

Complaints Policy

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Owner:	Allan Osborne		

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Complaints Policy covers initial issues raised and the procedure that Greenwich Waldorf School and Trustees must take.

1.2 Complaints from any stakeholder of Greenwich Waldorf School will be dealt with under this policy.

2. CONFIDENTIALITY

2.1 All aspects of complaints should be considered confidential by all parties and not discussed.

2.2 Audio recordings or voice notes of any meetings or hearings conducted under this policy are prohibited.

3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

TRUSTEES

3.1 The involvement of Trustees/Governors is at stage 3 only. It is important that all stakeholders follow this guidance to ensure equity and fairness for all.

CHAIR OF TRUSTEES/GOVERNORS (CoT)

3.2 The CoT is responsible for considering anonymous complaints and complaints concerning the Executive Principal.

3.3 The CoT may agree to witness confidentiality in exceptional circumstances.

EXECUTIVE PRINCIPAL

3.4 The Executive Principal will receive all stage 2 formal complaints or nominate a designated Senior Leader on their behalf.

3.5 The Executive Principal is responsible for ensuring that complaints are followed under the correct policy and must refer to [Appendix A](#) for exceptions.

CLERK TO THE TRUST

3.6 The Clerk to the Trustees is responsible for centrally filing all paperwork following a Stage 2 complaint and must not be involved until stage two has been completed.

3.7 The Clerk is responsible for all paperwork, arranging a committee for Stage 3 complaints and ensuring the Trustees are advised as per the policy.

4. INITIAL CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS

4.1 In the first instance, parents should raise concerns with the relevant Teacher directly. If the issue is not resolved satisfactorily, it will then move to Stage 1 of the complaints process.

4.2 Any complaints received centrally will be directed to the correct recipient.

5. ANONYMOUS COMPLAINTS

5.1 The Trustees will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the CoT must be advised of any anonymous complaints and will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation and how to proceed.

6. HISTORICAL ISSUES

6.1 All complaints must be raised within 3 months of the incident or occurrence of the issue. Students must be currently on the school roll.

6.2 Issues made outside of this timeframe must be sent to the CoT and will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

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

7. UNREASONABLE CONCERN/COMPLAINTS

7.1 Most complaints raised will be valid, and therefore we will treat them seriously. However, a complaint may become unreasonable if the person:

- Has made the same complaint before, and it's already been resolved by following the School' complaints procedure
- Makes a complaint that is obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, defamatory or repetitive manner Knowingly provides false information.
- Insists on pursuing a complaint that is unfounded, or out of scope of the complaints procedure.
- Pursues a valid complaint, but in an unreasonable manner e.g. refuses to articulate the complaint, refuses to cooperate with this complaints procedure, or insists that the complaint is dealt with in ways that are incompatible with this procedure and the time frames it sets out.
- Changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation goes on.
- Makes a complaint designed to cause disruption, annoyance or excessive demands on school time.
- Seeks unrealistic outcomes, or a solution that lacks any serious purpose or value.

7.2 The Trustees will take every reasonable step to address the complainant's concerns, and give them a clear statement of our position and their options. We will maintain our role as an objective arbiter throughout the process, including when we meet with individuals. We will follow our complaints procedure as normal as outlined wherever possible.

7.3 If the complainant continues to contact in a disruptive way, The Trustees may put communications strategies in place:

- Give the complainant a single point of contact via an email address.
- Limit the number of times the complainant can make contact, such as a fixed number per term.
- Ask the complainant to engage a third party to act on their behalf, such as [Citizens Advice](#).
- Put any other strategy in place as necessary.

7.4 The Trustees may stop responding to the complainant when all of these factors are met:

- We believe we have taken all reasonable steps to help address their concerns.
- We have provided a clear statement of our position and their options.
- The complainant contacts us repeatedly, and we believe their intention is to cause disruption or inconvenience.

Where we stop responding, we will inform the individual that we intend to do so. We will also explain that we will still consider any new complaints they make.

7.5 In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from a school site.

7.6 If we have resolved a complaint under this procedure and receive a duplicate complaint on the same subject from a partner, family member or other individual, we will assess whether there are aspects that we hadn't previously considered, or any new information we need to take into account.

If we are satisfied that there are no new aspects, we will:

- Tell the new complainant that we have already investigated and responded to this issue, and the local process is complete.
- Direct them to the DfE if they are dissatisfied with our original handling of the complaint.

If there are new aspects, we will follow this procedure again.

8.GENERAL GUIDELINES

8.1 All complaints can be made in person, in writing (including by email) or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of a Complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

8.2 Complaints can be made via email. All complaints should be sent to admin@greenwichwaldorfschool.com and marked as COMPLAINT. It will be forwarded to the Executive Principal who will delegate to an Investigating Officer.

8.3 Trustees should not be responding to any complaint in the first instance and should direct the Complainant to the Executive Principal. Failure to do so may jeopardise a fair and equitable process.

8.4 If the complaint is escalated to any external body/agency before the Trustees complaints process is completed, the Chair of the Trustees must be notified and must consider a suspension of this policy until a response from the external agency is received in relation to the complaint.

8.5 This Complaints Policy does not cover policies named in [Appendix A](#).

8.6 Complaints against individual members of staff will be investigated under this policy and may subsequently be dealt with under internal HR policies which are confidential in nature.

8.7 Any complaints regarding the Executive Principal must be addressed to the CoT who will take responsibility for the complaint.

9. PROCEDURES FOR INITIAL ISSUES RAISED (STAGE 1)

9.1 If the initial concern has not been resolved by the relevant Teacher, it will become a Stage 1 complaint. This can be made in the same way as the guidance in 8.1 and 8.2.

9.2 The school will make contact within 1 school day of the initial issue raised. This response must include a projected timescale for the full response and clear steps on what happens next in writing. A follow-up telephone conversation may be appropriate.

9.3 The appointed person will ensure they speak directly to all appropriate persons who may be able to assist with enquiries into the issues raised.

9.4 All projected time scales will be communicated within the initial response which will be in 5 working days; if circumstances change they must be communicated and agreed by all parties. If these timescales change, they must be communicated with all parties as soon as possible and new timescales agreed.

9.5 The final response will ensure that it is clear on any action or monitoring of the situation that has been agreed.

9.6 If the Complainant is still dissatisfied after the initial response, a formal complaint must be raised within 5 school days for it to move to Stage 2 as outlined in this policy.

10. STAGE 2 (FORMAL COMPLAINT)

10.1 If any Complainant is not satisfied with the outcome from the initial issue raised, they may make a stage 2 formal complaint to the Executive Principal. This should be made in writing or by email to the school, however access arrangements should be made for all stakeholders.

10.2 The formal complaint will be acknowledged in writing or via email within 3 school days confirming that it is a Stage 2 formal complaint and will set out projected timescales.

10.3 Within 5 school days the Complainant will be invited to a meeting to discuss the complaint with the Investigating Officer (on his/her behalf). The Complainant may be accompanied by one person to assist in explaining the detail of the complaint.

10.4 The Investigating Officer will consider and evaluate all existing details and any new details arising from the meeting. The Investigating Officer will talk to and take statements as required.

10.5 Once all the relevant facts have been established a written/email response will be made. This will give a full explanation of the outcome of the investigation and any follow-up action if required.

10.6 All projected time scales will be communicated within the initial response; normally a response will be received within 10 school days. If these fall behind they must be communicated with all parties as soon as possible and new timescales agreed.

10.7 The formal response will ensure that it is clear on any action or monitoring of the situation that has been agreed.

10.8 All relevant paperwork must be sent to the Executive Principal's PA at nicolacoughlin@greenwichwaldorfschool.com.

10.9 If the Complainant is still dissatisfied after Stage 2, a formal complaint must be raised within Ten(10) school days for it to move to Stage 3 as outlined in this policy.

11.STAGE 3 (FINAL STAGE)

11.1 If any Complainant is not satisfied with the outcome from the Stage 2 response, they may make a stage 3 (final) formal complaint. This should be made in writing or by email to the Clerk to Trustees, however access arrangements should be made for all stakeholders.

11.2 The Clerk to the Trustees will respond to the Complainant to outline the procedures and timescales within 5 school days.

11.3 The Clerk will arrange a formal complaint panel hearing. This panel will be made up of 3 Trustees, of which 1 must be different and independent to the management of the school.

11.4 The complaint panel hearing timescales will be set out by the Clerk and will depend on availability. The Trustees should aim to hold this hearing within 20 school days.

11.5 The aim of a Complaint Panel Hearing is to resolve the complaint and to achieve reconciliation between the school and the Complainant. It may sometimes only be possible for the Complaint Panel to establish the facts and make recommendations, which should reassure the complainant that the complaint has been taken seriously and action has been taken to prevent a similar situation occurring in the future.

11.6 No additional evidence should be presented. The Investigating Officer will give all the documentation to the Clerk including the initial concern raised, as well as any investigating documents including the final response made. The Clerk will circulate this to the panel members and the Complainant at least 5 school days prior to the panel hearing.

11.7 If new evidence needs to be presented, then the complaint needs to be reinvestigated under Stage 2 of this policy.

11.8 At the complaint panel hearing the Complainant and Investigating Officer will be invited to attend.

11.9 The Complainant may be accompanied by one person to assist in explaining the detail of the complaint (this must be communicated to the Clerk 5 school days ahead of the meeting).

11.10 The school will be represented by the Investigating Officer.

12.THE COMPLAINTS HEARING PANEL

12.1 The Complaints Panel Hearing will operate in accordance with the following formal procedures;

12.2 The Clerk to the Complaint Panel will arrange for the Complaint Panel Hearing to take place normally within twenty school days. The Complainant will need to confirm to the Clerk within 5 school days of receiving the confirmation. If the Complainant is not available, one re-arrangement will be offered. After that the hearing will take place in their absence unless the complainant puts in writing their wish to withdraw the complaint.

12.3 The Clerk to the Complaint Panel will distribute the relevant documents within 5 working days of the

panel hearing.

12.4 Should any party not be able to attend the hearing on the date confirmed by the Clerk, the Clerk will seek to find an alternative date. If they are still unable to attend the alternative date, the Clerk will inform the complainant that the meeting will take place in their absence.

12.5 The Clerk will be in attendance at the Complaint Panel Hearing to ensure an accurate record is made during the proceedings.

12.6 During the meeting, the following will occur:

- The Complainant will be given the opportunity to explain the issues; • the Investigating Officer may ask questions of the Complainant;
- The Complaint Panel may ask questions of the Complainant;
- The Investigating Officer will explain the process taken and the school's response;
- The Complainant may question the Investigating Officer;
- The complaint panel may question the Investigating Officer;
- Each party may make a brief final statement
- The Investigating Officer and Complainant will be asked to leave, the panel and Clerk will remain.

12.7 The Complaint Panel will then consider the complaint and all the information and documentation presented in order to:

- Make findings of fact, on a balance of probabilities (that is to say, more likely than not to be true);
- Make recommendations as to action to be taken, if necessary;

12.8 The Clerk will notify all relevant parties, in writing of the findings and recommendations within ten school days

13. RETENTION OF COMPLAINTS RECORDS

13.1 The paperwork for all initial issues raised should be retained until the complaint has been satisfied.

13.2 The Trustees will keep a record of all stage 2 and stage 3 complaints in accordance with the records management and will be kept confidential.

13.3 The finding and recommendations of the panel will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Executive Principal

13.4 Record will include actions taken by the schools as result of complaints regardless of whether upheld or not

13.5 All correspondence and records relating to complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or the body conducting the inspection under section 109 requests access to them.

COMPLAINTS FOR EYFS REQUIREMENTS

14. 1 All written complaints relating to the fulfillment of the EYFS requirements, notwithstanding the learning and development exceptions will be investigated and the complainant notified of a response within 28 days of receipt of a complaint.

14.2 A record of complaints will be made available to Ofsted/ISA, upon request.

APPENDIX A: COMPLAINTS NOT COVERED BY THIS POLICY

Exceptions Who to contact

- Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special
- Statutory assessments of Educational Needs, or school reorganization proposals should be Special

Educational Needs raised with the School SENCo.

- Matters likely to require a Complaints about Child Protection matters are handled under our child Child Protection Policy or our safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.
- If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).
- Whistleblowing. We have an internal whistleblowing Policy for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors. The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters directly with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus.
- Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain directly to the LA or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.
- Staff grievances Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.
- Complaints about services Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with provided by other providers complaints about service. Please contact them directly. who may use school premises or facilities.

Ofsted

Contact details: 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

ISI

Contact details: 02076000100, or email info@isi.net