treat all those involved in the complaint with respect
- refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality.

Investigator

The investigator's role is to establish the facts relevant to the complaint by:

- providing a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint through:
 - sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved
 - interviewing staff and children/young people and other people relevant to the complaint
 - consideration of records and other relevant information
 - analysing information
- liaising with the complainant and the complaints coordinator as appropriate to clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.

The investigator should:

- conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning
- keep notes of interviews or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of the meeting
- ensure that any papers produced during the investigation are kept securely pending any appeal
- be mindful of the timescales to respond
- prepare a comprehensive report for the headteacher or complaints committee that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.

The headteacher or complaints committee will then determine whether to uphold or dismiss the complaint and communicate that decision to the complainant, providing the appropriate escalation details.

Complaints Coordinator (this could be the headteacher / designated complaints governor or other staff member providing administrative support, dependent on any conflict of interest)

The complaints coordinator should:

- ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure
- liaise with staff members, headteacher, Chair of Governors, Clerk and LAs (if appropriate) to ensure the smooth running of the complaints procedure
- be aware of issues regarding:
 - sharing third party information
 - additional support. This may be needed by complainants when making a complaint including interpretation support or where the complainant is a child or young person
- keep records.

Clerk to the Governing Body

The Clerk is the contact point for the complainant and the committee and should:

- ensure that all people involved in the complaint procedure are aware of their legal rights and duties, including any under legislation relating to school complaints, education law, the Equality Act 2010, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)
- set the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties (if they are invited to attend) and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- collate any written material relevant to the complaint (for example; stage 1 paperwork, school and complainant submissions) and send it to the parties in advance of the meeting within an agreed timescale
- record the proceedings
- circulate the minutes of the meeting
- notify all parties of the committee's decision.

Committee Chair

The committee's chair (must be one of the Academy's governors), who is nominated in advance of the complaint meeting, should ensure that:

- both parties are asked (via the Clerk) to provide any additional information relating to the complaint by a specified date in advance of the meeting
- the meeting is conducted in an informal manner, is not adversarial, and that, if all parties are invited to attend, everyone is treated with respect and courtesy
- complainants who may not be used to speaking at such a meeting are put at ease. This is

particularly important if the complainant is a child/young person

- the remit of the committee is explained to the complainant (see 'Scope' at stage 3).
- written material is seen by everyone in attendance, provided it does not breach confidentiality or any individual's rights to privacy under the DPA 2018 or GDPR.
- If a new issue arises it would be useful to give everyone the opportunity to consider and comment upon it; this may require a short adjournment of the meeting
- both the complainant and the school are given the opportunity to make their case and seek clarity, either through written submissions ahead of the meeting or verbally in the meeting itself
- the issues are addressed
- key findings of fact are made
- the committee is open-minded and acts independently
- no member of the committee has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure
- the meeting is minuted
- they liaise with the Clerk (and complaints coordinator, if the school has one).

Committee Member

Committee members should be aware that:

- the meeting must be independent and impartial, and should be seen to be so
- no governor may sit on the committee if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it.
- the aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant
- we recognise that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the meeting does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations.
- many complainants will feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting
- parents/carers often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child.
- extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child/young person and present during all or part of the meeting

Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings should ensure that the child/young person does not feel intimidated.

The committee should respect the views of the child/young person and give them equal consideration to those of adults.

If the child/young person is the complainant, the committee should ask in advance if any support is needed to help them present their complaint. Where the child/young person's parent is the complainant, the committee should give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the meeting, if any, the child/young person needs to attend.

However, the parent should be advised that agreement might not always be possible if the parent wishes the child/young person to attend a part of the meeting that the committee considers is not in the child/young person's best interests.

- the welfare of the child/young person is paramount.

Who can make a complaint?

This complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children that are registered at the school. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to Holmer Green Senior School about any provision of facilities or services that we provide. Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as appeals relating to exclusions or admissions), we will use this complaints procedure.

The difference between a concern and a complaint

A concern may be defined as *'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'*.

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

It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. Holmer Green Senior School takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, Ed Hillyard (Headteacher), will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, Sarah Lary (Senior Deputy Headteacher) will refer you to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important.

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

How to raise a concern or make a complaint

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf on a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

Concerns should be raised ideally with, for academic purposes, the class teacher and then head of department; or for pastoral purposes, the form tutor and then head of year; then the head of year or head of department's relevant line manager and then the headteacher. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

Complainants should not approach individual governors to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at Stage 3 of the procedure.

Complaints against school staff (except the headteacher) should be made in the first instance, to Mr E Hillyard (the headteacher) via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential. Complaints that involve or are about the headteacher should be addressed to Mr T Green (the Chair of Governors), via the school office, who will pass to the Clerk to the Governing Body to pass on. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor or the whole governing body should be addressed to Mrs J Knight (the Clerk to the Governing Body) via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

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.

Anonymous complaints

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

Time scales

You must raise the complaint within three months (inclusive of school holidays) 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.

Where the policy refers to 'school days', this references term time and does not include school holidays or INSET days.

Complaints received outside of term time

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

Scope of this Complaints Procedure

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

Exceptions	Who to contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Admissions to schools 	Concerns about admissions – see Admissions Policy and statutory admissions appeal code
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs 	SEND Tribunal and see SEN code of practice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation 	<p>Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.</p> <p>If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exclusion of children from school* 	<p>Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions.</p> <p><i>*complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whistleblowing 	<p>We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors.</p> <p>The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus.</p> <p>Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the LA or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff grievances 	<p>Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff conduct 	<p>Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate.</p> <p>Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities 	<p>Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them directly.</p>

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority (LA) safeguarding teams or Tribunals, this may impact on our ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations.

If a complainant commences legal action against Holmer Green Senior School in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure in relation to their complaint until those legal proceedings have concluded.

Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, Holmer Green Senior School wants to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- an explanation
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- an assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur
- an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint
- an apology.

Complaints that result in staff capability or disciplinary processes

If at any stage of this procedure it is determined that staff disciplinary or capability proceedings are necessary to resolve the issue, you will be informed that the complaints procedure has been terminated and that our own internal procedures will be followed to resolve the matter. From this point onwards you will not be entitled to participate in the proceedings or receive any further detail about them or their outcome.

Behaviour of complainants

When a complaint is made, we aim to deal with the complainant in a friendly, courteous and professional manner and the same is expected of the complainant.

Holmer Green Senior School has a duty to ensure the safety and welfare of its staff. Members of staff who are dealing with complaints are not expected to tolerate unacceptable behaviour by

complainants.

Unacceptable behaviour is defined as behaviour that is unacceptable by normal standards and is disadvantageous to the individual, such as the threat of or use of harassment, verbal abuse or physical violence. Examples of unacceptable behaviour may include:

- Harassment through aggressive or abusive language or behaviour (face-to-face, by telephone, in written or electronic communications). Members of staff should not be subjected to rude, abusive, derogatory, threatening or harassing language or unwanted physical or non-verbal conduct.
- Unreasonable demands and persistence. What constitutes unreasonable demands may depend on the circumstances surrounding the behaviour but could include demanding responses or action within an unreasonable timescale, continual phone calls or letters or continuing refusal to accept a decision made in relation to a complaint.

If the academy considers that a complainant's behaviour is unacceptable then it will tell them why it finds their behaviour unacceptable and ask them to change it. If the unacceptable behaviour continues, the Academy will take action to restrict future contact with the Academy, by for example:

- Requesting contact in a particular form (for example, letter only)
- Requiring contact to take place with a named member of staff only
- Asking the complainant to enter into an agreement about their conduct

Where the behaviour is so extreme that it threatens the immediate or subsequent safety and welfare of a member of staff, other options may be considered, for example, requiring the complainant to leave the premises immediately, reporting the matter to the police or taking legal action. In such cases, the complainant may not be given prior warning of that action.

Withdrawal of a Complaint

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

Stage 1 – Informal complaints

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

Concerns should be raised with either the class teacher, year head / subject head or head teacher. Complainants should not approach individual governors to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at Stage 3 of the procedure.

Parents/carers should have an opportunity for informal discussion of their concerns with an appropriate member of staff. This discussion should aim to clarify the nature of the parent's/carer's concern and assure them that the Academy wishes to hear about it. The discussion should also aim to clarify what kind of outcome the parent/carer is seeking.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the appropriate person investigating the complaint will

provide an informal written response within **15** school days of the date of receipt of the complaint. If we do not hear from the complainant within 10 school days of the response being sent, we will consider the complaint resolved and close our file.

If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint stage 2. No new/unrelated complaints can be added to this particular complaint at this stage, nor can additional unrelated matters be raised that have not been raised informally at stage 1.

At each step the timescales can be extended, if agreed by both parties.

Stage 2 – Formal complaints

Formal complaints must be made to the headteacher (unless they are about the headteacher), via the school office. This may be done in person, in writing (on the Complaint Form).

The headteacher will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within **5** school days.

Within this response, the headteacher will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The headteacher can consider whether a face-to-face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

Note: The headteacher may delegate the investigation to another member of the school's senior leadership team but not the decision to be taken.

During the investigation, the headteacher (or investigator) will:

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

At the conclusion of their investigation, the headteacher will provide a formal written response within **15** school days of the date of receipt of the complaint.

If the headteacher is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.

The response will detail 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 Holmer Green Senior School will take to resolve the complaint.

The headteacher will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2.

If we do not hear from the complainant within 10 school days of the response being sent, we will consider the complaint resolved and close our file.

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 2. Complaints about the headteacher or member of the governing body must be made to the Clerk, via the school office.

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 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.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 2 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 3 – a meeting with members of the governing body's complaints committee, which will be formed of the first three, impartial, governors available. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure. The complainant must clearly state the grounds for escalating the complaint. No new unrelated complaints can be made at this stage, nor can additional unrelated matters be raised that have not been raised at stage 1 and 2.

A request to escalate to Stage 3 must be made to the Clerk, via the school office, within **10** school days of receipt of the Stage 2 response.

The Clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within **5** school days.

Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

The Clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within **15** school days of receipt of the Stage 3 request. If this is not possible, the Clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates, without good reason, the Clerk will decide when to hold the meeting. It will then proceed in the complainant's absence on the basis of written submissions from both parties.

The complaints committee will consist of at least three governors (one of whom will be independent) with no prior involvement or knowledge of the complaint. Prior to the meeting, they will decide amongst themselves who will act as the Chair of the Complaints Committee (this cannot be the independent panel member). If there are fewer than three governors available, the Clerk will source any additional, independent governors through another local school or through their LA's Governor Services team, to make up the committee. Alternatively, an entirely independent committee may be convened to hear the complaint at Stage 3.

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. Neither the complainant nor the academy can bring legal

representation. These review panels are not a form of legal proceedings. The aims of the review panel are:

- Reconciliation
- To put right things that may have gone wrong.

If a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by union and/or professional association representative.

Note: Complaints about staff conduct will not generally be handled under this complaints procedure. Complainants will be advised that any staff conduct complaints will be considered under staff disciplinary procedures, if appropriate, but outcomes will not be shared with them.
Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

At least **10** school days before the meeting, the Clerk will:

- confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that, if the complainant is invited, the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the committee at least **6** school days before the meeting.

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

The committee will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.

The meeting will be held in private.

Scope: The complaints committee will principally consider how the complaint was handled at the previous stages but has discretion to review other aspects of the complaint as it sees fit.

The committee will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The committee can:

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

If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the 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 Chair of the Committee will provide the complainant and Holmer Green Senior School with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within **10** school days.

The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the Department for Education if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by Holmer Green Senior 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 3 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 Holmer Green Senior School will take to resolve the complaint.

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

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

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

Next Steps

If the complainant believes the school did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact the Department for Education after they have completed Stage 3.

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by Holmer Green Senior School. They will consider whether Holmer Green Senior School has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint and whether they have followed [Part 7 of the Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#).

The complainant can refer their complaint to the Department for Education online at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus, by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:

Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD.

Persistent complaints

Unreasonably persistent complaints

Most complaints raised will be valid, and therefore we will treat them seriously. However, a complaint may become unreasonable if the person:

- Has made the same complaint before and it has already been resolved by following the school's complaints procedure
- Makes a complaint that is obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, defamatory or repetitive
- Knowingly provides false information
- Insists on pursuing a complaint that is unfounded or out of scope of the complaints procedure
- Pursues a valid complaint, but in an unreasonable manner e.g. refuses to articulate the complaint, refused to co-operate with this complaints' procedure, or insists that the complaint is dealt with in ways that are incompatible with this procedure and the time frames it sets out
- Changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation goes on
- Makes a complaint designed to cause disruption, annoyance or excessive demands on school time
- Seeks unrealistic outcomes, or a solution that lacks any serious purpose or value

Steps we will take

We will take every reasonable step to address the complainant's concerns and give them a clear statement of our position and their options. We will maintain our role as an objective arbiter throughout the process, including when we meet with individuals. We will follow our complaints procedure as normal (as outlined above) wherever possible.

The decision to classify a complaint as unreasonably persistent will be made by the Headteacher in consultation with the Chair of Governors. The complainant will be notified in writing of this decision and the reasons for it.

If the complainant continues to contact the school in a disruptive way, we may put communications strategies in place. We may:

- Give the complainant a single point of contact via an email address
- Limit the number of times the complainant can make contact such as a fixed number per term
- Put any other strategy in place as necessary

Stopping responding

We may stop responding to the complainant when all of these factors are met:

- We believe we have taken all reasonable steps to help address their concerns
- We have provided a clear statement of our position and their options
- The complainant contacts us repeatedly and we believe their intention is to cause disruption or inconvenience

Where we stop responding, we will inform the individual that we intend to do so.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from our school site.

Duplicate complaints

If we have resolved a complaint under this procedure and receive a duplicate complaint on the same subject from a partner, family member or other individual, we will assess whether there are aspects that we hadn't previously considered or any new information we need to consider.

If we are satisfied that there are no new aspects, we will:

- Tell the new complainant that we have already investigated and responded to this issue, and the local process is complete
- Direct them to the DfE if they are dissatisfied with our original handling of the complaint. If there are new aspects, we will follow this procedure again.

Complaint campaigns

Where the school receives multiple complaints about the same topic or subject, especially if these come from complainants unconnected with the school, the school may respond to these complaints by:

- Publishing a single response on the school website
- Sending a template response to all of the complainants

If complainants are not satisfied with the school's response, or wish to pursue the complaint further, the normal procedures will apply.

Parental Responsibility

Conflict between estranged parents over the application of parental responsibility is a common cause of complaints made to academies. [Parental responsibility: guide for schools and local authorities - GOV.UK](#) contains specific advice about how to approach issues concerning parental responsibility. Where a parent requests information or reports on their child as part of an ongoing complaint, seeking to build evidence about the parenting capacity of another parent following a separation or divorce the Academy will maintain a neutral position and supply all requested data to both parties holding parental responsibility.

Recorded meetings

Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any Minutes taken.

Record keeping

The school will record the progress of all complaints, including information about actions taken at all stages, the stage at which the complaint was resolved and the final outcome. The records will also include copies of letters and emails, and notes relating to meetings and phone calls.

This material will be treated as confidential and held centrally and will be viewed only by those involved in investigating the complaint or on the review panel.

The only exception to this is where the secretary of state (or someone acting on their behalf) or the complainant requests access to records of a complaint through a freedom of information (FOI) request or through a subject access request under the terms of the Data Protection Act, or where the material must be made available during a school inspection.

Records of complaints will be kept securely, only for as long as necessary and in line with data protection law and our privacy notices

The details of the complaint, including the names of individuals involved, will not be shared with the whole governing board in case a review panel needs to be organised at a later point. Where the governing board is aware of the substance of the complaint before the review panel stage, the school will (where reasonably practicable) arrange for an independent panel to hear the complaint.

Complainants also have the right to request an independent panel if they believe there is likely to be bias in the proceedings. The decision to approve this request is made by the governing board, who will not unreasonably withhold consent.

Learning lessons

The governing board will review any underlying issues raised by complaints with the Headteacher, where appropriate, and respecting confidentiality, to determine whether there are any improvements that the school can make to its procedures or practice to help prevent similar events in the future.

Monitoring arrangements

The governing body will monitor the effectiveness of the complaints procedure in ensuring that complaints are handled properly.

This policy will be reviewed by the Headteacher each year. At each review, the policy will be approved by the Governing Body.

Confidentiality and data protection

1. All complaints will be handled in the strictest confidence by the trust and its establishments and data protection principles will be applied in line with the trust's Data Protection Policy.
2. In line with data protection legislation, all records relating to individual complaints will remain confidential except where the Secretary of State, or a body conducting an inspection under Section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008, requests access to them.
3. It is expected that complainants will also keep their complaint private and confidential. Complainants should not discuss complaints or share response documentation publicly

- via any form of social media or with third parties.
4. The posting of any defamatory, offensive, or derogatory comments on social media sites by parents will be dealt with under the establishment's Parent Code of Conduct.
 5. Electronic audio or video recordings of meetings must not be made by either the trust/establishment or the complainant. A meeting to discuss a complaint may not go ahead if the complainant is insistent on recording the meeting, unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it, and it is agreed in advance. The trust/establishment will take notes of any meetings to discuss a complaint and complainants may do likewise.
 6. Due to privacy rights under data protection legislation, information disclosed relating to an outcome, if it relates to a third-party individual, i.e. disciplinary action of a member of staff or another pupil, may be limited.

Links with other policies

Policies dealing with other forms of complaints include:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures
- Admissions policy
- Exclusions policy
- Staff grievance procedures
- Staff disciplinary procedures
- SEN policy and information report

Compliance

This policy complies with the statutory requirement laid out in the SEND Code of Practice and has been written with reference to the following guidance and documents:

- part 7 of the schedule to [the Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#)
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-complaints-procedures/best-practice-advice-for-school-complaints-procedures-2019>
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dealing-with-issues-relating-to-parental-responsibility>
- [Parent Guide to School Complaints](#)

Policy date: April 2026

To be reviewed: April 2027

Appendix 1: Complaint Reporting Form

Complaint Reporting Form

Please complete in BLOCK CAPITALS and return to the Headteacher, who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:	
Student's name (if applicable):	
Your relationship to the student (if applicable):	
Name of Establishment:	

Address, incl. Postcode:	
Daytime telephone number:	
Evening telephone number:	
Email address:	

Please give details of your complaint:

(provide as much detail as possible about the matter, including dates and times of events, potential witnesses. You may also attach copies of any relevant documents)

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What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint?

To whom did you speak to and what was the response? (An informal resolution should have been sought)

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

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

Signature:

Date:

For official use only

Date acknowledgement sent

Complaint referred to

Acknowledgement sent by

Complaint referred on (date)