



THE GRAMMAR SCHOOL
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Complaints' procedure for parents/guardians

ISI reference	33a
Rationale for the Policy:	The school seeks to clarify the ways by which a parent can raise a concern or complaint with school about their child/ren, from EYFS to Year 13.
Policy aim:	To guide parents through the process if they wish to raise a concern or a complaint
Author:	Principal
Agreed and Authorised by:	Governing body
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The School runs on FREDIE principles:
Fairness, Respect, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Engagement

Complaints' procedure for parents/guardians

GSAL values the quality of its relationships with parents and always seeks to do the right thing for every child and for the school as a whole. In the first instance, any parent or guardian is encouraged to make direct contact with the relevant member of staff whenever there is a query about which they seek clarification.

However, we recognise that, on occasion, conflicts of interest, misunderstandings and errors may occur between parents, pupils and teachers and concerns arise which may lead to a formal complaint. This policy outlines the procedures to follow when a parent or guardian wishes to make a complaint about their individual child or children. We always aim to deal with such complaints fairly, quickly and, in the first instance, informally. The following provides a statement of the clear and stepped procedures that we use in handling complaints from parents or guardians. The statement applies to parents or guardians of all pupils in GSAL, including Early Years Foundation Stage and a simplified flow diagram that outlines these steps can be found at the end of this policy.

Stage 1 Informal Resolution

At this first, informal stage, a parent or guardian may raise their concern or complaint with any member of staff and will usually be in direct contact with the most appropriate person in school to answer their concern. Depending upon the nature of the concern or complaint, if it is relayed directly to a member of SLT, they will either deal with it themselves or delegate the investigation to the most relevant person in the school.

Staff will endeavour to acknowledge emails, letters or phone calls of concern within two working days of their receipt and inform parents about how the school intends to investigate the matter. A written record is kept of all concerns/complaints, and the school's response, at this stage on CPOMS.

The school will endeavour to communicate its final response to parents in writing within 10 working days of the initial acknowledgement, unless specific circumstances mean that this period is extended. This response will always aim to bring 'closure' by outlining the findings and outcome of the investigation.

In the event of a failure to reach a satisfactory resolution at Stage 1, parents will be advised to pursue their complaint formally, in accordance with the Stage 2 procedure set out below.

Stage 2 Formal Resolution

Parents whose complaint has not been resolved by the Stage 1 process, should put their complaint formally in writing, within 14 working days of the Stage 1 response from the school, to the Principal on: Nina.ColtmanLeigh@gsal.org.uk

The letter should include three things:

- i. full details of the original complaint and parental perspective;
- ii. supporting evidence to suggest that the original school decision was wrong;
- iii. the outcome that parents are hoping for.

The Principal will aim to acknowledge the complaint within two working days and will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

In most cases, either the Principal (or such person as may be appointed to act in their place) will meet with the parents concerned to discuss the complaint within 10 working days of receiving it, unless, despite the best efforts of all involved, circumstances dictate that the meeting be delayed beyond this timescale.

The Principal (or their delegated representative) will then carry out any necessary further investigations.

Once the Principal is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing, within 10 working days of the meeting with parents. The Principal will also give reasons for the decision and include findings and recommendations in response to the complaint, where relevant.

If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

If the parent wishes to make a complaint against the Principal, the letter should be sent to the Chair of Governors via the Clerk to the Board on the following email address: elizabeth.carruthers@gsal.org.uk

Stage 3 Panel Hearing

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome at Stage 2, they may within 14 days of receipt of the decision of Stage 2, submit a written request to the Chair of Governors to appeal the decision at Stage 3 before a panel.

The email address for the Clerk to the Governing Body is: elizabeth.carruthers@gsal.org.uk

The Chair will convene a panel composed of at least three people who have not been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint to date, to hear the evidence and make a final decision as to whether or not the complaint will be upheld. Typically, two members of the panel will be serving governors. One of the panel will always be independent of the management or running of the school. Parents and the school are entitled to provide evidence for their positions, in advance of the meeting, and this information will be shared with all parties.

The panel will meet within 14 days of the letter having been received in order to discuss the complaint, unless particular circumstances force a delay. The parent may attend this meeting themselves, and be accompanied (but not represented), if they wish. Parents are given the opportunity to explain their position and supporting evidence in more detail (usually approx. 20 mins) and the school is given a right of reply. The panel may ask further questions. The whole meeting usually takes place within an hour.

The considered decision of the panel, including its findings and recommendations, will be notified to the complainant within seven working days of the meeting and will be final and binding. If the subject of the complaint is an adult working in the school, they will also be sent the findings and recommendations and a copy of the panel's findings and recommendations will also be made available at the school for inspection by the Principal and the Chair of the Governing Body.

If the complaint relates to the Chair of the Board of Governors, or the governing body, it should still be addressed to the Clerk to the Board on the following email address: elizabeth.carruthers@gsal.org.uk

The Clerk will decide how best to proceed with the complaint.

Confidentiality

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except in so far as is required of the School by Part 7, Paragraph 33, of The Education (Independent Schools

Standards) (England) Regulations 2014; where disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection; or where the Secretary of State or body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them; or where any other legal obligation prevails.

Record-keeping

Formal notes will be taken in all formal complaint meetings, usually by a member of the school's administration team, and in panel hearings, by the Clerk to the Board of Governors. These should be agreed by and circulated to both parties. Audio recording is only allowed by the consent of both parties.

A log of all formal complaints is kept by the Principal's EA, which includes the stage at which it has been resolved. The complaints' log details the recommendations and actions taken by the school as a result of a formal complaint, regardless of whether the complaint was upheld. Records of complaint are held for seven years following the date of resolution, and then reviewed for retention in the case of continuous disputes. Where the complaint has a safeguarding angle, the records will be preserved up to a member of staff's pensionable age or for 10 years from the allegation if this is longer.

Timeframes

School holidays

For any stage of a complaint, if it is being handled during a school holiday, then the time frame for investigation would be extended according to the nature of the complaint and the length of that holiday period. This would be notified to the parents on receipt of their complaint. The time period would be as short as is reasonably practicable yet allow for a full and proper investigation to take place during that holiday period or immediately after it.

Former pupils and parents

The school reserves the right not to investigate a complaint from a former parent or pupil once they have left the school, or if more than three months have lapsed since the incident, depending on the circumstances. A complaint from a former pupil/parent will always be followed up if the complaint started while the child was still a pupil.

Vexatious complaints

Where repeated attempts are made by a parent to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages, this can be regarded as vexatious and outside the scope of this policy.

EYFS

Written complaints at the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) age group about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirement will be investigated by the school and notified to the parent within 28 days. The record of complaints relating to EYFS will be available to Ofsted or ISI on request. For the EYFS, a record of complaints will be kept for three years as a minimum, as required under GDPR. For this age group only, a complaint may also be made directly as follows:

- Leeds City Council Early Years Learning Improvement Service via the EYFS Improvement Manager, (eyct@leeds.gov.uk , telephone [0113 378 5555](tel:01133785555) or post to 0-5 Learning Improvement Team, Landmark Court Unit 7, Revie Road, Leeds, LS11 8JT)
- Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD, enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk Tel: 0300 123 4666
- ISI, Cap House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA. concerns@isi.net Tel: 0207 600 0100

The number of formal complaints at stages 2 or 3 in 2022-23 was 1.

Appendix 1

Flow diagram outlining steps for concerns/complaints

