



Fairfield House School

Complaints and Grievance Policy

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Policy Owner: Head Teacher / Proprietor

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1. Statement of Intent

Fairfield House School is committed to providing a safe, inclusive and high-quality educational environment in which pupils, parents, carers and professionals are treated with dignity and respect.

The school recognises that concerns and complaints may arise and is committed to ensuring these are addressed promptly, fairly and transparently. We actively promote a culture of openness and accountability, where feedback is valued and used to drive continuous improvement.

This policy reflects the school's commitment to working in partnership with families, local authorities and external agencies, ensuring a multi-disciplinary approach to meeting the needs of all pupils.

2. Legal and Regulatory Framework

This policy is written in accordance with:

- **The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (as amended)**
 - Part 7: Manner in which complaints are handled
- **Ofsted Education Inspection Framework (EIF)**
- **Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)**
- **Equality Act 2010**
- **SEND Code of Practice (2015)**

In particular, this policy ensures compliance with:

- A clear **three-stage complaints procedure**
- Defined **timescales for response and resolution**
- Provision for a **panel hearing with an independent member**
- Maintenance of a **written record of complaints and outcomes**
- Accessibility for all pupils, including those with SEND

3. Aims of the Policy

The school aims to:

- Ensure all concerns and complaints are managed effectively and in line with statutory requirements
- Provide a clear, transparent and accessible complaints process
- Resolve issues at the earliest possible stage
- Safeguard the welfare and rights of pupils
- Promote continuous improvement through reflective practice

4. Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is defined as:

An expression of dissatisfaction regarding the conduct, operation or provision of the school, including actions or lack of actions by staff, or perceived unfair treatment of a pupil or individual.

Safeguarding concerns will always be managed in accordance with the school's safeguarding and child protection procedures.

5. Key Principles

All complaints will be:

- Taken seriously and treated with sensitivity
- Handled confidentially in line with data protection requirements
- Investigated thoroughly, fairly and impartially
- Resolved within clearly defined timescales
- Used to inform school self-evaluation and improvement

6. Complaints Procedure

6.1. Stage 1: Informal Resolution

In line with best practice, most concerns should be resolved informally.

- Concerns should be raised with the relevant staff member or class teacher
- The Head Teacher will be informed where appropriate
- The concern will be acknowledged promptly
- A response will be provided within **5 working days**

Where appropriate, reasonable adjustments will be made to support communication needs.

6.2. Stage 2: Formal Complaint

Where a concern is not resolved informally, or the complainant wishes to escalate:

- A formal complaint must be submitted in writing to the **Head Teacher**
- The complaint will be acknowledged within **5 working days**
- A full investigation will be undertaken
- A written outcome will be provided within **28 days**

The investigation will include:

- Gathering relevant evidence and documentation
- Meetings with staff and, where appropriate, pupils
- Consultation with external professionals if required

The outcome will include findings, actions taken and any recommendations.

6.3. Stage 3: Panel Hearing (Independent Review)

In accordance with the **Independent School Standards**, if the complainant remains dissatisfied:

- The complainant requests in writing to the Proprietor for a panel to be convened
- An acknowledgement of the panel convening at a future date will be provided to the complainant within 5 working days
- A panel hearing will then be convened within **15 working days**
- The panel will consist of **at least three members**, including:
 - One member independent of the management and running of the school
- The complainant may attend and be accompanied, however the individual accompanying the complainant will not be permitted to take part in the process
- The panel will consider all evidence and make findings and recommendations
- A written outcome will be provided within **10 working days**

This stage ensures compliance with ISSR requirements for independence and fairness.

7. Record Keeping and Monitoring

In line with regulatory requirements, the school will:

- Maintain a **written record of all complaints**, including:
 - Whether resolved at informal or formal stage
 - Whether a panel hearing was required
 - Actions taken as a result
- Ensure records are stored securely and confidentially
- Make records available for inspection by regulatory bodies where required

8. Complaints Made by Parents

Fairfield House School values the strong partnership between home and school and recognises that parents and carers play a vital role in supporting their child's education and wellbeing. We encourage parents to raise concerns at the earliest opportunity so that issues can be addressed promptly, collaboratively and effectively.

Parents are encouraged to raise concerns initially with the relevant member of staff, class teacher or key worker. Most concerns can be resolved quickly through open discussion and partnership working.

Where a concern remains unresolved, parents should contact the Head Teacher, who will review the matter and seek to resolve the issue through discussion, investigation and appropriate action.

If the complaint remains unresolved following involvement of the Head Teacher, parents may submit a formal complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this policy.

The school will:

- Listen to and acknowledge parental concerns promptly.
- Treat all complaints seriously and confidentially.
- Investigate complaints thoroughly, fairly and impartially.
- Keep parents informed of the progress of any investigation.
- Provide a clear written outcome outlining findings, actions taken and any recommendations where appropriate.
- Make reasonable adjustments to support parents with disabilities, communication needs or language barriers.

Where a complaint relates to a pupil's Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), safeguarding, special educational provision or involvement of external agencies, the school may consult with relevant professionals and the placing Local Authority as part of the investigation process.

Parents retain the right to progress through each stage of the complaints procedure if they remain dissatisfied with the outcome. The school will endeavour to resolve concerns through open communication and partnership working wherever possible.

9. Complaints Made by Pupils

The school recognises that pupils in a specialist setting may require additional support to raise concerns.

We will:

- Take all pupil complaints seriously
- Ensure pupils are supported to communicate concerns effectively
- Involve Speech and Language Therapists where appropriate
- Provide advocacy and reassurance throughout the process

No pupil will be disadvantaged for raising a concern.

9.1 Accessibility and SEND Compliance for Complaints Made by Pupils

In line with the **SEND Code of Practice** and Equality Act 2010, the school will:

- Provide information in accessible formats (visual, simplified, symbol-supported)
- Support pupils to express concerns using communication systems such as:
 - PECs
 - Makaton
 - Visual aids
- Offer support from familiar adults or professionals
- Make reasonable adjustments to ensure equitable access to the complaints process

This ensures that all pupils, including those with communication needs, can meaningfully engage with the process.

10. Safeguarding Considerations

Where a complaint relates to safeguarding:

- The school's safeguarding procedures will take precedence
- Concerns will be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately
- External agencies will be involved where required

11. Data Protection Complaints

Fairfield House School recognises that, from 19th June 2026, Section 164A of the Data Protection Act 2018 places specific obligations on data controllers, including schools, in relation to complaints made by data subjects about the handling of their personal data.

Where a complaint relates to data protection matters, Fairfield House School will ensure that:

- Individuals are able to make a complaint easily, including through the provision of an appropriate complaints form or clearly signposted process
- All data protection complaints are acknowledged within 30 calendar days
- Complaints are investigated promptly and without undue delay
- Appropriate steps are taken to establish the facts and consider the issues raised
- The outcome of the complaint is communicated clearly and without undue delay

Fairfield House School will not operate a separate complaints procedure for data protection matters. Instead, such complaints will be managed through this Complaints Policy, with additional steps taken here necessary to ensure compliance with data protection legislation.

Where a complaint falls under both this Complaints Policy and data protection law, Fairfield House School will ensure the requirements of both are met and that there is no conflict between procedures.

Complainants retain the right to refer concerns to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) if they are dissatisfied with the school's handling of their personal data.

12. Ofsted Contact Information

Complainants may contact Ofsted at any stage if they feel the matter cannot be resolved internally:

Ofsted

Piccadilly Gate

Store Street

Manchester

M1 2WD

Telephone: 0300 123 1231

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The school will notify Ofsted of any complaints that meet the criteria for notifiable events.

13. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure ongoing compliance with:

- Independent School Standards Regulations
- Ofsted Education Inspection Framework
- Current safeguarding and SEND guidance

14. Linked Policies

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- SEND Policy
- Equality and Inclusion Policy