

COMPLAINTS POLICY & PROCEDURES



Date of Last review:	July 2024
Date of this review:	July 2026
New review:	This policy will be reviewed when the school receives notice of updates from the LA or interim review will be carried out by the school
Comments	Additional comments: school will not respond to AI generated complaints.
Signature (Headteacher)	<i>E. Patel</i>
Review approved by the Governing Body (Management Committee)	Circulated to Management Committee on 20.05.2026 via the Governor Hub.

Contents

1. Introduction.....	2
2. General Principles	3.
3. Complaints Procedure Stage 1	4
4. Complaints Procedure Stage 2	5
5. Complaints Procedure Stage 3; Review by the Governing Body.....	5-6
6. The Role of the Local Authority.....	7
7. The Role of The Grove Partnership School	7
8. Definitions & Scope.....	8
9. Responsibility of the Complainant.....	9
10. Learning lessons.....	9
11. Monitoring arrangements.....	9
12. Links with other policies & Contact information.....	10

1. Introduction

The Grove Partnership will 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 ensure we publicise the existence of this policy and make it available on the school website.

- 1.1.** In accordance with Section 29 of the Education Act 2002, all Local Authority maintained 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. This school complaints procedure sets out how the school will respond to any complaints received and adheres to the [Best Practice Advice for School Complaints Procedures 2020 provided by the Department for Education](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-complaints-procedures/best-practice-advice-for-school-complaints-procedures-2019).

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-complaints-procedures/best-practice-advice-for-school-complaints-procedures-2019>

- 1.2.** This procedure will apply to most general complaints received by the school. It is not intended to cover those matters for which there is a specific statutory requirement, or where there is a separate appeal process that parents can access. For example, in respect of special needs assessment and exclusions. Concerns about allegations of a safeguarding nature and staff disciplinary matters will be dealt with through the Governing Body and LA procedures that have been adopted for these purposes. Complaints about services provided by other agencies who may use the school facilities should be progressed in the first instance direct with the provider concerned. Access to the school complaint procedure must not be limited only to those parents of pupils attending the school.

1.3. Schools must make all parents aware of the existence and operation of the school's complaints procedure. This procedure and information for parents about how to make a complaint or raise concerns is available on the school website, or can be obtained via the school office.

1.4. The Head Teacher will have responsibility for ensuring a robust and fit for purpose complaint process is in place, and will assess each case in respect of the level of involvement of the Head Teacher at each individual stage.

1.5. Should any individual school governor be approached about a complaint they should assist the complainant to access the school complaint procedure, or direct them to the Head Teacher or the Chair of Governors. It is important that no individual governor becomes involved in the investigation of a complaint as this will prejudice their involvement if this is required at a later stage.

1.6. It is expected that most concerns and complaints will be dealt with and resolved informally in the first instance, usually by the class teacher and without the need to invoke any formal process. Where matters cannot be resolved informally then a formal complaint may be raised with the school.

1.7. Complaints will be considered by the school as quickly as possible with emphasis on early resolution, therefore any concern or complaint will need to be raised with the school as soon as possible after the incident or concern arises. The school will not generally consider any complaint made later than three months after the incident or concern has arisen. Where complaints are made outside of this timeframe they will be considered on a case by case basis by the Head Teacher who will determine whether the school feels able to reasonably and practicably investigate and respond.

1.8. The Governing Body will nominate five governors to form a Complaints Committee from which when needed, three members can be identified to form a Governing Body Complaints Panel. The Governing body should have regard to the advantages of having a mix of different type of governor on the committee and be sensitive to issues of equal opportunity in the composition of the committee. The Head Teacher will not be involved in the preparations or management of this committee or the panel stage of the complaint process.

1.9. Complainants have the right to request an independent panel, if they believe there is likely to be bias in the proceedings. Any such request will be considered, but ultimately this decision will be made by the Governors.

1.10. The Governing Body will be provided with a report in respect of the number and type of complaints received by the school, and any actions/improvement taken as a result of complaint outcomes and information.

2. General principles

2.1. Complaints will be responded to quickly and in a way that is consistent with fairness to all, with access provided to all stages of the complaints process.

2.2. Upon receipt of a complaint school will assess the validity and verify the identity of the person submitting the complaint. School will not respond to complaints that have been AI generated. The increased used of AI generated complaints has placed undue strain on school who are under legal duties to properly consider, verify and meaningfully respond to complaints and requests.

2.3. To ensure that we meet the Public Sector Equality Duty, where a complainant has difficulty in providing written details of their complaint or other support needs are identified, then an alternative method of contact and support will need to be agreed.

2.4. Staff who may be the subject of a complaint or questioned as part of a complaint investigation must be treated fairly and have an opportunity to respond. They should be offered appropriate support and kept informed as to the outcome.

2.5 Confidentiality is important, and all conversations and correspondence must be treated accordingly. Parents will need to be reassured and feel confident that making a complaint will not disadvantage their child. Anonymous complaints cannot be investigated and responded to, however the school will take any internal action that may be identified as being necessary.

2.6. If the outcome of a complaint is that the school is shown to be at fault, then the school will take appropriate action to address matters.

2.7. All staff and governors in school will have the opportunity to take part in training or briefing sessions to raise their awareness of the complaint procedure, and develop their skills in responding to complaints and concerns.

2.8. All complaints will be recorded to enable monitoring of complaint information and of any learning and development as a result of complaints.

2.9. We will aim to ensure that parents feel that they can raise any concerns they may have with staff without undue formality, either in person, by telephone or in writing. There may be occasions when it is appropriate for someone to act on behalf of a parent in such an approach, where this is the case appropriate permission will be sought before accepting the complaint.

2.10. Parents may not always wish to make a complaint, they may wish to ask a question or express an opinion, and the school will welcome positively any such feedback and suggestions. A preliminary discussion with school staff may be needed to clarify any issue and help to decide whether the parent wishes to take any matter further.

2.11. Staff will respond initially to any concerns or complaint, with the Head Teacher normally dealing with those complaints that proceed to a later stage. At any stage however the Head Teacher may designate responsibility for the investigation of a complaint to another member of staff or the Chair of Governors where this is felt to be appropriate.

2.12. Any investigation will be conducted in a way that is fair and transparent and the complainant will be kept updated as to progress made and any timescales.

2.13. In the case of serial or persistent complaints or where the outcome sought is not one which is reasonable or achievable, or where the behaviour of a complainant in pursuing their complaint is deemed to be unacceptable, the school will put in place a management plan and respond to such complaints and behaviour in line with school policies and the guidance provided by the Department for Education, the Local Government Ombudsman and the Local Authority.

3. Complaint procedure – Stage one

3.1. Parents will be offered the opportunity for an informal discussion with an appropriate member of staff regarding their concerns or complaint.

3.2. If the member of staff cannot deal with the matter immediately, they should make firm arrangements for when it will be dealt with, or refer the matter to another member of staff.

3.3. Where the concern or complaint is regarding a serious matter this may require the immediate attention or involvement of the Head Teacher, and staff should seek advice from the Head Teacher where necessary. In any event the Head Teacher should be kept informed of the details and outcome of any complaints.

3.4. If the complaint is about the Head Teacher, the complainant should be advised to put their complaint in writing direct to the Chair of Governors. Complaints about the Chair of Governors or any individual governor should be made in writing to the Clerk to the Governing Body.

3.5. If no satisfactory solution can be found within 15 working days or any other agreed timeframe, the complainant if they wish may ask for their complaint to be progressed to the next stage of the complaint process. They will be given clear information on how to proceed and any advice and support that may be available to them.

4. Complaints Procedure – Stage two

4.1. Parents who wish to progress a complaint to stage two will be asked to put the complaint in writing to the Head Teacher, or where appropriate to arrange an appointment to meet with the Head Teacher. The complaint will be acknowledged either orally or in writing **within three days of receipt**, and the complainant will be provided with information about what will happen next and the timescale for response. A response will normally be provided by the Head Teacher or nominated responder within **15 working days** of receipt of the complaint details. If it is not possible to deal with the matter in this timeframe, the complainant will be informed of when it is likely to be concluded.

4.2. The complainant will be offered opportunity to discuss their complaint in person and provide any additional information, and can if they wish be accompanied by a friend or relative for support.

4.3. The Head Teacher (or designated member of staff) will then investigate the complaint including as necessary interviewing witnesses, obtaining statements from those involved and reviewing information available. Where it is deemed necessary to speak to pupils this will be done in a way that is sensitive, and normally with a parent/guardian present. In some circumstances this may not be possible and a senior member of staff with whom the pupil feels comfortable should attend with him/her.

4.4. The Head Teacher (or designated member of staff) will keep a written record of any interviews, meetings, telephone conversations and other complaint documentation.

4.5. Once all the relevant facts have been established, the Head Teacher (or designated member of staff) will arrange a meeting with the complainant to discuss the outcome and try to provide for a resolution. This meeting will normally be followed up with a letter formally confirming the outcome and any actions or resolution agreed. The complainant should be advised in this letter that if they remain dissatisfied with the outcome and wish to take the complaint further that they will need to contact the Chair of Governors within **20 working days** of receiving the letter detailing the stage two outcome of the complaint.

4.6. Where it is felt to be helpful the Chair of Governors may be asked to look at any further resolution to the complaint that may be available.

4.7. If the complaint is in respect of the Head Teacher or if the Head Teacher has been very closely involved at stage one, the Chair of Governors should carry out the stage two investigation process.

5. Complaints Procedure - Stage three: Review by a Governing Body.

The Panel

5.1. The following procedure will be followed upon receipt of a written request from the complainant for the complaint to proceed to stage three.

5.2. The request will be acknowledged and confirmation provided that a Governing Body Complaint Panel will be arranged to hear the complaint within **20 working days** of receipt of the request.

5.3. The Clerk to the Governing body will consult with the Chair of Governors and identify from the Complaints Committee three panel members. The panel members will then agree the Panel Chair. A date for the panel meeting will be agreed.

5.4. The Clerk will write to the Head Teacher and the complainant confirming the agreed panel date, time and venue, including details of the timeframe within which they must submit any documentation for consideration by the panel members. All parties will be given **five working days'** notice of the panel date.

5.5. The letter of notification to the complainant should also inform him/her of their right to be accompanied by a friend/relative for support.

5.6. The clerk will ensure that all those attending the panel receive a panel information pack containing all of the information submitted by the complainant and the school, no later than **three working days** prior to the panel date agreed.

5.7. Normally at the Panel the Head Teacher will represent the school and any other staff involved in the complaint. The attendance at the panel of school staff other than the Head Teacher, pupils or witnesses will be subject to the discretion of the panel Chair.

5.8. The school or panel Chair may request that a representative/s from the Local Authority attends the panel to provide advice in respect of the complaint process, or where a professional opinion or advice would be considered helpful.

5.9. The panel Chair will make appropriate arrangements for the panel to be minuted. Minutes will be kept with the complaint record, and can be made available on request to attendees.

The Panel Meeting:

5.10. The Chair of the panel will ensure that the proceedings are as informal as possible and that the complainant feels at ease. The Chair will make introductions and confirm the remit of the panel, along with the details of the complaint and any outcome sought.

5.11. The aim of the panel will be to listen to the complaint, consider any information provided, review the schools' response to the complaint and also to try to identify or provide for any further resolution.

5.12. It is acknowledged that not all complaints will be resolvable, and that there may be cases where the panel are unable to provide the outcome which is being sought. In such cases a panel will look

to establish the facts, acknowledge any differences and try to identify a way forward that can be agreed by all parties.

5.13. All parties will be treated fairly and addressed in a way that is respectful. Should any party behave in a way that is deemed by the Chair to be unacceptable then the Chair may adjourn the meeting for a time, ask the individual to leave the meeting or may if necessary bring the meeting to an early conclusion.

5.14. Both parties will be provided with an opportunity to address the panel and panel members may ask questions or seek further clarification, and the Chair will call on any attending witnesses or professionals to provide information as required.

5.15. At the conclusion of the meeting, the chair will explain that the committee will consider its decision and write to both parties with the outcome within **ten working days**.

5.16. At the conclusion of the meeting the Head Teacher, complainants and any witnesses will withdraw and the committee will consider its decision. This should include:

- a decision on the complaint
- any appropriate action identified to be taken by the school
- and where appropriate, recommendations on changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure similar problems do not arise in the future.

5.17. The school will ensure that a copy of all correspondence and notes is kept on file in the school. This will be separate from pupils' personal records.

5.18. The aim of the panel should always be to resolve the complaint wherever possible and achieve reconciliation between the School and the complainant. It must be recognised however that the complainant may not always be satisfied with the outcome and it may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations that will satisfy the complainant that their complaint has been taken seriously.

Following full consideration of all the available information the panel may:

- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;
- uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
- decide on appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
- recommend changes to the schools systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

It is important that the panel is independent and impartial, and seen to be so, and no panel member should have had any prior involvement in the complaint. Care should be taken when a panel is chosen to ensure that members are sensitive to the issues of race, gender and religious affiliation and also that there is no conflict of interest.

6. The Role of the Local Authority (LA)

6.1. When the LA receives a general complaint about a school matter, which does not fall within their remit or any independent appeal process, the LA will signpost the complainant to the school's own complaints procedure. The complainant will be advised to discuss their concern/complaint with the Head Teacher/Chair of Governors as appropriate. Assistance may be given to the complainant to contact the school, or where they are having difficulty or ask for support in accessing the school

complaint process. Where there are matters of serious concern or safeguarding issues then the LA will contact the school/relevant professionals as appropriate.

6.2. The school may seek subject to Service Level Agreement, support and advice, including legal advice as appropriate from relevant LA officers in respect of responding to any complaints and concerns received.

7. The Role of The Grove Partnership

7.1 Our school aims to meet its statutory obligations when responding to complaints from parents of pupils at the school and others. Staff will need to be clear about the difference between a concern and a formal complaint. The formal procedure will need to be invoked when initial attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful and the person making the complaint remains dissatisfied and wishes to progress the matter further.

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.
- Ensure 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.

7.2. Throughout the process, we will be sensitive to the needs of all parties involved, and make any reasonable adjustments needed to accommodate individuals.

8. Definitions and Scope

8.1. 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”.

8.2. 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.

When investigating a complaint, we will try to clarify:

1. What has happened?
2. Who was involved?
3. What the complainant feels would put things right.

This policy does **not** cover complaints procedures relating to:

- Admissions
- Statutory assessments of special educational needs (SEN)
- Safeguarding matters
- Exclusion
- Whistle-blowing
- Staff grievances
- Staff discipline & conduct

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

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

Complaints about the school's delivery of the National Curriculum are within the scope of this policy, but complaints about the content of the National Curriculum should be sent to [the DfE](#).

9. Responsibility of the Complainant

9.1 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.
- Not to publish details about the complaint on social media.

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:

1. Has made the same complaint before, and it's already been resolved by following the school's complaints procedure.
2. Makes a complaint that is obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, defamatory or repetitive.
3. Knowingly provides false information.
4. Insists on pursuing a complaint that is unfounded, or out of scope of the complaints procedure.
5. 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 time frames it sets out.
6. Changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation goes on.
7. Makes a complaint designed to cause disruption, annoyance or excessive demands on school time.
8. Seeks unrealistic outcomes, or a solution that lacks any serious purpose or value.

10. Learning lessons

The Management Committee will review any underlying issues raised by complaints with the Head teacher, 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.

11. Monitoring arrangements

The Governing Body will monitor the effectiveness of the complaints procedure in ensuring that complaints are handled properly. The complaints records are logged and managed by the School Business Manager. This policy will be reviewed by the School Business Manager every two years (the DfE recommends at least once every 2 to 3 years). At each review, the policy will be shared with and approved by Management Committee including the Head teacher.

12. Links with other policies & Contact Information

Policies dealing with other forms of complaints include:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures
- Staff grievance procedures.
- Staff disciplinary procedures.
- SEND policy and information report.
- Privacy notices

Contact Information & Details: Most complaints and concerns can be dealt with informally and resolved by speaking to the child's teacher or by making an appointment with the Head teacher. If you are unable to resolve matters, please put the complaint in writing to the Head teacher:

Mr E Patel
Head teacher
The Grove Partnership,
Whitcroft Street,
Watersheddings,
Oldham, OL1 4HX

If matters are still not resolved or if your complaint is about the Head teacher, then you will need to put your complaint in writing to the Chair of Governors via the school address or by writing to:

Governor Support
Oldham Council,
Oldham
OL1 1HD

Below is the link to the information relating to complaints located on the Oldham Council Website.
https://www.oldham.gov.uk/info/200226/schools_and_colleges/1962/school_complaints

Review of Policy:

This policy has been issued to school by the Local Authority and has been adapted in respect of The Grove Partnership's complaints information. This policy replaces all previous policies, procedures and guidelines in use within the establishment. This policy will be reviewed every two years and the Management Committee will assess its implementation and effectiveness. The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout the school.

Review Date: May 2026	Reviewer: Chrissy Emerson (Business Manager)
Review Date: July 2024	Reviewer: Chrissy Emerson (Business Manager)
Review Date: July 2021	Reviewer: C Emerson (Business Manager)
Review Date: Feb 2018	Reviewer: Chrissy Emerson (Business Manager)
Review Date: Nov 2016	Reviewer: Andrea Skelly (Head teacher)