



# Complaints Procedure

Date	Version	Comment
May 2024	2.9	Revision to "Stage 3" to insert review by the Chair of the Governing Body

Signed:

Date:

# Complaints Procedure



## Version History

Date	Version	Comment
November 2023	2.8	Reviewed by Full Governing Body
January 2022	2.5 & 2.6	Amendments based on model policies from DfE, The Key and The School Bus. v2.6 Approved by Principal. Recommended to B&F Committee
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November 2019	1.2	EP Review comments addressed
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October 2019	1.0	Draft for review by Executive Principal



# 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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# Complaints Procedure

## 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
- 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.

As a Rights Respecting School, the best interests of the child is at the heart of everything we do.

## 2. 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.

This document meets the requirements of section 35 of the schedule to [the Education \(Non-Maintained Special Schools\) \(England\) Regulations 2011](#), which states that non-maintained special schools must have and make available a written procedure to deal with complaints relating to their school.

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

## 3. Definitions and scope

### 3.1 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”
- A **complaint** is defined as “an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action”



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## 3.2 Scope

The school intends to resolve complaints informally where possible, at the earliest possible stage.

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:

- 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

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

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

## 4. Roles and responsibilities

### 4.1 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

### 4.2 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 Principal or complaints committee, which includes the facts and potential solutions

### 4.3 The complaints co-ordinator

The complaints co-ordinator can be:

- The Principal
- A designated governor for the complaint, if appointed

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- 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 Principal, chair of governors, clerk and, depending on the nature of the complaint, the local authority in maintained schools
- 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

## 4.4 Clerk to the governing board

The clerk will:

- Be the contact point for the complainant and the complaints panel, including circulating the relevant papers and evidence before complaints panel meetings
- Arrange the complaints hearing
- Record and circulate the minutes and outcome of the hearing

## 4.5 Panel chair

The panel chair will:

- Chair the meeting, ensuring that everyone is treated with respect throughout
- Make sure all parties see the relevant information, understand the purpose of the panel, and are allowed to present their case

## 5. 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

### 5.1 Time scales

The complainant must raise the complaint within 3 months of the incident. If the complaint is about a series of related incidents, they must raise the complaint within 3 months of the last incident.

We will consider exceptions to this timeframe in circumstances where there were valid reasons for not making a complaint at that time and the complaint can still be investigated in a fair manner for all involved.

When complaints are made out of term time, we will consider them to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

If at any point we cannot meet the timescales we have set out in this policy, we will:

- Set new time limits with the complainant
- Send the complainant details of the new deadline and explain the delay

The school aims to resolve concerns, difficulties and complaints in a timely manner. Time limits for each stage of the procedure are set out under each individual stage. For the purposes of this Complaints Policy, a "school day" is defined



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as a weekday during term time, when the school is open to children. The definition of "school day" excludes weekends, school holidays and bank holidays. For the avoidance of doubt, term dates are published on the school's website, and information about term dates is made available to parents and students periodically.

Although every effort will be made by the school to comply with the time limits specified under each stage of the procedure, it may not always be possible to do so, for example due to the complexity or number of matters raised, or due to the unavailability of the Complainant to attend a meeting, if offered. In all cases, where a time limit cannot be complied with, the school will write to the Complainant within the specified time limit, setting out the reason.

## 6. Stages of complaint (not complaints against the Principal or governors)

- **Informal complaints** – raised verbally with school staff and resolution sought through dialogue.
- **Formal complaints** – submitted in writing and investigated (usually by the Principal unless the complaint is about the Principal).
- **Complaints panel** – convened if the formal stage does not achieve resolution, whereby a panel of governors decides whether or not the complaint is upheld.

### 6.1 Stage 1: informal

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.

The complainant should raise the informal complaint as soon as possible with the relevant member of staff or the Principal as appropriate, either in person or by letter, telephone or email. If the complainant is unclear who to contact or how to contact them, they should contact the school office on 020 7987 6032 or at [enquiries@georgegreens.com](mailto:enquiries@georgegreens.com).

The school will acknowledge informal complaints within 5 school days, and investigate and provide a response within 20 school days.

The informal stage will involve a meeting between the complainant and the Principal, the person nominated to investigate, or another member of staff, as appropriate.

All complaints, except those against the Principal or a governor, will be dealt with under the informal stage of the complaints process (stage 1) in the first instance. If the complaint is not resolved informally, it will be escalated to a formal complaint.

### 6.2 Stage 2: formal

Formal complaints should be raised:

- By letter or email
- Using the complaints form appended to this policy
- By a third party in writing acting on behalf of the complainant

The complainant should provide details such as relevant dates, times, and the names of witnesses of events, alongside copies of any relevant documents, and what they feel would resolve the complaint. Formal complaints should be sent to the Principal's PA ([fbegum3@georgegreens.com](mailto:fbegum3@georgegreens.com)) unless the complaint is about the Principal or a member of the Governing Body in which case it should be sent to the Clerk of the Governing Body at [clerk@georgegreens.com](mailto:clerk@georgegreens.com).

If complainants need assistance raising a formal complaint, they can contact Principal's PA or at [enquiries@georgegreens.com](mailto:enquiries@georgegreens.com).

The Principal 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.



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The Principal (or designated member of the senior leadership team) may call a meeting to clarify concerns, and seek a resolution. The complainant may be accompanied to this meeting, and should inform the school of the identity of their companion in advance.

In certain circumstances, the school may need to refuse a request for a particular individual to attend any such meeting – for example, if there is a conflict of interest or if the person is banned from the school site. If this is the case, the school will notify the complainant as soon as they are aware, so that the complainant has the opportunity to arrange alternative accompaniment.

The Principal (or other person appointed by the Principal for this purpose) will then conduct their own investigation. The written conclusion of this investigation will be sent to the complainant within [20] school days, except in exceptional circumstances and the complainant will be notified.

If the complainant wishes to proceed to the next stage of the procedure, they should inform the clerk to the governing board within [10] school days.

## 6.3 Stage 3: Review by the Chair of the Governing Body

If the complainant is unsatisfied with the outcome of the complaint under stage 2, the complainant may write to the Clerk of the Governing Body asking for the complaint to be reviewed by the Chair of the Governing Body. Complaints can be escalated by contacting the clerk to the governing board at [clerk@georgegreens.com](mailto:clerk@georgegreens.com):

- By letter or email
- Through a third party acting on behalf of the complainant

The clerk will need 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 clerk will inform the Chair of Governors of the need to review the complaint.

The Chair of the Governing Body, or a Governor nominated by the Chair, will be provided with all relevant documentation relating to the complaint and will review and consider all matters raised in the complaint and investigation carried out under stage 2. Following this review, if the Chair or nominated Governor feels it appropriate, the complainant will be offered a meeting to discuss the issues raised with a view to reaching an acceptable resolution.

The written conclusion of this investigation will be sent to the complainant within [20] school days of receipt of the request.

If the complainant is unsatisfied with the outcome under stage 3 and wishes to proceed to the next stage of the procedure, they should inform the clerk to the governing board in writing within [10] school days. Requests received outside of this timeframe will be considered in exceptional circumstances.

The clerk will acknowledge receipt of the request within [5] school days.

## 6.4 Stage 4: Review by a complaints panel of Governors

### Convening the panel

The complaints panel consists of the first 3 members of the governing board available, who don't have direct knowledge of the complaint. These individuals will have access to the existing record of the complaint's progress (see section 10). The governors will select a panel chair from among themselves.

If not enough impartial governors are available, we will seek panel members from other schools or the local authority. We will make sure the governors we source are suitably skilled and can demonstrate that they are independent and impartial.

The complainant must have reasonable notice of the date of the complaints panel. The clerk will aim to find a date within [20] school days of the request, where possible.

If the complainant rejects the offer of 3 proposed dates without good reason, the clerk will set a date. The hearing will go ahead using written submissions from both parties.





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Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least [5] school days before the date of the meeting.

## At the meeting

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending will be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

At the complaints panel meeting, the complainant and representatives from the school, as appropriate, will be present. Each will have an opportunity to set out written or oral submissions prior to the meeting.

The complainant must be allowed to attend the panel hearing and be accompanied by a suitable companion if they wish. We don't encourage either party to bring legal representation but will consider it on a case-by-case basis. For instance, if a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by their union.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

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

The panel, the complainant and the school representative will be given the chance to ask and reply to questions. Once the complainant and school representatives have completed presenting their cases, they will be asked to leave and evidence will then be considered.

The panel will then put together its findings and recommendations from the case. The panel will also provide copies of the minutes of the hearing and the findings and recommendations to the complainant and, where relevant, the subject of the complaint, and make a copy of the findings and recommendations available for inspection by the Principal.

## The outcome

The panel can:

- Uphold the complaint, in whole or in part
- Dismiss the complaint, in whole or in part

If the complaint is upheld, the committee will:

- Decide the appropriate action to resolve the complaint
- Where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future

The school will inform those involved of the decision in writing within [10] school days.

## 7. Complaints against the Principal, a governor or the governing board

### 7.1 Stage 1: Informal

Complaints made against the Principal or any member of the governing board should be directed to the Chair of Governors to the governing board in the first instance – [chair@georgegreens.com](mailto:chair@georgegreens.com).

If the complaint is about the Principal or 1 member of the governing board (including the chair or vice-chair), a suitably skilled and impartial governor will carry out the steps at stage 1 (set out in section 6 above), and may appoint an independent investigator to support them in the investigation.

### 7.2 Stage 2: Formal

If the complaint is:

- Jointly about the chair and vice-chair or



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- The entire governing board or
- The majority of the governing board

An independent investigator will carry out the steps in stage 2 (set out in section 6 above). They will be appointed by the governing board, and will write a formal response at the end of their investigation.

## 7.3 Stage 3: review panel if the complaint is:

- Jointly about the chair and vice-chair or
- The entire governing board or
- The majority of the governing board

A panel of independent governors will hear the complaint. They will be sourced from local schools and/or the local authority and will carry out the steps at stage 3 (set out in section 6 above).

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

If the complainant is unsatisfied with the outcome of the school's complaints procedure, they can refer their complaint to the DfE.

The DfE will not re-investigate the matter of the complaint. It will look at whether the school's complaints policy and any other relevant statutory policies that the school holds were adhered to. The DfE also looks at whether the school's statutory policies adhere to education legislation.

The DfE will intervene where a school has:

- Failed to act in line with its duties under education law
- Acted (or is proposing to act) unreasonably when exercising its functions

If the complaints procedure is found to not meet regulations, the school will be asked to correct its procedure accordingly.

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

<https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school>

We will include this information in the outcome letter to complainants.

## 9. Persistent complaints

### 9.1 Unreasonably persistent complaints

Most complaints raised will be valid, and therefore we will treat them seriously. However, a complaint may become unreasonable if the person:

- Has made the same complaint before, and it's already been resolved by following the school's complaints procedure
- Makes a complaint that is obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, defamatory or repetitive
- Insists on pursuing a complaint that is unfounded, or out of scope of the complaints procedure, beyond all reason
- Pursues a valid complaint, but in an unreasonable manner e.g. refuses to articulate the complaint, refuses to co-operate with this complaints procedure, or insists that the complaint is dealt with in ways that are incompatible with this procedure and the timeframes it sets out
- Makes a complaint designed to cause disruption, annoyance or excessive demands on school time
- Seeks unrealistic outcomes, or a solution that lacks any serious purpose or value

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## Steps we will take

We will take every reasonable step to address the complainant's concerns, and give them a clear statement of our position and their options. We will maintain our role as an objective arbiter throughout the process, including when we meet with individuals. We will follow our complaints procedure as normal (as outlined above) wherever possible.

If the complainant continues to contact the school in a disruptive way, we may put communications strategies in place. We may:

- Give the complainant a single point of contact via an email address
- Limit the number of times the complainant can make contact, such as a fixed number per term
- Ask the complainant to engage a third party to act on their behalf, such as [Citizens Advice](#)
- Put any other strategy in place as necessary

## Stopping responding

We may stop responding to the complainant when all of these factors are met:

- We believe we have taken all reasonable steps to help address their concerns
- We have provided a clear statement of our position and their options
- The complainant contacts us repeatedly, and we believe their intention is to cause disruption or inconvenience

Where we stop responding, we will inform the individual that we intend to do so. We will also explain that we will still consider any new complaints they make.

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 our school site.

## 9.2 Duplicate complaints

If we have resolved a complaint under this procedure and receive a duplicate complaint on the same subject from a partner, family member or other individual, we will assess whether there are aspects that we hadn't previously considered, or any new information we need to take into account.

If we are satisfied that there are no new aspects, we will:

- Tell the new complainant that we have already investigated and responded to this issue, and that the local process is complete
- Direct them to the DfE if they are dissatisfied with our original handling of the complaint

If there are new aspects, we will follow the complaints procedure set out in this document again.

## 9.3 Complaint campaigns

Where the school receives a large volume of complaints about the same topic or subject, especially if these come from complainants unconnected with the school, the school may respond to these complaints by:

- Publishing a single response on the school website
- Sending a template response to all of the complainants

If complainants are not satisfied with the school's response, or wish to pursue the complaint further, the normal procedures will apply.



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## 10. 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 final outcome. The records will also include copies of letters and emails, and notes relating to meetings and phone calls.

This material will be treated as confidential and held centrally, and will be viewed only by those involved in investigating the complaint or on the complaints 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 through a subject access request under the terms of the Data Protection Act 2018, or where the material must be made available during a school inspection.

Records of complaints will be kept securely, only for as long as necessary and in line with data protection law, our privacy notices and data protection policy.

The details of the complaint, including the names of individuals involved, will not be shared with the whole governing board in case a complaints panel needs to be organised at a later point.

Where the governing board is aware of the substance of the complaint before the complaints 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 decision to approve this request is made by the governing board, who will not unreasonably withhold consent.

## 11. Learning lessons

The governing board will review any underlying issues raised by complaints with the Principal and Senior Leadership Team where appropriate, and respecting confidentiality, to determine whether there are any improvements that the school can make to its procedures or practice to help prevent similar events in the future.

## 12. Withdrawal of complaint

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

## 13. 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 Formal 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/ignl/council\\_and\\_democracy/complaints/complaints.aspx](https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/ignl/council_and_democracy/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 the DfE will consider whether the 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: <https://www.gov.uk/contact-dfe>, by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:

Department for Education  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD.



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## 12. Monitoring arrangements

The governing board will monitor the effectiveness of the complaints procedure in making sure that complaints are handled properly. The governing board will track the number and nature of complaints, and review underlying issues as stated in section 11.

The complaints records are logged and managed by the Principal.

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Full Governing Board.

## 13. Links with other policies

Policies dealing with other forms of complaints include:

- 16-19 Bursary
- Admissions Policy
- CCTV Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedures
- Data Protection Policy
- Data Retention Policy
- Freedom of Information Policy
- SEN Policy and Information Report
- Security Policy
- Staff Disciplinary Procedures
- Staff Grievance Procedures
- Supporting Students with Medical Needs
- Permanent Exclusion/ Suspension Policy
- Privacy Notices
- Whistleblowing

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



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## Complaint Form

Please complete this form and return to the School Reception (in an envelope to ensure privacy) marked for the attention of the Principal (or Chair of Governors where appropriate).

The recipient 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): .....

Email: ..... Phone Number: .....

Please set out succinctly the nature of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it, and any actions you feel might resolve the problem at this stage.

Signature: .....

Date: .....