

West Park School



Complaints Policy

Date approved by Governors:	17th March 2025
Policy Owner:	School Business Manager
Date of last Review:	March 2026
Date of next Review:	March 2027

Dealing with Complaints

The school will attempt to handle all concerns at the earliest opportunity and therefore avoid the need for formal procedures. Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage will reduce formal complaints. The requirement to have a formal complaints policy does not undermine our efforts to resolve concerns informally as possible.

In most cases, the member of staff working directly with the pupil will receive the first approach and attempt to resolve issues, involving more senior staff if necessary.

The formal procedures will be invoked when initial attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful and the person raising the concerns remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further. Complainants will be encouraged to state what actions they feel might resolve the problem at any stage.

Process (see flow chart)

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

Anonymous Complaints

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

Informal procedure

The teacher or other relevant member of staff will respond directly to the complainant and resolve the issue. If the complainant is not satisfied, they will be informed of how to proceed to the formal procedure. The form can be collected and submitted via the school office.

Formal procedure – Stage 1

The complaint is submitted on the complaints pro-forma to the Head who will acknowledge receipt, investigate and provide a written response. 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 and will aim to respond within 15 working 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.

Complaints about the headteacher or trustees must be made to the Clerk, via the school office.

Formal procedure – Stage 2

A request to escalate to Stage 2 must be made to the Clerk, via the school office, within 10 school days of receipt of the Stage 1 response.

The complaint is submitted to the Clerk to Trustees requesting that the complaint be heard by the Trustee's Complaints Panel. The complaints committee will consist of at least three trustees 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. The

Clerk to Trustees will arrange a hearing and confirm the decision in writing.

If the complainant is invited to attend the meeting, they may bring someone along to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. Generally, we do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the committee meeting. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate.

Formal procedure – Stage 3

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 or the relevant regulatory body after they have completed Stage 2.

The Remit of the Complaints Panel

The Complaints panel will be independent and impartial and no trustee will sit on the panel if they have had prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it. The panel will include one member who is independent of the running or management of the school. The remaining members will consist of a cross-section of the categories of trustee and be sensitive to the issues of race, gender and religious affiliation. The panel will aim to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant.

It has to be recognised that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the panel does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations which will satisfy the complainant that his or her complaint has been taken seriously.

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.

A copy of the findings and recommendations will be provided in writing to the complainant and, where appropriate, the person complained about within 10 school days of the decision being made.

A copy of the findings and recommendations will be made available for inspection on the school premises and can be accessed via the school office.

Vexatious Complaints

There may be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedure having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to re-open the same issue, the Chair of Trustees is able to inform them in writing that the procedure has been followed and that the matter is now closed.

Investigating Complaints

The Head or nominated member of staff will:

- establish what has happened so far, and who has been involved;
- clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved;

- meet with the complainant or contact them to clarify or gain further information;
- interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
- conduct all interviews with an open mind;
- keep notes of the interview and record the outcome;
- provide a written response to the complainant.

Recording Complaints

The Clerk to Trustees will record the progress of complaints and the final outcome and ensure that the complainant and the school have the same understanding of what was discussed and agreed.

Trustee Board Review of Complaints

The Trustee Board will monitor the level and nature of complaints and review the outcomes to ensure the procedure is operating effectively.

Withdrawal of Complaints

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

Publicising the Procedure

This procedure will be available on the school's website.

Record Keeping

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 Education Act requests access to them.

CONCERN OR COMPLAINT RECEIVED



INFORMAL PROCEDURE	SCHOOL ACTION
<p>Informal discussion with the relevant teacher or other relevant member of staff usually resulting in resolution of the issue.</p> <p>If the complaint is about the Head – proceed to Stage 2</p>	<p>The complainant is informed of the action to be taken to resolve the issue. If they are not satisfied they will be provided with a copy of the school’s Complaints Procedure and information on how to proceed to stage 1.</p>

FORMAL PROCEDURE – STAGE 1	SCHOOL ACTION
<p>The complaint is submitted in writing to the Head.</p>	<p>The Head acknowledges receipt within 5 school days and provides a written response within 15 working days. Information will be provided to the complainant on how to proceed to stage 2 if not satisfied.</p>

FORMAL PROCEDURE – STAGE 2	SCHOOL ACTION
<p>The complaint is submitted to the Clerk to Trustees requesting that the complaint be heard by the Trustee’s Complaints Panel. The Clerk to Trustees will arrange a hearing and confirm the decision in writing. The complaints committee will consist of at least three Trustees 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.</p>	<p>The Clerk to Trustees convenes a meeting of the Complaints Panel to meet within 25 school days from receipt of the written complaint. The Clerk to Trustees informs the complainant of the findings, in writing, within 5 school days of the meeting.</p>

FORMAL PROCEDURE – STAGE 3	SCHOOL ACTION
<p>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 or the relevant regulatory body after they have completed Stage 2.</p> <p>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:</p> <p>Department for Education Piccadilly Gate Store Street Manchester</p> <p>M1 2WD.</p>	<p>The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by West Park School. They will consider whether West Park School has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint.</p>

COMPLAINT FORM

Please complete and return to the school office.

YOUR NAME:	
PUPIL NAME:	
YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO THE PUPIL:	
ADDRESS:	
DAYTIME TELEPHONE NUMBER: EVENING TELEPHONE NUMBER	

PLEASE GIVE DETAILS OF YOUR COMPLAINT:

--

WHAT ACTION, IF ANY, HAVE YOU ALREADY TAKEN TO TRY AND RESOLVE YOUR COMPLAINT?

--

WHAT ACTION DO YOU FEEL MIGHT RESOLVE THE PROBLEM AT THIS STAGE?

--

ARE YOU ATTACHING PAPERWORK? IF SO, PLEASE GIVE DETAILS

--

SIGNATURE:	
DATE:	

SCHOOL USE ONLY	
DATE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT SENT:	
BY WHO:	
COMPLAINT REFERRED TO:	
DATE:	