



'We can and we will'
GLEBE PRIMARY SCHOOL

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Mission Statement

At Glebe Primary School, we believe in an ethos that values the whole child. We strive to enable all children to achieve their full potential academically, socially and emotionally.

Introduction

From 1 September 2003, all maintained schools and maintained nursery schools in England are required, under Section 29 of the Education Act 2002, to have in place a procedure to deal with complaints relating to the school and to any community facilities or services that the school provides.

Legislation and Guidance

This document meets the requirements of section 29 of the [Education Act 2002](#), which states that schools must have and make available a procedure to deal with all complaints relating to their school and to any community facilities or services that the school provides.

It is also based on [guidance for schools on complaints procedures](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), including the model procedure, and model procedure for dealing with serial and unreasonable complaints.

In addition, it addresses duties set out in the [Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework](#) with regards to dealing with complaints about the school's fulfilment of Early Years Foundation Stage requirements.

1. Aims

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

When responding to complaints, we aim to:

- Be impartial and non-adversarial
- Facilitate a full and fair investigation by an independent person or panel, where necessary
- Address all the points at issue and provide an effective and prompt response
- Respect complainants' desire for confidentiality

Complaints Procedure

- Treat complainants with respect and courtesy
- Make sure that any decisions we make are lawful, rational, reasonable, fair and proportionate, in line with the principles of administrative law
- 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 aim to give the complainant the opportunity to complete the complaints procedure in full. To support this, we will make sure 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.

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".
- A **complaint** is defined as "an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action".

Scope of this Procedure

This procedure covers all complaints received **other than those set out below**. Formal complaints in the following areas will be dealt with under the relevant procedures, some of which are statutory procedures:

- Admissions
- Statutory assessments of special educational needs (SEN)
- Safeguarding matters
- Suspension and permanent exclusion
- Whistle-blowing
- Staff grievances
- Staff discipline
- School re-organisation proposals
- Curriculum
- Collective worship

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

Complaints Procedure

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

Principles When Dealing With Complaints

The Complaints Procedure is based on the following principles:

- Confidentiality should be respected;
- Give and expect both courtesy and consideration;
- Communication is the key to solving disputes and disagreements;
- Concerns and complaints will be dealt with fairly and as speedily as possible;
- Complainants will be kept informed at every stage, whether it is an informal or formal complaint;
- Records will be kept of meetings and discussions that take place and will be retained in accordance with the data protection principles.

Roles and responsibilities

The complainant

The complainant will get a more effective and timely response to their complaint if they:

- Follow these procedures
- Co-operate with the school throughout the process, and respond to deadlines and communication promptly
- Ask for assistance as needed
- Treat all those involved with respect
- Do not publish details about the complaint on social media

The investigator

An individual will be appointed to look into the complaint and establish the facts. They will:

- Interview all relevant parties, keeping notes
- Consider records and any written evidence and keep these securely
- Prepare a comprehensive report to the headteacher or complaints committee, which includes the facts and potential solutions

The complaints co-ordinator

The complaints co-ordinator can be:

- The headteacher
- The designated complaints governor
- Any other staff member providing administrative support

The complaints co-ordinator will:

- Keep the complainant up to date at each stage in the procedure
- Make sure the process runs smoothly by liaising with staff members, the headteacher, chair of governors, clerk and the local authority.

Complaints Procedure

- Be aware of issues relating to:
 - Sharing third party information
 - Additional support needed by complainants, for example interpretation support or where the complainant is a child or young person
- Keep records

Clerk to the governing board

The clerk will:

- Be the contact point for the complainant and the complaints committee, including circulating the relevant papers and evidence before complaints committee meetings
- Arrange the complaints hearing
- Record and circulate the minutes and outcome of the hearing
- Ensure that all persons 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 2018, and the UK General Data Protection Regulation
- Set the date, time and venue of the hearing, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- Notify all parties of the panel's decision.

Committee chair

The committee chair will:

- Chair the meeting, ensuring that everyone is treated with respect throughout
- Ensure all parties see the relevant information, understand the purpose of the committee, and are allowed to present their case
- Ensure the remit of the panel is explained to the parties and each party has the opportunity of presenting their case
- Ensure that without undue interruption the issues are addressed
- Ensure parents and others who may not be used to speaking at such a hearing are put at ease
- Ensure the hearing is conducted in an informal manner with each party treating the other with respect and courtesy
- Ensure the panel is open minded and acting independently
- Ensure no member of the panel has a vested interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure
- Ensure each side is given the opportunity to state their case and ask questions
- Ensure that written material is seen by all parties. If a new issue arises it would be useful to give all parties the opportunity to consider and comment on it.

Anonymous Complaints

It will be left to the Headteacher's discretion to decide whether the gravity of an anonymous complaint warrants its investigation.

Complaints Procedure

Responsible Person

Every school will have a person to receive, record and monitor formal complaints. The Headteacher is the Complaints Co-ordinator and in her absence, the deputy headteachers will assume this role.

Time Limits

The complainant 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. Complaints made outside of this timeframe will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

Complaints which are received outside of term time will be considered to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

Complaints need to be considered and resolved as quickly and efficiently as possible using time limits given in this procedure. However, where further investigations are necessary, new time limits can be set.

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority, safeguarding teams or tribunals, this may impact on the school's ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or may result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations. In both these instances, the complainant will be notified and provided with an explanation for the delay.

Informal Concerns/ Complaints

The majority of parental concerns/complaints can be resolved informally and speedily. If there is a concern about what the school has done, or not done:

- The concern should be raised verbally with the teacher or Head teacher as soon as possible;
- It may be that the teacher/Head teacher is unaware of the problem or there might have been a misunderstanding;
- If there is dissatisfaction with the outcome and feel the matter cannot be resolved in an informal way, or if you feel so deeply about your concern that you wish to take the matter further, you have the opportunity to make a formal complaint.

It is in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage.

Complainants should never feel or be made to feel that a complaint made in a reasonable and appropriate manner will not be taken seriously or that it will reflect adversely on their child and their child's opportunities at the school.

We will try to investigate and try to resolve every complaint in a positive manner and will treat every complaint as an opportunity to improve service.

Complaints Procedure

We will respect the views of a complainant who indicates that they would have difficulty discussing a complaint with a particular member of staff. In these cases, the matter can be referred to the Headteacher who may, if they feel it appropriate, refer the complainant to another member of staff. Alternatively, they may not feel this is necessary. Where the complaint concerns the Headteacher, the complainant must be referred to the Chair of Governors.

Where the first approach is made to a Governor, the next step would be to refer the complainant to the appropriate person and advise them about the correct procedure. Here, the Governor must not act unilaterally on an individual complaint outside the formal procedure or be involved at the early stages in case they are needed to sit on a panel at a complaint with a particular member of staff. In these cases, the matter can be referred to the Headteacher who may, if they feel it appropriate, refer the complainant to another member of staff. Alternatively, they may not feel this is necessary. Where the complaint concerns the Headteacher, the complainant must be referred to the Chair of Governors.

Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels too compromised to deal with a complaint, they may consider referring the complainant to the Headteacher. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the complaint objectively and impartially is crucial and the key factor.

The person dealing with the complaint should provide a written acknowledgement to the complainant **within 5 working days of receiving the complaint**. A copy of this complaints procedure should be provided at the same time.

The person dealing with the complaint will carry out the necessary investigation to establish the facts. This may include meeting with the complainant and interviewing relevant witnesses.

On completion of the investigation, a written response to the complaint should be provided to the complainant within **10 working days** of the school's written acknowledgement of the complaint.

The written response should contain an outline of the complaint, the response to the complaint, the decisions reached and the reasons for those decisions. This can include:

- *There is insufficient evidence to reach a conclusion so the complaint cannot be upheld*
- *The concern was not substantiated by the evidence*
- *The concern was substantiated in part or in full. Some details may then be given of the action that the school may be taking to review procedures etc. but details of the investigation or of any disciplinary procedures should not be released*
- *The matter has been fully investigated and that appropriate procedures are being followed which may be strictly confidential (e.g. where staff disciplinary procedures are being followed).*

The written response must be endorsed by the Headteacher. It should also inform the complainant that if they remain dissatisfied with the outcome to their complaint, they can progress it to the second stage of this procedure.

Complaints Procedure

If no further communication is received from the complainant within the specified period, it is deemed that the complaint has been resolved and the matter is closed.

Formal Complaints to the Head teacher/ Chair of Governors Stage one.

Formal complaints must be in writing, either in a letter, or email. It should be made clear that it is a formal complaint.

If you are unable to make a formal complaint in writing due to a disability or other difficulty, you must make your complaint in person and the complaint will be recorded on your behalf in writing.

Formal complaints should normally be addressed to the Head teacher in the first instance. If formal complaints are passed directly to the Chair of Governors or another named governor, then these complaints will be passed on to the Head teacher who will consult with the Chair of Governors. A decision will be made on who will respond to the complainant. If the complaint is against the Head teacher, then the Chair of Governors will automatically deal with the complaint.

The Head teacher or Chair of Governors will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge in writing (or by email) **receipt** of the complaint within **3 school** days.

The Head teacher or Chair of Governors will investigate the complaint and respond to the complainant within **14 school days** of the date of receipt of the complaint.

At this stage, the outcome of the investigation by the Head teacher or chair of Governors is final.

Note: At any time during the course of the investigation, the complainant can withdraw the complaint or ask for it to become an informal complain/concern. This must be done in writing by the complainant and will be acknowledged in writing by the Head teacher or Chair of Governors.

Formal Complaints to the Governing Body Stage Two

If there is dissatisfaction with the outcome of the initial investigation (Stage One) and the complainant feels strongly that s/he wishes to take the matter further, s/he may wish to put the matter before the governing body complaints committee. If the complainant wishes to proceed to the next stage of the procedure, they should inform the clerk to the governing board within **5 school days**.

Complaints can be escalated by contacting the clerk to the governing board:

- By letter or email
- Over the phone
- In person
- Through a third party acting on behalf of the complainant

Complaints Procedure

The clerk will need the details of the complaint as set out above, as well as details from the complainant on how they feel the previous stage of the procedure has not addressed their complaint sufficiently, and what they feel would resolve the complaint.

The Chair of Governors will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge in writing (or by email) **receipt** of the complaint **within 3 school** days. S/he will advise that a complaints' panel of 3 members of the Governing Body, who have not had any previous involvement in the complaint (if the Chair of Governors was involved in stage 1 of the process then they will not be permitted to sit on the complaints panel) will be convened at a date and time convenient to all parties but within **14 school days** of **receipt** of the complaint.

The clerk will write to and inform the panel, complainant and any witnesses of the date and location of the hearing. The notification should inform the complainant that they can bring a friend/relative to accompany them to the hearing, and that they, if they wish to, can submit further written evidence relevant to the complaint for consideration by the panel.

This further written evidence must be received **no later than 3 working days before** the hearing. The panel will not accept new complaints at this stage or evidence unrelated to the complaint being reviewed.

Where the date offered by the clerk is rejected by the complainant, the clerk can offer two additional dates. If these are also rejected without good reason, the clerk will decide when to hold the hearing which will then proceed in the complainant's absence and based on any written submissions and evidence from both parties.

The meeting will be clerked.

The governors' complaints panel will take the following points into account, bearing in mind that each party will be given the opportunity to state their case and ask questions, and written material will be seen by all parties:

- The hearing will be as informal as possible;
- Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.
- Witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing in which they give their evidence;
- After introductions, the complainant is invited to explain their complaint and the outcomes sought, and be followed by their witnesses;
- The Head teacher may question both the complainant and the witnesses after each has spoken;
- The Head teacher is then invited to explain the school's actions and be followed by the school's witnesses;
- The complainant may question both the Head teacher and the witnesses after each has spoken;
- The panel may ask questions at any point;
- The complainant is then invited to sum up their complaint;

Complaints Procedure

- The Headteacher is then invited to sum up the school's actions and response to the complaint;
- Both parties leave together while the panel decides on the issues;
- The Chair explains that both parties will be written to within 5 school days of the hearing, setting out the panel's decision(s).

The panel can:

- Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;
- Uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
- Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
- Recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

The decision of the panel, is final and the matter closed. The schools' complaints procedure at this stage will have been exhausted.

Note : The complainant may ask for his/her complaint to be withdrawn at any stage and this will be acknowledged in writing by the Chair of Governors or the Chair of the complaints panel, whichever is appropriate.

Complaints Received Outside of Term Time

Complaints delivered to the school outside of term time, will be deemed to have been received on the first day the school returns from its break.

Serial, Persistent, Unreasonable and Vexatious Complainants

There will be occasions when, despite all stages of the complaints procedure having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If a complainant tries to re-open the same issue, the school can inform them that the procedure has been completed and that the matter is now closed.

If the complainant contacts the school again on the same issue, the correspondence may then be viewed as "serial" or "unreasonable" or even "vexatious" and the school will then use the Policy on Vexatious and Persistent complaints.

Reviewed: February 2024

To be reviewed: February 2025



Chair of Governors

Complaints Procedure

Appendix 1-Alternatives to the Complaints Procedure

Admissions to schools Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs School re-organisation	Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with Hillingdon Local Authority
Exclusion of children from school	This complaints procedure will apply to complaints about the application of the School Behaviour Policy. Further information about raising concerns in respect of exclusions can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions
National Curriculum – content	Please contact the Department for Education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus
Collective Worship	Complainants who are dissatisfied with the content of the daily act of collective worship should contact the local authority or the Local Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education or any other relevant Body.
Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation/Safeguarding	Complainants who are dissatisfied with the content of the daily act of collective worship should contact the local authority
Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation/Safeguarding	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policies and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance. If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO)- Hannah Ives 01895 250975/07753-431285 or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) https://hillingdonsafeguardingpartnership.org.uk/professionals/useful-guidance/mash/
Whistleblowing	Whistleblowing complaints are handled under our Whistleblowing Policy which applies to all our staff. If you are not a staff member and wish to raise or report a concern, this complaints procedure will apply. You may also be able to complain to the local authority or the Department for Education depending on the substance of your complaint. www.education.gov.uk/contactus
Staff grievances	Complaints from staff (including former staff) concerning the employment relationship will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures. If staff members have children at the school where they are employed and wish to make a complaint in their capacity as a parent concerning their child, this complaints procedure will apply. Where this is the case, the staff grievances complaints from staff (including former staff) concerning the employment relationship 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.
Data Protection	Complaints to be made direct to the School's Data Protection Officer or the ICO. https://ico.org.uk/global/contact-us/
Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them directly.

Complaints Procedure