Complaints Policy

Last reviewed: November 2026

Next reviewed: Novemeber 2027

Received and Agreed by the Governing Body

Signed Chair of Governors: _____ Date: _____

1. Introduction

- Governing bodies are required by law to have a procedure in place to deal with complaints relating to aspects of the school or the provision of facilities or certain services at the school. The law requires that this procedure must be publicised.
- The vast majority of complaints and concerns can be resolved informally.
- A complaint can be brought by a parent of a registered child at the school or any person who has been provided with a service or a facility at the school. The procedure refers to this person as a complainant.
- The complainant must feel able to raise concerns and complaints with members of staff without formality, either in person, by telephone or in writing.
- Even when a complaint has been made it can be resolved or withdrawn at any stage.

2. 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 the 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.

3. 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. The 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, the 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, the school will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

4. 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 with either the class teacher or 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 2 of the procedure.

- Complaints against school staff (except the Headteacher) should be made in the first instance, to 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 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 the Chair of Governors, via the school office. 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 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 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.

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 the school, other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

Exceptions	Who to contact
• Admissions to schools • Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs • School re-organisation proposals	Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with Hackney Learning Trust
• 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 or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).
• Exclusion of children from school*	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions. **complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure Also see Behaviour Policy.*
• Whistleblowing	We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors. 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. 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.
• Staff grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.
• Staff conduct	Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate. 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.
• Complaints about services provided by other providers	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.
• National Curriculum - content	Please contact the Department for Education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus

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 the 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.

5. Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, the 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.

Withdrawal of a Complaint

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

Informal stage

You can make an appointment to speak to the member(s) of staff concerned. You may also wish to refer your concerns on to the relevant line manager. In many instances, complaints can be resolved at this early, informal stage.

If you feel that your complaint has not been, or cannot be, resolved through informal discussion, you should use the formal complaints process.

Formal Stage

STAGE 1 – Headteacher
You must complete the **complaints form** and send this to the Headteacher.

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.**

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 the 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 1.

STAGE 2 – CHAIR OF GOVERNORS

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.

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 Chair of Governors will acknowledge receipt of your complaint. The Chair of Governors will then review your complaint and any initial investigation. The Chair may also carry out a further investigation or commission another person to do so on his/her behalf. In the case of a complaint about the Headteacher, the Chair will carry out an initial investigation or commission an independent person to do so.

If your complaint is about the Chair of Governors, this will be investigated by the Vice-Chair following the same process.

Any investigation at this stage will normally be carried out within **10 school days** of receipt of the complaint by the Chair. As with Stage 1 & 2, the timescale for completing the investigation may be extended by notifying you in writing of the extension and the reason for it.

Once the investigation has been completed, the Chair will write to you within **3 school days** with a formal response. If you wish, you may request a meeting to discuss the response.

If you are dissatisfied with the Chair's response, you can write to the Clerk to the Governing Body **within 10 school days** to request that the complaint be referred to the Governing Body Complaints Committee (Stage 4).

STAGE 3 – GOVERNING BODY COMPLAINTS COMMITTEE MEETING

The Clerk will acknowledge receipt of your complaint and confirm that a panel meeting will be convened within **20 school days**. As with Stages 1, 2 and 3, this timescale may be extended if there are good reasons and you will be advised if this is necessary. You will also be advised of the timeframes in which documentation for the meeting and the names of any witnesses you may wish to call must be provided to the Clerk.

The Complaints Committee panel will comprise 3 governors who have not had any prior involvement in the complaint or the circumstances surrounding it. This will ensure that the meeting is independent and impartial. In cases where all members of the Governing Body have prior knowledge, an independent panel will be convened by the Clerk.

The Clerk will liaise with all parties to find a convenient date, time and venue for the meeting and final details will be notified to you in writing at least **10 working days** before the meeting.

If the Committee feels that any further investigation is needed, it may commission this from another person such as a senior member of staff (not involved in the complaint), a governor or an independent person.

Any new investigation report should be available for circulation **7 working days** before the meeting. You may also submit a written statement or additional documents for circulation **7**

working days before the meeting. If either party wishes witnesses to be called, they must notify the Clerk **7 working days** before the meeting.

All papers and details of witnesses to be called will be made available to the Committee, the complainant and the Headteacher at least **3 working days** before the meeting. The Clerk will also advise you of the structure of the meeting.

Members of the Committee will not discuss the meeting papers or details of the complaint with any other people prior to the meeting. The meeting will be held in private bearing in mind your right to confidentiality.

At the meeting, all parties will be treated with respect and care will be taken to ensure that the setting is not confrontational or adversarial. If a child is the complainant or is giving evidence, the Committee will give particularly careful consideration to the atmosphere and proceedings to ensure that the child does not feel intimidated. The views of children will be given equal consideration to those of adults.

The meeting may be adjourned if new evidence or witnesses are brought to allow for additional time to consider this new information. Where the complaint is complex, the committee may also decide to adjourn and reconvene at a later date to give sufficient time to review the evidence.

The Committee can decide:

- To dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;
- To uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
- To decide on appropriate action to resolve the complaint;
- To recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that similar problems do not recur.

Following the meeting, the Chair of the Committee will write to inform the complainant of its decision within **5 working days** of the end of the meeting. As with earlier stages, this timescale may be extended if there is a good reason to do so.

The Clerk will produce and circulate draft minutes of the proceedings within **20 school days** after the meeting to provide both parties with the opportunity to agree or challenge this record.

The Clerk will ensure that all final records are stored centrally and the outcome of the complaint and any changes to systems or procedures are communicated to the Governing Body.

This is the final stage of the school's formal complaints process.

APPEAL STAGE – DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION

If you believe that the **school's complaints procedure was not followed appropriately**, the final stage of appeal is to the Secretary of State for Education through the School Complaints Unit at the Department for Education. Complainants should note that **the Department will not re-investigate the substance of the complaint** as this remains the responsibility of schools.

The School Complaints Unit will:

- examine if the complaints policy and any other relevant policies were followed in accordance with the provisions set out; and
- examine policies to determine if they adhere to education legislation.

If a Complainant feels that relevant school policies do not adhere to education legislation or that the school did not properly follow the complaints policy and procedure, the complainant can write to:

The School Complaints Unit

Department for Education
2nd Floor, Piccadilly Gate
Manchester
M1 2WD.

9. Policy for managing serial and unreasonable complaints – Persistent, Unreasonable, Habitual and/or Vexatious Policy

Parkwood is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with our schools. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is habitual, excessive, abusive, offensive or threatening.

The school defines unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the school, such as, if the complainant:

- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
- refuses to co-operate with the complaint's investigation process
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaint's procedure
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaint's procedure or with good practice
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on
- raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales
- makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced
- changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds
- repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed)
- refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education
- seeks an unrealistic outcome
- makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone 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.

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school that relates to their complaint, while the complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text), as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the head or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an '*unreasonable'* marking.

If the behaviour continues, the headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact the schools causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will be reviewed after six months.

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 the schools.

Note:
This aspect of the policy may also be adapted to manage unreasonable or persistent contact not directly associated with, or resulting from, formal complaints.

10. Monitoring and review

The curriculum committee of the governing body will monitor this policy on a three year basis, in consultation with staff. If the policy appears to need modification, then the committee will report its findings and recommendations to the full governing body.

Complaint Form

Please complete and return to the school office – addressed to the Headteacher/Chair of Governors or Clerk to the Governing Body who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:
Pupil's name (if relevant):
Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):
Address: **Postcode:** **Day time telephone number:** **Evening telephone number:**
Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it.

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?
Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.
Signature: **Date:**
Official use
Date acknowledgement sent:
By who:
Complaint referred to:
Date: