



Complaints Policy

Phase of school this policy relates to

Early Years	Primary	Secondary	Whole School
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Policy lead staff member:	Leanna Barrett
Policy link governor:	Cecily Hewlett
Date Ratified:	20/5/26

Liberty Woodland School's Complaints Policy follows guidance from the Independent School Standards Regulations, Part 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled.

This policy applies to pupils enrolled at Liberty Woodland School.

This policy is published on the School website and is available on request from the School office.

INTRODUCTION

Liberty Woodland School prides itself on the quality of the teaching and care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this policy.

Liberty Woodland School will make the Complaints Procedure available to all parents of enrolled pupils via the Liberty Woodland School website. It is also available to prospective parents where the complaint concerns the School's admissions process.

This procedure applies to parents of current pupils and to parents of former pupils where the complaint was initially raised whilst the pupil was still registered at the School.

The School will ensure that parents who request it are made aware that this document is available and have access to it.

SCOPE

This procedure applies to complaints from parents of pupils registered at the School.

This procedure does not apply to:

- safeguarding or child protection concerns;
- allegations against staff;
- low-level concerns (as detailed in the "Managing Allegations Against Staff" Policy)
- staff grievance or disciplinary matters;
- whistleblowing;
- SEND tribunal matters; or
- statutory assessment decisions.

Such matters will be managed under the appropriate School policy or statutory procedure.

SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS

Concerns relating to safeguarding, child protection, staff conduct or allegations against staff will be handled in accordance with the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and relevant statutory procedures and may be managed outside this complaints procedure where appropriate.

WHAT CONSTITUTES A COMPLAINT?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. It can be about the School as a whole, a specific department or an individual staff member. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the School has done something wrong, failed to do something it should have done or has acted unfairly.

TIMEFRAME FOR DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS

All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively. They will be acknowledged within five working days if received during term time and as soon as reasonably practicable during holiday periods.

It is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible. The School's target is to complete the first two stages of the procedure within 28 working days.

The timescale is measured in normal school working days whether the complaint is lodged during term time or school holidays.

Stage 3, the Panel Hearing, will normally be completed within a further 28 working days.

STAGE 1 – INFORMAL RESOLUTION

It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.

If parents have a complaint, they should normally contact the relevant staff member or the Deputy Head. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction.

If the relevant staff member cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for the Deputy Head to consult the Head of School.

Complaints made directly to the Deputy Head or Head of School will usually be referred to the relevant member of staff unless the Head of School deems it appropriate to deal with the matter personally.

The relevant member of staff will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received.

Should the matter not be resolved within fourteen working days, or in the event that the relevant staff member and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution,

parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.

If the complaint is against the Head of School, parents should make the complaint directly to the Chair of Governors.

STAGE 2 – FORMAL RESOLUTION

If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head of School. The Head of School will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

In most cases, the Head of School will meet the parents concerned, normally within seven working days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If this is not possible, a telephone or remote meeting may be arranged.

If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

It may be necessary for the Head of School to carry out further investigations.

The Head of School will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

Once the Head of School is satisfied that, so far as is reasonably practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Head of School will also give reasons for the decision.

If the complaint is against the Head of School, the Chair of Governors will call for a full report from the Head of School and all relevant documents. The Chair may also seek information from members of staff and, in most cases, will speak to or meet with the parents to discuss the matter further.

Once the Chair is satisfied that all relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed of the decision in writing together with the reasons for the decision.

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

STAGE 3 – PANEL HEARING

If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 following a failure to reach an earlier resolution, they should write to the Chair of Governors requesting a Complaints Panel hearing.

The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration.

The Panel will consist of at least three persons, two of whom will not have been 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.

Panel members shall be appointed by the Governing Body.

The Chair of the Panel will acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as reasonably practicable and normally within fourteen working days.

Hearings may take place in person or remotely using appropriate technology, when appropriate.

The Panel hearing will proceed notwithstanding that the parent may subsequently decide not to attend. If necessary, the Panel will consider the complaint in the parent's absence and issue findings on the substance of the complaint, thereby bringing the matter to a conclusion.

If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than five working days prior to the hearing.

The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate. The Panel should be informed in advance of the name of the accompanying person and their relationship to the complainant.

Reasonable adjustments will be considered where required to enable individuals to access the complaints process fairly.

If possible, the Panel will resolve the complaint without the need for further investigation.

Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.

After due consideration of all relevant facts, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations.

The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, normally within seven working days of the hearing.

The decision of the Panel will be final.

The Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will be sent by email or otherwise provided to the parents and, where relevant, the person complained of, as well as the Governors and the Head of School.

A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will be available for inspection on the School premises by the Chair of Governors and the Head of School.

POST-COMPLAINT

If the complainant believes the School did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of its duties under education law, they may contact the Department for Education after completion of Stage 3.

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn decisions made by the School. However, it may consider whether the School has complied with education legislation and relevant standards.

Parents may contact the Department for Education online at:

www.education.gov.uk/contactus

Telephone: 0370 000 2288

Or write to:

Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

UNREASONABLY PERSISTENT COMPLAINTS

The School will take all reasonable steps to investigate concerns raised by parents.

There may be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedure having been followed, a complainant remains dissatisfied.

Where complainants repeatedly raise substantially similar issues after the complaints procedure has been exhausted, the School may reasonably limit further responses.

For the purposes of this policy, unreasonable behaviour may include:

- continuing to pursue a complaint that has already been fully investigated and concluded under this procedure
- submitting multiple complaints about the same matter

- sending an excessive volume of correspondence or making repeated contact that places an unreasonable burden on staff
- using abusive, threatening or offensive language – whether in writing, in person or by telephone – towards staff or governors
- seeking to involve or copy in third parties in a manner designed to intimidate or pressurise the School

The School will act reasonably and proportionately and will consider any reasonable adjustments required.

The School reserves the right to cease responding to complaints where it is satisfied that the complaints procedure has been fully and properly implemented and the matter has been concluded.

If an individual's behaviour becomes unreasonable, abusive or amounts to harassment, the School may seek appropriate advice, including legal advice where necessary.

RECORDING COMPLAINTS

A written record will be kept of complaints made in writing under the formal part of the procedure and whether they are resolved at the Formal Resolution stage or proceed to a Panel hearing.

A written record will also be made of action taken by the School as a result of these complaints, regardless of whether they are upheld.

At the School's discretion, additional records may be kept including:

- date when the issue was raised;
- parent and pupil names;
- details of the complaint;
- records of investigations and witness statements where appropriate;
- details of staff members handling the matter at each stage; and
- copies of relevant correspondence.

The School processes data in accordance with its Privacy Policy.

Records may include special category personal data where this is necessary owing to the nature of the complaint.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially.

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where access is requested by the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008.

The School will retain records of formal complaints and Complaints Panel hearings in accordance with its retention procedures and Privacy Policy.

GOVERNANCE OVERSIGHT

The Governing Body will monitor patterns and trends in complaints annually in order to identify potential areas for improvement and ensure the effectiveness of the complaints procedure.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Guidance on complaints about independent schools can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school/private-schools>

MONITORING AND REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed biennially or sooner in response to changes in legislation, regulatory requirements or operational need.

The Head of School and Governing Body are responsible for ensuring the effective implementation of this policy.

The number of complaints reaching stage 2 or above of the complaints process in the last academic year 2025/2026 is 2.