



## Complaints policy

<b>Current Review Date:</b>	27 November 2024
<b>Policy Reviewed by:</b>	Headteacher
<b>Policy approved by:</b>	Board of Governors
<b>Policy due for review:</b>	31 October 2026
<b>Number of complaints 2023/2024:</b>	0

### Aims

Our school aims to meet its statutory obligations when responding to complaints from parents of pupils and others. When responding to complaints, we aim to:

- Be impartial and non-adversarial
- Where necessary, 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.
- Respect complainants' desire for confidentiality
- Treat complainants with respect
- Keep complainants informed of the progress of the complaints process
- Consider how the complaint can feed into school improvement evaluation processes

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

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

To support this, we will ensure that this policy is publicised and made available on the school website.



## 2. Legislation and guidance

This document meets the requirements set out in part 7 of the schedule to [the Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#) and the 4th chapter of the Swedish Education Act (2010:800), which both state that we must have and make available a written procedure to deal with complaints from parents of pupils at the school and others.

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](#). It also refers to [good practice guidance on setting up complaints procedures](#) from the Department for Education (DfE).

## 3. Definitions and scope

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 with school staff as far as possible.

A **complaint** is “an expression of dissatisfaction, however, made, about actions taken or a lack of action”.

The school intends to resolve complaints informally as soon as possible. However, there may be occasions when complainants would like to raise their concerns formally. This policy outlines the procedure for handling such complaints.

This policy does not cover complaints procedures relating to:

- Whistleblowing
- Staff discipline and grievances

Please see our separate policies for procedures relating to these types of complaints.

This policy covers arrangements for handling complaints from parents of children with special educational needs (SEN) about the school’s support. Such complaints should first be made to the class teacher or mentor; they will then be referred to this complaints policy.

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



## 4. Principles for investigation

When investigating a complaint, we will try to clarify:

- What has happened
- Who was involved
- What the complainant feels would put things right

We also intend to address complaints as quickly as possible. To achieve this, realistic and reasonable time limits will be set for each action within each stage.

Where further investigations are necessary, new time limits will be set, and the complainant will be sent details of the new deadline with an explanation for the delay.

The school expects complaints to be made promptly after an incident arises and no later than 3 months afterwards. We will consider exceptions to this time frame in circumstances where there were valid reasons for not making a complaint at that time, and the complaint can still be investigated fairly for all involved.

### 4.1. Stage 1: informal concern

The school will take informal concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve the matter quickly. Clarifying information may resolve the issue.

The complainant should file a complaint as soon as possible with the relevant member of staff or the Head Teacher (Pre-School, Primary and Secondary School) or Deputy Head Teacher (Sixth Form), either in person or by letter, telephone or email. If the complainant needs clarification on who to contact or how to contact them, they should contact the school office.

The informal stage will involve a meeting between the complainant and the Deputy Head (Richmond) or Head Teacher (Barnes). If the complaint is not resolved informally, it will be escalated to a formal complaint.

### 4.2. Stage 2: Formal complaint

The formal stage involves the complainant writing the complaint (by filling in the form in Appendix 1) to the Head Teacher (Pre-School, Primary and Secondary School) or Deputy Head Teacher (Sixth Form).

The statement should provide details such as relevant dates, times and the names of witnesses of events, alongside copies of any relevant documents. The complainant should also state what they feel would resolve the complaint.



The Head Teacher (Pre-School, Primary and Secondary School) or Deputy Head Teacher (Sixth Form) will then conduct their own investigation. The written conclusion of this investigation will be sent to the complainant within 15 workdays. If the school need a longer time to conclude the inquiry, the complainant will be notified within the stated time and explained the delay.

If the complainant is unsatisfied with the response and wishes to proceed to the next stage of this procedure, they should inform the Chair of Governors in writing within five working days.

### **4.3. Stage 3: Review panel**

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response to the complaint at the second formal stage, the complaint will be escalated to the panel hearing stage.

The panel will be appointed by or on behalf of the proprietor and must consist of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. At least one-panel member must be independent of the school's management and running. The panel cannot be made up solely of Governing board members, as they are not independent of the school's management and running.

The panel will access the existing record of the complaint's progress (see section 9).

The complainant must have reasonable notice of the review panel's date; however, the panel reserves the right to convene at its own convenience rather than that of the complainant. At the review panel meeting, the complainant and representatives from the school, as appropriate, will be present. Each can make written or oral submissions before the meeting.

The complainant must be allowed to attend the panel hearing and be accompanied if they wish.

At the meeting, each individual will be able to give statements and present their evidence, and witnesses will be called, as appropriate, to show their evidence.

The panel, the complainant and the school representative(s) will be allowed to ask and reply to questions. Once the complainant and school representative(s) have presented their cases, they will be asked to leave, and evidence will be considered.

The panel must then compile its findings and recommendations from the case. The panel will also provide a copy to the complainant and, where relevant, the individual who is the subject of the complaint and make a copy available for inspection by the proprietor and headteacher.

The school will inform those involved of the decision in writing within ten work



days.

## 6. Complaints against the headteacher or a governor

Complaints against the Head Teacher should be directed to the Chair of Governors.

Where a complaint is against the Chair of Governors or any member of the Governing Board, it should be made in writing to the Whistleblowing Officer in the first instance. If the complaint is against the Whistleblowing Officer, the complaint is made to the Chair of Governors.

## 7. Referring complaints on completion of the school's procedure

If the complainant is unsatisfied with the outcome of the school's complaints procedure and the complaint is regarding the school not meeting standards set by the DfE or the Swedish Education Act in any of the following areas, the complainant can refer their complaint to the DfE or Swedish School Inspectorate (Skolinspektionen).

- Education
- Pupil welfare and health and safety
- School premises
- Staff suitability
- Making information available to parents
- The spiritual, moral, social or cultural development of pupils

The DfE will consider reports of a significant failure to meet the standards. Where appropriate, an emergency inspection can be arranged to look at pupil welfare and health and safety and make sure that the school deals with serious failings.

For more information or to refer to a complaint, see the following web pages:

- Department of Education (UK): <https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school>
- Swedish School Inspectorate: <https://www.skolinspektionen.se/sv/Anmalningar>

## 8. Persistent complaints

Where a complainant tries to reopen the issue with the school after the complaints procedure has been fully exhausted and the school has done everything it reasonably can in response to the complaint, the Chair of Governors (or another member of the Board of Governors in the case of a complaint about the Chair) will inform the complainant that the matter is closed.



If the complainant subsequently contacts the school again about the same issue, the school can choose not to respond. The normal circumstance in which we will not respond is if:

- The school has taken every reasonable step to address the complainant's needs , *and*,
- The complainant has been given a clear statement of the school's position and their options (if any), *and*,
- The complainant is contacting the school repeatedly but making substantially the same points each time

However, this list is not intended to be exhaustive.

The school will be most likely to choose not to respond if:

- We have reason to believe the individual is contacting the school with the intention of causing disruption or inconvenience and/or
- The individual's letters/emails/telephone calls are often or always abusive or aggressive, and/or
- The individual makes insulting personal comments about, or threats towards, school staff

Unreasonable behaviour which is abusive, offensive or threatening may constitute an unreasonably persistent complaint.

Once the school has decided that it is appropriate to stop responding, the complainant will be informed in writing, either by letter or email.

The school will ensure that complainants making any new complaint are heard and that the school acts reasonably when making this decision.

## **9. 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 outcome. The records will also include copies of letters and emails, as well as notes relating to meetings and phone calls.

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

This is except 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 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 for different lengths of time depending on its nature:

- Safeguarding, staff and insurance matters: 50 years
- Other complaints: 10 years

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 later.

Where the governing board is aware of the complaint's substance 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 governing board decides whether to approve this request and will not unreasonably withhold consent.

## **10. Learning lessons**

The governing board will review any underlying issues raised by complaints with school management, where appropriate and respecting confidentiality, to determine whether the school can improve its procedures or practices to help prevent similar events in the future.

## **11. Monitoring arrangements**

The governing board will monitor the effectiveness of the complaints procedure to ensure that complaints are handled properly. The board will track the number and nature of complaints and review underlying issues, as stated in section 10.

The headteacher logs and manages the complaints records. This policy is reviewed and approved by the full governing board every three years.