


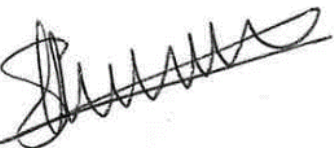


## WEAVERS FEDERATION PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Stewart Headlam and Hague

# Complaints Procedures 2024 - 2027

Document edition	Section	Details of Change
Colour Change	All sections	Change all the writing with color to black

Reviewed by	Date
SHH RESOURCES - Millie Otieno-Storey 	10 Oct 2024
Ratified by Chair of Governors	Date
 Sophie Fanning-Tichborne	13 November 2024

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This is a Weavers' Federation Policy. The schools therein are: Swanlea, Stewart Headlam and Hague  
The Term 'school' in this document applies equally to all three schools.

If you have a concern or complaint please see the Heads of School in the first instance:

Hague:	Alison Goodliffe
Stewart Headlam:	Nilufar Chowdhury
Swanlea School:	Kabir Miah
Primary Executive Headteacher:	Judy Knappett
Secondary Executive Headteacher:	Brenda Landers

The Chair of Governors can be contacted via either of the school offices for Swanlea, Hague or Stewart Headlam.

## 1. Aims

Our schools aim to meet their 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 and courtesy
- Make sure that any decisions we make are lawful, rational, reasonable, fair and proportionate, in line with the principles of administrative law
- 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.

To support this, we will make sure we publicise the existence of this policy and make it available on the school website.

Throughout the process, we will be sensitive to the needs of all parties involved, and make any reasonable adjustments needed to accommodate individuals.

The schools are committed to ensuring concerns and complaints are heard and responded to calmly and amicably.

We seek to ensure that the school remains a safe place for pupils, staff and all other members of our community. Please be aware that raised voices, aggressive gestures or intimidating behaviour will not be tolerated in discussion about complaints.

## 2. 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), including the model procedure, and model procedure for dealing with serial and unreasonable complaints.

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.

### 3. The difference between a concern and a complaint

#### 3.1 Definitions

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

Many issues can be resolved without the need for formal stages of the complaints procedure. The school takes concerns seriously and will try to resolve the matter as quickly as possible going through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

- The **Head of School** or another member of the Senior Leadership Team will meet with you or refer you to another member of staff. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important.

#### 3.2 Scope of the complaints procedure

The school intends to resolve complaints informally where possible and 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. A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made a 3<sup>rd</sup> party acting on behalf of a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

This policy does **not** cover complaints procedures relating to:

Admissions Statutory assessments of special educational needs (SEN) School re-organisation proposals	Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with Tower Hamlets Council.
Safeguarding matters	Complaints about child protection matters are 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

	<p>safeguarding <b>LADO: Melanie Benzie</b>  Email: <a href="mailto:LADO@towerhamlets.gov.uk">LADO@towerhamlets.gov.uk</a>  Secure  email: <a href="mailto:LADO@towerhamlets.gcsx.gov.uk">LADO@towerhamlets.gcsx.gov.uk</a>  Tel: 020 7364 0677  or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).  <b>Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and the Assessment &amp; Intervention Team (A&amp;I) : 079 4639 0776</b></p>
Suspension and permanent exclusion	<p>Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at:  <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-exclusions-guide-for-parents/a-guide-for-parents-on-school-behaviour-and-exclusion">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-exclusions-guide-for-parents/a-guide-for-parents-on-school-behaviour-and-exclusion</a></p>
Whistle-blowing	<p>We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors. If you do not wish to raise it internally, then a referral can be made at <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus">www.education.gov.uk/contactus</a></p> <p>Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure.</p>
Staff grievances	<p>Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's LA agreed grievance procedures.</p>
Staff discipline	<p>Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's LA agreed disciplinary procedures, if appropriate.</p> <p>Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.</p>
Curriculum	<p>Please contact the Department for Education at:  <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus">www.education.gov.uk/contactus</a></p>

Collective worship	Parents and carers can withdraw their child from any aspect of religious education, including the daily act of collective worship. They do not have to explain why
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Please see our separate policies for procedures relating to these types of complaint.

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

## 4. Roles and responsibilities

### 4.1 The complainant

The complainant will get a more effective and timely response to their complaint if they:

- Explain the complaint in full as early as possible
- Follow these procedures
- Co-operate with the school throughout the process in seeking a solution to the complaint, and respond to deadlines and communication promptly
- Ask for assistance as needed
- Treat all those involved with respect
- Do not publish details about the complaint on social media and respect confidentiality

### 4.2 The investigator

An individual will be appointed to look into the complaint and establish the facts. They will:

- Provide comprehensive, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint
- Be sensitive but thorough when interviewing staff, young children and others relevant to the complaint
- Interview all relevant parties, keeping notes
- Consider records and any written evidence and keep these securely
- Prepare a comprehensive report to the headteacher or complaints committee, which includes the facts and potential solutions
- Liaise with the Complaints Coordinator to keep the complainant up to date
- Seek HR advice and support as needed follow linked policies including LA Policies.

### 4.3 The complaints co-ordinator

The complaints co-ordinator can be the Head of School or Executive Headteacher or a designated governor or any other staff member providing administrative support.

The complaints co-ordinator will:

- Keep the complainant up to date at each stage in the procedure
- Make sure the process runs smoothly by liaising with staff members, the head of school or executive headteacher, chair of governors, clerk and [local authority]

Be aware of issues relating to:

- o Sharing third party information
- o Additional support needed by complainants, for example interpretation support or where the complainant is a child or young person
- Keep records

#### **4.4 Clerk to the governing board**

The clerk will:

- Be the contact point for the complainant and the complaints committee, including circulating the relevant papers and evidence before complaints committee meetings.
- Ensure that all involved in the complaint procedure are aware of their rights and duties including legislation relating to school complaints, education law, the Equality Act 2010, Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data protection Act (DPA)2018 and General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)
- Arrange the complaints hearing, set the date, time and venue, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties (if they're 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.
- Record and circulate the minutes and outcome of the hearing
- Notify all parties of the committee's decision.

#### **4.5 Committee chair**

The committee chair, nominated in advance of the complaint meeting will:

- Chair the meeting, ensuring that everyone is treated with respect and courtesy throughout
- 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, and that the remit of the committee is explained to the complainant
- Ask both parties (via the Clerk) to provide any additional information relating to the complaint by a specified date in advance of the meeting

- Make sure all parties see the relevant information (provided it does not breach confidentiality or any individual's rights to privacy under the DPA 2018 or GDPR), , and are allowed to present their case
- 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 co-ordinator, if the school has one)
- Both parties 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 meeting follows an agenda, it is conducted in a formal but friendly manner, it is not adversarial,
- If new issues arise, it would be useful to give everyone the opportunity to consider and comment upon them; this may require a short adjournment of the meeting
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#### **4.6 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 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.

## 5. 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

### 5.1 Time scales

The complainant must raise the complaint **within 3 months of the incident**. If the complaint is about a series of related incidents, they must raise the complaint within 3 months of the last incident.

We will consider exceptions to this timeframe in circumstances where there were valid reasons for not making a complaint at that time and the complaint can still be investigated in a fair manner for all involved.

When complaints are made out of term time, we will consider them to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

If at any point we cannot meet the timescales we have set out in this policy, we will:

- Set new time limits with the complainant
- Send the complainant details of the new deadline and explain the delay

### 5.2 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 section 10) 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 4666, or by emailing [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto: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.

### **5.3 Complaints – SEND**

Day to day issues can be dealt with by the primary class teacher, tutor or subject teacher. More serious concerns or issues specifically to do with SEND can be dealt with by the Learning Coordinator, Deputy SENDCos or the SENDCo. We also have a clear complaints procedure which applies to all complaints, including those related to SEND provision. Please contact the school's admin office:

[admin@hague.towerhamlets.sch.uk](mailto:admin@hague.towerhamlets.sch.uk)

[admin@stewartheadlam.towerhamlets.sch.uk](mailto:admin@stewartheadlam.towerhamlets.sch.uk)

[officeadmin@swanlea.co.uk](mailto:officeadmin@swanlea.co.uk)

### **5.4 Resolving complaints**

At each stage in the procedure, the school 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

### **5.5 Withdrawal of a complaint**

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

## **6. Stages of complaint (not complaints against the headteacher or governors)**

### **6.1 Informal Stage – raising concerns and how they are resolved**

Concerns should, in the first instance, be raised with either the class teacher, Senior Leader or Head of School.

A concern 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.

The school will take informal 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.

The informal stage may involve:

a meeting between the complainant and the **Head of School**

a meeting between the Head of school and others linked to the concern as appropriate.

The school uses rights respecting language, conflict resolution and restorative justice strategies as appropriate to facilitate and support positive resolutions for all.

At each stage in the procedure, the federation schools want to resolve the concern or 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
- acknowledgement that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- an assurance that steps will be taken to prevent or avoid a repetition of the incident or issue.
- 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.

If the complaint is not resolved informally, it will be escalated to a formal complaint explained in Stages 1 & 2 below.

If the complaint is about the Head of School, Executive 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 head of School, Executive 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, then Stage 1 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 within 20 school days.

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. *If approached they will explain and advise the person to contact **the Head of School and follow school procedures.***

## **6.2 Stage 1: formal complaint**

Formal complaints can be raised:

- By letter or email
- Over the phone
- In person
- By a third party acting on behalf of the complainant

The complainant should provide details such as relevant dates, times, and the names of witnesses of events, alongside copies of any relevant documents, and what they feel would resolve the complaint.

If complainants need assistance raising a formal complaint, they can contact the school office – by phone or email.

Hague School: [admin@hague.towerhamlets.sch.uk](mailto:admin@hague.towerhamlets.sch.uk) Tel: 0207 739 9574

Stewart Headlam School: [mrahman@stewartheadlam.towerhamlets.sch.uk](mailto:mrahman@stewartheadlam.towerhamlets.sch.uk) Tel: 0207 247 1201

Swanlea School office [admin@swanlea.co.uk](mailto:admin@swanlea.co.uk) . Tel: 0207 375 3267

The **Head of School** will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within **[5]** school days.

Within this response, the **Head of School** will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see.

The **Head of School** (or designated member of the senior leadership team) will call a meeting to clarify concerns, and seek a resolution. This should take place within **[10]** days of receipt of the complaint where possible.

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

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.

The **Head of School** (or other person appointed for this purpose) will then conduct their own investigation. The written conclusion of this investigation will be sent to the complainant within **[20]** school days. If the investigator is not able 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 taken by the school to resolve the complaint as noted in 6.1.

The **Head of School** will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint including the time frames should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1.

### **How to escalate a complaint**

Complaints can be escalated by contacting the clerk to the governing board:

- By letter or email
- Over the phone
- In person

- Through a third party acting on behalf of the complainant

The clerk will need the details of the complaint as set out above, as well as details from the complainant on how they feel the previous stage of the procedure has not addressed their complaint sufficiently, and what they feel would resolve the complaint.

The written conclusion of this investigation will be sent to the complainant within [20] school days.

If the complainant wishes to proceed to the next stage of the procedure, they should inform the clerk to the governing board in writing within [20] school days. Requests received outside of this timeframe will be considered in exceptional circumstances.

The clerk will acknowledge receipt of the request within [5] school days.

### **6.3 Stage 2: submit the complaint to the governing body review panel**

**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 committee, which will be formed of at least 3, impartial, governors available. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.**

#### **Convening the panel**

The review panel consists of the first 3 members of the governing board available, who don’t have direct knowledge of the complaint. These individuals will have access to the existing record of the complaint’s progress (see section 10). The governors will select a panel chair from among themselves.

If not enough impartial governors are available, we will seek panel members from other schools, the local authority. We will make sure the governors we source are suitably skilled and can demonstrate that they are independent and impartial.

The complainant must have reasonable notice of the date of the review panel. The clerk will aim to find a date within [10] school days of the request, where possible.

If the complainant rejects the offer of 3 proposed dates without good reason, the clerk will set a date. The hearing will go ahead using written submissions from both parties.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least [5] school days before the date of the meeting.

#### **At least [10] school days before the meeting, the clerk will:**

- Confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties including the complainant if attending, and that the venue and proceedings are accessible.
- Requests of any further written material to be submitted to the committee at least [10] school days before the meeting.

- Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least [5] 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 not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the complaints procedure.

### **At the meeting**

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 will be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

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.

The complainant must be allowed to attend the panel hearing and be accompanied by a suitable companion if they wish. We don't encourage either party to bring legal representation, but will consider it on a case-by-case basis. For instance, if a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by their union.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

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.

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 panel will then put together its findings and recommendations from the case.

- The panel will also provide copies of the minutes of the hearing and the findings and recommendations to the complainant and, where relevant, the subject of the complaint.
- They will make a copy of the findings and recommendations available for inspection by the **Head of School and or the Executive Headteacher**.

### **The outcome**

The committee can:

- Uphold the complaint, in whole or in part
- Dismiss the complaint, in whole or in part

If the complaint is upheld, the committee will:

- Decide the appropriate action to resolve the complaint
- Where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future

The school will inform those involved of the decision in writing within **[10]** school days.

## **7. Complaints against the headteacher, a governor or the governing board**

### **7.1 Stage 1: informal**

Complaints made against the **Head of School, Executive Headteacher** or any member of the governing board should be directed to the clerk to the governing board in the first instance.

If the complaint is about a member of the Senior Leadership Team, Head of School or Executive Headteacher or 1 member of the governing board (including the chair or vice-chair), a suitably skilled and impartial governor will carry out the steps at stage 1 formal complaint (set out in section 6 above).

### **7.2 Stage 2: formal**

If the complaint is:

- Jointly about the chair and vice-chair or
- The entire governing board or
- The majority of the governing board

An independent investigator will carry out the steps in stage 2 (set out in section 6 above). They will be appointed by the governing board and will write a formal response at the end of their investigation.

## **8. 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 DfE.

The DfE 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 DfE also looks at whether the school's statutory policies adhere to education legislation.

The DfE will intervene where a school has:

- Failed to act in line with its duties under education law
- Acted (or is proposing to act) unreasonably when exercising its functions

If the complaints procedure is found to not meet regulations, the school will be asked to correct its procedure accordingly.

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

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

We will include this information in the outcome letter to complainants.

## **9. Persistent complaints**

## 9.1 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
- Insists on pursuing a complaint that is unfounded, or out of scope of the complaints procedure, beyond all reason
- Pursues a valid complaint, but in an unreasonable manner e.g. refuses to articulate the complaint, refuses to co-operate with this complaints procedure, or insists that the complaint is dealt with in ways that are incompatible with this procedure and the timeframes it sets out
- 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.

## 9.2 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 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 that 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.

### **9.3 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 normal procedures will apply.

## **10. 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 through a subject access request 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 securely, only for as long as necessary and in line with data protection law, our privacy notices and [records management policy/record retention schedule].

All schools except non-maintained special schools (which do not have review panels) insert:

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.

## **11. Learning lessons**

The [governing board] will review any underlying issues raised by complaints with the [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.

## **12. Monitoring arrangements**

The [governing board] will monitor the effectiveness of the complaints procedure in making sure that complaints are handled properly. The [governing board] will track the number and nature of complaints, and review underlying issues as stated in section 11.

The complaints records are logged and managed by [Executive Headteacher].

This policy will be reviewed by [the Executive Headteacher and full governing board] every [2 years] the DfE recommends at least once every 2 to 3 years].

At each review, the policy will be approved by [the full governing board].

## **13. Links with other policies**

Policies dealing with other forms of complaints include:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures
- Admissions policy
- Suspension and permanent exclusion policy
- Staff grievance procedures
- Staff disciplinary procedures
- SEN policy and information report
- Privacy notices
- Keeping Schools Safe from Abuse, Threat and Violence

## **14. Appendices**

### Complaint Form Stage 1

Please complete and return to **the Head of School** who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken within 5 school days.

<b>Your name:</b>		
<b>Pupil's name (if relevant):</b>	<b>Year group:</b>	<b>School:</b>
<b>Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):</b>		
<b>Address:</b>          <b>Postcode:</b> <b>Day time telephone number:</b> <b>Evening telephone number:</b>		

**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: School:
Complaint referred to:

## Complaint Form Stage 2

Request for Governing Board Review (Can only be completed after Stage 1 has been concluded)	
Your name	
School Student's name	
Relationship with the school student	
Address	
Telephone Numbers	
Email Address	
Dear Sir / Madam	

<p>I submitted a formal complaint to the school on:</p> <p>I am dissatisfied with the procedure that has been followed.</p> <p>My complaint was submitted to:</p> <p>I received a response from:</p>
<p>I have attached copies of my formal complaint and of the response received</p> <p>Yes/ No</p>
<p>I am dissatisfied with the way in which the procedure was applied because:</p> <p>Please continue on separate paper if required and indicate the number of additional pages submitted</p> <p>Signature Date</p>
<p>What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage? Please submit this form to the School Office</p>

### **Management of Serial and Persistent Complaints Guidance**

The Stewart Headlam and Hague Schools' Federation 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 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 abusive, offensive or threatening.

The school defines unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the school, such as, if the complainant:

- 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.
- Refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure
- Insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice
- Introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on
- Raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and 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 and where relevant including referral to the Department for Education
- Seeks an unrealistic outcome
- Makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with
- Uses threats to intimidate
- Uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence
- Knowingly provides falsified information
- Publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school that relates to their complaint, while the 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 **Head of School, Executive Headteacher or Chair of Governors** will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an '*unreasonable*' marking.

If the behaviour continues, the **Head of School or Executive Headteacher** will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For

complainants who excessively contact the 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 be reviewed after six months.

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 the school.

#### General School Complaints Flow Chart

<b>INFORMAL STAGE</b>  Complainant registers a complaint or raises a concern with the class teacher, or senior leader
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Version Control		
Date	Version	Comments
04.10.2023	V1	3.2 changed Exclusions to Suspension and Exclusion in line with DfE guidance which LA now refers to.
		Used updated 2022 Use the Key Template for improved format/highlights in yellow draft SHHF to be removed for publishing
01.09.2024	V2	Amalgamated the Complaints procedures of Swanlea School and Stewart Headlam and Hague to create the first federation wide Complaints Policy across all three schools