HOE VALLEY SCHOOL

PARENTAL COMPLAINTS

Person Responsible:	Head Teacher
Date Adopted:	December 2015
Date of last review:	Spring 2026
Date of next review:	Spring 2028

1. Introduction

Hoe Valley School endeavours to provide the best possible education for all its students in an open and transparent environment. We welcome any feedback that we receive from parents, students and third parties, and we accept that not all of this will be positive. Where concerns are raised the school intends for these to be dealt with:

- Fairly
- Openly
- Promptly
- Without Prejudice

In order to do so, the governing board of Hoe Valley School has approved the following procedure which explains what you should do if you wish to make a complaint about the school. All members of staff will be familiar with the procedure and will be able to assist you.

2. Complaints that fall outside of this procedure

Complaints relating to the following issues are covered by a separate/specific policy.

Section 39 School Standards & Framework Act Complaints regarding: Provision of information, delivery of, or withdrawal from, the national curriculum, religious education or collective worship and non-approved external qualifications or syllabuses	Governors agreed complaints procedure applies, but the complainant has further right of appeal to the Local Authority. For further information contact the Local Education Officer Team via Surrey County Council Contact Centre 03456 009 009
Staff grievances and disciplinary procedures	Complaints and Grievances Policy;

	Discipline and Capability Policy. Complainants will not be informed of the outcome of any such procedures
Student Exclusion	Parents have the right to make representations about suspensions to a panel of Governors. There is also a right of appeal to independent panel for permanent exclusion. For further information see the Exclusions policy.
Admission to school	Right of appeal to independent panel if admission is refused. For further information, see the Admissions policy.
Child Protection/Safeguarding	Surrey Safeguarding Children's Board procedures apply. Contact the Surrey County Council Contact Centre 03456 009 009.
Statements of Special Educational Needs	Local Authority statutory assessment procedures apply if a parent requests a statement. There is then a right of appeal to independent SEN Tribunal. For information contact the SEN Administration Team via Surrey County Council Contact Centre 03456 009 009.
Whistleblowing	Whistleblowing Policy for staff and volunteers. Other concerns can be raised direct with Ofsted by telephone on: 0300 123 3155, via email at: whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk or by writing to: WBHL, Ofsted Piccadilly Gate Store Street Manchester M1 2WD. The Department for Education is also a prescribed body for whistleblowing in education.
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. Providers should be contacted directly.

These policies are available on the school website or on request from the school.

3. 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 Hoe Valley School encourages those that have concerns to raise them with the appropriate person at the school (e.g. your child's class teacher) and to work constructively with that person towards resolving them. You should feel able to raise concerns with the school without formality either in person, by phone or in writing. You should raise any concerns that you have as soon as possible after the issue/incident occurs and you will then be given an opportunity to discuss your concerns privately. The staff member will ensure that appropriate action is taken to resolve your concern as speedily as possible – usually within five working days. In most cases the response will be given to you verbally unless a written response seems to be the best way of making the process or outcome clear.

The extent to which this informal concerns procedure was 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.

4. Complaints about the Head Teacher or the Governors

Where a complaint is about the Head Teacher, the complainant should notify the clerk to the governors (see contact details at the end of the document). 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 Head Teacher.

Where a complaint concerns a governor, the complainant should contact the clerk to the governing board. The clerk will then determine the most appropriate course of action, seeking advice as appropriate. This will depend upon the nature of the complaint.

5. The 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 or more 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 Head Teacher/Chair of the Governing Board/Clerk to the Governing Board (as appropriate) will review the circumstances, seek advice and determine whether the complaint should be considered under the formal procedure.

6. 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 because of the complaint regardless of whether it has been upheld.

7. Maintaining confidentiality

Informal concerns and complaints will be dealt with confidentially at all stages and following the conclusion of the procedure. Confidentiality should be maintained all times by everyone involved. The governing board of Hoe Valley School request that complaints are not discussed publicly, including via social media.

Actions taken in relation to school staff that arise because 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.

8. 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 policy.

9. The formal stages of the complaint's procedure

The majority of concerns can be dealt with without resorting to the formal stages of the procedure. If you need to raise a concern, then please do so with the relevant member of staff who will be happy to talk to you and seek to resolve it.

There are **two** formal stages of the complaint's procedure.

Stage 1 – formal investigation by Head Teacher

1. A request for a formal investigation of a complaint by the Head Teacher (or Chair of the Governing Board as appropriate) should be made in writing to the school by completing the formal complaints form that is included as Appendix 1 of this procedure.

2. The Head Teacher or Chair of the Governing Board as appropriate) 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.

4. The Head Teacher 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 Head Teacher 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 Head Teacher 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 20 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 board.

Stage 2 – Review by a panel of the governing board

The complainant is 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 governing board at a meeting convened by the clerk to the governing board.

Requests for a review of the decision taken at stage 1 should be made in writing to the clerk (see contact details below) no later than 4 weeks after written notification of the decision taken has been received. The request should include a brief summary of the complaint, why the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of stage 1 and the outcome they are seeking.

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 these 5 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 acknowledge the written request for the complaint to be reviewed no later than ten working days (not including the school holidays) after receiving it.
2. The clerk will convene a panel of two school governors and one independent member to review the complaint. All three panel members 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).
4. The panel **may** decide to invite the following to attend the review meeting:
    - the complainant
    - the Head Teacher (or Chair of the Governing Board as appropriate) who investigated the complaint and made the decision at stage 1
    - relevant persons involved the complaint
    - 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, Head Teacher 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. However, legal representatives are not permitted to attend the review meeting.
6. Where the relevant persons involved in the complaint include students 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/Trustee/Governing Board the complainant may request that the review meeting is held by an independent panel. This is at the discretion of the governing board who will notify the clerk of their decision. Where an entirely independent panel is required, timescales may be affected while the school source 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 Head Teacher (or Chair of the Governing Board 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. If the complainant remains dissatisfied and wishes to escalate the complaint further they should refer to the following:

- If the complainant feels that the governing board acted 'unreasonably' in the handling of the complaint, they can complain to the Department for Education after the complaint's procedure has been exhausted. Please note that 'unreasonable' is used in a legal sense and means acting in a way in which no reasonable school or authority would act in the same circumstances. https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school

10. Timescale for completing the formal stages of the procedure

Hoe Valley 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 Hoe Valley School 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.

11. Serial, persistent and unreasonable complaints

For the purpose of this procedure a complaint may be viewed as serial and/or persistent if it relates to substantially the same issue that was the subject of a previous complaint (made by the same

complainant) which has already been through a formal complaints procedure in which the complainant has been notified of the outcome. In such cases it is likely that the complainant will be informed that the matter is now closed and that Hoe Valley School will provide no further response.

For the purpose of this procedure a complaint may be viewed as unreasonable if it contains threatening, abusive or offensive language and seeks unrealistic outcomes beyond that which could be considered reasonable. In such cases the Head Teacher /Chair of the Governing Board/Clerk to the Governing Board (as appropriate) will consult with relevant parties and may decide that the complaint is not considered under this procedure. The complainant will be notified in writing that this is the case and that Hoe Valley School will provide no further response.

Queries regarding any aspect of the complaints procedure should be directed to the Clerk to the Governing Board at the following address Hoe Valley School, Egley Road, Woking, Surrey,GU22 0NH.

Appendix

Hoe Valley School Formal Complaints Form

Name	
Name of pupil, year group and your relationship to them (where applicable)	
Contact address	
Contact telephone day	
Contact telephone mobile	
Contact 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?	
Sign and date	