



Complaints Procedures Policy

Updated: September 2026

Next review: September 2027

Reviewed by: Anna Hulme

Version	Date	Created/Updated By
1.1	8 th April 2024	Anna Hulme
1.2	April 2025	Anna Hulme
1.3	April 2026	Anna Hulme
1.4	September 2026	Anna Hulme

This policy has been updated to reflect the current Department for Education (DfE) position and the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, including current DfE independent school standards guidance. The safeguarding provisions are aligned with Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026, which comes into force on 1 September 2026.

Contents

Statement of intent

1. Legal framework
2. Scope and definitions
3. Who can make a complaint
4. Matters outside this procedure
5. Timescales
6. Informal stage
7. Formal stage

Version 1.4

8. Panel hearing
9. Complaints involving the Headteacher or proprietor
10. Complaints made by pupils
11. Safeguarding complaints and allegations
12. Serial, persistent, unreasonable or duplicate complaints
13. Complaints involving third parties
14. Recording, confidentiality and data protection
15. Reporting and publication requirements
16. Monitoring and review

Statement of intent

Jasmine Grove School is committed to resolving concerns and complaints promptly, fairly and, wherever possible, at the earliest appropriate stage. The school will ensure that complaints are handled impartially, respectfully and without unreasonable delay, while maintaining appropriate confidentiality and safeguarding children and young people.

The school will seek to learn from complaints and use relevant findings to improve its practice, provision and services. No pupil will be disadvantaged or penalised because a parent or pupil has raised a complaint in good faith.

This procedure provides the statutory three-stage complaints process required for independent schools: informal consideration, a formal written complaint, and a panel hearing including an independent panel member.

1. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to, and will be operated consistently with, the following legislation and guidance as applicable:

Education and Skills Act 2008.

Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, Schedule 1, Part 7 (Manner in which complaints are handled), as amended.

Equality Act 2010.

Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.

Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004, where relevant to safeguarding and welfare.

Department for Education guidance on regulating independent schools and the Independent School Standards, current at the date of this policy.

Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026, effective from 1 September 2026, together with the school's safeguarding and child protection arrangements.

The school will also have regard to relevant DfE best-practice material on complaints handling, including guidance on clear stages, impartiality, accessibility, record keeping, serial or unreasonable complaints and allowing complainants a fair opportunity to complete the procedure.

2. Scope and definitions

Complaint: an expression of dissatisfaction about an action taken, a perceived lack of action, or the standard of service or provision provided by the school.

Concern: an expression of worry, doubt or dissatisfaction that may be capable of being resolved quickly without entering the formal complaints process. A concern may become a complaint if the person remains dissatisfied.

Complainant: the person raising the concern or complaint.

Parent: a person who has parental responsibility or who is otherwise recognised by the school as a parent/carer for school purposes.

Working day: a day on which the school is open for normal business, excluding weekends and public holidays. Where a deadline falls during a school closure, the school will apply the stated alternative timescale and communicate this clearly.

Grievance: a complaint by an employee about their employment or working conditions. Staff grievances are dealt with under the school's Grievance Policy.

3. Who can make a complaint

The statutory complaints procedure under Part 7 of the Independent School Standards applies to complaints made by parents of pupils concerning their child. Jasmine Grove School also chooses to accept complaints from pupils and, where appropriate, other individuals affected by the school's provision, and will deal with them respectfully and proportionately.

Where a complaint is made by someone other than a parent of a current pupil, the school may determine the most appropriate route for dealing with it. This does not remove any statutory or safeguarding duty that may apply.

Complaints from parents of former pupils may be considered where the complaint concerns matters arising while the pupil attended the school or where the complaint was initiated before the pupil left. The school may decline complaints that are historical and could reasonably have been raised earlier, subject to safeguarding, equality and other legal considerations.

4. Matters outside this procedure

Staff grievances and employment matters – see the Grievance Policy.

Safeguarding concerns or allegations about staff, volunteers, contractors or other adults – see section 11 and the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy. These must not be delayed while a complaint is investigated.

Admissions decisions or appeals where a separate statutory or school procedure applies.

Exclusion decisions where a separate statutory or school procedure applies.

Requests for information, subject access requests or other data protection matters, which should be directed through the relevant data protection procedure.

Complaints about services provided by an external organisation where that organisation has responsibility for the service; the school will signpost the complainant where appropriate.

Where a complaint contains several issues, the school will identify which issues fall under this policy and which require another procedure. The complainant will be told how each issue will be handled.

5. Timescales

Complaints should normally be raised as soon as possible and ordinarily within three months of the incident or the complainant becoming aware of the issue. The school will not automatically reject a complaint outside this period. Exceptions may be made where there is a reasonable explanation for the delay, where the issue is ongoing, or where safeguarding, equality or other significant circumstances make consideration appropriate.

The school will provide clear timescales at each stage. If it becomes clear that a published timescale cannot reasonably be met, the complainant will be told why, given a revised timescale and kept informed of progress.

Stage	Target	Purpose
Informal	Acknowledge promptly; normally resolve within 5 working days	Seek early resolution.
Formal	Acknowledge within 2 working days; normally issue outcome within 10 working days	Full investigation and written response.
Panel	Arrange as soon as practicable; normally within 20 working days of escalation	Independent review of the complaint and formal outcome.

6. Informal stage

The school encourages concerns to be raised informally wherever this is appropriate. The aim is to resolve matters quickly, locally and without unnecessary formality.

Concerns should normally be directed as follows:

Educational or teaching issues – the relevant teacher or appropriate senior member of staff.

Pastoral issues – the Headteacher or designated pastoral lead.

Behaviour issues – the member of staff responsible for the relevant decision, or a senior member of staff.

Financial or administrative matters – the Headteacher or appropriate senior member of staff.

Concerns about the Headteacher – the Chair of the Proprietor/Governing Body.

Other concerns – the Headteacher or a nominated senior member of staff.

A concern may be made in person, by telephone, email or letter. The school will make a proportionate written record of concerns and the action taken. If the concern is not resolved, or the complainant remains dissatisfied, they will be informed of their right to proceed to the formal stage.

7. Formal stage

A formal complaint should be made in writing to the Headteacher. The complaint should explain what has happened, why the complainant remains dissatisfied, and, where possible, what outcome they are seeking. The school will provide reasonable assistance where a complainant has difficulty setting out their complaint in writing.

The complaint will normally be acknowledged within two working days. The acknowledgement will identify the person responsible for investigating the complaint and provide an indicative timescale.

The investigator will be impartial and, wherever reasonably practicable, will not have been directly involved in the matter being complained about. The investigator may review relevant records, speak to staff or pupils where appropriate, consider written evidence and meet the complainant if necessary.

The complainant will have a fair opportunity to provide relevant information. The school will not normally investigate matters that are irrelevant, speculative or outside the scope of the complaint.

At the end of the formal stage, the complainant will receive a written response setting out the complaint considered, the evidence taken into account, the findings, the decision (for example upheld, partially upheld or not upheld), the reasons for the decision and any appropriate action. The response will also explain how to request a panel hearing if the complainant remains dissatisfied.

8. Panel hearing

If the complainant remains dissatisfied following the formal stage, they may request a panel hearing. The request should normally be made in writing and explain the grounds for escalation. The panel stage is the final stage of the school's internal complaints procedure.

The panel will consist of at least three people who have not been directly involved in the matters complained about.

At least one panel member will be independent of the management and running of the school and will not be a member of the school's workforce or proprietor body or otherwise involved in the school's management.

The school will make reasonable arrangements to enable the complainant to attend and participate.

The complainant may be accompanied by a friend or representative. Legal representation is not normally appropriate; any request for legal representation will be considered by the

school in advance and may be refused where it would be disproportionate or unfair to the process.

The panel may request further information in advance where reasonably necessary and will provide relevant information to the parties in sufficient time for it to be considered.

The panel will consider the complaint fairly and impartially, make findings and, where appropriate, recommendations.

The panel's written outcome will normally be provided within five working days of the hearing, subject to any unavoidable delay being explained.

The panel will not normally reinvestigate every aspect of a complaint from the beginning. Its role is to review whether the complaint was properly considered, whether the process was fair and whether the findings and response were reasonable in light of the evidence.

The panel's decision is final within the school's internal complaints procedure. The school will not normally enter into further correspondence on the same complaint unless new material information is provided or there is evidence that the procedure was not followed.

9. Complaints involving the Headteacher or proprietor

A complaint about the Headteacher will be submitted to the Chair of the Proprietor/Governing Body, who will arrange for it to be handled by an appropriate person who has not been directly involved.

Where a complaint concerns the Chair or the proprietor body as a whole, it will be directed to an appropriately independent person appointed for that purpose. The school will ensure that the panel stage remains compliant with the requirement for an independent panel member.

The school will maintain appropriate arrangements to avoid conflicts of interest and will record who is responsible for each stage.

10. Complaints made by pupils

Pupils may raise concerns or complaints with any trusted adult in school. A pupil does not need to use formal language or understand the stages of this policy in order to be heard.

Staff receiving a complaint from a pupil will listen carefully, make an appropriate record and ensure that the matter is referred to the relevant senior member of staff. Where the complaint indicates a safeguarding concern, staff must follow the safeguarding procedure immediately rather than treating it solely as a complaint.

Pupils will be supported to participate in any process in an age- and developmentally appropriate way. The school will consider whether a trusted adult, advocate or other appropriate support is required.

Parents/carers will normally be informed where appropriate, but confidentiality, the pupil's welfare, safeguarding duties and the child's wishes and best interests will be considered before information is shared.

11. Safeguarding complaints and allegations

A complaint that raises a safeguarding concern, including an allegation about a member of staff, volunteer, contractor or other adult, must be dealt with under the school's safeguarding arrangements. It must not be delayed pending completion of the ordinary complaints process.

Staff must act immediately on a safeguarding concern and report it to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or deputy without delay.

The school will follow its Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and the relevant local safeguarding arrangements.

Where an allegation concerns a member of staff or other adult working with children, the school will follow the procedures for managing allegations, including referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) where required.

The school will not conduct an internal investigation where doing so could compromise a safeguarding or criminal investigation. It will follow the direction of the appropriate safeguarding or law-enforcement authority.

Records will include the concern, actions taken, decisions, rationale and outcomes, in accordance with safeguarding and data protection requirements.

KCSIE 2026 states that safeguarding concerns and allegations about staff should be managed through the school's safeguarding procedure, including concerns about supply staff, trainee teachers, volunteers and contractors. The school will apply the version of KCSIE in force at the relevant date.

12. Serial, persistent, unreasonable or duplicate complaints

The school recognises that a complainant may need to pursue a legitimate complaint firmly. However, the school may apply reasonable controls where a complaint is repetitive, vexatious, abusive, threatening, disproportionate or otherwise unreasonable, or where the same issue has already been fully considered.

The school may nominate a single point of contact.

The school may limit communication to writing or to specified times and channels.

The school may decline to respond to repeated correspondence that adds no new material.

Where multiple people submit substantially identical complaints about the same matter, the school may coordinate the response while preserving each complainant's right to have their own complaint considered where appropriate.

Any decision to restrict contact will be proportionate, recorded and reviewed.

These arrangements will not be used to prevent a genuine complaint being heard, nor will they override safeguarding, equality or other legal duties.

13. Complaints involving third parties

Where a complaint concerns an external provider or contractor, the school will establish whether the matter is within the school's control. Where the provider has its own complaints procedure, the school may ask the complainant to use it, while continuing to address any matter for which the school retains responsibility.

14. Recording, confidentiality and data protection

The school will maintain a written record of complaints and the action taken, including whether a complaint was resolved informally, formally or at panel. Records may include the date received, complainant's name, pupil's name where relevant, description of the issue, evidence, investigation records, witness statements, correspondence, decision-making rationale, outcome and action taken.

Complaints records will be kept securely and retained in accordance with the school's Records Management/Retention arrangements and applicable data protection law. Information will be shared only where there is a lawful basis to do so, including where disclosure is necessary for safeguarding or is requested by a regulator or inspector acting within their powers.

Individual complaint records will normally be treated as confidential, subject to the requirements of the Independent School Standards, inspection and regulatory powers, safeguarding duties, data protection law and any other legal requirement.

15. Reporting and publication requirements

The school will make this complaints procedure available to parents of pupils and publish it on the school's website or otherwise make it readily available in accordance with the Independent School Standards.

In accordance with the Independent School Standards, the school will make available, on request to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate, details of the complaints procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

The school will not publish personal information about individual complainants or pupils when reporting complaint numbers.

The school will maintain evidence that the procedure is being implemented effectively and will make relevant records available to inspectors or the Department for Education where lawfully requested.

For independent schools, complaints about compliance with the Independent School Standards may be raised with the Department for Education after the school's own procedure has been completed. The DfE's role is regulatory; it does not ordinarily act as an appeal body to substitute its own decision for the school's decision on an individual complaint.

16. Monitoring and review

The proprietor will monitor the operation and effectiveness of this policy at least annually. The review will consider complaint numbers and themes, response times, outcomes, any

safeguarding implications, equality considerations, lessons learned and any changes in legislation, statutory guidance or regulatory expectations.

This policy will next be reviewed in August 2027, or sooner if there is a significant legal, regulatory or safeguarding change.

Key external DfE references

DfE – Regulating independent schools / Independent School Standards guidance (updated 2 April 2026).

DfE – Setting up an academies complaints procedure / best-practice complaints guidance (used as supplementary best practice where appropriate).

DfE – Keeping children safe in education 2026 (effective from 1 September 2026).

DfE – Complain about a school: Private schools.

1. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to legislation including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education and Skills Act 2008
- The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014
- Equality Act 2010
- The UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Freedom of Information Act 2000

This policy also has due regard to related guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- DfE (2019) 'The Independent School Standards'

This policy will be implemented in accordance with the following school policies:

- Records Management Policy
- Grievance Policy

2. Definitions

For the purpose of this policy:

- A **"complaint"** can be defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction' towards the actions taken or a perceived lack of action taken.
- A **"concern"** can be defined as 'an expression of worry or doubt' where reassurance is required; concerns will be classed and addressed as complaints.
- **"Complainants"** are those who have raised a concern or a complaint.
- A **"grievance"** is an issue raised by a member of staff where they feel the school has not implemented a policy or process fairly or properly. Grievances will be dealt with in line with the school's Grievance Policy.
- **"Days"** relate to school days.

3. Eligibility to make a complaint

Parents of pupils currently being educated at the school are able to make a complaint in line with this policy.

All complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Parents will be assured that their children will not be penalised if they raise a complaint.

This policy does not cover complaints made by the following:

- Parents of pupils who have left voluntarily or as a result of being excluded (except where the complaints process was started when the pupil was still being educated at the school)
- Prospective pupils and their parents, and the failure to admit such pupils

Complaints from Pupils

The procedures below will be followed in the event of a pupil making a complaint against a member of staff, a fellow pupil or any other person or situation either in school or outside.

Pupils may wish to talk to an adult they trust about a situation relating to school or to a situation outside school. Pupils are reminded that, although they may speak to any member of staff, there may be occasions where information will have to be referred to other agencies such as Social Services (safeguarding concern).

Within school, pupils may talk to any member of Education Staff. A pupil may merely need a trusted adult to talk a situation through with and may not be making a formal complaint.

However, all actual complaints made by pupils will be recorded by the member of staff in the Complaints Log. *Where the complaint suggests a Child Protection issue a formal referral will be made to the local Safeguarding team in line with Jasmine Grove School's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy. The school's response to the complaint will also be recorded.

If the complaint is serious the pupil's parents/carers will be informed of both the complaint and the outcome. Some complaints will be referred to other agencies or to the Local Authority. If necessary, a meeting will be called to discuss the issues further.

If a complaint is upheld the school undertakes to respond to all recommendations and with appropriate actions. The school will regularly review this policy and undertakes to evaluate and to respond to recommendations in an ongoing attempt to improve practice.

A pupil may ask to speak to an adult from an outside agency. The school will wherever possible put the pupil in contact with a representative of the appropriate agency. The referral will be noted in the pupil's file. We will try to resolve the complaint within 2 weeks from the day the pupil made the complaint. *See School Safeguarding Policy for further guidance

4. Timescales

Complaints are expected to be made as soon as possible after an issue arises to ensure the issue is addressed in an appropriate timescale.

The school upholds a **three-month** time limit in which a complaint can be lodged following an incident. Complaints made outside this time limit will not be automatically refused and exceptions will be considered.

Timescales for managing complaints at specific stages are outlined in the relevant sections of this policy. In the case of any timescales changing, all parties involved will be informed of the changes in a timely manner.

5. Informal raising of a concern

The school will endeavour to resolve most concerns informally.

Concerns will be raised initially as follows:

Type of concern	Individual to whom a concern should be raised
-----------------	---

Educational issues	The relevant teacher – the concern will be passed to a more senior member of staff if appropriate.
Pastoral care issues	The headteacher
Behavioural issues	The staff member who imposed the behaviour sanction
Financial matters	The headteacher
Other concerns	The headteacher
Concerns regarding the headteacher	The chair of the proprietor body

A complaint may be made in person, by telephone or in writing. A written record will be kept of all concerns and the date on which they were received. A concern provided in writing will be acknowledged by telephone or in writing within **two working days** of receipt during term time and as soon as practicable during school holidays.

If the concern is not resolved within **five working days** or, in the event that the complainant is not satisfied with the response to their concern, the complainant will be advised to proceed in accordance with the '[Formal complaint](#)' stage of this procedure.

6. Formal complaint

The complainant should submit their complaint in writing to the headteacher. The complaint will be acknowledged by telephone or in writing within **two working days** of receipt during term time and as soon as practicable during school holidays, indicating that action is being taken and the likely timescales.

The headteacher will meet with the complainant within **five working days** of acknowledging receipt of the complaint to discuss the matter. If the complaint is about the headteacher, the discussion will take place with the chair of the proprietor body.

During the meeting, the headteacher will attempt to reach a resolution; however, it may be necessary for further investigations to be carried out by the headteacher or another designated member of staff. If the complaint is about the headteacher, the chair of the proprietor body will arrange any necessary investigations.

Written records will be kept of all meetings and other communications held in relation to the complaint.

Once all facts are established, the headteacher will inform the complainant of their decision and their reasoning in writing.

If the complaint is about the headteacher, the chair of the proprietorial body will inform the complainant of their decision and their reasoning in writing.

(Chair of Governors) Mandy Clarke

The complainant will be informed of the decision within **10 working days** from the receipt of the complaint. Where there are exceptional circumstances resulting in a delay, the complainant will be notified of this and informed of the new timescales as soon as possible.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome suggested, they will be advised to proceed to the '[Panel hearing](#)' stage of this procedure.

7. Panel hearing

Where a complaint cannot be resolved, a hearing before a panel appointed by or on behalf of the school's proprietor will be arranged.

The panel will consist of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. One panel member will be independent of the management and running of the school – this means they are not a member of the school's workforce or proprietor body and are not otherwise involved in the management of the school, e.g. a solicitor who regularly acts for the school.

A hearing will be scheduled to take place as soon as practicable and normally within **10 working days**. Reasonable arrangements will be made to ensure the complainant can attend the panel hearing. If the complainant does not exercise the right to attend the panel hearing, the hearing will still be held.

The complainant will be informed that they are able to be accompanied at the hearing if they wish; however, legal representation will not normally be appropriate.

The right for a parent to be accompanied at a panel hearing does not confer a right on a parent to have a legal representative make representations on their behalf at a hearing, but the school will decide whether to allow this on a case-by-case basis.

If the panel deems it necessary, it may require that further details of the complaint or any related matters be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such information will be supplied to all parties no later than **five working days** prior to the hearing.

After considering all of the relevant facts, the panel will make findings and recommendations. The decision, findings and recommendations will be provided to the complainant in writing within **five working days** of the hearing. A copy of the decision, findings and recommendations will be sent to, where relevant, the person complained about, the headteacher and the chair of the proprietorial body.

The decision of the panel will be final and represents the conclusion of the school's complaints procedure.

If it is found that the school has not met its requirements in relation to managing complaints because of the way a particular complaint has been handled, the Secretary of State has no power to compel the school to alter its decision on that complaint, only to take regulatory action designed to address the failure to meet the complaints standard, so that future complaints are dealt with properly.

8. Recording complaints

A written record will be kept of any complaint made, detailing:

- Whether the complaint was resolved following an informal route, formal route or panel hearing.
- Actions taken by the school as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint was upheld).

Additional records may be kept containing the following information:

- The date the issue was raised
- The name of the complainant and, where relevant, their child
- A description of the issue
- Records of all the investigations
- Witness statements
- The name of the staff member responsible for handling the issue at each stage
- Copies of correspondence on the issue

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests to access them.

9. Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed **annually**. The next scheduled review of this policy is September 2024. All changes made to this policy will be communicated with all relevant stakeholders.