# Pathways School

# Complaints Policy

| School Year | Number of Complaints |
|---|---|
| 2022/23 | 0 |
| 2023/24 | 0 |
| 2024/25 | 0 |
| 2025/26 | 0 |

## Policy Monitoring

Date policy last reviewed: June 2026

Signed by:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Neil Jones | Headteacher | Date: | June 2026 |
| Saima Ali | Chair of governors | Date: | June 2026 |

Date of next review: June 2027

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and following any concerns and/or updates to national/local guidance or procedure.

## 1. Introduction

At Pathways School we believe in a culture based on open and honest relationships and listening and responding to concerns raised at the earliest opportunity.

This policy aims to set out an effective means by which complaints concerning Pathways School can be addressed. The procedure sets out how this will be done. Our school aims to meet its statutory obligations when responding to complaints from parents of students 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.
- Ensure 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 will 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 publicise this policy and make it available on the school website.
All complaints will be treated confidentially unless legal obligations require disclosure to the relevant authorities.

This document meets the requirements set out in the independent schools' registration and operation guidance (DfE 2019) which states that we must have and make available a written procedure to deal with complaints from parents of students at the school.
https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2014/3283/made

All members of Pathways School community are entitled to raise concerns and make complaints. This includes students, volunteers, visitors, parents and others with parental responsibility, neighbours and members of the public encountering our organisation. The information in this policy is to be made available to all these people or on request. There is a separate Grievance Procedure and Whistleblowing Procedure for use by staff.

### Student Voice

We are committed to listening to and hearing the voice of our students both on an individual basis and as a group. We will take account of their views in every aspect of their education and school life, encouraging self-advocacy, independence, and participation in group activity.

## 2. Definitions and scope

The DfE guidance explains the difference between a concern and a complaint. A concern is defined as “an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought.” The school will resolve concerns through day-to-day communication as far as possible.
A complaint is defined as “an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action.” The school intends to resolve complaints informally where possible, at the earliest possible stage.

There may be occasions when complainants would like to raise their concerns formally. This policy outlines the procedure relating to managing such complaints.
This policy does not cover complaints procedures relating to:

- Admissions
- Statutory Assessments
- Safeguarding Matters
- Exclusion
- Whistleblowing
- Staff grievances
- Staff discipline

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

## 3. Principles for investigation

When investigating a complaint, we will try to clarify:
- What has happened
- Who was involved?
- What the complainant feels would put things right

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

Where further investigations are necessary, new time limits will be set, and the complainant will be sent details of the new deadline with an explanation for the delay. The school expects that complaints will be made as soon as possible after an incident arises and no later than 3 months afterwards. We will consider exceptions to this time frame 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.

## 4. Complaints Procedure

### 4.1 3 Stages of complaint (not complaints against the Headteacher or Governors)

**Stage 1: informal**
The school will take informal concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve the matter quickly. It may be the case that they provision, or clarification of information will resolve the issue.
The complainant should raise the complaint as soon as possible with the relevant member of staff or the Headteacher, either in person or by letter, telephone, or email. If the complainant is unclear who to contact or how to contact them, they should contact the school office.

The school will acknowledge informal complaints within five working days and provide a response within ten working days.
The informal stage will involve a meeting between the complainant and the Headteacher.
If the complaint is not resolved informally, it will be escalated to a formal complaint.

**Stage 2: Formal**

The formal stage involves the complainant putting the complaint to the Headteacher

- In a letter or email
- In person

If in writing, the complainant should provide details such as relevant dates, times, and the names of witnesses. Of events, alongside copies of any relevant documents. The complainant should also state what they feel would resolve the complaint. If a formal complaint is made in person, the Headteacher will initially make a written summary of the complaint and agree it with the complainant before proceeding.

The Headteacher will investigate or commission an independent investigator if appropriate. The written conclusion of this investigation will be sent to the complainant within ten working days.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response and wishes to proceed to the next stage of this procedure, they should inform the Chair of Governors in writing within five working days.

**Stage 3: Panel Hearing**

Stage 3 is the final stage of the procedure and reviews whether the complaint was adequately investigated at stage 2.

The stage 3 request should specify why the complainant remains dissatisfied and what outcome(s) they are seeking.

Following the receipt of a written request, the Chair of Governors will convene an appeal panel (which will include at least three people who have not been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, of whom one person will be independent of the school) to consider the complaint within twenty working days.

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

At the review panel meeting, the complainant, and representatives from the school, as appropriate, will be present. Each will have an opportunity to set out written or oral submissions prior to the meeting. The complainant must be allowed to attend the panel hearing and be accompanied if they wish.

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(s) will be given the chance to ask and reply to questions.

Once the complainant and school representative(s) have presented their cases, they will be asked to leave, and evidence will then be considered. The panel must then put together its findings and recommendations from the case. The panel will also provide a copy of the

findings and recommendations to the complainant and, where relevant, the individual who is the subject of the complaint, and make a copy available for inspection by the Board of Governors.

A written record will be kept of all complaints made in accordance with this policy along with details of whether they were resolved following a formal procedure or progression to a panel hearing. The Chair of Governors will inform those involved of the decision in writing within five working days.

### 4.2 Complaints against the Headteacher or a Governor

Complaints made against the Headteacher should be directed to the Chair of Governors.
Complaints made against a trustee should be directed to the Chair of Governors.
Where a complaint is against the Chair of Governors it should be made to any member of the Board of governors.

### 4.3 Complaints file

All complaints are recorded in the Pathways School complaints file.

Each report in the complaints file may contain some or all the following information:

- The name of the complainant and their relationship to Pathways School
- The name of the student involved (if relevant)
- A summary of the complaint
- A summary of facts relevant to the complaint
- The Headteacher comments on the complaint
- Comments by other people whose views are relevant
- Any other document relevant to the complaint
- Any action to be taken because of the complaint

If the complainant is unsatisfied with the outcome of the school's complaints procedure and the complaint is regarding the school not meeting standards set by the DfE in any of the following areas, the complainant can refer their complaint to the DfE.

- Education
- Student welfare, health and safety
- School premises
- Staff suitability
- Making information available to parents
- The spiritual, moral, social or cultural development of students

The DfE will consider reports of a major failure to meet the standards. Where appropriate, it can arrange and emergency inspection to look at student welfare, health and safety, and make syre that the school deals with serious failings.

For more information or to refer a complaint, see the following webpage:
https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school

## 5. Resolving complaints

A complaint is resolved when agreement has been reached with the person making the complaint, this could be agreeing to disagree, or with the outcome of an appeal. There are

occasions when a resolution is not clear or defined and the complainant may simply cease contact. Ways of resolving complaints include:

- Explanation
- Advice
- Information
- Discussion
- Apology

## 6. Learning Lessons

The Board of Governors will review any underlying issues raised by complaints with the Headteacher where appropriate, and respecting confidentiality, determine whether there are any improvements that the school can make to its procedures or practices to help prevent similar events in the future. The number of complaints registered under the formal procedure are published annually on the school website.

## 7. Fundraising complaints procedure

As an organisation registered with the Fundraising Regulator we are committed to best practice, and we take all complaints seriously. If you have a complaint or a concern about our fundraising, you can contact The Chair of Trustees/Governors. We will treat you politely, fairly and respect your confidence.

**Stage one:**

Where a complaint has been made, we will acknowledge receipt within five working days, explain the process that will be followed and when a decision will be made.
We aim to respond to all complaints with a resolution within five working days. There may be times where this is not possible. If this is the case, we will notify you of this and advise you of the date by which you will receive a response.

**Stage two:**

If you are still unhappy, you can contact the Fundraising Regulator who will independently investigate your complaint. You contact them on their website:
www.fundraisingregulator.org.uk/make-a-complaint/complaints/.

## 8. Who else will listen?

For complaints about Positive Behaviour Support for Learning
Contact The Charity Commission
https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-charity

For complaints about Pathways School
Contact Department of Education
https://form.education.gov.uk/service/Contact_the_Department_for_Education