



## Complaints Policy

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### Introduction

“We can talk with someone about anything even if it’s awful or small.”

At Holywell School we actively encourage students and parents to contact us about anything and everything related to learning and school. We welcome news about successes and important events outside of school and we appreciate feedback on all school-related matters. We hope for open, positive, solution-focussed conversations and exchanges of information and we will also provide positive feedback on the great work students are doing. Receiving a phone-call from school is not always a negative experience ... and, likewise, we hope for ‘good news’ calls from parents/carers too!

There are times when concerns need to be shared and, again, we hope for open, positive, solution-focussed conversations and exchanges of information. We are a listening school and we deal with concerns and complaints in a respectful, responsive and timely manner, always placing the student at the heart of everything we do. We want all of our students to be able to ‘live life in all its fullness’.

This policy defines the different levels of concern and complaints and suggests a practical, objective and step-by-step way to approach these concerns and complaints. We aim to deal with all concerns and complaints informally and within school in the first instance, however, clear steps for more formal concerns and complaints are also included here. There is a process and we would be grateful if it were followed.

We also appreciate that any concern or reason for complaint may be emotive – especially where there may be an upset or distressed child at the centre of the issue; all we ask is that you are clear in your communication, kind in your manner and patient while we address the issue. For further information, please also refer to the Parental Expectations Policy.

## **Definitions**

- A concern is 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'.
- A complaint may be defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction, about actions taken or a lack of action'.
- Unreasonable complaints include:
  - Vexatious complaints which:
    - Are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious.
    - Insist upon pursuing unreasonable complaints and/or unrealistic outcomes.
    - Insist upon pursuing unreasonable complaints in an unacceptable, aggressive or confrontational manner.
    - Are designed to cause disruption or annoyance.
    - Demand for redress which lacks any serious purpose or value.
  - Serial or persistent complaints:
    - Are duplicated, sent by the same complainant once the initial complaint has been closed.
- Duplicate complaints are identical complaints received from a complainant's spouse, partner, grandparent or child. These complaints will not be addressed again; the individual making the second complaint will be informed that the complaint has been dealt with on a local level and if they are dissatisfied with the result, they can appeal within the parameters outlined in this policy.

## **Making contact**

At Holywell, we aim to resolve all concerns and complaints at the earliest possible stage and we are dedicated to continuing to provide the highest quality of education possible throughout the procedure.

Our procedure has been created to deal with any concern or complaint against a member of staff or the school as a whole, relating to any aspects of the school or the provision of facilities or services. It is designed to ensure that the school's procedure is straightforward, impartial, non-adversarial, allows a full and fair investigation, respects confidentiality and delivers an effective response and appropriate redress.

Any person, including a member of the public, is able to raise a concern or make a complaint about the provision of facilities or services that the school provides. This policy outlines the procedure that the complainant and school must follow. NB. We actively discourage the use of social media for airing dissatisfaction with our school – we are fiercely proud of our school and its excellent standing in the community. Where there are concerns and issues, we expect all members of our community to communicate with us by using the procedure outlined in this policy and only through official channels.

Once a concern or a complaint has been made, it can be resolved or withdrawn at any stage.

## **How to raise a concern**

In general, concerns are handled within the school and are best addressed directly to the member of staff involved. A concern may be raised in person by telephone (call the school office and they will help you to connect with the most appropriate member of staff (01234 750 831). As an alternative, concerns can be raised in writing (email or letter).

Please give the following information when communicating your concern:

- Name of parent/carer making the complaint
- Contact details: Phone number
- Contact details: email
- Student's name and Tutor Group
- The nature of your concern. Please include all relevant facts, dates and names of people involved and any witnesses.
- Have you raised this with anyone already in school? Please include the following:
  - When did you first raise the issue and with whom?
  - What action was taken as a result of your communication?
  - Is this a one-off issue or part of a chain of events?
- What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?
- Have you informed any external agency/third party about your concern?

The member of staff will deal with your concern and agree a time-scale for dealing with the concern. This may involve a meeting in school, a follow-up phone call or further related actions.

If your concern is not satisfactorily resolved, you can escalate the concern and contact the member of staff's line manager – this will be the Subject Leader, The Head of Year, or the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Co-ordinator (SENDCo). Please see the staff contact list (p12) for further contacts.

### **How to raise a complaint**

In general, complaints are handled within the school and after a concern has not been satisfactorily resolved. A complaint can be made by a person or by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

There are three Stages in terms of raising a complaint:

- Stage 1 aims to resolve the complaint through an informal process. Please use the proforma in Appendix A. This ensures clarity of communication and makes clear what parents/carers/members of the public would like as an outcome of the concern. Please mark the form as 'Stage 1 Informal'.
- Stage 2 is the first formal stage where a formal written complaint using the proforma in Appendix A is made and considered by the headteacher (or the Chair of Governors if the complaint is about the headteacher), who has responsibility for dealing with complaints. Please mark the form 'Stage 2 Formal'. We always advise that Stage 1 has been completed before this first formal stage is considered.
- Stage 3 involves a review of the complaint by the Chair of Governors who will convene a complaint's review panel: one panel member will be independent of the management and running of the academy.

Please note, at any stage, an informal meeting can be offered to resolve any complaint, to air views or to find an alternative way forward. We are a listening school and we aim to be peaceful problem-solvers throughout.

### **Stage 1 – Informal complaints**

It is to be hoped that most complaints can be expressed and resolved on an informal basis. Complaints should be raised with either the class teacher, head of year / subject leader, member of the senior leadership team or head teacher. 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 3 of the procedure. Use the proforma in Appendix A. Please mark the form as 'Stage 1 Informal'. This ensures clarity of communication and makes clear what parents/carers/members of the public would like as an outcome of the concern.

Where there are issues to address, we aim to be peaceful problem-solvers, whilst remaining clear and robust in terms of standards and expectations. Keeping the focus on learning and behaving well within our Christian-Values-Driven framework always results in a satisfactory solution and a safe, collaborative, positive way forward.

To prevent any later challenge or disagreement over what was said, brief notes of meetings and telephone calls are kept and a copy of any written response is added to the record. These notes are kept securely on the school's ICT system and, where appropriate, encrypted. NB. We do not have the facility to record phone calls and we request that all complaints are made in a polite and respectful manner.

We will aim to acknowledge your complaint as soon as possible. Please be aware that all staff have teaching commitments and/or other responsibilities. An immediate response may not always be possible and, although we will endeavour to investigate complaints straightaway, at the very latest, we will respond to your complaint within three working days.

If the complaint is about a member of staff, a senior member of staff will discuss the complaint with them and ascertain their point of view. Where there is an issue to be addressed, actions will be taken. The member of staff may seek support and/or refer the matter to a more senior member of staff to act as a complaint coordinator. If the complaint is about the headteacher, the headteacher may direct the complainant to the chair of the governing board and/or refer the matter to a member of the Senior Leadership Team to act as a complaint coordinator.

Where appropriate, we will arrange a meeting between the complainant and the relevant member of staff to discuss the issue in a respectful and informal manner to seek a mutual resolution. This may be mediated by the headteacher and/or another member of staff acting as a complaint coordinator.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the appropriate person investigating the complaint will provide an informal response within 10 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint. This may be in the form of a written response, a telephone call and/or a meeting during which brief notes may be taken. NB. Any acknowledgement that the school could have handled the situation better is not an admission of unlawful or negligent action, but a recognition that practices can always be improved.

If an appropriate resolution cannot be sought at this informal level, if the issue remains unresolved, or if the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome following the initial discussions, the complainant may wish to proceed to the next level of the procedure – Stage 2: to make a formal complaint.

## **Stage 2: Formal Complaints**

Formal complaints must be made in writing or in person using the proforma in Appendix A of this policy. Please mark the form as 'Stage 2 Formal'. Normally, this formal written complaint should be sent to the headteacher ([mgsimpson@holywellschool.co.uk](mailto:mgsimpson@holywellschool.co.uk)). If, however, your complaint concerns the headteacher personally, it should be sent to the academy marked "For the attention of the Chair of Governors" or sent by email to the Chair of Governors ([pkendall@holywellschool.co.uk](mailto:pkendall@holywellschool.co.uk)).

The headteacher or the Chair of Governors will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) as soon as possible and no later than 3 school days after receipt of the formal complaint.

Within this response, the headteacher or the Chair of Governors will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The headteacher or the Chair of Governors can consider whether a face-to-face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

*Note 1: The head teacher may delegate the investigation to another member of the school's senior leadership team but not the decision to be taken.*

The headteacher, the Chair of Governors or the delegated investigator will investigate the complaint. During the investigation the headteacher, the Chair of Governors or the delegated 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.

As part of our investigation into the complaint, we may invite the complainant to a meeting to discuss the complaint and fill in any further details required. If the complainant wishes, they can ask someone to accompany them to help them explain the reasons for the complaint. The headteacher, the Chair of Governors or the delegated investigator may also be accompanied by a suitable person if they wish.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the headteacher, the Chair of Governors or the delegated investigator will provide a formal written response, usually no later than 10 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint. If the head teacher 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 Holywell will take to resolve the complaint.

The headteacher, the Chair of Governors or the delegated investigator will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2.

If the complaint is about the head teacher, 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 2.

Stage 2 complaints about the head teacher or member of the governing body must be made to the Clerk ([zecott@holywellschool.co.uk](mailto:zecott@holywellschool.co.uk)).

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 considered by an independent investigator appointed by the governing body. At the conclusion of their investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response.

### **Stage 3 – Panel Hearing**

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 2 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 3 – a panel hearing consisting of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint with one

panel member who is independent of the management and running of the school. This is the final stage of the complaints' procedure.

A request to escalate to Stage 3 must be made to the Clerk of the Governing Board (zecott@holyellschool.co.uk), within 5 school days of receipt of the Stage 2 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 5 school days. Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

The Clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within 10 school days of receipt of the Stage 3 request. If this is not possible, the Clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed. If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates, without good reason, the Clerk will decide when to hold the meeting. It will then proceed in the complainant's absence on the basis of written submissions from both parties.

If the complaint is jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or the entire governing body or the majority of the governing body, Stage 3 will be heard by a committee of independent, co-opted governors.

A complainant may bring someone along to the panel meeting to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. Generally, we do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the committee meeting. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate. For instance, if a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by union and/or legal representation.

*Note: Complaints about staff conduct will not generally be handled under this complaints' procedure. Complainants will be advised that any staff conduct complaints will be considered under the academy's internal confidential procedures, as required by law using our Allegations Against Staff Policy.*

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

At least 5 school days before the meeting, the Clerk will:

- confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that, if the complainant is invited, the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible.
- request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the committee at least 3 school days before the meeting.
- Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 2 school days before the date of the meeting. 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 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 any recording of meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

During the meeting, the complainant can expect there to be opportunities for:

- The complaint to be explained;
- The complainant to hear the academy's response from the headteacher;

- The complainant to question the headteacher about the complaint and the response;
- The complainant to be questioned by the headteacher about the complaint and the response;
- the panel members to be able to question the complainant and the headteacher;
- any party to have the right to call witnesses (subject to the chair's approval) and all parties to have the right to question all witnesses;
- the complainant and the headteacher to make a final statement.

At the end of the meeting, everyone apart from the committee will leave. The committee will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. 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 Committee will provide the complainant and the school with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 10 school days.

The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by Holywell School.

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 Holywell will take to resolve the complaint.

The panel will ensure that those findings and recommendations are sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about. Furthermore, they will be available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the head teacher.

A written record will be kept of all complaints, and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing.

### **Next Steps**

If the complainant believes the school did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact the ESFA after they have completed Stage 3.

The ESFA will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by Holywell. They will consider whether Holywell has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint and whether they have followed [Part 7 of the Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#).

The complainant can refer their complaint to the ESFA online at:

[www.education.gov.uk/contactus](http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus), by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:

Academy Complaints and Customer Insight Unit  
Education and Skills Funding Agency

Cheylesmore House, 5 Quinton Road  
Coventry  
CV1 2WT

### 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.

### 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.

### 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.

### Scope of this complaints' procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by Holywell School, other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

Exceptions	Who to contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Admissions to schools</li></ul>	Concerns about admissions should be handled through a separate process – either through the appeals process or via the local authority.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation</li></ul>	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and 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): 01234 718700 (multiagency@bedford.gov.uk ) / Access and Referral team 0300 300 8585 ( <a href="mailto:cs.accessandreferral@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk">cs.accessandreferral@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk</a> ; . LADO: 0300 300 8142 / <a href="mailto:lado@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk">lado@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk</a>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Exclusion of children from school*</li></ul>	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: <a href="http://www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions">www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions</a> .  <i>*complaints about the application of the behaviour for learning policy (<a href="https://www.theschoolbus.net/compliancemanager/public/behaviour-for-learning-policy/0d207e8e-5485-4a35-9bab-be9aa4cc8409/53390">https://www.theschoolbus.net/compliancemanager/public/behaviour-for-learning-policy/0d207e8e-5485-4a35-9bab-be9aa4cc8409/53390</a>) can be made through the school's complaints procedure.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Whistleblowing</li></ul>	We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors. The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed



Exceptions	Who to contact
	person for matters relating to education for whistle-blowers in education who do not want to raise matters directly with their employer. Referrals can be made at: <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus">www.education.gov.uk/contactus</a> . Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the LA or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff grievances</li> </ul>	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff conduct</li> </ul>	Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures – including the Allegations Against Staff policy.

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 this happens, we will inform you of a proposed new timescale.

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

### **Persistent complaints and unreasonably persistent complaints**

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's complaints procedure.
- Makes a complaint that is obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, defamatory or repetitive.
- 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.

### **Steps we will take**

We 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 above) wherever possible.

If the complainant continues to contact the school in a disruptive way, we may put communications strategies in place. We may:

- 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.

### Stopping responding

We 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.

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 our school site.

### **Duplicate complaints**

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 consider.

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 ESFA if they are dissatisfied with our original handling of the complaint.

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

### **Complaint campaigns**

Where the school receives a large volume of complaints about the same topic or subject, especially if these come from complainants unconnected with the school, the school may respond to these complaints by:

- Publishing a single response on the school website.
- Sending a template response to all of the complainants.

If complainants are not satisfied with the school's response, or wish to pursue the complaint further, the process outlined in this policy should be strictly adhered to.

## **Resolving complaints**

At each stage in the procedure, Holywell wants to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. 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 recur.
- an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made.
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint.
- an apology.

Very occasionally, the academy will feel that it needs, regretfully, to close a complaint where the complainant is still dissatisfied and has completed all 3 stages of the complaint's procedure.

We will do all we can to help to resolve a complaint against the academy, but sometimes it is simply not possible to meet all of the complainant's wishes. Sometimes it is simply a case of "agreeing to disagree".

If a complainant persists in making representations to the academy - to the headteacher, designated governor, Chair of Governors or anyone else - this can be extremely time-consuming and can detract from our responsibility to look after the interests of all the children in our care. For this reason, we are entitled to close correspondence (including personal approaches, as well as letters and telephone calls) on a complaint where we feel that we have taken all reasonable action to resolve the complaint and the complaint has completed all 3 stages of the procedure.

## **Withdrawal of a complaint**

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

### **Main contacts are as follows:**

Holywell School  
Red Lion Close  
Cranfield  
MK43 0JA  
tel: 01234 750381  
email: [office@holywellschool.co.uk](mailto:office@holywellschool.co.uk)

Key contacts (correct at time of writing [September 2022] – please check with the School Website)

Head of Year 5: Mrs M Bassett  
[mbassett@holywellschool.co.uk](mailto:mbassett@holywellschool.co.uk)

Head of Year 6: Miss H Lau  
[hau@holywellschool.co.uk](mailto:hau@holywellschool.co.uk)

Head of Year 7: Mr M Fincham  
[mfincham@holywellschool.co.uk](mailto:mfincham@holywellschool.co.uk)

Head of Year 8: Mr M Eames  
[meames@holywellschool.co.uk](mailto:meames@holywellschool.co.uk)

Office Manager: Mrs S King  
[sking@holywellschool.co.uk](mailto:sking@holywellschool.co.uk)

### Leadership Team

Headteacher: Mr MG Simpson  
[mgsimpson@holywellschool.co.uk](mailto:mgsimpson@holywellschool.co.uk)

Deputy Headteachers: Mr S Van Der Merwe  
[svandermerwe@holywellschool.co.uk](mailto:svandermerwe@holywellschool.co.uk)

Mrs J Davies  
[jdavies@holywellschool.co.uk](mailto:jdavies@holywellschool.co.uk)

NB. Mrs Davies is also our Designated Safeguarding Lead

Assistant Headteacher: Mr J Ulph  
[julph@holywellschool.co.uk](mailto:julph@holywellschool.co.uk)

Senior Leader/ KS2: Mrs M Purves  
[mpurves@holywellschool.co.uk](mailto:mpurves@holywellschool.co.uk)

KS3: Miss A Norman  
[anorman@holywellschool.co.uk](mailto:anorman@holywellschool.co.uk)

Chair of Governors: Ms P Kendall  
[pkendall@holywellschool.co.uk](mailto:pkendall@holywellschool.co.uk)

Clerk to the Governors Mrs Z Ecott  
[zecott@holywellschool.co.uk](mailto:zecott@holywellschool.co.uk)

## **Review**

This policy will be reviewed every year by SLT and the Ethos Committee of the Board of Governors. The governing body may, however, review the policy earlier than this if they receive recommendations on how the policy may be improved.

## **Legal Framework**

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

- The Education Act 2002
- The Freedom of Information Act 2000
- The Immigration Act 2016
- The Equality Act 2010
- The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
- The Data Protection Act 2018
- The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014

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

- DfE 'Best Practice Advice for School Complaints Procedures 2016' 2016
- Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) 'Creating an academy complaints procedure' 2015
- HM Government 'Code of practice on the English language requirement for public sector workers' 2016

## Appendix A: Informal / Formal Complaint

This form should be used to submit an informal or a formal complaint to the school. NB. Usually, a stage 1 complaint will be submitted as a first step after raising a concern.

Send the completed formal complaint to the headteacher ([mgsimpson@holywellschool.co.uk](mailto:mgsimpson@holywellschool.co.uk)). If your complaint relates to the Headteacher, send it to the Chair of Governors ([pkendall@holywellschool.co.uk](mailto:pkendall@holywellschool.co.uk)). You are advised to keep a copy. Please be aware that the information will, in normal circumstances, be shared with any person/s complained about. Please think carefully about what you write.

Stage of complaint (Please highlight or circle as appropriate):      Stage 1: Informal Complaint  
Stage 2: Formal Complaint

Name of parent/carers making the complaint: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact details: Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact details: email: \_\_\_\_\_

Student's name: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Describe briefly: The nature of your complaint. Please include all relevant facts, dates and names of people involved and any witnesses.

2. Have you raised this at an informal level? Please include the following:

2.1. When did you first raise the issue and with whom?

2.2. What action was taken as a result of your informal complaint?

2.3. Is this a one-off issue or part of a chain of events?

3. What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

4. Have you informed any external agency/third party about your complaint?      YES/NO

If yes: do you wish the external agency/third party to receive correspondence?      YES/NO

If yes: please identify the external agency/third party and provide email and postal addresses and telephone number.

Printed Name:

Signed:

Date:

<b>Official use</b>
<b>Date acknowledgement sent:</b>
<b>By whom:</b>
<b>Complaint referred to:</b>
<b>Action taken:</b>
<b>Date:</b>

## **Appendix B: Roles and Responsibilities**

### Complainant

The complainant will receive a more effective response to the complaint if they:

- explain the complaint in full as early as possible
- cooperate with the school in seeking a solution to the complaint
- respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint
- ask for assistance as needed
- treat all those involved in the complaint with respect
- refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality.

### Investigator

The investigator's role is to establish the facts relevant to the complaint by:

- providing a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint through:
  - sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved
  - interviewing staff and children/young people and other people relevant to the complaint
  - consideration of records and other relevant information
  - analysing information
- liaising with the complainant and the complaints co-ordinator as appropriate to clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.

The investigator should:

- conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning
- keep notes of interviews or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of the meeting
- ensure that any papers produced during the investigation are kept securely pending any appeal
- be mindful of the timescales to respond
- prepare a comprehensive report for the head teacher or complaints committee that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.
- The head teacher or complaints committee will then determine whether to uphold or dismiss the complaint and communicate that decision to the complainant, providing the appropriate escalation details.

### Complaints Co-ordinator

(this could be the head teacher / designated complaints governor or other staff member providing administrative support)

The complaints co-ordinator should:

- ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure
- liaise with staff members, head teacher, Chair of Governors or the Clerk and to ensure the smooth running of the complaints' procedure
- be aware of issues regarding:
  - sharing third party information
  - additional support. This may be needed by complainants when making a complaint including interpretation support or where the complainant is a child or young person
- keep records.

### Clerk to the Governing Body

The Clerk is the contact point for the complainant and the committee and should:

- ensure that all people involved in the complaint procedure are aware of their legal rights and duties, including any under legislation relating to school complaints, education law, the Equality Act 2010, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)
- set the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties (if they are invited to attend) and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- collate any written material relevant to the complaint (for example: stage 1 paperwork, school and complainant submissions) and send it to the parties in advance of the meeting within an agreed timescale
- minute the proceedings
- circulate the minutes of the meeting
- notify all parties of the committee's decision.

### Committee Chair

The committee's chair, who is nominated in advance of the complaint meeting, should ensure that:

- both parties are asked (via the Clerk) to provide any additional information relating to the complaint by a specified date in advance of the meeting
- the meeting is conducted in an informal manner, is not adversarial, and that, if all parties are invited to attend, everyone is treated with respect and courtesy
- complainants who may not be used to speaking at such a meeting are put at ease. This is particularly important if the complainant is a child/young person
- the remit of the committee is explained to the complainant
- written material is seen by everyone in attendance, provided it does not breach confidentiality or any individual's rights to privacy under the DPA 2018 or GDPR.



If a new issue arises it would be useful to give everyone the opportunity to consider and comment upon it; this may require a short adjournment of the meeting

- both the complainant and the school are given the opportunity to make their case and seek clarity, either through written submissions ahead of the meeting or verbally in the meeting itself
- the issues are addressed
- key findings of fact are made
- the committee is open-minded and acts independently
- no member of the committee has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure
- the meeting is minuted
- they liaise with the Clerk (and complaints coordinator, if the school has one).

#### Committee Member

Committee members should be aware that:

- the meeting must be independent and impartial, and should be seen to be so

No governor may sit on the committee if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it.

- the aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant

We recognise that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the meeting does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations.

- many complainants will feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting

Parents/carers often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child.

- extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child/young person and present during all or part of the meeting

Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings should ensure that the child/young person does not feel intimidated.

The committee should respect the views of the child/young person and give them equal consideration to those of adults.

If the child/young person is the complainant, the committee should ask in advance if any support is needed to help them present their complaint. Where the child/young person's parent is the complainant, the committee should give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the meeting, if any, the child/young person needs to attend.

However, the parent should be advised that agreement might not always be possible if the parent wishes the child/young person to attend a part of the meeting that the committee considers is not in the child/young person's best interests.

- The welfare of the child/young person is paramount.