



Blue Skies School: Complaints Policy

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Last reviewed on:	March 2026	
Next review due by:	March 2027	

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1. Introduction

At Blue Skies School, we are committed to providing the best education for our pupils, ensuring they are healthy, happy, safe, and able to achieve their potential. We believe that strong relationships between staff, students, and parents contribute to a positive educational experience. However, we recognise the importance of having a clear complaints procedure in place should concerns arise.

This policy outlines the steps that should be followed to resolve complaints in a fair, transparent, and timely manner. We strive to address complaints promptly and professionally, putting the interests of our pupils at the centre of any resolution process.

This complaints policy complies with:

- The Education Act 2002 (Section 29)
- The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (Part 7 – Handling Complaints)
- Department for Education (DfE) *Best Practice Guidance for School Complaints Procedures*
- General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018
- *Keeping Children Safe in Education* statutory guidance

This policy is available to parents, carers, and other stakeholders via our school website and upon request. The number of formal complaints registered under this procedure during the previous academic year is available upon request.

2. Aims & Principles of the Complaints Policy

Blue Skies School aims to be fair, open, and honest when dealing with complaints. We ensure that:

- Complaints are handled with sensitivity, impartiality, and confidentiality.
- Complaints are investigated thoroughly and efficiently, with appropriate action taken where necessary.
- The complaints process is transparent, accessible, and fair to all parties involved.
- Resolutions focus on what is best for the child.
- All complainants are treated with respect and courtesy.
- Any individual facing a complaint is given the opportunity to respond and present their viewpoint.
- We learn from complaints to improve policies and practices.

It is in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. We encourage concerns to be addressed informally before escalating to formal complaints procedures.

3. Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to complaints from parents, carers, or guardians of pupils currently attending the school. We will also consider complaints from other stakeholders, such as external professionals or members of the community, where appropriate.

Exclusions:

Certain issues fall outside the scope of this complaints policy, as they are subject to separate statutory procedures:

- **Admissions appeals** – These are handled in line with the school's admissions policy.
- **Exclusions of pupils** – These follow the statutory school behaviour and exclusions policy.
- **Safeguarding concerns** – Any complaint involving child protection will be referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), as required by *Keeping Children Safe in Education* guidelines.
- **Staff grievances and disciplinary matters** – These are addressed under the school's HR policies and procedures.
- **Subject access requests or data protection complaints** – These are handled under GDPR regulations and the school's data protection policy.

4. Complaints Process

We encourage concerns to be addressed informally in the first instance. However, if the complainant remains dissatisfied, the following formal process applies:

Stage 1: Informal Resolution

- Concerns should be raised with the relevant member of staff.
- If the issue remains unresolved, the matter should be referred to the Head of School.
- Most concerns can be addressed informally through communication and early intervention.

- A record of informal complaints may be kept where necessary to identify recurring issues.

Stage 2: Formal Complaint to the Headteacher

- If unresolved at Stage 1, a formal complaint must be submitted in writing to the Head of School.
- The complaint will be acknowledged within 3 working days.
- The Head of School will investigate the matter and provide a formal response within 10 working days.
- If additional time is required for investigation, the complainant will be informed of the revised timeline.

Stage 3: Escalation to the Proprietors

- If the complainant is dissatisfied with the Head's response, they may escalate the complaint in writing to the Proprietors.
- The Proprietors will acknowledge the complaint within 3 school days.
- A full investigation will be conducted, and a response provided within 10 working days.

Stage 4: Complaints Panel Hearing

- If the complaint remains unresolved, the complainant may request a Complaints Panel Hearing within 5 school days.
- The panel will consist of at least three individuals, one of whom must be independent of the school's management.
- The school's appointed independent panel member is Peter Jacobs, Director at Kape HR, who has no employment, financial, or family connection to the school. In the event that Peter Jacobs is unavailable or has a conflict of interest in a particular case, an alternative independent member will be appointed and the complainant notified in advance.
- The complainant may attend the hearing and be accompanied by a suitable companion.
- The panel will make findings and recommendations and provide these to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about, and make a copy of

the findings and recommendations available for inspection by the proprietor and headteacher.

- The panel will provide written feedback within 5 working days.

Stage 5: External Escalation

- If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they may escalate their complaint to the Department for Education (DfE) via their complaints process.
- Information on this process is available on the DfE website.

5. Confidentiality & Data Protection

- Complaints will be handled in accordance with GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.
- A written record of formal complaints and outcomes will be maintained.
- All complaint records will be kept confidential, except where disclosure is legally required (e.g., to the DfE or Ofsted).
- Complaint records will be retained for three years.

6. Unreasonable or Serial Complaints

Blue Skies School aims to handle complaints fairly. However, if a complainant acts in an unreasonable manner—such as making repeated complaints about the same issue without presenting new evidence or engaging in abusive behaviour—the school reserves the right to take action, including:

- Issuing a written warning.
- Limiting communication to a single contact method.
- Ceasing correspondence in extreme cases.

7. Monitoring & Review

- The Headteacher will log and monitor formal complaints annually.
- The Proprietors will review complaint trends to improve school policies.
- This policy will be reviewed every two years, or sooner if legal changes occur.