



Complaints Policy

Policy Leader: David Martin

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Ghyll Royd School the Pre-School and Nursery (Early Years Foundation Stage) is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of young children and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. Safeguarding at Ghyll Royd School and in the Pre-School is everyone's responsibility and everybody is able to make a referral to children's social care if needed.

Policy Statement

Ghyll Royd School, Pre-School and Nursery (the school) has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents of existing pupils at the school and/or prospective pupils do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the school in accordance with this procedure.

Ghyll Royd makes the complaints procedure available to all parents of pupils and of prospective pupils on the school's website and in the school office during the school day. Members of Staff with a complaint or grievance should refer to the staff handbook.

The school will review current definitions against the latest DfE Best Practice: [School complaints procedures: guidance for maintained schools - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/614442/School-complaints-procedures-guidance-for-maintained-schools-2019.pdf) (www.gov.uk)

What constitutes 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'.

A complaint may be made about the school as a whole, about a specific department within the school or about an individual member of staff. Matters relating to the Headteacher will be referred to the Chair of Governors.

Written complaints regarding the Early Years Foundation Stage requirements must be investigated, and complainants notified with the outcome within 28 working days of the complaint. A record of complaints will be available to Ofsted.

A 'working day' is any day the school is open during term time.

Dealing with concerns and complaints.

All concerns and complaints will be handled seriously, sensitively and as quickly as possible, and although holiday time and other factors can affect the timescales, all will normally be acknowledged within two working days and fully dealt in accordance with the timescales identified for each stage below.

Parents are also directed to **Dealing with unreasonable, serial or persistent complaints** below.

Stage 1

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

If parents have a concern or a complaint, in the first instance, they should normally contact their child's Key Worker, Class Teacher or the appropriate Subject Teacher. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means, to the parents' satisfaction.

If the member of staff cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for a consultation to be arranged with the Headteacher. Complaints made directly to the Headteacher will usually be referred to the relevant member of staff unless it is deemed inappropriate. The 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 seven working days or in the event that there is a failure to reach a satisfactory resolution then the parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.

Stage 2

If the complaint cannot be resolved at Stage 1 then the complaint should be put in writing to the Headteacher. The Headteacher will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take. This will be within 7 working days.

If the complaint is against the Headteacher, then the complaint should be referred to the Chair of Governors who will handle the procedure. In most cases, the Chair of Governors will speak to, or if possible, meet with the parents concerned to discuss the matter, normally within 7 working days of receiving the complaint. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage. It may be necessary for the Chair of Governors to carry out further investigations. The Chair of Governors will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

Once the Headteacher (or Chair of Governors) is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents (and the Headteacher) will be informed of the decision in writing. This decision will be communicated no more than 15 working days since the start of Stage 2. If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

Stage 3

If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they should write to the Clerk to the Governors within 10 working days of receiving the Stage 2 outcome. The Clerk to the Governors has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel.

The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of three persons; two being Governors, not more than one of whom will be a Parent Governor, and neither will be directly involved with any matter detailed in the complaint; and a person independent of the school's workforce, management and running of the school.

Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Board of Governors. The Clerk to the Governors, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practical and normally within 15 working days of receipt the Stage 3 complaint.

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 3 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. If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately 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 facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within 15 working days of the hearing.

After due consideration of all facts the Panel will make findings as to whether or not the Stage 2 decision was reasonable and accordingly decide whether to: dismiss the complaint(s) in whole or in part; uphold the complaint(s) in whole or in part; and may make recommendations.

The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will be sent in writing to the parents, and where relevant, the person complained about; and available for inspection on the school premises by the Headteacher and Governors.

Dealing with unreasonable, serial or persistent complaints

The school is committed to dealing with complaints fairly and impartially, and will not normally limit the contact complainants have with the school. However, we do not tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action against such behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

The school defines unreasonable behaviour as that which impedes our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the school. Examples of where a complainant may be regarded as unreasonable are when they:

- refuse to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance;
- raise a complaint expecting schools involvements with dynamics or issues that occur outside of school at parties and social events
- refuse to co-operate with the complaints investigation process;
- refuse to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure;
- insist on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice;
- introduce trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on;
- raise large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales;
- make unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced;
- change the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds;
- repeatedly make the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed);
- refuse to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented;
- seek an unrealistic outcome;
- make excessive demands on school time 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;
- use threats to intimidate;
- use abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence;
- knowingly provides falsified information; and/or
- publish unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school that relates to their complaint, while the 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.

In response to any serious incident of actual or threatened aggression or violence from a complainant, the police will be immediately informed.

Recording of Concerns & Complaints

Complaints Record

The number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year is made available to parents in the Complaints policy (see below) and also included in the September newsletters.

Term	Number of Complaints raised	Resolved at Stage 1	Resolved at Stage 2	Resolved at Stage 3
2023-2024	7	3	4	0

All concerns and complaints are recorded onto a central log that contains the following Information: date when the issue was raised; name of parent; name of pupil; year group; brief statement of issue; staff member handling the issue; stage at which the complaint was resolved; and brief statement of any action taken whether the complaint was upheld or not.

Notes on all concerns and complaints are maintained and kept together in the school and Headteachers office; they are regularly reviewed by the Headteacher. The files will contain simple but clear notes of all conversations with parents about any source of dissatisfaction. There will be a clear statement of what is a parents concern or complaint.

The written records indicate whether the complaints are resolved at Stage 1, Stage 2 or proceed to Stage 3. The written record will include action taken by the school as a result of the complaint, regardless of whether they are upheld or not. All notes and correspondence, statements and records are kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under 162A of the 2002 Act requests access to them. Complaints records will be kept for a minimum of 7 years.

Contacts for complainants

Whilst we hope that all parents and pupils will feel able to raise concerns directly with us and that we will be able to resolve them satisfactorily at an early stage, we would like parents and pupils to be aware of other bodies that they might wish to contact if they are unhappy with the response that they have received from the school.

Parents with children in the Nursery or Early Years setting are able to contact Ofsted if they wish to make a complaint: Telephone: 0300 123 4666
Address: Ofsted, 5th, 6th and 7th Floors, Picadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD

Parents can also contact the Department for Education Independent Education Team:
Telephone: 0370 000 2288
Online at: <https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school/private-schools>
Mail: IEBT, DfE, Bishopgate House, Feethams, Darlington, DL1 5QE

or

The Independent Schools Inspectorate, CAP House, 9 – 12 Long Lane London EC1A 9HA
Telephone: 020 7600 0100
Email: concerns@isi.net