

HANDEL HOUSE SCHOOL
Northholme, Gainsborough, Lincs. DN21 2JB
Telephone 01427 612426



COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE FOR PARENTS OF PUPILS

This procedure, which applies to the whole school, inclusive of the Early Years Foundation Stage, is made available to parents. The School also recognises that some complaints may concern the processing of personal data. Such complaints will be handled in accordance with UK data protection legislation and the School's Data Protection Policy. These procedures are publicly available on the school's website. On request a copy may be obtained from the school's office. The Complaints Procedure is also provided in the information for prospective parents and guardians, when a parent makes an enquiry for admission to the school.

Legal Status:

This procedure has been prepared having regard to:

- The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2014 (as amended), particularly Standard 33;
- Independent Schools Inspectorate Regulatory Requirements and Guidance (April 2026), paragraphs 7.3–7.5;
- UK General Data Protection Regulation;
- Data Protection Act 2018;
- Data (Use and Access) Act 2025, including section 164A;
- Information Commissioner's Office guidance on complaints and data protection.

Applies to:

- The parents of current pupils at Handel House School;
- The parents of past pupils of Handel House School if a complaint was raised when the pupil was still registered, but does not cover exclusions.

Timescale

The process of dealing with a complaint in writing from the moment that it is received by the school to resolution will take no more than twenty eight (28) working days, except in circumstances in which the normal timescales are affected by issues that delay resolution; namely school holidays and other factors.

Monitoring and Review:

Action by the Headteacher (who is also the Proprietor):

- The Headteacher/Proprietor logs all complaints (formal and informal) received by the school and records at which stage and how they were resolved. The record includes, at least: the person making the complaint, the date of the complaint, the nature of the complaint, any action taken and the outcome of the complaint. The logging of complaints for management purposes enables patterns of concern to be monitored.
- The Headteacher/Proprietor monitors the complaints procedure, to ensure that all complaints are handled properly, taking into account any local or national decisions that affect the complaints process, and making any modifications necessary to this procedure. The Headteacher/Proprietor also retains details of the number of complaints, registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

- The Headteacher/Proprietor undertakes a formal annual review of these procedures for the purpose of monitoring and of the efficiency with which the related duties have been discharged, by no later than September 2025 or earlier if significant changes to the systems and arrangements take place, or if legislation, regulatory requirements or best practice guidelines so require.

Signed: Mr Mark Raisborough (Headteacher/Proprietor)

Approved: School Advisory Board July 2026

Date: October 2025: Updated June 2026: Next Review June 2027

Introduction

Handel House School prides itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to all of its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by Handel House School in accordance with this Procedure. This procedure encompasses the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Written complaints relating to the school's fulfilment of the EYFS requirements will be investigated and complainants notified of the outcome within 28 days of receipt of the complaint. A record of complaints relating to the EYFS will be made available to Ofsted and ISI if requested. It is the aim of this procedure to resolve complaints either to the parent's satisfaction, or with an otherwise appropriate outcome which balances the rights and duties of pupils. Pupils will not be penalised for making a complaint in good faith. We aim to be open about the decisions we make and the actions we take and will always explain our rationale. Those who have complaints should feel these can be voiced and that they will be taken seriously.

A complaint is likely to arise when there are issues of physical or emotional well-being and security at stake, or when the school's stated aims or values are being ignored. A breach of the law will always constitute a complaint. At every stage of the procedure, the handling of the complaint will be swift (using the agreed time frame), fair and necessarily confidential. Throughout the process, Handel House School will be willing to: listen, learn, admit mistakes, apologise if appropriate, address any issues raised and change practices and procedures if appropriate.

The Complaints Process

At all stages in the complaints process a written record is to be kept of the date a resolution was reached and the agreed nature of this. The parents will then be informed in writing.

Stage 1 - Informal Resolution (Who should you contact?)

(References to the number of working days refer to term-time only)

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- Any person with a complaint, should normally raise it in person with the member of staff/individual concerned.
- The member of staff/individual involved will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. Our ideal is that no concern should ever become a formal complaint, as through open dialogue, a resolution should always be accomplished. If the member of staff/individual cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary to consult with colleagues.
- For matters on the curriculum, subject related issues or general academic concern, please contact the Headteacher/Proprietor.
- For matters concerning finance, fees and non-academic services, please contact the Headteacher/Proprietor.
- For matters regarding after school care, please contact the Headteacher/Proprietor
- Should the matter not be resolved within seven (7) working days, or in the event that Handel House School and the parents fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution (What to do if you remain dissatisfied?)

(References to the number of working days refer to term-time only)

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis then the parents should put their complaint in writing, with any relevant documents, to the Headteacher/Proprietor who will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Headteacher/Proprietor will either meet or speak to the parents concerned, normally within seven (7) working days of receiving the complaint at Stage 2, to discuss the matter. Ideally this would take place on the day that the complaint is received. The Headteacher/Proprietor will establish what has happened so far and who has

been involved; clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved and what the parents feel would resolve the issue. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

- It may be necessary for the Headteacher/Proprietor to carry out further investigations that may delay a resolution. The Headteacher/Proprietor may ask the EYFS Co-ordinator to act as investigator.
- The Headteacher/Proprietor will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Headteacher/Proprietor is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and the parents will be informed of this decision in writing within twenty (20) working days of receiving the complaint at Stage 2, if possible. The Headteacher/Proprietor will give reasons for the decision.
- Where the complaint concerns the processing of personal data, the investigation will also consider the School's obligations under UK data protection legislation and any relevant guidance issued by the Information Commissioner's Office.
- A written record will also be kept of when a final outcome was reached.

Stage 3 – Complaints Panel Hearing

- If parents seek to invoke stage 3 (following a failure to reach an early resolution of this procedure) they will be referred to the Panel Convener who will be appointed by the Headteacher/Proprietor to call hearings of the Complaints Panel
- Parents will be asked to provide the specifics of the complaint in writing
- The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel within seven (7) working days of receiving the complaint at Stage 3 for consideration. The panel will consist of at least three (3) people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. The panel members are appointed by the Headteacher/Proprietor. The Advisory Board will normally be members of the panel. At least one panel member is independent of the management and running of the school. The Department for Education has given the following guidance on the identity of an independent panel member. *“Our general view is that people who have held a position of responsibility and are used to scrutinising evidence and putting forward balanced arguments would be suitable. Examples of persons likely to be suitable are serving or retired business people, civil servants, Headteacher/Proprietors or senior members of staff at other schools, people with a legal background and retired members of the Police Force might be considered.”*
- The School Advisory Board, on behalf of the Headteacher/Proprietor, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within fourteen (14) working days of referral to the panel. A secretary will be present to take notes.
- If the Complaints 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 five (5) working days prior to the hearing.
- The complainant(s) may be accompanied to the hearing. This may be a relative or friend.
- If possible, the Complaints Panel will resolve the parent’s complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.
- Where further investigation is required, the Complaints Panel will decide how it should be carried out. After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Complaints Panel will reach a decision and may make findings and recommendations, which it shall complete normally within five (5) working days of the Hearing.
- The Complaints Panel’s findings, and, if any recommendations and the reasons for them will be sent by electronic mail or in writing to the parents and, where relevant, the person complained about. These findings and recommendations will be available for inspection on the school premises and kept by the Headteacher/Proprietor for at least three (3) years. The decision of the panel will be final.
- Handel House School will take the Complaints Panel findings seriously and will make appropriate changes to policies, procedures and practices as a result.
- The Panel Hearing will go ahead even if the parent subsequently decides not to attend.
- **The panel's decision is final within the school's complaints procedure**, without limiting statutory rights.

Completion of this Complaints Procedure does not affect an individual's statutory rights, including rights under data protection legislation or the right to complain to the Information Commissioner's Office where applicable.

Summary of Time Scales During

School Time:

- *Stage 1 Informal resolution:*

Resolved in seven (7) working term days or progress to Stage 2

- *Stage 2 Formal resolution:* Response to parents within seven (7) working term days for meeting to resolve. If still unresolved or a further investigation needed, a letter from the Headteacher/Proprietor will be received by the parents within twenty (20) working term days of the initial meeting.
- *Stage 3 Panel Hearing:*
Complaint sent to the Complaints Panel within seven (7) working term days. The date of the hearing is to be set normally no later than fourteen (14) working term days. Copies of the particulars of the complaint are supplied to all parties not later than five (5) working term days prior to the hearing. If possible the parent's complaint will be resolved immediately. If further investigation is required, a decision will be sent within five (5) working term days of the hearing.

During Holiday Periods

The complaint will normally be resolved within twenty eight (28) working days of the lodging of the complaint to its resolution whenever possible. Allowable exceptions to this rule are for instances when persons involved in the complaint are unavailable during holiday periods. In this case the parents will be kept informed. However, as far as possible, the meeting should not be delayed if the referral comes at the end of term, especially at the end of the Summer Term. Since the aim of the procedure is to resolve the issue and effect reconciliation if necessary, it will be best if the matter can come to the Panel as quickly as possible, especially if the parents will already have been engaged over a longer period in attempts to put things right.

Complaints Relating to Personal Data (Data Protection)

Where a complaint relates to the School's handling of personal data, including the collection, use, storage, sharing or security of personal information, the School will consider the complaint in accordance with both this Complaints Procedure and its obligations under UK data protection legislation.

Individuals are encouraged to raise any concerns with the School in the first instance so that matters can be investigated and, where appropriate, resolved promptly.

The School will investigate any concerns regarding the processing of personal data and provide a written response explaining:

- the outcome of the investigation;
- any action taken;
- the reasons for the decision reached; and
- where appropriate, any remedial action.

If, after receiving the School's response, the complainant remains dissatisfied with how their personal data has been handled, they have the right to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) although the School aims to resolve data protection concerns directly wherever possible before a complaint is referred to the Information Commissioner's Office.

Contact details for the ICO are:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire SK9 5AF

Telephone: **0303 123 1113**

Website:

<https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/data-protection-complaints/>

The School will cooperate fully with any lawful enquiries made by the Information Commissioner's Office.

Confidentiality

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be handled confidentially and disclosed only where:

- disclosure is required by law;
- the Secretary of State, Ofsted or the Independent Schools Inspectorate requires access as part of its statutory functions;
- disclosure is necessary for safeguarding purposes;
- disclosure is required for the purposes of legal proceedings; or
- disclosure is required under UK data protection legislation.

Record keeping for the Whole School

A written record of all complaints, whether they are resolved at the informal stage or following a formal procedure, or proceeding to a panel hearing, is kept by the Headteacher/Proprietor. Complaint records will be retained in accordance with the School's Data Retention Policy and applicable data protection legislation. Records relating to formal complaints will normally be retained for at least seven years from closure unless a longer retention period is required by law or where safeguarding considerations apply. We also keep a record of informal complaints. The record includes, at least: the person making the complaint, the date of the complaint, the nature of the complaint, any action taken and the outcome of the complaint (regardless of whether they are upheld). A written record will also be kept of when a final outcome was reached. The Headteacher/Proprietor, and EYFS Co-ordinator examine this written record on an annual basis. The number of formal complaints, received in an academic year, is made available to parents. The number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the last school year (2025/26) has been 2. The school will provide, on request to Ofsted and ISI, a written record of all complaints made during a specified period and the action that was taken as a result of each complaint.

Child Protection

For any complaint that involves a potential child protection issue, this must be reported immediately to the Headteacher/Proprietor (See our Child Protection Policy for details of the procedure).

Complaints from External Bodies

Complaints from the public about the behaviour of a group of pupils will be dealt with on a general basis,

Grievance, Disciplinary and Capability Procedures with reminders to all about the school's expectations This Complaints Procedure is totally separate from any Disciplinary or Capability Procedures. Should a complaint lead to concerns on the part of the Headteacher/Proprietor about the capability or conduct of a member of staff, these would not be discussed or dealt with within this procedure. This procedure does not apply to members of staff who wish to make a complaint as this would need to follow the school's Grievance Procedure.

In addition to the Complaints Procedure detailed above, parents of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) may also make a complaint to Ofsted should they wish to, the relevant contact details are:

- Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD.
Telephone: General Helpline 0300 123 4666 Textphone number 0161 618 8524 Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
Web: www.ofsted.gov.uk

Additionally, parents can raise concerns by writing to the Independent Schools inspectorate whose details are:

- ISI, Ground Floor, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA, Telephone: 02076 000100 or to concerns@isi.net.