



Complaints Procedure Policy

Approved by the Management Committee

Hawkswood Group

Date of Next Review: September 2025

Ratified: September 2023

Complaints Procedure

1. Introduction

- 1.1 At The Hawkswood Group, as a priority we strive to provide a professional service and a good education for all our children. The head teacher and staff work have a responsibility to do everything reasonable to build positive relationships with all parents/ carers and other stakeholders.
- 1.2 However, the school is obliged to have procedures in place in case there are complaints by parents, carers or other adults working within the school setting. The following policy sets out the procedures that the school follows in such cases.
- 1.3 If any parents have a concern with the education that their child is receiving, or have any concerns relating to the school, we encourage them to talk to their child's mentor, form tutor, class teacher or a member of SLT immediately so that there can be an opportunity to resolve this quickly.
- 1.4 Any complaint regarding a Safeguarding issue may be dealt with under the Safeguarding Policy, Staff Conduct and Staff Disciplinary policies as appropriate.

2. Complaints about the actions of a member of staff other than the Headteacher

2.1 Informal Stage

- 2.1.1 Most parental concerns can be adequately resolved by informal discussion with one of the appropriate members of staff in 1.3. These discussions may or may not include the member of staff who is the object of the complaint. There will be no need for the complaint to be put in writing, which would formalise matters and parents may feel less willing to articulate concerns, perhaps because of fear that such action may prejudice the interests of their child. In the case of more serious concerns, it may be appropriate to address them directly to the Headteacher.

2.2 Formal Stage

- 2.2.1 If the complainant is not satisfied with the response received, and the school has had a reasonable opportunity to resolve the matter, they should put the complaint in writing. This may be to the Headteacher or a member of the Senior Leadership Team. The complainant should normally receive a response within 15 school days of contacting the senior member of staff. The complaint should include details, which might assist the investigation, such as names of potential witnesses, dates and times of events, and copies of relevant documents. In addition, the Headteacher / SLT may meet with the complainant to clarify the complaint. It is good practice to have a colleague with the Headteacher / SLT during any such meeting, although this should not be anyone who is the object of the complaint or who has had any prior dealings with the matter.
- 2.2.2 The Headteacher or other designated member of staff will collect any other evidence, as s/he deems necessary. Where this involves an interview with a member of staff, s/he may be accompanied by a friend or representative if they wish. The investigation will begin as soon as possible and when it has been concluded the complainant, and the member of staff concerned, will be informed in writing of the outcome. This may be to the effect that:

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

2.2.3 The complainant will be told that consideration of their complaint by the Headteacher / SLT is now concluded. If the complainant is not satisfied with the manner in which the process has been followed, the complainant may request the Management Committee's complaints panel to review the process followed by the Headteacher (see Section 3). Any such request must be put in writing within 10 school days of receiving notice of the outcome from the Headteacher/ SLT, and include a statement specifying any perceived failures to follow procedure. If the complainant considers that the decision of the Headteacher / SLT is perverse, or that the Headteacher / SLT has acted unreasonably in considering the complaint, then the complainant may bring a complaint against the Headteacher as detailed in Section 3 below OR the member of SLT as detailed in Section 2.

3. Complaints about the actions of the Headteacher

3.1 Informal Stage

3.1.1 The complainant is usually expected to arrange to speak directly with the Headteacher, except in the case of serious concerns when it may be appropriate to raise them directly with the Chair of the Management Committee. Many concerns can be resolved by simple clarification or the provision of information.

3.1.2 However, in certain circumstances it may be appropriate to encourage parents/carers to put their concerns in writing, for example where there is continuing/constant verbalising of concerns even when the Headteacher considers they have been appropriately dealt with.

In dealing with the complaint, there will also be an appropriate balance in ensuring that staff are not being subjected to harassment or malicious complaints. If there are grounds to consider that the complaint may fall into this category then the Harassment Policy may be activated and action taken to protect staff from unfair and unwarranted behaviour/s.

3.2 Formal Stage

3.2.1 If the complaint is not resolved at the informal stage, the complainant must put the complaint in writing to the Chair of the Management Committee who is responsible for investigating it. In certain circumstances it may be more appropriate for the investigation to be conducted by the Vice-Chair, for example if the complainant is well known to the Chair. In such cases, this person is termed 'the Investigator'.

3.2.2 The complainant should include details which might assist the investigation, such as names of potential witnesses, dates and times of events and copies of relevant documents. In addition, the complainant will be invited to meet with the Chair to present oral evidence or to clarify the complaint. The Chair will collect such other evidence as is deemed necessary. This may include the interviewing of witnesses and others who may provide relevant information. It is good practice to always have another person with the Chair during any such meeting, although this should not be anyone who is the object of the complaint or

who has any connection with the complaint. The person could act as a brief note taker to aid the Chair's investigation. These will not be formal minutes but brief notes describing the issues under review.

- 3.2.3 The Headteacher will be provided with a copy of the complaint and any additional evidence presented by the complainant or collected by the Chair. Once there has been an opportunity for the Headteacher to consider this, he/she will be invited to meet separately with the Chair, in order to present written and oral evidence in response. A friend or representative may accompany the Headteacher at this meeting.
- 3.2.4 When the investigation has been concluded, the complainant and the Headteacher will be informed in writing of the outcome. The complainant will not be informed of any disciplinary/capability action. The whole process should be concluded within 20 school days.
- 3.2.5 The complainant will be told that consideration of their complaint by the Chair is now concluded. If the complainant is not satisfied with the manner in which the process has been followed, the complainant may request that the Management Committee's complaints panel review the process followed. Any such request must be made in writing within 2 school weeks of receiving notice of the outcome from the Chair, and include a statement specifying any perceived failures to follow the procedure.

4. Review of complaint's process by the Management Committee Panel

- 4.1 Any review of the process followed by the Headteacher or the Chair of the Management Committee (or Investigator) shall be conducted by a panel of three members of the Management Committee. It should be noted, however, that if any of the committee members have been involved directly or indirectly with the case then they must not form part of the panel.
- 4.2 The panel is established to review the process not the decision taken by the Headteacher, Chair or Investigator, following the receipt of a formal complaint. However, when a parent writes to the panel seeking a review it may not be clear until the panel meets, whether or not this is only a matter of process or simple dissatisfaction with the decision reached. The first task of the panel, therefore, is to determine the nature of the request.
- 4.3 If the panel forms the view that it is a matter of the complainant being dissatisfied with the decision reached then the panel will not take the matter any further*. If however, the complainant is concerned that the process undertaken by the Headteacher or the Chair was not in accordance with the published process then the panel will continue their review.
- 4.4 The panel may receive evidence from the complainant orally, who may be accompanied by a friend or relative, or representative if they wish, and/or in writing. The complainant may submit relevant documentary evidence. In addition, the panel will meet separately with the Headteacher or the Chair/Investigator, as appropriate, to receive an account of the procedure which has been followed. This account may be presented orally and in writing. The panel will also have access to the records kept of the process followed.
- 4.5 It is good practice to have a note taker to assist the panel during any such meeting, although this should not be anyone who is the object of the complaint or who has had any dealings with the case. The person will only act as a brief note taker to aid the review. These will not be formal minutes but brief notes describing the issues under review.

- 4.6 The complainant and the Headteacher or the Chair/Investigator, as appropriate, will be informed in writing of the outcome, normally within 20 school days from the beginning of the review. This may be to the effect that:
- There is insufficient evidence to reach a conclusion, so the complaint cannot be upheld.
 - The concern about applying procedures correctly is not substantiated by the evidence.
 - The above concern was substantiated in part or in full, but that the procedural failure did not affect the outcome significantly, so the matter is now closed.
 - This concern was substantiated in part or in full and the governing body will take reasonable steps where practical to prevent a recurrence or to rectify the situation.

*The nature of the complaint may give the panel cause to consider it in the best interests of the school to review even if it is clear that it is not about due process. It must be made clear to all parties that the panel is not empowered to overturn the judgement of the Headteacher or Chair but could refer it back for further consideration if they feel uneasy about the initial judgement. Should they review the case on this basis they will follow the same procedure as laid down for the Chair of Management Committee in investigating a complaint against the Headteacher. Further guidance is offered below.

5. Panel Meeting Procedure

(This will only apply if the panel decides to go ahead with the review as articulated above).

- a. Introductions - the members of the panel will introduce themselves. The complainant and the friend, relative, representative (if attending) will introduce themselves.
- b. The Chair of the panel will outline the process.
- c. The complainant or person in attendance has the opportunity to present evidence. Depending upon the level of detail of the submission received, it may be reasonable to advise the complainant that s/he must focus on where the process was not followed and s/he is limited to new material rather than simply restating what has already being submitted. Panel members may ask questions both during the presenting of evidence and at the end of the presentation.
- d. The complainant should be advised that the panel will next see the Headteacher or the Chair of Management Committee (or Investigator) to receive an account of the procedures that have been followed, together with access to records kept of the process followed. When the complainant has presented his/her evidence, s/he leaves.
- e. The above procedure will then be explained to the Headteacher/Chair (or Investigator) prior to presenting his/her account. This can be either at the same or a separate meeting. Please note that the Headteacher and Chair (or Investigator) do not attend at the same time as the complainant.
- f. The panel will then deliberate with neither the complainant nor Headteacher/Chair /Investigator taking any further part.
- g. Both the complainant and the Headteacher/Chair (or Investigator) must be advised that the panel is not empowered to overturn the judgement but could refer it back for further consideration.
- h. The complainant and the Headteacher/Chair of Management Committee (or Investigator) will be advised in writing of the outcome.

6. Review Outcome Notification

- 6.1 Both the complainant and the Headteacher/Chair (or Investigator) will be informed in writing of the outcome, normally within twenty (20) school days from the beginning of the review.



Complaint Form

Please complete this form and return it to Headteacher who will acknowledge its receipt and inform you of the next stage in the procedure.

Your name: _____

Relationship with school [e.g. parent/carer of a pupil on the school's roll]:

Pupil's name [if relevant to your complaint]: _____

Your Address: _____

Telephone number: _____

Email: _____

Please give details of your complaint, [including dates, documentary evidence, names of witnesses etc...], to allow the matter to be fully investigated:

(You may continue on separate paper, or attach additional paperwork, if you wish. If you have already provided information it would be helpful if you could summarise the main points).

Number of Additional pages attached: _____.