



Complaints Procedures Policy

Harlescott House School

Last updated: 06/08/2026 | Last reviewed: 06/08/2026

Headteacher | Education Director

Policy note

This policy is based on Part 7 of the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and the Department for Education's current Independent school standards guidance, updated April 2026. Independent schools in England must have and make available a written complaints procedure which provides for three stages: informal resolution, formal written complaint, and a panel hearing arranged by or on behalf of the proprietor, with at least one panel member who is independent of the management and running of the school. The school should tailor this policy to its governance structure, published information arrangements, and any related procedures such as safeguarding, exclusions, admissions, SEN, staff grievance and disciplinary processes.

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Statement of intent

Harlescott House School aims to resolve all complaints at the earliest possible stage and is dedicated to ensuring all complaints are managed sympathetically and efficiently.

Any complaint or concern will be taken seriously, whether formally or informally, and the appropriate procedures will be implemented. This policy has been created to deal with any complaint against a member of staff, or the school as a whole, relating to any aspects of the school or the provision of facilities or services.

The school will ensure the complaints procedure is:

- Easily accessible and shared with all stakeholders.
- Simple to understand and put into practice.
- Impartial and fair to all parties involved.
- Respectful of confidentiality duties.
- Continuously under improvement, using information gathered during the procedure.
- Fairly investigated, by an independent person when necessary.
- Used to address all issues to provide appropriate and effective responses where necessary.

Legal framework

This policy has due regard to legislation and statutory requirements including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education and Skills Act 2008, including inspection and regulatory provisions for independent schools
- The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, Schedule 1, Part 7: Manner in which complaints are handled
- Equality Act 2010
- Children and Families Act 2014, where complaints relate to special educational needs and disability matters that may be subject to separate statutory routes
- The UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Freedom of Information Act 2000, where applicable

This policy also has due regard to related guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- DfE (April 2026) 'Independent school standards guidance'
- DfE 'Regulating independent schools' guidance
- GOV.UK 'Complain about a school: Private schools' guidance
- Ofsted inspection guidance for non-association independent schools, where applicable

This policy will be implemented in accordance with the following school policies:

- Grievance Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Exclusions Policy, where applicable
- Special Educational Needs and Disability Policy
- Data Protection Policy and Privacy Notices

Definitions

For the purpose of this policy:

- A **"complaint"** can be defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction' towards the actions taken or a perceived lack of action taken.
- A **"concern"** can be defined as 'an expression of worry or doubt' where reassurance is required; concerns will be classed and addressed as complaints.
- **"Complainants" are those who have raised a concern or a complaint.**
- A **"grievance"** is an issue raised by a member of staff where they feel the school has not implemented a policy or process fairly or properly. Grievances will be dealt with in line with the school's Grievance Policy.
- **"Days" relate to school days.**

Eligibility to make a complaint

Parents and carers of pupils currently being educated at the school may make a complaint under this policy about any aspect of the school, or the provision of facilities or services, that affects their child.

All complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Parents will be assured that their children will not be penalised if they raise a complaint.

Where a complaint was raised while a pupil was registered at the school, the complainant will normally be permitted to complete the complaints procedure even if the pupil subsequently leaves the school.

This policy does not cover complaints made by the following:

- Parents/carers of pupils who have left voluntarily or as a result of exclusion, unless the complaint was made while the pupil was still being educated at the school

- Pupils, unless they are raising a matter through a pupil voice, safeguarding, behaviour or other appropriate school process
- Prospective pupils and their parents/carers, including complaints about failure to admit, which will be considered under the school's admissions arrangements where applicable
- Staff grievances or disciplinary matters, which will be handled under the relevant staff procedure
- Safeguarding concerns, where immediate action may be required under the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Matters that are subject to a separate statutory route, tribunal, appeal or legal process, including certain SEN, disability discrimination, admissions or exclusion matters

Timescales

Complaints are expected to be made as soon as possible after an issue arises to ensure the issue is addressed in an appropriate timescale.

The school normally expects complaints to be raised within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents has occurred, within three months of the last of those incidents. Complaints made outside this period will be considered where there are exceptional circumstances.

Timescales for managing complaints at specific stages are outlined in the relevant sections of this policy. In the case of any timescales changing, all parties involved will be informed of the changes in a timely manner.

For the purposes of this policy, "school days" means weekdays during term time when the school is open to pupils. The school will respond as soon as reasonably practicable during school holidays and will keep the complainant informed if timescales need to be extended.

Informal raising of a concern

The school will endeavour to resolve most concerns informally.

Concerns will be raised initially as follows:

Type of concern	Individual to whom a concern should be raised
Educational issues	The relevant teacher – the concern will be passed to a more senior member of staff if appropriate.
Behavioural issues	The staff member who imposed the behaviour sanction
Financial matters	The headteacher
Other concerns	The headteacher
Concerns regarding the headteacher	Education Director
Concerns regarding the Education Director	Board of Directors/Proprietor

A complaint may be made in person, by telephone or in writing. A written record will be kept of all concerns and the date on which they were received. A concern provided in writing will be acknowledged by telephone or in writing within two days of receipt during term time and as soon as practicable during school holidays.

If the concern is not resolved within five days or, in the event that the complainant is not satisfied with the response to their concern, the complainant will be advised to proceed in accordance with the 'Formal complaint' stage of this procedure.

Where a concern indicates that a child may be at risk of harm, the matter will be referred immediately to the school's safeguarding lead and managed under the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. This may run alongside, or take precedence over, the complaints procedure as appropriate.

Formal complaint

The complainant should submit their formal complaint in writing to the headteacher. Where a complainant has difficulty putting a complaint in writing, the school will make reasonable adjustments and may accept an alternative accessible format. The complaint will be acknowledged by telephone or in writing within two school days of receipt during term time and as soon as practicable during school holidays, indicating that action is being taken and the likely timescales.

The headteacher will meet with the complainant within five days of acknowledging receipt of the complaint to discuss the matter. If the complaint is about the headteacher, the discussion will take place with the Education Director.

During the meeting, the headteacher will attempt to reach a resolution; however, it may be necessary for further investigations to be carried out by the headteacher or another designated member of staff. If the complaint is about the headteacher, the Education Director will arrange any necessary investigations.

Also, if the complaint is about the Education Director, the Proprietor/other board director will arrange any necessary investigations.

Written records will be kept of all meetings and other communications held in relation to the complaint.

Once all facts are established, the headteacher will inform the complainant of their decision and their reasoning in writing.

If the complaint is about the headteacher, the education director will inform the complainant of their decision and their reasoning in writing.

The complainant will be informed of the decision within 10 days of the receipt of the complaint. Where exceptional circumstances result in a delay, the complainant will be notified and informed of the new timescales as soon as possible.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome suggested, they will be advised to proceed to the '[Panel hearing](#)' stage of this procedure.

Panel hearing

Where a complaint cannot be resolved, a hearing before a panel appointed by or on behalf of the school's proprietor will be arranged.

The panel will consist of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. At least one panel member will be independent of the management and running of the school. A person is not normally independent if they are a member of the school's workforce, part of the proprietor body, or otherwise involved in the school's management or operation.

A hearing will be scheduled to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 10 days. Reasonable arrangements will be made to ensure the complainant can attend the panel hearing. If the complainant does not exercise the right to attend the panel hearing, the hearing will still be held.

The complainant will be informed that they are able to be accompanied at the hearing if they wish; however, legal representation will not normally be appropriate.

The right for a parent to be accompanied at a panel hearing does not confer a right on a parent to have a legal representative make representations on their behalf at a hearing, but the school will decide whether to allow this on a case-by-case basis.

If the panel deems it necessary, it may require that further details of the complaint or any related matters be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such information will be supplied to all parties no later than five days prior to the hearing.

After considering all of the relevant facts, the panel will make findings and, where appropriate, recommendations. The decision, findings and any recommendations will be provided to the complainant in writing within five school days of the hearing. A copy of the decision, findings and recommendations will be sent to, where relevant, the person complained about, the headteacher, the proprietor or chair of the proprietorial body, and any other person who needs the information in order to implement the outcome.

The school will ensure that the panel's findings and recommendations are available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the headteacher.

The decision of the panel will be final and represents the conclusion of the school's complaints procedure.

If the school has not met its requirements in relation to the handling of complaints, the Department for Education may consider this as part of its regulatory role. The Department for Education does not normally investigate or overturn individual complaint outcomes, but it may take regulatory action where the Independent School Standards are not met.

Recording complaints

The school will maintain a complaint log for all complaints handled under this policy. The complaint log will be kept securely, updated at each stage of the process, and used to evidence how complaints have been received, investigated, resolved and reviewed. The template at Annex A may be used for this purpose.

- Whether each complaint was resolved following an informal route, formal route, or panel hearing
- Actions taken by the school as a result of the complaint, regardless of whether the complaint was upheld
- Whether the complaint related to a boarding provision, where applicable

Additional records may be kept containing the following information:

- The date the issue was raised
- The name of the complainant and, where relevant, their child
- A description of the issue
- Records of all the investigations
- Witness statements
- The name of the staff member responsible for handling the issue at each stage
- Copies of correspondence on the issue

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where disclosure is required by law, requested by the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008, required in order to implement the outcome of the complaint, or otherwise permitted under data protection legislation.

The school will process personal data gathered under this policy in accordance with its Data Protection Policy and Privacy Notices. Records will be retained only for as long as necessary and in line with the school's retention schedule.

Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed annually and sooner if there are changes to legislation, statutory requirements, DfE guidance, inspection expectations or the school's governance arrangements. The next scheduled review date of this policy is 06/08/2027.

All changes made to this policy will be communicated with all relevant stakeholders.

Annex A: Complaint Log

This template should be completed for each complaint and updated throughout the complaints process. It should be stored securely and handled in accordance with the school's confidentiality and data protection requirements.

Field	Details
Complaint reference number	
Date complaint received	
Name of complainant	
Relationship to pupil	
Name of pupil, where relevant	
Summary of complaint	
Stage at which complaint was resolved	Informal / Formal / Panel hearing
Staff member responsible for handling the complaint	
Key investigation steps taken	
Outcome	Upheld / Partially upheld / Not upheld / Resolved informally / Withdrawn
Actions taken by the school	
Whether the complaint related to boarding provision, where applicable	Yes / No / Not applicable
Date outcome communicated to complainant	

Field	Details
Panel hearing date, where applicable	
Panel findings and recommendations, where applicable	
Date complaint closed	
Retention review date	
Notes on confidentiality, data protection or safeguarding considerations	