



**Policy title Complaints Policy**

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**Signed: Chair of Governors**

# Complaints Policy

## Introduction

**Background:** Greenmead Primary School is dedicated to providing the best possible education and support for all its pupils. This means having a clear, fair, and efficient procedure for dealing with any complaints to or against the school, so that any issues that arise can be dealt with as swiftly and effectively as possible.

This policy explains that procedure, and the steps that it outlines should be referred to and followed by all pupils and their parents whenever an issue arises that causes them concern.

To best support a good relationship between parents/carers and the school there is home/school agreement in place which can be found in your child's home/school book and in **Appendix 1**.

All school staff will be made aware of complaints procedures and expected to review this policy regularly in order that they are familiar with our process of dealing with complaints and can be of the most assistance when an issue is brought to their attention.

**Ethos:** We encourage parents to be mindful of how they approach staff with any concerns. Approaches should be made with mutual respect and professionalism and with the intention of resolving all issues with open dialogue and mutual understanding.

**Exceptions:** This policy does not apply to complaints about: admissions, exclusions and staff disciplinary proceedings.

If there is an allegation or concern about physical or sexual misconduct towards a child, or there is a belief that a child may be at risk of serious harm, the school will immediately refer the case to the safeguarding and child protection services. If it is decided that there is cause for an official investigation, the decisions by these authorities will supersede those made by the school and outlined in this policy.

For more information on our school's provision for protecting our pupils, read our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy (available on the school website).

Please refer to our Allegations of Abuse against Staff Policy for an outline of this procedure (available from the School Office).

We initially want to address any parent/carer concerns informally with understanding of wanting to work together in the child's best interests informally before either the school or the parents wish to proceed through the formal process.

For ease, please refer to the flowcharts in **Appendix 2** of how to raise a concern and for escalating this to a formal complaint.

## **1. Informal raising of concerns**

**Initial escalation:** If you wish to raise a concern about a class related issue then please email your child's class teacher, send a message in the home/school book or leave a message with the admin team asking for the class teacher to call you back. Your child's class teacher is best placed to help you either directly or be able to direct you to the appropriate member of the school team.

If you wish to raise a concern about therapy then please email your child's designated therapist who will be able to deal with your concern.

If you wish to raise a concern about a medical/health related issue then please email the school nurses.

If you wish to raise a concern about the provision of After Party please email the After Party Leader in the first instance.

If you wish to raise a concern about admin processes or the premises then please email the admin team in the first instance.

If your complaint is about a member of staff, you must first raise this with the Headteacher either in person or in writing, and a meeting can be arranged with the Headteacher to discuss the issue at hand.

If your complaint is about the Headteacher, you must raise your concern in writing with the Chair of Governors.

The Chair of Governors may refer complaints that are taken straight to them back to the appropriate member of staff if they do not warrant the governing body's involvement at that point.

## **2. Informal escalation of concern**

If you feel that your concern has not been resolved satisfactorily with the class teacher you can escalate your concern to a pathway leader via email who will respond to your email within 3 working days and will aim to find an informal resolution between you and the class teacher.

If you feel that your concern has not been resolved satisfactorily with the therapist you can escalate your concern to the Clinical Lead via email who will respond to your email within 3 working days and will aim to find an informal resolution between you and the therapist.

If you feel that your concern has not been resolved satisfactorily with the school nurse you can escalate your concern to the Head of Care via email who will respond to your email within 3 working days and will aim to find an informal resolution between you and the school nurse.

If you feel your concern has not been satisfactorily resolved with the After Party Leader you can escalate your concern to the Head of Care via email who will respond to your email within 3 working days and will aim to find an informal resolution between you and the After Party team.

If you feel your concern has not been satisfactorily resolved with the admin team about admin processes or the premises then you can escalate your concern to the School Business Manager who will respond to

your email within 3 working days and will aim to deal your concern in conjunction with you and the relevant team members.

**Secondary escalation:** If you feel that the informal raising of your concern or initial escalation steps have not resolved your concerns you can email the Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher and share your concerns and where you feel that your concerns have not been resolved. The Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher will acknowledge your concern and will investigate your concern with members of the school team and respond to you within 3 working days with an outcome.

One outcome may be that the Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher will invite you in for an informal resolutions meeting with appropriate members of the school team to agree on an action plan and a review date. Minutes of the meeting and the actions will be recorded and sent out to you and the school team members.

These meetings will be chaired by the Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher and there will be an agreement of mutual respect and professional conduct within the meeting using the five principles of conflict resolution;

1. Clarify what the concerns are
2. Bring parties together to talk
3. Identify solutions and actions
4. Review actions and
5. Monitor concerns and follow up

Following an agreed period actions will be reviewed and parents/carers' concerns at the agreed review meeting.

### **3. Formal complaints**

If you feel that your concerns have still not been dealt with satisfactorily then you can put a formal complaint in writing to the headteacher. In order to ensure that complaints are processed efficiently and effectively the school deals with formal complaints in three stages;

#### **a. Formal complaints, complaint heard by Headteacher**

In order to ensure that complaints are processed efficiently and effectively, Greenmead School addresses formal complaints in three stages:

##### ***Stage 1: The Headteacher***

If you do not feel that your concern has been satisfactorily addressed through the informal process noted above or feel that the issue is serious enough that it warrants immediate use of the formal process, you can make a formal complaint in writing to the Headteacher. The school has a standard complaint form which can be found in **Appendix 3**.

The Headteacher will acknowledge your complaint in writing within **3 days**. The headteacher will outline their decision if there is one to be made, and any action to be taken as a result of your complaint.

The Headteacher will keep a record of all interactions with you and other staff, meetings and decisions

made in reference to your complaint.

If the complaint is against a member of staff, the Headteacher will talk to that employee.

Complaints about the Headteacher should be reported to the Chair of Governors by letter or via the school office ([admin@greenmead.wandsworth.sch.uk](mailto:admin@greenmead.wandsworth.sch.uk)) using **Appendix 2** template.

### ***Stage 2: The Chair of Governors***

If, having spoken to the Headteacher, you have remaining concerns, you may lodge your complaint with the Chair of Governors in writing via the school office ([admin@greenmead.wandsworth.sch.uk](mailto:admin@greenmead.wandsworth.sch.uk)), explaining your concern and the steps that have led up to you taking this course of action.

If the complaint is against a member of staff, that employee will be given the opportunity to write a response, which will be sent to the Chair of Governors within **5 working days** of the complaint being lodged with them.

The Chair of Governors will respond to you in writing within **7 working days** outlining their response to your concern, and any action that has or will be taken. If they have decided not to take any further action on the issue, they will explain what they have decided, how they have reached this decision, and will outline your right of appeal and how you can start your appeal.

### **b. Appeals**

### ***Stage 3: Governor Appeal Panel***

If you would like to launch an appeal following the outcome of a formal complaint that you have lodged, this will be taken to the appeals panel of the governing board within **14 working days** (as governors have working roles and may need to request time off from employers).

### **The Appeals Panel**

The Appeals Panel will be made up of members of the governing board, excluding parent governors. No member of the governing board, including the chair, can sit on the appeals panel if they have had any former knowledge or involvement in the case that is being dealt with at that time.

The complainant is able to bring support to the panel meeting but their involvement is there to support the complainant, not to contribute to the panel hearing.

The panel will give careful consideration to how the complainant can be made to feel most comfortable presenting to the panel, especially in the case of a young child having to present or explain information.

### **Appeals procedure**

The procedure for an appeal is as follows:

1. The complainant and Headteacher will enter the hearing together.

2. The Chair of the appeals panel (appointed by the Chair of Governors) will introduce the panel members and outline the process.
3. The complainant will explain the complaint.
4. The Headteacher and panel will question the complainant.
5. The Headteacher will explain the school's actions.
6. The complainant and panel will question the Headteacher.
7. The complainant will sum up their complaint.
8. The Headteacher will sum up the school's actions.
9. The Chair of the appeals panel will explain that both parties will hear from the panel within **5 working days**.
10. Both parties will leave together while the panel decides.
11. The clerk will stay with the panel to clarify.

#### **The Appeals Panel will:**

- dismiss all or part of the complaint
- uphold all or part of the complaint
- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- evaluate all the evidence available and recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures as a preventative step against similar problems arising in the future.

Greenmead School will review and evaluate **all** complaints no matter how far they are taken or what the outcome to ensure that similar problems are avoided in the future or to see if they could have been managed any more effectively. Each committee of the governing Board is tasked with overseeing the review of complaints in their area.

The panel's decision is final. If you have remaining complaints following the outcome, you have the choice of seeking mediation (see below) or taking your complaint to the Secretary of State for Education.

#### ***Stage 4. Local Authority Mediation Role (optional)***

Local Authorities (LA) are not part of the formal statutory process for school complaints. However, Greenmead School works closely with Wandsworth Local Education Authority and governors believe there can be value in using a mediation process for some complaints. If both parties are in agreement, Greenmead Governors have agreed to offer Local Authority mediation at this stage before a complaint is escalated to the Secretary of State for Education.

Mediation is an effort to bring the two parties together; it does not formally reinvestigate or propose remedies. Wandsworth Local Authority mediation service cannot impose a resolution to a complaint. Wandsworth involvement in mediation shall be time limited to no more than six weeks; school term times will need to be taken into consideration. Should a resolution fail to be reached within this time period, the complainant will be advised of their right to escalate their complaint to the Secretary of State for Education.

#### ***Stage 5: Complaints to the Secretary of State***

The Secretary of State may hear a complaint and intervene if:

- the complaint relates to a failure by the governing board or LA to carry out its statutory duties
- the complainant believes the governing board or LA is acting unreasonably. The test for this is that no reasonable authority or governing board, acting with due regard to its statutory duties, would have reached that decision
- intervention is expedient (i.e., there is an instruction the Secretary of State can give to one or other party that would put matters right).

The complainant should set out fully the concerns and reasons why the complaint is being submitted, enclosing all previous correspondence relevant to the complaint. They should write to The Secretary of State, Department for Education, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT or call 0870 001 2288.

### **Note about complaints to Ofsted**

***Ofsted will not usually consider a complaint if you have not first followed the school's or local authority's complaints procedure. This includes writing to the DfE.***

Ofsted will not investigate cases to do with individual pupils. Their powers are to 'whole school' issues in relation to;

- admission procedures
- legal exclusions of individual pupils
- providing education for individual pupils with special educational needs
- religious education or the religious character of a school
- temporary changes to the curriculum

Ofsted are not in a position to:

- investigate incidents that are alleged to have taken place
- judge how well a school investigated or responded to a complaint
- mediate between a parent or carer and a school to resolve a dispute

If your concerns are about these issues, you should contact the local authority or the DfE

It is important to understand that Ofsted's role in considering a complaint about a school is solely to determine if there is a need to inspect. Ofsted cannot seek to resolve or establish cause for any individual complaint.

If your concern affects the school as a whole and you have followed all of the existing processes including complaining to the governing body and local authority, we have powers to consider some complaints made in writing about schools and we provide an online form for this.

These complaints may come from registered parents or carers of pupils at the school that the complaint is about and complaints from other people. This includes the parents and carers of pupils who may be off sick or temporarily excluded. Examples could include:

- the school is not providing a good enough education

- the pupils are not achieving as much as they should, or their different needs are not being met
- the school is not well led and managed, or is inappropriately managing finances as a group, the pupils' personal development and well-being are being neglected

To find out more go to [Complaints to Ofsted about schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

## **6. Staff complaints**

Staff who have a concern about a colleague or a volunteer member of staff should refer to the school Whistleblowing Policy.

The procedure for dealing with any other staff complaints or employment grievances is set out in the school's staff discipline, conduct and grievance policy.

## **7. Serial and unreasonable complaints**

Greenmead School is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high-quality service to those who raise complain. We will not normally limit the contact a complainant has with our school. 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.

Greenmead School defines unacceptable behaviour as that which hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the school, such as if the complainant;

- Refuses to articulate the complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
- Refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process
- Refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure
- Insists on the complaint being dealt with ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice
- Introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be considered and commented on
- Raises large numbers of detailed but minor 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
- Makes personal remarks about a member of staff
- Changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds
- Repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complain is groundless or has been addressed)
- Refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into the complaint where the school's complaints procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed
- Seeks unrealistic outcomes
- Makes excessive demands on the school by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with

- Uses threats to intimidate
- Uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence
- Knowingly provides falsified information
- Publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forms

Complainants should not repeat information to the school team while the complaint is being processed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone or email) as it could delay the outcome being reached.

If the complainant's behaviour continues the Headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact the 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 be reviewed after 6 months.

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 the school site and barring them from communication to staff in emails.

## Appendix 1

### Greenmead School Home/School Agreement

*We value all of our parents/carers, families, pupils and staff and aim to work in partnership to continually develop our practice and provision. We aim to make Greenmead a place where everyone is welcomed, valued, appreciated and able to join in. This can be done most effectively when all parents/carers, families and staff understand their responsibilities and work together towards the same goals. Working together requires all stakeholders to be respectful and professional towards one another and work together in the child's best interests.*

#### School's Responsibilities

School will:

- Provide your child with a high standard of education that is personalised within a balanced curriculum
- Provide a happy, safe and stimulating environment that is set up to also promote learning, independence and preparation for life skills.
- Ensure that professionals work together for pupils and their families.
- Provide frequent communication from school regarding your child's education, care and therapy.
- Communicate key messages through media e.g. through the website and newsletters including the term dates
- Consult with parents/carers on big whole school issues or changes in processes as well as information and changes with their own child.
- Involve parents/carers with setting and reviewing IEPs which will help the pupils to achieve their full potential.
- Keep pupils safe and free from harm.
- Create challenges to promote independence to ensure that pupils succeed and take risks in order to achieve.
- Give plenty of warning for meetings and offer flexible times for these to happen.
- Listen to parent/carer views.
- Celebrate your child's progress and achievements.
- Encourage your child to become an active participant within our community

#### Parent/Carer Responsibilities

Parents/carers will:

- Help their child gain the most from their education; making sure that they arrive at school on time and attend everyday unless unwell or have appointments that cannot be held outside of school hours.
- Make sure they are ready for their school day with any equipment, medication or care supplies they may need.
- Ensure that they communicate with the school anything that might affect their child's school day either in person, or via the home/school diary, email or a telephone call.
- Ensure that they engage with IEPs, curriculum targets and attend Parents Evenings and Annual Review, EHCP or TAC meetings on time.
- Parents/carers will aim to be positive and productive, working towards moving your child on in their learning and personal progress.
- Notify the school if their child is going to be absent.
- Not take their child out of school for private therapy sessions or family holiday.
- Share any information and advice given to them by health professionals.
- Pay school dinner money, After Party and Holiday Scheme payments promptly and avoiding going into arrears.
- Inform school of any changes in contact numbers or home addresses.
- Encourage a positive attitude towards their child's education and school. Discuss any concerns as it is much healthier to work out solutions and move on. Parents/carers can refer to the school's complaints policy which can be found on the website.

Signed: (Parents/carers)

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Signed: (Headteacher)

*Edmonds-Side*

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**Appendix 2**

**Informal process for when a parent/carer who raises a concern**

Parent/carer has a concern

**Classroom related concern**

Email class teacher to raise concern or write in the home/school

**Therapy related concern**

Email therapist to raise concern

**Health/Medical related concern**

Email School Nurse to raise concern

**After Party related concern**

Email the After Party Leader to raise concern

**Admin Processes/Premises concern**

Email the admin team to raise concern

Concern has been dealt with satisfactorily

Concern has not been satisfactorily resolved

**Classroom related concern**

Parent/carer to email pathway leader (middle leader) to raise concern

**Therapy related concern**

Email Clinical Lead to escalate concern

**Health/Medical related concern**

Email Head of Care to escalate concern

**After Party related concern**

Email Head of Care to escalate concern

**Admin Processes/Premises concern**

Email School Business Manager to escalate concern

Concern has been dealt with satisfactorily

Concern has not been satisfactorily resolved

Parent/carer to email Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher (senior leaders) to escalate concerns

Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher will acknowledge your email within 3 days and will then investigate your concerns and what actions have already taken place. You will receive an email with the outcome of the investigations within 3 days.

You will be invited to a face to face resolution meeting where actions between school team and parents/carers will be agreed. The Headteacher/Deputy Head will chair this meeting and minutes of the meeting and actions agreed will be recorded and shared with the parent/carer and the school team. There will be an agreed period for a review and a review meeting date will be set.

At the review meeting actions from the previous meeting will be reviewed and next steps agreed, recorded and shared with parents/carers and the school team.

After all of the above actions have happened and the parent/carer still has a concern this will escalate to a formal complaint which must be put in writing and the formal complaints process will start

### Formal process for when a parent raises a complaint

Parent/carer to put formal complaint in writing using the template provided in the policy. This will be addressed to the Headteacher. You will get an acknowledgment of your complaint within 3 days. The headteacher will ensure that all informal processes have been followed from both the school team and the parent/carer. The headteacher will outline their decision and any actions to be taken.

Complaint has been dealt with satisfactorily – no further action required

Complaint has not been satisfactorily resolved

If you are dissatisfied with the headteacher's decisions you may escalate your complaint to the Chair of Governors in writing. The chair of governors will respond within 7 working days having gone back to the Headteacher to establish details about the complaint and any actions already in place and decisions that have been made. The Chair of Governors will make a decision and communicate their decision to you in writing.

Complaint has been dealt with satisfactorily – no further action required

Complaint has not been satisfactorily resolved

If you are dissatisfied you can escalate your concern to the Governors Appeal Panel who will follow the appeals procedures as outlined in the complaints policy.

Complaint has been dealt with satisfactorily – no further action required

Complaint has not been satisfactorily resolved

If you are dissatisfied with the outcomes of the Governors Appeal Panel you can escalate your concern to the Local Authority who will act as to mediate between the parent/carer and the school.

If you are dissatisfied with both the School Governors and the Local Authority in dealing with your complaint you can escalate your complaint to the Secretary of State.

**Complaints' Form**

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

**Your name:**

**Child's name:**

**Address:**

**Postcode:**

**Day time telephone number:**

**Evening telephone number:**

**Please give details of your complaint.**

**What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint.  
(Who did you speak to and what was the response)?**

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

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

**Signature:**

**Date:**

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***Official use***

***Date acknowledgement sent:***

***By who:***

***Complaint referred to:***

***Date:***