Concerns and Complaints Policy

Date written / last reviewed:	March 2026
Full Governors Approval required:	Yes
Date approved by Board of Trustees:	March 2026
Date of next review:	Spring 2028
Statutory Policy:	Yes
Add to website:	Yes
Related Policies:	Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy Whistleblowing Policy

1. Aim

Our prime concerns are the education and well-being of our students. We will do whatever we can to resolve concerns and complaints so that we can fulfill our school vision, which is:

"Everyone enjoys learning, feels valued and experiences success"

The aim of this guidance is to clarify procedures so that concerns and complaints, whether from staff, students, parents or members of the public, can be resolved as promptly and amicably as possible, so that the aim of the school can be pursued. The school will always give serious consideration to concerns and complaints that are brought to its attention.

Waldegrave welcomes and celebrates diversity, and our approach to concerns and complaints is grounded by The Equalities Act and an appreciation of how race, class, gender, sexual orientation, size, religion, Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND), or disadvantage impacts on people's experiences of schools.

2. Which procedure should be used?

Sometimes, when concerns are more specific, there are alternative and more appropriate policies for dealing with them. The following list details specific topics of complaints and the correct policy to refer to. These policies are on the school website or on request from the school:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection. If at any time a child protection concern becomes apparent, the child protection process takes precedence over the complaints process, which will be halted until the child protection matter is resolved.
- Student admissions; please see the school's Admission Procedure.
- Student Suspensions and Exclusions; please see the school's Suspensions and Exclusions Policy or the Department for Education (DfE) guidance on exclusions (www.gov.uk).
- Staff grievance, capability or disciplinary; these are covered by the school's grievance/disciplinary/capability/whistleblowing procedures.
- Where a complaint concerns a third party used by the school; please complain directly to the third party themselves.
- Subject Access Requests and Freedom of Information Requests; please see the school's Privacy Notice.
- Complaints regarding discrimination and harassment based on protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act 2010. The Complaints Procedure applies but the complainant has a further right of appeal to SENDIST (Special Educational Needs and Disability First Tier Tribunal) for complaints about disability discrimination or to the County Court for all other unresolved disputes regarding

protected characteristics.

3. Anonymous Complaints

Waldegrave School will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Headteacher/Chair of Governors (as appropriate) will warrant whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

4. Resolving concerns informally

For the purpose of this procedure, concerns are defined as having a worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought. The majority of concerns can be dealt with without resorting to the formal stages of the formal complaints procedure (see below). The governing board of Waldegrave School encourages those that have concerns to raise them with the appropriate person at the school (e.g. your child's form tutor/teacher) and to work constructively with that person towards resolving them. The extent to which this was both attempted and followed may be taken into consideration when assessing the reasonableness of a complaint during the formal stages of the procedure.

The formal stages of the procedure should be followed when attempts to resolve concerns informally have proved unsuccessful, and in cases where individuals wish to raise their concern formally.

All concerns will be dealt with confidentially, although the staff member may need to take notes if they feel that the matter may need to be taken further or it may arise again in the future. Any such notes will be kept in accordance with the principles of the Data Protection Act 2018. However, such notes would be able to be used as evidence if further investigation was required, or if the concern became a formal complaint.

5. Complaints about the Headteacher or Governors

Where a complaint is about the Headteacher, the complainant should notify the Clerk to the Governors (see appendix A). The stage one process (see the formal stages below) will then commence, but with the Chair of Governors as the individual responsible for the investigation, rather than the Headteacher.

Where a complaint concerns a Governor the complainant should contact the Clerk to the Governing Body. The Clerk will then determine the most appropriate course of action, seeking advice as appropriate. This will depend upon the nature of the complaint.

6. Timescale for making a complaint

Notification of a complaint should be given as soon as possible after the issue that led to the complaint has occurred and after informal attempts to seek resolution have proved unsuccessful. Complaints that are submitted three months after the issue that led to the complaint occurred will not be considered under this procedure unless there are exceptional circumstances. These may include (but are not limited to) subsequent information about the complaint coming to light and a valid explanation of why it was not possible to give notification of the complaint sooner. In such cases the Headteacher/Chair of the Governing Body/Clerk to the Governing Body (as appropriate) will review the circumstances, seek advice and determine whether the complaint should be considered under the formal procedure.

7. Maintaining records

A confidential written record of all complaints that are made in accordance with this procedure will be kept by the school. The written record will include whether the complaint has been resolved following a formal procedure and whether it proceeded to a panel review meeting. It will also refer to any action taken by the school as a result of the complaint regardless of whether it has been upheld. These records will be held in accordance with our data protection obligations.

8. Maintaining confidentiality

Concerns and complaints will be dealt with confidentially at all stages and at the conclusion of the procedure. Confidentiality should be maintained at all times by everyone involved. The Governing Body of Waldegrave School requests that complaints are not discussed publicly, including via social media.

Actions taken in relation to school staff that arise as a result of the complaint will remain confidential to the school and the member of staff concerned.

Written records taken and used throughout the complaints process, including correspondence, notes of meetings, telephone calls etc., will be kept securely and in accordance with the principles of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018.

9. Safeguarding

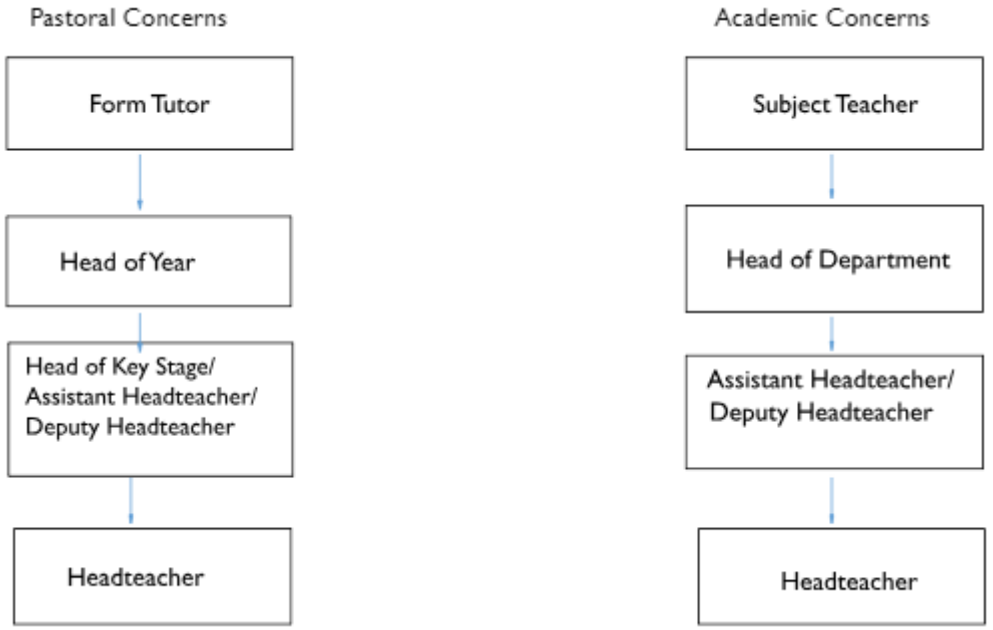
Wherever a concern indicates that a child's wellbeing or safety is at risk, the school is duty bound to report this immediately to the local authority. Any action taken will be in accordance with the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy which is on the school website or available by contacting the school.

10. Procedure

The majority of concerns can be resolved on an informal basis, following the procedure for concerns set out below. If you need to raise a concern, please do so with the relevant member of staff who will be happy to talk to you and seek to resolve it.

Should the matter not be resolved at the initial level within 14 working days, then it will be escalated to the next level as set out in the table below. Depending on the seriousness of the concern, it may be escalated more quickly, with the aim of resolving the concern within 14 further working days (excluding those that fall in the school holiday).

Responsibilities for dealing with concerns



11. Formal Complaints

If a concern has been escalated to the Headteacher and remains unresolved, or the matter is about the Headteacher or Chair of Governors, parents may choose to pass to stage one

of the formal complaints procedure.

For the purpose of this procedure, complaints are defined as an expression of dissatisfaction about actions taken, or a lack of action.

There are **two** formal stages of the complaints procedure.

Stage 1 – Formal investigation by Headteacher/Chair of Governing Body (as appropriate)

1. A request for a formal investigation of a complaint by the Headteacher/Chair of the Governing Body (as appropriate) should be made in writing by completing the formal complaints form that is included as Appendix B of this procedure and submitting it to the school. If help is required to complete the form, please contact the school (contact details in Appendix A).

2. The Headteacher/Chair of the Governing Body will acknowledge the request in writing no later than 10 working days (excluding those that fall in the school holidays) of receiving it. The written acknowledgment will, as far as possible, explain how the complaint will be investigated and the timescale for completing the investigation.

3. A log of all correspondence in relation to the complaint will be kept in accordance with the Data Protection Principles.

4. The Headteacher/Chair of the Governing Body will consider all relevant evidence. This **may** include, but is not limited to:
    - obtaining statements from the complainant and those involved with the complaint
    - meeting with the complainant and those involved in the complaint
    - reviewing correspondence and other documents relating to the complaint

5. After considering the available evidence, the Headteacher/Chair of the Governing Body can decide to:
    - uphold the complaint and direct that certain action be taken to resolve it
    - uphold the complaint in part (in other words find an aspect or aspects of the complaint to be valid, but not the whole complaint) direct for certain action to be taken, or
    - dismiss the complaint entirely

6. The Headteacher/Chair of the Governing Body will inform the complainant of their decision in writing, the grounds on which it was made and any actions taken as a result of the complaint. This will be within 30 working days (excluding those that fall in the school holidays) of having issued written acknowledgement of receipt of the complaint (see 2 above). The written notification shall also advise the complainant of their right to escalate the complaint to stage 2 of the formal complaints procedure if they are not satisfied with the outcome at stage 1, including the contact details of the Clerk to the Governing Body (Appendix A).

Stage 2 – Review by a panel of the Local Governing Body

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of their stage 1 complaint, they are entitled to request a review of the decision taken at stage 1 and the actions taken. The review is carried out by a panel of the Local Governing Body at a meeting convened by the Clerk to the Governing Body.

Requests for a review of the decision taken at stage 1 should be made in writing to the Clerk (Appendix A) by completing the stage 2 formal complaints form that is included as

Appendix C of this procedure no later than 10 days after written notification of the decision taken has been received. If help is required to complete the form, please contact the school (Appendix A).

The Clerk will fulfil the role of organising the time and date of the review meeting, inviting all the attendees, collating all the relevant documentation and distributing this five days in advance of the meeting. Minutes of the review meeting will be taken by the Clerk and provided with the written notification of the decision taken at stage 2 (see 9 below).

The following steps are taken at stage 2:

1. The Clerk will write to the complainant to acknowledge receipt within five days of receiving the request for an appeal.

2. The Clerk will convene a panel of two school Governors and one independent person to review the complaint. All three panel individuals will have no prior knowledge of the content of the complaint.

3. The review meeting will take place within 20 working days (excluding those which fall in the school holidays) of receipt of the written acknowledgement from the Clerk (see 1 above). If the first identified date is not convenient for the complainant, up to two further dates should be offered. If these all fail to be suitable, then the meeting may be conducted in private by the Complaint Appeal Panel.

4. The panel **may** decide to invite the following to attend the review meeting:
    - the complainant
    - the Headteacher/Chair of the Governing Body (as appropriate) who investigated the complaint and made the decision at stage 1
    - relevant persons involved the complaint/witnesses
    - persons whom, in the view of the panel, can provide relevant advice and information relating to the subject of the complaint and the review process at stage 2

5. Where the complainant, Headteacher and/or relevant person involved in the complaint have been invited to attend the review meeting, they are entitled to be accompanied by a family member/friend/representative as appropriate. The Clerk to the Governing Body should be advised of the name of this supportive companion prior to the hearing. The supportive companion is not there as a witness, so does not address the panel except with the prior agreement of the Chair. Legal representatives are not permitted to attend the review meeting.

6. Where the relevant persons involved in the complaint include pupils at the school, and their attendance at the review meeting has been requested by the panel, parental permission must be sought if they are under the age of 18. Extra care will be taken to consider the vulnerability of children where they are present at a complaints hearing.

7. Where the complaint is about a Governor/Director/Governing Body the complainant may request that the review meeting is held by an independent panel. This is at the discretion of the Academy Trust who will notify the Clerk of their decision. Where an entirely independent panel is required, timescales may be affected while the school sources appropriate individuals for the review.

8. After considering the complaint afresh and reviewing the available evidence, the panel reviewing the complaint can decide to:

    - uphold the complaint and direct that certain action be taken to resolve it;

- uphold the complaint in part (in other words find an aspect or aspects of the complaint to be valid, but not the whole complaint) and direct for certain action to be taken, or
- dismiss the complaint entirely.

Irrespective of the decision taken, the panel may also recommend steps that the complainant and the school should take to move forward from the presenting issues in the best interests of all concerned. The panel may also recommend steps to be taken that reduce the likelihood of a similar complaint being made in the future.

9. The complainant, the Headteacher/Chair of the Governing Body (as appropriate) who investigated the complaint and made the decision at stage 1, and, where relevant, the person complained about will be informed in writing of the outcome of the review meeting no later than 10 working days (excluding those which fall in the school holidays) after the review meeting has taken place.

This is the **final stage** at which the school will consider the complaint. The school will not consider the complaint beyond this.

If the complainant feels that the Governing Body acted unreasonably in the handling of the complaint, they can complain to the Educational and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) after the complaints procedure has been exhausted. Please note that 'unreasonable' is used in a legal sense and means acting in a way that no reasonable school would act in the same circumstances. The ESFA cannot review or overturn decisions about complaints made in respect of academies. The ESFA can only investigate whether the academy considered the complaint appropriately. If the ESFA finds that an academy did not consider a complaint appropriately it can request the academy to reconsider the complaint.

The Chair of the Complaint Appeal Panel should ensure that a copy of all relevant information relating to the complaint is kept at the school in a secure, confidential file, separate from staff and pupil/student records. This information should be retained for six years from the date of the complaint, in line with guidance from the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The complainant should be informed that this will be done.

Please note that the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 may request access to complaints documentation.

Timescale for completing the formal stages of the procedure





All timescales in this document refer to school working days i.e. excluding weekends, school holidays etc. Waldegrave School will endeavour to complete the formal stages of its complaints procedure in a timely manner and within the timescale for each stage that is referred to above. However, if it becomes clear that for any reason Waldegrave is unable to meet the timescale for completing a stage of the procedure, the complainant will be advised of this immediately, along with the reason for the delay and the revised timescale.

12. Serial, persistent and unreasonable complaints

Waldegrave School is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality service to those who complain. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

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

- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance;
- refuses to cooperate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved;
- 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 adopted complaints procedure or with good practice;
- 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, often immediately and to their own timescales;
- makes unjustified complaints 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 that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the ESFA;
- seeks an unrealistic outcome;
- makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email

and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with.

A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if the person making the complaint does so either face-to-face, by telephone or in writing or electronically:

- maliciously;
- aggressively;
- using threats, intimidation or violence;
- using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language;
- knowing it to be false;
- using falsified information;
- publishing unacceptable information in a variety of media such as in social media websites and newspapers.

Under no circumstances will a complainant be marked as 'serial' for exercising their right to refer their complaint to their MP, regardless of which stage the complaint has reached.

Complainants should limit the number of communications with a school while a complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text) as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' judgement.

If the behaviour continues the Headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and asking them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact Waldegrave school causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will usually be reviewed after six months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the concerns and actions taken will be put in writing immediately and the police informed. This may include banning an individual from school.

13. Barring from the School Premises

Although fulfilling a public function, schools are private places. The public has no automatic right of entry. Governors have a responsibility to ensure the wellbeing of pupils/students and staff and will therefore act to ensure that schools remain a safe place.

If a parent's behaviour is a cause for concern, a school can ask him/her to leave the school premises. In serious cases, the Headteacher or the Chair of Governors can notify them in writing that their implied permission to be on school premises has been temporarily revoked subject to any representations that the parent may wish to make. Schools should always give the parent the opportunity to formally express their views on the decision to bar in writing.

The decision to bar should then be reviewed, taking into account any representations made by the parent, and either confirmed or lifted. If the decision is confirmed the parent should be notified in writing, explaining how long the bar will be in place. Anyone wishing to complain about being barred can do so, by letter or email, to the Headteacher or Chair of Governors. However, complaints about barring cannot be escalated to the Department of Education. Once the school's own complaints procedure has been completed, the only remaining avenue of appeal is through the Courts; independent legal advice must therefore be sought.

Appendix A

Contact details for School

Waldegrave School
Fifth Cross Road
Twickenham
Middlesex
TW2 5LH

Tel: 020 8894 3244
Email: info@waldegravesch.org

Contact details for Clerk to the Governors

clerktogovs@waldegravesch.org or in writing to

FAO Clerk to Governors,
Waldegrave School
Fifth Cross Road
Twickenham
Middlesex
TW2 5LH

Appendix B

Waldegrave school Formal Complaints Form (Stage 1)

Name	
Name of pupil, year group and your relationship to them (where applicable)	
Address	
Telephone (Day)	
Telephone (Mobile)	
Email Address	

Details of the complaint
Action taken so far (including staff member who has dealt with it so far) or solutions offered
The reason that this was not a satisfactory resolution for you
What action would you like to be taken to resolve the problem?

Signed:

Date:

Official use

Date received:	Signed:

Appendix C

Waldegrave school Formal Complaints Form (Stage 2)

Name	
Name of pupil, year group and your relationship to them (where applicable)	
Address	
Telephone (Day)	
Telephone (Mobile)	
Email Address	

Reasons for requesting a Stage 2 Complaint Panel (Reasons why you feel the procedures at the earlier stages of the complaints process were not followed)
Which element(s) of your complaint were not properly considered the previous stages?
What outcome are you seeking from the Stage 2 Complaint Review?

Signed:

Date:

Official use

Date received:	Signed:

1