



Please note, following an update from the Department for Education, schools are not expected to handle new or existing complaints while they are closed. George Green's School will, however, still engage with parents and students where it can. Complaints will be considered once the government confirms schools can safely reopen.

Complaints Procedure

Date	Version	Comment
October 2019	1.0	Draft for review by Executive Principal
October 2019	1.1	EP review comments
November 2019	1.2	EP Review comments addressed
January 2020	2.0	Review by governors. Final

Signed:

Date:



Complaints Procedure

George Green's School is a Rights Respecting School

*The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) Article 13 (freedom of expression):
Every child must be free to express their thoughts and opinions and to access all kinds of information, as long as it is within the law*

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1. Introduction

George Green's School is committed to providing the best education for our students. We want our students to be healthy, happy and safe and to do well. We recognise the importance of establishing and maintaining good relationships with parents, carers and the wider community.

We are aware that there may be occasions where people have concerns or complaints and the following procedure sets out the steps that should be followed in order to resolve these as quickly and informally as possible.



Complaints Procedure

2. Aims

The School aims to meet its statutory obligations when responding to complaints from parents/carers of students 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
- Treat complainants with respect and courtesy
- Ensure 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 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.

3. 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 unreasonable complaints.

4. Definitions and scope

4.1 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”



Complaints Procedure

4.2 Scope

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. George Green's School takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

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 the following;

Exceptions	Who to contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admissions to schools • Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs* • School re-organisation proposals 	<p>Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.</p> <p><i>*arrangements for handling complaints from parents of children with special educational needs (SEN) about the school's support are within the scope of this policy. Such complaints should first be made to the Year Leader, who may direct you to one of the Learning Support teachers, the SENCO or other members of the interventions team. They will then be referred to this complaints policy.</i></p>
<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). Contact: 020 7364 5000</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. Please refer to the School's website for the behaviour policy</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>Other concerns can be raised directly with Ofsted by telephone on 0300 123 3155, via email at: whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk or by writing to:</p> <p>WHBL, Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD.</p> <p>The Department for Education is also a prescribed body for whistleblowing in education.</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>



Complaints Procedure

Exceptions	Who to contact
<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">• National Curriculum - content	<p>Please contact the Department for Education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus</p>

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

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 George Green's 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. 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.

Informal Stage

The School will take informal concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve the matter quickly. It may be the case that the provision or clarification of information will resolve the issue.

Concerns should be raised as soon as possible with either the relevant member of staff or the Year Leader in the first instance. If you are unclear who to contact or how to contact them, please contact the school office on 020 7987 6032.

It is recommended that you make an appointment to speak to the member of staff as soon as possible as this will give both parties the opportunity to talk about the issue in an appropriate manner and without being interrupted. The purpose of this meeting should be to establish the nature of the concern and to seek a realistic resolution to the problem.

It is important to recognise that schools are busy organisations and it may not be possible to offer an appointment straight away.

It is good practice for staff to create a brief written record of the concern raised and any actions agreed.

If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint. Moving to the formal stages is a serious step. If, at any stage, a resolution to the issue can be sought through negotiation of an agreement, this should be considered by all involved.

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 Formal Stage 2 of the procedure.



Complaints Procedure

Formal Stage 1

Formal complaints must be made to the Executive Principal or Principal (unless they are about the Executive Principal or Principal). This may be done in person, in writing (preferably on the [Complaint Form](#)), or by telephone. Your complaint should set out clearly the nature of the complaint, what remains unresolved and what outcome the you would like to see.

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.

The Executive Principal or Principal will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within five school days. For complaints received by telephone, the call itself is deemed to be an acknowledgement of the complaint.

Note: The Principal / Executive Principal 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 Executive Principal or Principal (or investigator) will:

- establish what has happened so far, and who has been involved
- clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved
- understand what you feel would put things right if this has not been set out in your written complaint
- 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 Executive Principal or Principal will provide a formal written response by email or letter within 20 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint.

If the Executive Principal or Principal 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 George Green's School will take to resolve the complaint.

The Executive Principal or Principal will advise the complainant of how to escalate the complaint should you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Formal Stage 1.

Concerns or complaints specifically above the Executive Principal or Principal or any individual governor

If the complaint is about the Executive Principal, Principal, 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 Formal Stage 1.

Complaints about the Executive Principal, Principal or member of the governing body must be made to the Clerk to the Governing Body, 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



Complaints Procedure

Stage 1 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.

Formal Stage 2

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Formal Stage 1 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Formal Stage 2 – 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 2 must be made to the Clerk, via the school office, within 10 school days of receipt of the Stage 1 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 10 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 2 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 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. If there are fewer than three governors from George Green's School available, the Clerk will source any additional, independent governors through another local school or through their Local Authority's Governor Services team, in order to make up the committee. Alternatively, an entirely independent committee may be convened to hear the complaint at Stage 2.

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. 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.

For instance, if a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by union and/or legal representation.

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 five 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 three school days before the meeting.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least two school days before the date of the meeting.



Complaints Procedure

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. Electronic/digital recordings of meetings or conversations are not 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.

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 George Green's School 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.

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 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 George Green's School will take to resolve the complaint.

The response will also advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied.

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 within the school.



Complaints Procedure

6. Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, George Green's 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 school policies in light of the complaint
- an apology.

It may also be the case that the complaint may not have any substance and is therefore considered to be unfounded or unsubstantiated.

7. What is expected of complainants

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
- Treat all those involved with respect
- Not publish details about the complaint on social media

8. Anonymous complaints

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

Members of staff can use the School's Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure where there are concerns around confidentiality.

9. 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 and the complaint can still be investigated in a fair manner for all involved.

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

If at any point we cannot meet the time scales we have set out in these procedures we will set new time limits with the complainant, confirming in writing and explaining the delay.



Complaints Procedure

10. Serial and unreasonable complaints

George Green's School 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 school. 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 abusive, offensive or threatening.

George Green's 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 complaints investigation process
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints 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 Executive Principal, Principal or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an '*unreasonable*' marking.



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If the behaviour continues, the Executive Principal or Principal will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact George Green's School 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 may bar an individual from George Green's School. This may result in us informing the police and we will communicate our actions to the complainant in writing.

11. Withdrawal of a complaint

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

12. 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 2. The Local Authority complaints procedure will also direct the complainant to the Department for Education. Please refer to

[https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgnl/council and democracy/complaints/complaints.aspx](https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgnl/council%20and%20democracy/complaints/complaints.aspx)

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by George Green's School. Instead they will consider whether George Green's School has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint.

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.

13. Monitoring

This document will be reviewed at least annually and referred to the governing body.

14. Links to other policies

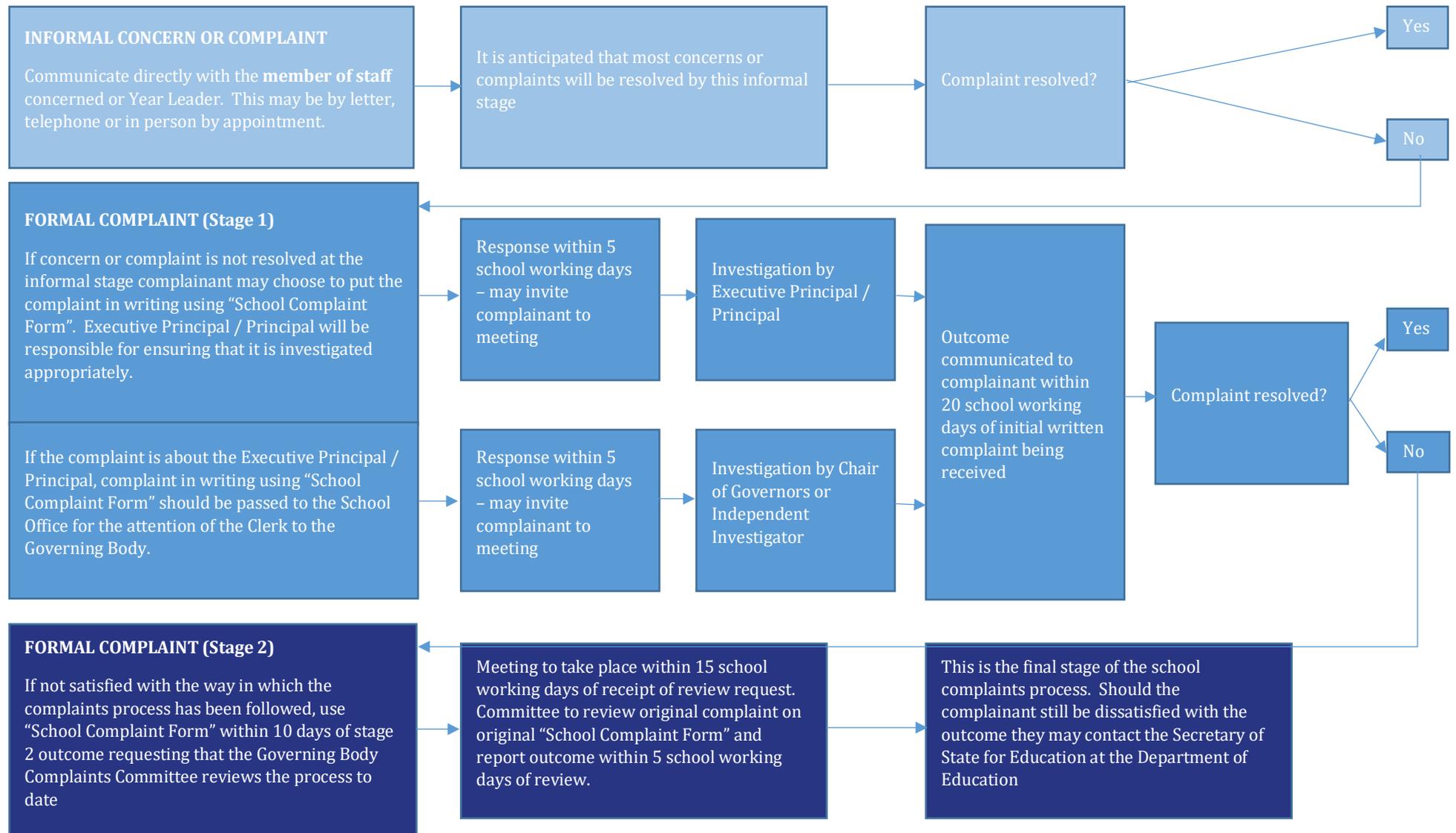
- Staff Grievance Resolution Procedure
- Staff Disciplinary Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Data Protection Policy

Complaints Procedure

- Data Retention Policy



Appendix 1 – Complaints Flow Chart





Appendix 2 – Complaint Form

School Complaint Form

Please complete this form and return to the School Reception. The Principal / Executive Principal will acknowledge receipt of your complaint and will explain what action will be taken.

Your Name:

.....

Student Name (if relevant):..... Tutor Group:

.....

Your Relationship to student (if relevant) :

.....

Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it.

School use only:

Action taken

Email: Phone Number:

Signature:

Date:

Thank you.



Complaints Procedure

Reception: Please hand this to Principal's PA.

