



Complaints Policy

Policy ratified by the Staffing & Community Committee

Autumn Term 2019

Review Date: Autumn Term 2021 (or as required)

Policy Owner: Rachel Davies, Headteacher

EXTERNAL POLICY

Grove Park Primary School Complaints Policy

Our School Values

We have a variety of ways in which any member of our community can express a concern or make a complaint. At Grove Park, we believe that feedback is key to helping us grow and develop as a school.

Legislation and guidance

This document meets the requirements of section 29 of the [Education Act 2002](#), which states that 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.

It is also based on [guidance for schools on complaints procedures](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), including the model procedure, and model procedure for dealing with unreasonable complaints.

Who can make a complaint?

This complaints procedure is mainly aimed at parents or carers of children who are registered at the school, but it is not limited to them.

Any member of the public may make a complaint to Grove Park Primary School about any provision of facilities or services that the school provides.

Throughout this policy and the complaints process, we will be sensitive to the needs of all parties involved, and make any reasonable adjustments needed to support or accommodate individuals.

Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as appeals relating to exclusions or admissions), the school will use this complaints procedure.

The difference between a concern and a complaint

A concern may be defined as 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'. A complaint may be defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'.

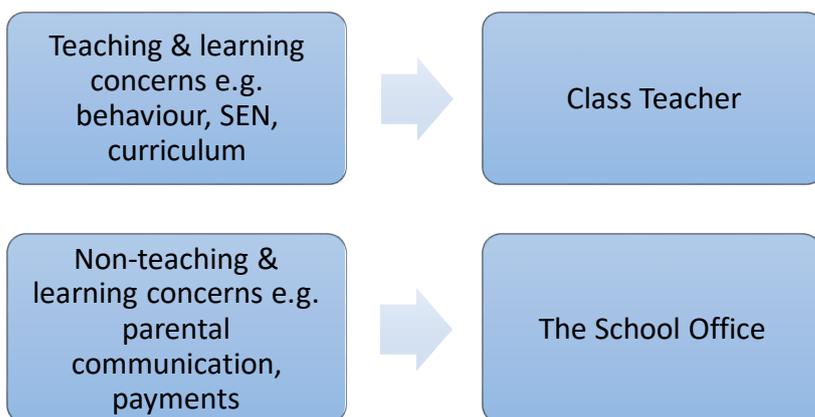
It is in everyone's interest that concerns are resolved at the earliest opportunity. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. Grove Park Primary School takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

Who to go to if you have a concern:

A concern can be raised or addressed: in person, in writing or by telephone.

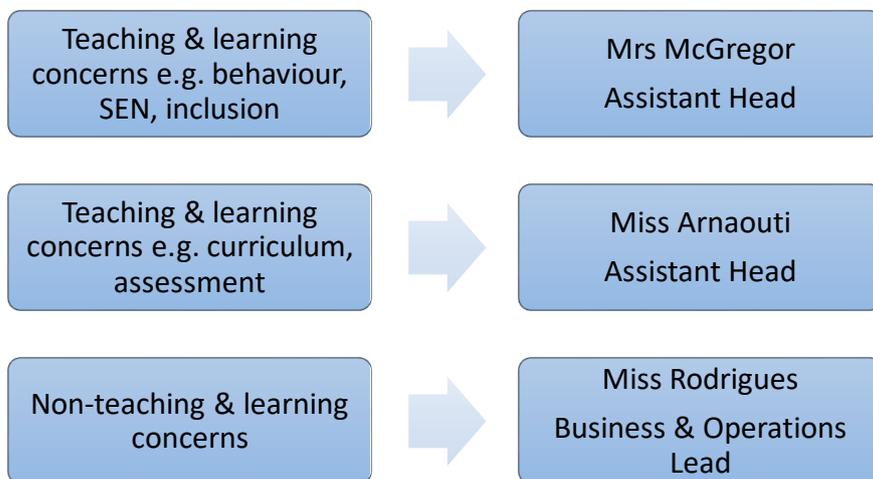
Please direct concerns to the relevant member of staff so that we are able to support you and address the issue as quickly and effectively as possible. The staff member may be able to address your concerns immediately or may arrange a further meeting within the 10 days.

Stage A of Informal Concerns: 10 school days



Stage B of Informal Concerns: 10 school days

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage A then, once this stage has been completed, you can raise your concern with a member of the Senior Leadership Team.



Stage C Final Stage of Informal Concerns: 10 school days

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage B then, once this stage has been completed, you can raise your concern with the headteacher. Once the headteacher has addressed a concern, any decisions made at this stage will be final

We understand, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, Grove Park Primary School will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

How to make a complaint

A complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by third party acting on behalf on a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

Complainants should not approach individual governors to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at stage 2 of the procedure.

Complaints should be made in the first instance, to Miss Davies (the Headteacher) via the school office. Please mark them as 'Private and confidential'.

Complaints that involve or are about the Headteacher should be addressed to Karen Jorgensen (the Chair of Governors), via the school office. Please mark them as 'private and confidential'.

Complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor or the whole governing body should be sent to the school for the attention of the clerk to the Governing Body via the school office. Please mark them as 'Private and Confidential'.

For ease of use, a template complaint form is included at the end of this procedure. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office or our Parent Support Adviser (Jo Lovatt). You can also ask third party organisations such as Citizens Advice to help you.

In accordance with equality law, we will be sensitive to the needs of all parties involved and make reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure. For instance, providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

In keeping with our school ethos and TREE values, we will treat complainants and those who express concerns with respect and courtesy

We will ensure that any decisions we make are lawful, rational, reasonable, fair and proportionate, in line with the principles of administrative law

Anonymous complaints

The school will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

Duplicate complaints

If, after closing a complaint at the end of the complaints procedure, we receive a duplicate complaint from a spouse, a partner, a grandparent, a child not attending this school or any other individual, we will assess whether there are aspects that we hadn't previously considered, or any new information we need to take into account.

If we are satisfied that there are no new aspects, we will:

- Tell the new complainant that we have already investigated and responded to this issue, and the local process is complete
 - Direct them to the DfE if they are dissatisfied with our original handling of the complaint
- If there are new aspects, we will follow this procedure again.

Complaint campaigns

If we receive what we consider to be a large volume of complaints, all based on the same subject and possibly from complainants not connected to the school, then we will treat these complaints as being part of a campaign and respond in one of the following two ways, depending upon the nature and scale of the complaint:

- Send the same response to all complainants; or
- Publish a single response on the school's website.

If complainants are not satisfied with the school's response, or wish to pursue the complaint further, the normal procedures will apply.

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:

- Has made the same complaint before, and it's already been resolved by following the school's complaints procedure;
- Makes a complaint that is obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, defamatory or repetitive;
- Knowingly provides false information;
- Insists on pursuing a complaint that is unfounded, or out of scope of the complaints procedure;
- Pursues a valid complaint, but in an unreasonable manner e.g. refuses to articulate the complaint, refused 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;
- Changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation progresses;
- Makes a complaint designed to cause disruption, annoyance or excessive demands on school time;
- Seeks unrealistic outcomes, or a solution that lacks any serious purpose or value.

Steps we will take:

We will take every reasonable step to address the complainant's concerns, and give them a clear statement of our position and their options. We will maintain our role as an objective arbiter throughout the process, including when we meet with individuals. We will follow our complaints procedure as normal (as outlined above) wherever possible.

If the complainant continues to contact the school in a disruptive way, we may put communications strategies in place. We may:

- Give the complainant a single point of contact via an email address;
- Limit the number of times the complainant can make contact, such as a fixed number per term;
- Ask the complainant to engage a third party to act on their behalf, such as Citizens' Advice;
- Put any other strategy in place as necessary.

Stopping responding

We may stop responding to the complainant when all of these factors are met:

- We believe we have taken all reasonable steps to help address their concerns;
- We have provided a clear statement of our position and their options;
- The complainant contacts us repeatedly, and we believe their intention is to cause disruption or inconvenience;

Where we stop responding, we will inform the individual that we intend to do so. We will also explain that we will still consider any new complaints they make.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from our school site.

Roles and Responsibilities – Complaints

The complainant

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;
- Treat all those involved with respect ;
- Do not publish details about the complaint on social media.

The investigator

An individual with no connection to the complaint or process, will be appointed to look into the complaint, and establish the facts. They will:

- Interview all relevant parties, keeping notes;
- Consider records and any written evidence and keep these securely;
- Prepare a comprehensive report to the Headteacher or complaints committee which includes the facts and potential solutions.

A Clerk (appointed by the Chair of the Panel)

The Clerk will:

- Be the contact point for the complainant and the complaints committee, including circulating the relevant papers and evidence before complaints committee meetings;
- Arrange the complaints hearing;
- Record and circulate the minutes and outcome of the hearing.

Chair of the Complaints Panel

The Chair of the Complaints Panel will:

- Chair the meeting, ensuring that everyone is treated with respect throughout;
- Make sure all parties see the relevant information, understand the purpose of the meeting, and are allowed to present their case.

Timescales

Complainants must raise the complaint within three months of the incident, or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

If at any point we cannot meet the time scales we have set out in this policy, we will:

- Set new time limits with the complainant;
- Send the complainant details of the new deadline and explain the delay.

Complaints received outside of term time

We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

Scope of this complaints procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by Grove Park Primary School other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

Exceptions	Who to contact
Admissions to schools Statutory assessments of special educational needs School re-organisation proposals	Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of special educational needs or school reorganisation proposals should be raised with the London Borough of Hounslow.

Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation	<p>Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.</p> <p>If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)</p>
Exclusion of children from school*	<p>Further information about raising concerns about exclusions can be found at www.gov.uk/school-discipline/exclusions/exclusions.</p> <p>*complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.</p>
Whistleblowing	<p>We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors.</p> <p>The secretary of state for education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at www.education.gov-uk/contactus.</p> <p>Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the local authority or the DfE (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.</p>
Staff grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.
Staff conduct	<p>Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate.</p> <p>Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.</p>
Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.
National curriculum - content	Please contact the DfE at www.education.gov.uk/contactus

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority (LA) safeguarding teams or tribunals, this may impact on our ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations.

If a complainant commences legal action against Grove Park Primary School in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure in relation to their complaint until those legal proceedings have concluded.

Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, Grove Park Primary School wants to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- an explanation;
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
- an assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur;
- an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made;
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint;
- an apology

Withdrawal of a complaint

If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

Stage 1

- Formal complaints must be made to the head teacher (unless they are about the head teacher), via the school office. This may be done in person, in writing (preferably on the complaint form), or by telephone. The head teacher will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 5 school days. Within this response, the Headteacher will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The head teacher can consider whether a face to face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

Note: The Headteacher may ask another member of the school's senior leadership team to carry out the investigation-

During the investigation, the head teacher (or investigator) will:

- If necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
- Keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the head teacher will provide a formal written response within 10 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint. If the

Headteacher is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions Grove Park Primary School will take to resolve the complaint.

The Headteacher will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1 . If the complaint is about the head teacher or a member of the governing body (including the Chair or Vice-Chair), a suitably skilled governor will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 1 .

Complaints about the head teacher or member of the governing body must be made to the clerk, via the school office.

If the complaint is jointly about the chair and vice chair, or the entire governing body, or the majority of the governing body, stage 1 will be considered by an independent investigator appointed by the governing body. At the conclusion of its investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response.

Stage 2

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at stage 1 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to stage 2 — a meeting with members of the governing body's complaints committee, which will be formed of the first three, impartial, governors available. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.

A request to escalate to stage 2 must be made to the clerk, via the school office, within 7 school days of receipt of the stage 1 response.

The clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 7 school days.

Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

The clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within 5 school days of receipt of the stage 2 request. If this is not possible, the clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates without good reason, the clerk will decide when to hold the meeting. It will then proceed in the complainant's absence on the basis of written submissions from both parties.

The complaints committee will consist of at least three governors with no prior involvement or direct knowledge of the complaint. Prior to the meeting, they will decide among themselves who will act as the chair of the complaints committee. If there are fewer than three governors from Grove Park Primary School available, the clerk will source any additional, independent governors through another local school or through their local authority's governor services team, in order to make up the committee. Alternatively, an entirely independent committee may be convened to hear the complaint at stage 2.

The committee will decide whether to deal with the complaint by inviting parties to a meeting or through written representations, but in making its decision it will be sensitive to the complainant's needs.

If The complainant is invited to attend the meeting; they may bring someone along to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. We don't encourage either party to bring legal representation, but will consider it on a case-by-case basis. For instance, if a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by their union.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

At least 5 school days before the meeting, the clerk will:

- Confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that if the complainant is invited, the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible;
- Request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the committee at least 5 school days before the meeting.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 5 school days before the date of the meeting. The committee will not normally accept as evidence recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

The committee will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from stage 1 of the procedure.

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

The committee will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The committee can:

- Uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
- Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.

If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the committee will:

- Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
- Where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

The chair of the committee will provide the complainant and Grove Park Primary School with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 10 days.

The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the DfE if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by Grove Park Primary School.

If the complaint is jointly about the chair and vice chair or the entire governing body or the majority of the governing body, stage 2 will be heard by a committee of independent governors.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions Grove Park Primary School will take to resolve the complaint.

The response will also advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied.

Next steps

If the complainant is unsatisfied with the outcome of Grove Park's complaints procedure after they have completed Stage 2, they can refer their complaint to the School Complaints Unit (SCU), which investigates complaints relating to maintained schools on behalf of the secretary of state.

The SCU will not re-investigate the matter of the complaint. It will look at whether Grove Park's complaints policy and any other relevant statutory policies that the school holds were adhered to. The SCU also looks at whether the school's statutory policies adhere to education legislation. It may direct the school to re-investigate the complaint where it is clear the school has acted unlawfully or unreasonably.

For more information or to refer a complaint, see the following webpage:

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

We will include this information in the outcome letter to complainants.

Grove Park Primary School Complaint form

Please complete and return to Headteacher who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:

Pupil's name (if relevant):

Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):

Address:

Daytime telephone number:

Evening telephone number:

Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it.

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.

Signature:

Date:

Official use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By who:

Complaint referred to:

Date: