

Complaints Policy & Procedure

Park Community School

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COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

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The Governors' statement on complaints

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all complaints made against the school or any member of the school community, will, wherever possible, be handled in a timely manner. All complaints will be dealt with in a consistent fashion and will be handled sensitively and according to our published procedures.

The governors seek to work in partnership with all parties and therefore it is intended that this policy should make it easy for any aggrieved person to access the correct procedure but this policy is not meant to be the only solution to the matter which is the subject of the complaint. We prefer complaints to be dealt with informally and face to face so will seek to deescalate

1.0 Introduction

Park Community School is dedicated to providing the best possible education and support for its students. This means having a clear, fair and efficient procedure for dealing with any complaints to or against the school, so that any issues that arise can be dealt with as swiftly and effectively as possible.

This policy explains the steps that will be followed when an issue arises that causes concern. Any person may make a complaint about provision of services that our school delivers, subject to the processes and limitations within this policy, unless separate statutory procedures apply. Complaints will only be considered when in your own words using our proforma. Generic or AI generated complaints will not be considered under this policy.

This procedure does not apply to complaints about:

- Admissions to school
- Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN)
- School re-organisation proposals
- Matters likely to require a Child Protection investigation
- Exclusion and suspension of children from school
- Whistleblowing
- Staff grievance and disciplinary procedures
- Subject Access Requests

In these cases, there are other separate and statutory procedures.

Complaints about services provided by third parties who may use the school's premises or facilities should be made direct to the third party.

The school will not respond to anonymous complaints. The Headteacher, the Head of School and/or Chair of Governors will consider general issues raised when these are about child protection.

For more information on our school's provision for protecting our students, please refer to our **Child Protection and Safeguarding policies** available on our website.

If we cannot meet the timescales set out in our policy, we will provide an explanation and details of the indicative timescales.

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2.0 When an issue or concern first arises

If you have a concern that you would like to take up with the school you should raise this with the school within three months. You should initially inform a member of staff either in person, over the telephone or in writing. You may wish to approach your child's teacher or tutor first as they will be best placed to help you directly or by letting you know which other member of staff you should be speaking to.

We aim to resolve all issues with open dialogue and mutual understanding. We will take your concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

The Headteacher, the Head of School, senior staff and Chair of Governors reserve the right to refer complaints that are taken straight to them back to the appropriate member of staff if it does not warrant their involvement at that point (please see the school's Code of Conduct Advice). Demands to escalate a complaint will not be agreed.

2.1 Initial informal meeting

When a concern has been received by school staff, you may receive a telephone call from a member of staff, or other representative of the school, or you may be invited to a meeting with a member of staff to discuss your concerns. The school will decide the best member of staff to meet with you.

If invited to a meeting, you are welcome to bring a friend, partner or, in the case of a student who has raised a concern, a parent/carer along for support. It may be appropriate for a student to attend the meeting if their parent has raised a concern, depending on the nature of the issue. If you are invited to attend a meeting it is important that you do so. If you do not meet with staff the school may regard that as the end of the complaint.

Staff will help you understand any future points of action that have been agreed and will make a record of what has been discussed, as well as any outcomes and a plan of action, if one has been agreed. You may take your own notes but cannot record the meeting e.g. use your phone to voice or video record the meeting.

All staff will do their best to ensure your concerns are dealt with appropriately and efficiently, but if an agreement cannot be reached, or if you are dissatisfied with the outcome, you can make a formal complaint in writing on the attached proforma to the Headteacher or Head of School. If your complaint is about the Headteacher you should make your complaint in writing to the Chair of Governors. Your formal complaint should be in writing and either posted or hand delivered to the school.

There is no prescribed timescale for resolution at this stage given the importance of dialogue and informal discussion, although we expect to respond to most issues within 10 school days.

3.0 Formal Complaints

In order to ensure complaints are dealt with efficiently and effectively, Park Community School deals with formal complaints in three stages.

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3.1 Stage 1 – Complaint heard by the Headteacher or Head of School

If you feel that your concern has not been dealt with as you would like, are unhappy with the outcome of your informal meeting or feel that the issue is serious enough that it warrants it, you can make a formal complaint to the Headteacher or Head of School. Make your formal complaint in handwriting using our proforma in this policy. Complaints should not be made in person, by email or telephone as this can lead to a lack of clarity about the complaint or it being passed to the wrong person.

The Headteacher or Head of School will acknowledge your complaint in writing within 10 school days. If further investigation is required, the school will acknowledge receipt of your complaint and then advise you that a full response will be provided within a further 20 school days.

The Headteacher or Head of School, or another member of senior staff, may invite you to attend a meeting to discuss your complaint and possible solutions, or to explain what has happened or will happen as a result of your complaint.

School staff will keep a record of interactions with you and decisions made in reference to your complaint.

If your complaint is about a member of staff, the Headteacher or Head of School will talk to that employee and invoke the relevant procedure if required. It will not be appropriate to inform you of the outcome of any investigation in relation to an individual member of staff.

Following investigation, the Headteacher or Head of School will explain in a letter what they have decided and how they reached the decision.

3.2 Stage 2 – Complaint heard by the Chair of Governors

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint at Stage 1, you should write to the Chair of Governors within 10 days explaining your concern and the steps that have resulted in you taking this course of action.

The Chair of Governors will acknowledge your complaint in writing or offer a full response within 10 school days. If further investigation is required, the Chair of Governors will acknowledge receipt of your complaint and will advise you that a full response will be provided within a further 20 school days.

The Chair of Governors may invite you to attend a meeting to discuss your complaint the may involve other staff and possible solutions, or to explain what has happened or will happen as a result of your complaint.

The Chair of Governors will explain that the Governing Body has a strategic role and is responsible for the school's strategic framework and senior staff are responsible for the internal organisation, management and control of the school and for advising on and implementing the governors' policies. The Headteacher and Head of School are solely responsible for making day to day decisions.

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This stage offers an opportunity for achieving conciliation between all parties and discussions between the chair of governors and senior staff will be key to resolving the complaint and agreeing a way forward. The Chair of Governors will decide what powers are available to governors in respect of the particular complaint. In reaching this decision, the Chair of Governors will determine to what extent the issues relate to responsibilities that:

- (a) are delegated to the Headteacher and Head of School by the Governing Body; or
- (b) fall within the Governing Body's remit only; or
- (c) are within the Headteacher and Head of School's Terms and Conditions of Employment and relate to the internal organisation, management and control of the school.

For delegated responsibilities and matters within the remit of the Governing Body, the Chair of Governors may look at the whole issue afresh. If the matter relates to the Headteacher or the Head of School's conduct, the Chair of Governors will decide whether the matter should be dealt with through the Complaints Procedure or Staff Disciplinary Procedure. Advice may be sought from the Local Authority and/or Education Personnel Services. For matters that are the Headteacher and Head of School's responsibility, the Chair of Governors is empowered only to look at whether the Headteacher or Head of School's decision or action was reasonable in the light of the information available at the time.

The Chair of Governors or a Clerk will keep a record of interactions with you and any decisions made in reference to your complaint.

If, following investigation, the Chair of Governors has decided not to take any further action, they will explain by letter what they have decided and how they reached the decision.

3.3 Stage 3 – Complaint heard by governing body's complaints panel

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint at Stage 2, you should write to the Clerk to Governors within **10 days** of the outcome of Stage 2, explaining your concern and the steps that have resulted in you taking this course of action.

The Clerk to Governors will acknowledge receipt of your request within 10 school days. The complaints panel will usually be convened within a further 20 school days of receiving the request for your complaint to be heard by the Governing Body's Complaints Panel. Where it is not possible to find a mutually convenient date within that timescale, all reasonable steps will be taken to agree a time and date mutually convenient to all parties. The panel may meet without you if a mutually convenient time cannot be identified. In that case the panel will consider the previously collected evidence.

The main function of the complaints panel will be to:

- a) ensure the complaint has been properly handled by the Headteacher or Head of School (and Chair of Governors)
- b) ensure that a sufficient comprehensive investigation was carried out
- c) ensure that the correct procedure / policies were followed.

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The panel will also review whether the Headteacher, Head of School (and Chair of Governors) acted reasonably.

The Clerk to Governors or Headteacher's PA will arrange and facilitate the meeting of the Complaints Panel. The Complaints Panel will consist of three governors who have no former knowledge or involvement in the matter being considered. The chair of the panel will be nominated from within the group of panel members. All panel members will have access to, and will be familiar with, this Complaints Policy. The Clerk to Governors or Headteacher's PA will confirm to all parties in writing, the date, time and venue for the meeting at least 10 school days in advance.

The Clerk to Governors will request that you supply any written information you feel the panel will require to consider your complaint fully, this should not be generic or AI generated material. The Headteacher or Head of School (and Chair of Governors) will also be requested to supply copies of their responses to the previous stages of the procedure, and any further information they consider the panel will require to consider the complaint fully. Copies of all paperwork will be distributed to all parties by the Clerk to Governors or Headteacher's PA at least 3 school days in advance of the meeting.

You are welcome to bring a friend or partner for support to the meeting and the chair of the panel will ensure the meeting is conducted in an appropriate manner keeping to the formal agenda. The Headteacher and/or Head of School (and Chair of Governors if attending) is also invited to bring a representative or member of staff for support.

No previously undisclosed evidence relating to the complaint should be introduced during the meeting.

The Clerk or Headteacher's PA will inform you (and the Headteacher or Head of School and/or Chair of Governors) in writing of the panel's decision within 5 school days of the meeting. The letter will include a summary of the issues, an outline of the main points of discussion, the reasons for the decision and the proposed actions or outcome. The panel may suggest you meet with the Headteacher or Head of School and/or Chair of Governors again to agree a way forward.

The letter may set out recommendations which will be made to the Governing Body.

The panel's decision is the final stage in the Complaints Procedure. If you feel the school has acted unreasonably or has not followed the correct procedures in relation to your complaint, you may write to the Secretary of State using the following contact details:

School Complaints Unit, Department for Education,
2nd Floor, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD

4.0 Unreasonable Complaints

Park Community School is committed to dealing with 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 the school. Operating from a position of mutual respect, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to

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protect staff from that behaviour including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening (see the school's Code of Conduct Advice).

Park Community School defines unreasonable complaints as those which, because of lengthy or frequent contact with the school, hinder our consideration of this or other people's complaints or prevent the smooth-running of the school through lengthy or frequent complaints

A complaint may also be regarded as unreasonable when the person making the complaint:

- refuses to articulate their complaint in their own writing on our complaints form in this policy, 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 while still wishing their complaint to be resolved. For example, not attending meeting with school staff.
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaint's procedure
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the school's complaints procedure or with good practice e.g demand quick responses without time for investigation or due consideration
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant expects to be taken into account and commented on, or raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, answered immediately or other timescales
- makes unjustified comments 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 a 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, complicated and/or stressful contact with school staff regarding the complaint either in person, in writing, by email or by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with
- refers to complaints which have been previously resolved through informal or formal processes
- raises complaints which are more than three months old.
- if the person making the complaint does so face-to-face, by telephone, in writing or electronically, refusing to follow the school's system using the attached proforma.

Please avoid:

- using threats of escalation, intimidation or violence
- using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language
- using falsified information
- publishing information in social media, on websites, or in newspapers

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Complainants should limit the numbers of communications with a school while a complaint is being progressed. Repeated correspondence is not helpful because it can delay the outcome being reached.

When possible, the senior staff or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking.

If the behaviour continues the Headteacher or Head of School will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and asking them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact Park Community School causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit school contact.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the concerns and actions taken may be put in writing and the police informed. This can include banning an individual from Park Community School sites.

5.0 Governing Body review and monitoring of complaints

The Headteacher or Head of School will report to the Governing Body regarding formal complaints received and the levels at which they have been resolved. No details identifying the complainant or any member of staff will be published.

The Governing Body will review and evaluate complaints and their resolution to ensure that similar problems are avoided in the future or to see if they could have been managed any more efficiently.

6.0 Complaints by Staff

Staff who have a concern about a colleague or volunteer in school should refer to the whistleblowing policy which is available on the Park Community School intranet.

The procedure for dealing with any other staff complaint or employment grievance is set out in the school's staff discipline, conduct and grievance policies which are available from the HR Manager.

7.0 Complaints Policy Review

The Governing Body of Park Community School will review this policy as required. The Governing Body of Park Community School will also review this policy following a complaint panel meeting to ensure that it met the requirement to provide a clear, fair and efficient complaints procedure.

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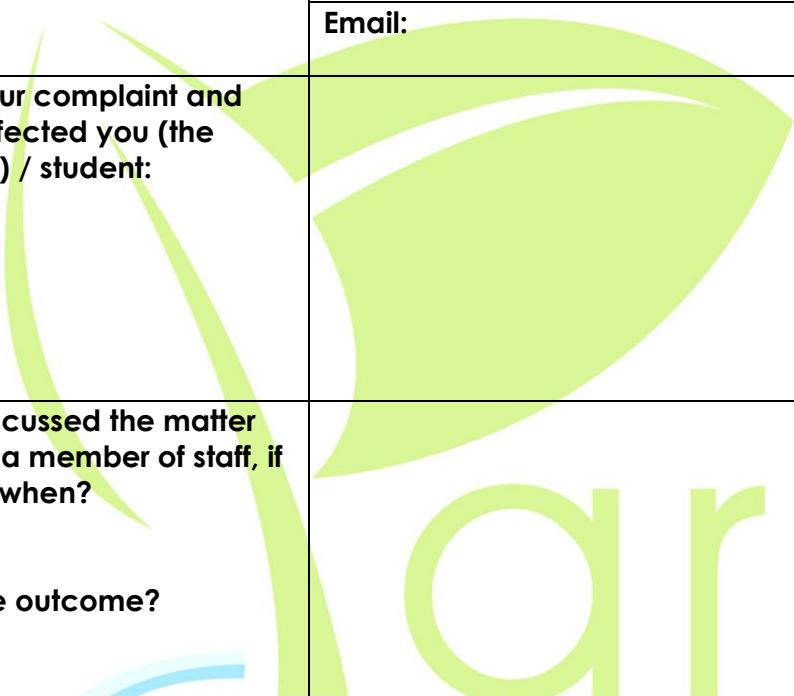
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Document Control Table	
Associated documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Child Protection policy• Safeguarding policy• Whistleblowing policy
Date approved by governors	
Review date	

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Appendix 1 - Complaints Form- in your own writing please complete this form and deliver or post it to school reception

Name of complainant:	
Contact details:	Address: Telephone: Email:
Outline of your complaint and how it has affected you (the complainant) / student:	
Have you discussed the matter already with a member of staff, if so, who and when? What was the outcome?	
What would you like to happen as a result of your complaint?	
Signature:	
Date:	

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For school use:

Date received:	Complaint made by:
Date acknowledged and by whom:	Complaint regarding:
Added to Complaint Log <input type="checkbox"/>	Complaint no:
Dates of action taken:	Summary of action taken:

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Appendix 2 – Code of Conduct Advice

Park Community School staff are here to help. Please ensure all communication, whether written or verbal, in person or at distance, is polite and courteous. School staff will not continue conversations, discussions or meetings if they feel intimidated, threatened or are abused. We have a complaints procedure for use when you are dissatisfied with how the school has dealt with an issue or concern. Some advice is given below to help ensure your concern is quickly resolved.

- Meetings will be arranged when appropriate and necessary in the school's view. The school will decide who is best placed to discuss the matter with you. Please do not demand meetings with specific members of staff or refuse to meet with the staff identified by the school as best placed to deal with your concern.
- Child Protection concerns or those relating to safety will be dealt with swiftly. In other cases, appointments to see members of staff will need to be made further in advance. This is because school staff are busy and unlikely to be available straightaway. Please do not come into school reception in the hope that a forceful demand will mean you can circumvent an appointment.
- Inflammatory comments or statements should be avoided. When expressing concerns or making a complaint, the tone should be courteous at all times. Emotive and accusatory words such as 'disgusting', use of capitals or defamatory statements should not be included. Concerns should be limited to the current situation and not draw on past events or those which have been dealt with previously.
- Concerns and complaints should initially be taken up with the person who was most heavily involved in the incident, unless it is of a very personal nature to do with that staff member. In that case it should be addressed to their curriculum or area leader. In line with the complaints policy, the Headteacher and Head of School should not be involved immediately and will only become involved when the correct procedure has been followed. This is to ensure a suitably neutral review of your concern, if necessary, at a later stage.
- Your assumption should be that you have one version of the matter, which is a concern, rather than concluding you have the totality of the information. Your complaint reflects the information you have currently received.
- You will represent your own views and should not seek to present yourself as a spokesperson for others.
- All complaints are taken seriously and dealt with in a timely manner. We will work to resolve them. Threatening staff with the press, local authority or Ofsted is not a means to fast-forward your complaint or the school's investigation
- Concerns should be raised using your own words not generic statements or AI generated lists of demands or obligation. These are often inaccurate and slow down the process of addressing your concern

Please note any concerns and complaints which are received and do not comply with our expectations indicated above will be unattended until the communications meet the expectations outlined above. Parents or carers who breach these terms will be subject to restricted access to staff.

These standards apply to written and verbal communication.