West Green Primary School

Complaints Procedure

Reviewed on:	October 2025
Next Review:	October 2027
Staff Responsibility	SLT
Governor responsibility	FGB
Signed by Chair	Amelia Griffiths

Safeguarding Statement

At West Green Primary School, we respect and value all children and are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all our pupils so they can learn, in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. We believe every pupil should be able to participate in all school activities in an enjoyable and safe environment and be protected from harm. This is the responsibility of every adult employed by, or invited to deliver services at West Green Primary School. We recognise our responsibility to safeguard all who access school and promote the welfare of all our pupils by protecting them from physical, sexual and emotional abuse, neglect and bullying.

West Green Primary School

Complaints Procedure

Introduction

At West Green Primary School, we work very hard to build positive relationships with members of the public and local community. Our aim is to deal with issues and problems before they become a 'complaint'. There is a clear protocol to follow and the steps with their outcomes are outlined in this document.

If anyone is unhappy with their child's education, we encourage talking to the child's class teacher as soon as possible. We are confident that when a concern is shared, the class teacher can give reassurance or work with parents/carers to devise what steps need to be taken to address the concern.

If you have any general concerns relating to the school please contact a member of the Senior Leadership Team – Mary Gardiner, Jennifer Murphy or Lou Archer.

As a school, we promise we will always aim to be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaint and to deal with them as swiftly as possible. We will always work with you to ensure any situation is resolved as appropriate or a clear explanation is provided for where any requested outcomes cannot be met. Our focus will always be on the child and what is best for them.

Aims

Our school aims to meet its statutory obligations when responding to complaints from parents of pupils at the school, and others.

When responding to complaints, we aim to:

- Be impartial and non-adversarial
- Facilitate a full and fair investigation by an independent person or panel, where necessary
- Address all the points at issue and provide an effective and prompt response
- Respect complainants' desire for confidentiality
- Treat complainants with respect
- Keep complainants informed of the progress of the complaints process
- Consider how the complaint can feed into school improvement evaluation processes

We try to resolve concerns or complaints by informal means wherever possible. Where this is not possible, formal procedures will be followed.

The school will aim to give the complainant the opportunity to complete the complaints procedure in full.

Legislation and guidance

This document meets the requirements of section 29 of the Education Act 2002, which states that schools must have and make available a procedure to deal with all complaints relating to their school and to any community facilities or services that the school provides.

It is also based on guidance for schools on complaints procedures from the Department for Education (DfE).

In addition, it addresses duties set out in the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework with regards to dealing with complaints about the school's fulfilment of Early Years Foundation Stage requirements.

Definitions and scope

The DfE guidance explains the difference between a concern and a complaint.

A **concern** is defined as "an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought".

The school will resolve concerns through day-to-day communication as far as possible.

A **complaint** is defined as "an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action".

The school intends to resolve complaints informally where possible, at the earliest possible stage.

There may be occasions when complainants would like to raise their concerns formally. This policy outlines the procedure relating to handling such complaints.

This policy does not cover complaints procedures relating to:

- Admissions
- Statutory assessments of special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)
- Safeguarding matters
- Exclusion or suspension
- Whistle-blowing
- Staff grievances
- Staff discipline

Please see our separate policies for procedures relating to these types of complaint.

Arrangements for handling complaints from parents/carers of children with SEND about the school's support are within the scope of this policy. Such complaints should first be made to the Class Teacher and/or Lou Archer (Inclusion Lead); they will then be referred to this complaints policy. Our SEND policy includes information about the rights of parents/carers of pupils with disabilities who believe that our school has discriminated against their child.

Complaints about services provided by other providers who use school premises or facilities should be directed to the provider concerned.

Complaints about our fulfilment of early years' requirements

We will investigate all written complaints relating to the school's fulfilment of the Early Years Foundation Stage requirements, and notify the complainant of the outcome within 28 days of receiving the complaint. The school will keep a record of the complaint (see Record-keeping section) and make this available to Ofsted on request.

Parents and carers can notify Ofsted if they believe that the school is not meeting Early Years Foundation Stage requirements, by calling 0300 123 4234 or 0300 123 4666, or by emailing enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk. An online contact form is also available at https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted#org-contacts.

We will notify parents and carers if we become aware that the school is to be inspected by Ofsted. We will also supply a copy of the inspection report to parents and carers of children attending the setting on a regular basis.

How to raise a concern or make a complaint

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf on a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

Concerns should be raised with either the class teacher or headteacher. The school will take concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve the matter quickly. It may be the case that the provision or clarification of information will resolve the issue. However, if the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint. (See Stage 1 below)

Complainants should not approach individual governors to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at Stage 2 of the procedure.

Complaints against school staff (except the headteacher) should be made in the first instance, to Mary Gardiner (the headteacher) via the School Admin in the school office**.** Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints that involve or are about the headteacher should be addressed to Ms Amelia Griffiths (the Chair of Governors), via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor or the whole governing body should be addressed to Ms Michelle Duffour (the Clerk to the Governing Body) via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

For ease of use, a template complaint form is included at the end of this procedure (Appendix 1). If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office. You can also ask third party organisations like the Citizens Advice to help you.

In accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure. For instance, providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

Anonymous complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the headteacher or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation if there are exceptional circumstances such as child protection/safeguarding issues or bullying allegations, where the school might consider it appropriate to contact outside agencies.

Time scales

You must raise the complaint within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority (LA) safeguarding teams or Tribunals, this may impact on our ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations.

If a complainant commences legal action against West Green Primary School in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure in relation to their complaint until those legal proceedings have concluded.

Complaints received outside of term time

We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

Principles for investigation

When investigating a complaint, we will try to clarify:

- What has happened
- Who was involved
- What the complainant feels would put things right

We also intend to address complaints as quickly as possible. To achieve this, realistic and reasonable time limits will be set for each action within each stage.

Where further investigations are necessary, new time limits will be set, and the complainant will be sent details of the new deadline with an explanation for the delay.

At each stage in the procedure, West Green Primary School wants to resolve the complaint. As appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, or not upheld. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- an explanation
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- an assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not happen again
- an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to make changes going forward

- an undertaking to review school policies or practices in light of the complaint
- an apology.

Withdrawal of a Complaint

If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

Stage 1

Formal complaints must be made to the headteacher (unless they are about the headteacher), via the school office. This may be done in person, in writing (preferably on the Complaint Form), or by telephone.

The headteacher will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 3 school days.

Within this response, the headteacher will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The headteacher can consider whether a face-to-face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this. If so, a meeting will be arranged, the complainant may be accompanied to this meeting, and should inform the school of the identity of their companion in advance.

In certain circumstances, the school may need to refuse a request for a particular individual to attend any such meeting – for example, if there is a conflict of interest. If this is the case, the school will notify the complainant as soon as they are aware, so that the complainant has the opportunity to arrange alternative accompaniment.

Note: The headteacher may delegate the investigation to another member of the school's senior leadership team but not the decision to be taken.

During the investigation, the headteacher (or investigator) will:

- if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
- keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the headteacher will provide a formal written response within 10 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint or the face-to-face meeting if arranged (not including school holidays).

If the headteacher is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions West Green Primary School will take to resolve the complaint.

The headteacher will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1.

If the complaint is about the headteacher, or a member of the governing body (including the Chair or Vice-Chair), a suitably skilled governor will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 1.

Complaints about the headteacher or member of the governing body must be made to the Clerk, via the school office.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire governing body or
- the majority of the governing body

Stage 1 will be considered by an independent investigator appointed via the Clerk by their LA Governor Services Team (Haringey Education Partnership Governors' Services). At the conclusion of their investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response.

Stage 2

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 1 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 2 – a meeting with members of the governing body's complaints review panel, which will be formed of the first three, impartial, governors available. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.

A request to escalate to Stage 2 must be made to the Clerk, via the school office, within 15 school days of receipt of the Stage 1 response.

The Clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 3 school days.

Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

The review panel consists of members of the governing board with no prior involvement or knowledge of the complaint. Prior to the meeting, they will decide amongst themselves who will act as the Chair of the Complaints Committee. If there are fewer than three governors from West Green Primary School available, the Clerk will source any additional, independent governors through another local school or through their LA's Governor Services team (HEP Governors' Services), in order to make up the committee. Alternatively, an entirely independent committee may be convened to hear the complaint at Stage 2. These individuals will have access to the existing record of the complaint's progress (see Record Keeping section below).

The complainant must have reasonable notice of the date of the review panel; however, the review panel reserves the right to convene at their convenience rather than that of the complainant.

At the review panel meeting, the complainant and representatives from the school, as appropriate, will be present. Each will have an opportunity to set out written or oral submissions prior to the meeting. All submissions must be in full and submitted to the panel a minimum of 5 school days (not including school holidays) prior to the review panel meeting. The Chair of the panel retains the right to refuse to admit any written or oral submissions submitted after this time.

Any written material will then be circulated to all parties. The committee will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

The committee will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.

The complainant must be allowed to attend the panel hearing and be accompanied by a suitable companion if they wish (see Stage 1 above).

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

At the meeting, each individual will have the opportunity to give statements and present their evidence, and witnesses will be called as appropriate to present their evidence. Names of all witnesses that may be called must be shared with all those party to the review panel meeting a minimum of 5 school days (not including school holidays) prior to the review panel meeting. The Chair of the panel retains the right to refuse to hear any witnesses whose name is submitted after this time. All witnesses will be required to wait outside the review panel meeting when not giving evidence.

The panel, the complainant and the school representative will be given the chance to ask and reply to questions. Once the complainant and school representatives have completed presenting their cases, they will be asked to leave and evidence will then be considered.

The committee can:

- uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.

If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the committee will:

- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

The Chair of the Review Panel will provide the complainant, West Green Primary School and, where relevant, the subject of the complaint, with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 5 school days. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions recommended to West Green Primary School to take to resolve the complaint.

The response will also advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire governing body or
- the majority of the governing body

Stage 2 will be heard by a committee of independent governors.

Referring complaints on completion of the school's procedure

If the complainant is unsatisfied with the outcome of the school's complaints procedure, they can refer their complaint to the School Complaints Unit (SCU), which investigates complaints relating to maintained schools on behalf of the secretary of state.

The SCU will not re-investigate the matter of the complaint. It will look at whether the school's complaints policy and any other relevant statutory policies that the school holds were adhered to. The SCU also looks at whether the school's statutory policies adhere to education legislation. It may direct the school to re-investigate the complaint where it is clear the school has acted unlawfully or unreasonably.

For more information or to refer a complaint, see the following webpage:

https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school

Record-keeping

The school will record the progress of all complaints, including information about actions taken at all stages, the stage at which the complaint was resolved, and the final outcome. The records will also include copies of letters and emails, and notes relating to meetings and phone calls.

This material will be treated as confidential and held centrally, and will be viewed only by those involved in investigating the complaint or on the review panel.

This is except where the secretary of state (or someone acting on their behalf) or the complainant requests access to records of a complaint through a freedom of information (FOI) request or under the terms of the Data Protection Act, or where the material must be made available during a school inspection.

Records of complaints will be kept for 6 years.

The details of the complaint, including the names of individuals involved, will not be shared with the whole governing board in case a review panel needs to be organised at a later point.

Where the governing board is aware of the substance of the complaint before the review panel stage, the school will (where reasonably practicable) arrange for an independent panel to hear the complaint.

Complainants also have the right to request an independent panel if they believe there is likely to be bias in the proceedings. The decision to approve this request is made by the governing board, who will not unreasonably withhold consent.

Learning lessons

The Chair of Governors (as appropriate) will review any underlying issues raised by complaints with the Headteacher/senior leadership team, where appropriate, and respecting confidentiality, to determine whether there are any improvements that the school can make to its procedures or practice to help prevent similar events in the future.

Persistent complaints

West Green Primary School is committed to dealing with all complaints and parental communication fairly and impartially, and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with our school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is burdensome, unreasonably repetitive, abusive, offensive or threatening.

Where a complainant tries to re-open the issue with the school after the complaints' procedure has been fully exhausted and the school has done everything it reasonably can in response to the complaint, the chair of governors (or other appropriate person in the case of a complaint about the chair) will inform the complainant that the matter is closed.

If the complainant subsequently contacts the school again about the same issue, the school can choose not to respond. The normal circumstance in which we will not respond is if:

- The school has taken every reasonable step to address the complainant's needs, *and*
- The complainant has been given a clear statement of the school's position and their options (if any), *and*
- The complainant is contacting the school repeatedly but making substantially the same points each time

However, this list is not intended to be exhaustive.

The school will be most likely to choose not to respond if:

- We have reason to believe the individual is contacting the school with the intention of causing disruption or inconvenience, and/or
- The individual's letters/emails/telephone calls are often or always abusive or aggressive, and/or
- The individual makes insulting personal comments about, or threats towards, school staff

Unreasonable behaviour which is abusive, offensive or threatening may constitute an unreasonably persistent complaint.

Once the school has decided that it is appropriate to stop responding, the complainant will be informed in writing, either by letter or email.

The school will ensure when making this decision that complainants making any new complaint are heard, and that the school acts reasonably.

Unreasonably persistent complaints

West Green Primary School is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with the school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

West Green Primary School defines unreasonable complainants as 'those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with the school, hinder our consideration of their or other people's complaints'.

A complaint may be regarded as unreasonable when the person making the complaint:

• refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance;

• refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved;

• refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaints' procedure;

• insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice;

• introduces trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant expects to be taken into account and commented on, or raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and/or to their own timescales;

• makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced;

• changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds;

• repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed);

• refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education;

• seeks an unrealistic outcome;

• makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with.

• makes constant and excessive demands on staff which impacts on the school's time and resources

• continues to pursue complaints about a member of the school community which are unsubstantiated and could be considered a personal vendetta

Please note that the Chair of the review panel retains the right to dismiss a complaint for lack of cooperation by the complainant with no right for the complainant to take the complaint further under the procedures as outlined in this policy.

A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if the person making the complaint does so either face-to-face, by telephone, in writing or by email:

• maliciously;

• aggressively;

• using threats, intimidation or violence;

• using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language;

• knowing it to be false;

• using falsified information;

• publishing unacceptable information in a variety of media such as in social media websites and newspapers.

Complainants should limit the numbers of communications with a school while a 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.

Whenever possible, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking.

If the behaviour continues the Headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and asking them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact West Green Primary School causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will usually be reviewed after 6 months.

Communication Plan

In such a case, where the school has agreed that the complainant is raising unreasonably persistent complaints and a change to communication needs to be put in place, the governing body will have agreed that contact can be restricted. The decision to restrict communication will need to be agreed by the Headteacher and Chair of Governors with advice, if necessary, from the local authority of Haringey. The complainant must be notified in writing and the letter will clearly identify:

- The reason why the decision to apply this policy has been taken;
- What impact this will have on their contact with the school;
- The duration of the restriction; and how and to whom the complainant can appeal the decision.

The restrictions can include all or some of the following:

- placing time limits on telephone calls/personal contact;
- limiting the number of telephone calls/personal contacts/emails/or other school communication methods;
- restricting the complainant to only one form of communication and with one named member of staff;
- refusing all communication regarding an identified subject.

The restriction would not include emergency contact regarding the complainant's child/children or information which would be essential to their child/children's learning and achievement.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the concerns and actions taken will be put in writing immediately and the police informed. This may include banning an individual from the school premises.

Monitoring arrangements

The Full Governing Body/delegated governor will monitor the effectiveness of the complaints procedure in ensuring that complaints are handled properly. The FGB/delegated governor will track the number and nature of complaints, and review underlying issues as stated in the Learning Lessons section.

The complaints records are logged and managed by our School Business Manager.

This policy will be reviewed by the FGB at least every 2 years**.**

At each review, the policy will be approved by the Full Governing Body/delegated governor.

Appendix 1:

Complaint Form

Please complete and return to Mary Gardiner (marked Private and Confidential via the school office) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:
Pupil's name (if relevant):
Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):
Address: **Postcode:** **Day time telephone number:** **Evening telephone number:**
Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it.

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?
Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.
Signature: **Date:**
Official use
Date acknowledgement sent:
By who:
Complaint referred to:
Date: