

Complaints Policy and Procedure

Longwill School for Deaf Children

1.0 Document control and approval

Document control	Details
Policy title	Complaints Policy and Procedure
Version	2.0
Staff covered	All staff
Policy owner	Headteacher
Approved by	Longwill Governing Body
Adopted from	Department for Education model procedure
Approval date	2025
Effective date	September 2025
Review date	Three years after approval, or sooner if guidance changes
Status	Approved

2.0 Purpose and scope

2.1 Who can make a complaint?

This procedure is not limited to parents or carers of registered pupils. Any person, including a member of the public, may complain about facilities or services provided by the school. Matters governed by separate statutory procedures, such as admissions or exclusion appeals, are outside this procedure.

2.2 Concern and complaint

A concern is an expression of worry or doubt about an important matter for which reassurance is sought. A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about action taken or a lack of action.

The school aims to resolve concerns at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally. Where a concern cannot be resolved, the formal stages below apply.

2.3 Accessibility and reasonable adjustments

The school will consider reasonable adjustments under the [Equality Act 2010](#) so that complainants can access this procedure. Adjustments may include alternative formats, BSL or interpretation support, assistance with a complaint form, or an accessible meeting venue.

3.0 Raising a concern or complaint

A concern or complaint may be made in person, in writing, by email or by telephone. A third party may act for a complainant where appropriate consent has been provided.

- Concerns should normally be raised with the class teacher or Headteacher. If unresolved, the complainant may make a formal complaint.
- Complaints about a member of staff, other than the Headteacher, should be addressed to the Headteacher via the school office and marked Private and Confidential.
- Complaints about the Headteacher should be addressed to the Chair of Governors via the school office and marked Private and Confidential.
- Complaints about the Chair, an individual governor, or the governing body should be addressed to the Clerk to the Governing Body via the school office and marked Private and Confidential.
- Complainants should not approach individual governors, because this could prevent a governor from acting impartially at Stage 2.

A complaint form is included at Appendix A. The school office can help with completion, and independent support may also be available from [Citizens Advice](#).

3.1 Anonymous complaints

Anonymous complaints will not normally be investigated. The Headteacher or Chair of Governors, as appropriate, will decide whether the circumstances warrant investigation.

3.2 Time limits

A complaint should be raised within three months of the incident or, for a series of related incidents, within three months of the latest incident. Complaints outside that period may be considered where exceptional circumstances apply. A complaint received outside term time is treated as received on the first school day after the holiday period.

4.0 Matters outside this procedure

Exception	Route
Admissions, statutory SEND assessments and school reorganisation	Use the relevant Birmingham City Council or statutory route. See school admissions and SEND support and complaints .
Child protection or safeguarding	Follow the school Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy. For current external contacts, see Birmingham City Council safeguarding information and Birmingham Children's Advice and Support Service (CASS) . If someone is in immediate danger, call 999.
Suspensions and permanent exclusions	Use the statutory review or appeal route described in the government guidance on suspensions and permanent exclusions . Complaints about application of the school Behaviour Policy may use this procedure.
Whistleblowing	Employees should use the school's whistleblowing procedure. Other eligible workers can consult current whistleblowing guidance .
Staff grievances	Staff complaints are handled under the school's grievance procedure.
Staff conduct	Conduct concerns may be considered under disciplinary procedures. The complainant will be told that the matter is being addressed but will not receive confidential employment information.
Services delivered by another provider	Contact the provider and use its own complaints procedure.
National Curriculum content	Contact the Department for Education through its published contact routes.

Where the police, local authority safeguarding teams, a tribunal or another public body is investigating related matters, the school may adjust timescales or suspend this procedure until that investigation is complete. The school may also consider suspension where related legal proceedings have begun.

5.0 Resolving and withdrawing complaints

At every stage, the school will seek to resolve the complaint. Where appropriate, it may uphold the complaint in whole or in part and offer:

- an explanation
- an acknowledgement that the situation could have been handled differently
- an assurance and action plan intended to prevent recurrence
- a review of relevant school policy or practice
- an apology.

A complainant who wishes to withdraw a complaint will be asked to confirm this in writing.

6.0 Stage 1 - formal complaint

A formal complaint should be made to the Headteacher via the school office unless the complaint is about the Headteacher. It may be submitted in person, in writing, by email or by telephone; use of the complaint form is encouraged.

- The Headteacher records the date received and acknowledges the complaint in writing within 5 school days.
- The Headteacher clarifies the complaint, what remains unresolved and the outcome sought, and decides whether a meeting is appropriate.
- The Headteacher may delegate the investigation to another senior leader but not the final decision.
- The investigator interviews relevant people where necessary, permits appropriate accompaniment, and keeps written records.
- A formal written response is issued within 20 school days of receipt. If this is not possible, the complainant receives an update and revised date.
- The response explains the investigation, decision, reasons, any action and how to request Stage 2.

If the complaint concerns the Headteacher or a governor, a suitably skilled, impartial governor will carry out Stage 1. A complaint jointly about the Chair and Vice-Chair, the whole governing body, or a majority of the governing body will be investigated by an independent person appointed by the governing body.

7.0 Stage 2 - complaints committee

A complainant dissatisfied with Stage 1 may request a meeting of the governing body's complaints committee. Stage 2 is the final internal stage.

- The request must be made to the Clerk within 20 school days of the Stage 1 response. Late requests are considered only where exceptional circumstances apply.
- The Clerk acknowledges the request in writing within 5 school days and aims to convene the meeting within 20 school days. If this is not possible, the Clerk gives an anticipated date and keeps the complainant informed.
- The committee comprises at least three impartial governors with no prior involvement or knowledge. Independent governors will be sourced if necessary.

- The committee may invite the parties to a meeting or decide the matter through written representations, taking account of the complainant's needs.
- If a complainant rejects three proposed dates without good reason, the Clerk may set a date and the committee may proceed in the complainant's absence using the written evidence.

7.1 Attendance and support

A complainant invited to attend may bring a relative or friend for support. Legal representation is not normally encouraged, although it may be appropriate in exceptional circumstances. Media representatives may not attend. Staff witnesses may seek union or legal support where appropriate.

7.2 Papers and evidence

- At least 10 school days before the meeting, the Clerk confirms the date, time, accessible venue and arrangements, and requests any further written material.
- The Clerk circulates the written material to all parties at least 10 school days before the meeting.
- Covert recordings made without informed consent will not normally be accepted as evidence.
- The committee will not consider a new complaint or unrelated evidence at Stage 2. A new complaint begins at Stage 1.
- The meeting is private. Recording is not normally permitted unless required as a reasonable adjustment; prior knowledge and consent of all parties is required and recorded in the minutes.

7.3 Decision

The committee may uphold or dismiss the complaint in whole or in part. If upheld, it will decide appropriate action and may recommend changes to systems or procedures. The Chair of the Committee will issue a written decision, reasons and any actions within 10 school days. The response will explain the external escalation route.

A complaint jointly about the Chair and Vice-Chair, the whole governing body, or a majority of the governing body will be heard at Stage 2 by a committee of independent governors.

8.0 After Stage 2

If the complainant believes that the school did not follow its published procedure or acted unlawfully or unreasonably under education law, they may contact the [Department for Education complaints service](#) after completing Stage 2. The Department for Education will not normally reconsider the substance of the complaint or overturn the school's decision; it considers whether the school followed education law and relevant statutory policies.

Postal correspondence may be sent to: Ministerial and Public Communications Division, Department for Education, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD. Current online and contact details should be checked before submission.

9.0 Roles and responsibilities

Complainant

- Explain the complaint fully and promptly.
- Co-operate in seeking a solution and respond to reasonable requests.
- Ask for assistance where needed.
- Treat everyone involved with respect and preserve confidentiality, including on social media.

Investigator

- Establish relevant facts through fair, sensitive interviews and review of records.
- Keep secure notes and evidence, observe timescales, and liaise with the complainant and complaints co-ordinator.
- Prepare a clear report identifying facts, possible solutions and recommendations; the decision-maker determines the outcome.

Complaints co-ordinator

- Keep the complainant updated.
- Liaise with staff, leaders, governors, the Clerk and local authority as appropriate.
- Arrange additional support, including interpretation or support for a child or young person.
- Keep appropriate records.

Clerk to the Governing Body

- Advise participants of relevant duties under education law, the [Equality Act 2010](#), [Freedom of Information Act 2000](#), [Data Protection Act 2018](#) and [UK GDPR](#).
- Arrange an accessible meeting, collate and circulate papers, record proceedings and minutes, and notify all parties of the decision.

Committee Chair

- Ensure an informal, respectful and non-adversarial meeting.
- Explain the committee's remit, protect confidentiality and ensure both parties can make their case.
- Lead the committee to address the issues, make findings of fact, act independently and record the meeting.

Committee members

- Remain independent and impartial, with no prior involvement or external interest.
- Seek resolution and reconciliation while recognising that agreement may not always be possible.
- Take extra care where a child or young person participates; their welfare is paramount and their views receive equal consideration.

10.0 Records, confidentiality and review

Complaint records will be handled securely and retained in accordance with the school's retention schedule and data protection duties. Information will be shared only where necessary and lawful. The governing body will review this procedure every three years, or sooner following changes to guidance, legislation or school arrangements.

External references

- [DfE guidance for maintained-school complaints procedures](#)
- [Department for Education complaints service](#)
- [Birmingham City Council safeguarding information](#)
- [Birmingham Children's Advice and Support Service \(CASS\)](#)
- [Equality Act 2010](#)
- [Data Protection Act 2018](#)
- [UK GDPR](#)

Appendix A - Complaint form

Please complete and return this form to the school office. The school will acknowledge receipt and explain the next action.

Your name:

Pupil's name (if relevant):

Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):

Address:

Postcode:

Daytime telephone number:

Email address:

Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have already spoken to anyone at the school:

What action or outcome do you feel might resolve the matter?

Are you attaching any documents? If so, please list them:

Signature:

Date:

Official use

Date received:

Date acknowledgement sent:

Acknowledged by:

Referred to:

Date referred:
