



## **Complaints Policy**

Peafield Lane Academy aims to be an inclusive school providing high quality teaching and learning, where everyone's contribution to school life is valued. We provide children with the opportunity to learn in a stimulating, caring, supportive and respectful environment where staff are committed to our aims. Your comments, either positive or developmental, are helpful for our future planning. As a school we are committed to continuous improvement and you are an important part of this. We recognise that there are occasions where you may need to discuss issues with us and this policy sets out the procedure for doing so.

Should you wish to register a complaint, the different stages of the process are detailed below. Should you have any queries on the process please contact the school office.

The process should be followed sequentially. Occasionally it might be necessary to circumvent a stage(s) due to either the complexities of the case or the subject of the complaint. You will be kept fully informed.

In this document 'we' is the school and 'you' refers to the person making the complaint. Flying High Partnership may also appear as FHP.

The Central Team are those that support schools in a wider context and form the 'employer'.

### **Expectations:**

#### **As a school we will**

- Look into your complaint thoroughly and fairly.
- Deal with your complaint with honesty and politely.
- Keep you up to date with progress at each stage.
- Where appropriate tell you what we are going to do to put things right in terms of actions to be taken or lessons learnt for the future.
- Give you a full and clear written reply providing you with intended next steps and an indication of time scales,
- Respect the confidentiality of all individuals involved.

#### **You should:**

- Inform the school of the complaint at the earliest possibility, complaints must be raised within 1 month of the event being complained of, save in exceptional circumstances.
- Follow this complaints procedure using the form provided in Appendix 1 of this document.
- Talk to staff or other adults in a calm and polite way.
- Remember that we will have internal procedures such as behaviour policy for dealing with certain issues.

#### **General Principles**

- Where possible we hope that we can make an informal resolution to any complaints.
- All stages of the complaints procedure will be based on thorough investigation not assumptions.

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- The responsibility for dealing with initial general complaints lies solely with us the school. The Flying High Partnership will redirect complaints back to us unless all steps in this complaints procedure have already been undertaken.
- An anonymous complaint will not be investigated under this procedure unless there are exceptional circumstances. These would include serious concerns such as Child Protection issues, where we would either involve appropriate external agencies or else conduct its own internal review to test whether there is any corroborative evidence which might trigger a formal investigation.
- It is unhelpful if a complaint is broadcast to the school community. Therefore, we will make it clear to any person who raises a concern that we will treat the matter with a high degree of confidentiality and ask you to do likewise. This is more likely to meet with a favourable response if you are convinced that we are taking their concern seriously and are actively seeking to resolve the matter.
- Where letters are sent the time taken for delivery is not included within stated timeframes for response.
- It might be decided that any new items will be treated as a separate complaint rather than an addition to an existing complaint – we encourage complainants to raise all concerns at the initial submission of a complaint whether informal or formal.
- Complaints can only escalate to the next stage if the they believe the complaint has not been handled appropriately rather than disagree with the outcome(s).
- The complainant is entitled to have some with them at any meeting in relation to this policy
- The panel will make findings and recommendations, provide a copy to the complainant and where relevant, the person complained about. A confidential copy will also be kept in school compliant with GDPR retention.

### **Withdrawal of a complaint**

If you wish to withdraw your complaint, you should do so in writing.

### **Stage One - Complaint heard by staff member (informal stage)**

You should, wherever possible, arrange to visit us and discuss the concern directly with the member of staff concerned e.g. class teacher in the first instance.

It is in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible opportunity. Complaints concerning the school curriculum and other related matters are usually settled quickly and informally by visiting us, where the staff member will discuss and consider the matter of concern to you.

Should further information be required the outcome at this stage may be to mutually agree a timeframe and a follow-up in person meeting to resolve the matter.

### **Stage Two – Complaint heard by member of the Senior Leadership Team**

At this stage you should arrange to speak with a member of the Senior Leadership Team to discuss concerns in person with a view to resolution.

Should further information be required the outcome at this stage may be to mutually agree a timeframe and a follow-up in person meeting to resolve the matter.

### **Stage 3 – Formal complaint submitted to Headteacher (or Chair of Governors)**

A complaint should not be escalated based on the outcome you receive but if you feel you're your complaint has not been handled correctly you can raise it with the Headteacher by completing the complaint form (appendix 1) and submitting this to the Headteacher. We recognise providing a complaint in writing may not always be possible. Under these circumstances a complaint may be made in person or by telephone. We will document your complaint and provide you a copy in acknowledgement. Under some circumstances we will, with your prior permission, use a recording device to ensure that you are able to access and review the discussions at a later point.

If the nature of your complaint is with regard to the Headteacher this stage of the complaint will be heard by the Chair of the Governing Body.

When a formal complaint is received the matter is fully investigated by the Headteacher (Or Chair of Governors). We will inform you how long we expect our investigation to take and arrange a time to contact you again – we will provide an initial update or outcome normally within ten working days as determined by the school calendar. Where the matter is not resolved within the ten days an appropriate timeframe will be agreed.

A record of the complaint will be logged and reported to governors.

The aim at this stage is to conclude the complaint. If you wish to appeal the outcome, please refer to the guidance for Stage Four. Complaints should only be escalated to the next stage if you believe the complaint has not been handled appropriately rather than you disagree with the outcome(s).

#### **Contact Details for Headteacher:**

Should you need to escalate a complaint to the Headteacher, please contact:

Chris Heathcote via email [head@peafieldlaneacademy.co.uk](mailto:head@peafieldlaneacademy.co.uk)

Contact details for the governing body: [helen.bonsor@nottsc.gov.uk](mailto:helen.bonsor@nottsc.gov.uk)

Should you need to escalate a complaint to the Chair of Governors, please contact:

Diane Wise via email [dwise@peafieldlaneacademy.co.uk](mailto:dwise@peafieldlaneacademy.co.uk)

### **Stage 4 - Complaint heard by the Local Governing Body Appeal Panel**

At this stage you should contact the governing body to state the reason(s) why you are not satisfied with the process of the complaint. A reminder that complaints should only be

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escalated to the next stage if the complainant believes the complaint has not been handled appropriately rather than disagreement with the outcome(s).

If your complaint relates to the governing body you should contact the Flying High Partnership who will handle this stage of the complaint:

Contact FHP via [info@flyinghightrust.co.uk](mailto:info@flyinghightrust.co.uk)

You should include detail as to why you disagree with the way it's been handled, details of this and the resolution you would like to see achieved.

Contact details for the governing body: Helen Bonsor (Clerk to Governing Body)

[helen.bonsor@nottsc.gov.uk](mailto:helen.bonsor@nottsc.gov.uk)

The complaints panel will consist of two members of the Governing Body who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, alongside one person who is independent of the management of the school.

When a complaint has reached this stage, a panel will convene within 15 working days as determined by the school calendar. You will be invited to submit further representations to the panel, both written and orally. Following the meeting you will receive a written outcome usually within ten working days. Copies will be sent to the governors, Headteacher and Flying High Partnership.

### **The Flying High Partnership:**

At this stage, the remit of FHP is to ensure that we have adhered to this policy and that the outcome is reasonable, not to re-hear the complaint. FHP will acknowledge receipt of complaints and provide an initial or conclusive response usually within ten school days, and confirm an intended outcome time period for more complex cases.

Complaints should not be sent to FHP directly before this stage. The FHP will refer the complaint back to us if you have not been through the process.

If the complaint is about the governing body, then you can send it directly to FHP.

### **Contact Details for the Flying High Partnership:**

Flying High Partnership, 2a Vickery Way, Chilwell, Nottingham, NG9 6RY

Telephone: 0115 989 1915

Email: [info@flyinghightrust.co.uk](mailto:info@flyinghightrust.co.uk)

Flying High Partnership Complaints Policy:

<http://flyinghightrust.co.uk/trust-documents>

### **Policy for Unreasonable Complainants**

We are committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality service to you. We will not normally limit the contact you have with the 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.

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We define unreasonable complainants as ‘those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with the school, hinder our consideration of their or other people’s complaints’. The complaint itself may also be deemed unreasonable if unsubstantiated and in such cases will not be accepted as a complaint. Or if the volume of complaints is deemed to be unreasonable.

A complaint may be regarded as unreasonable when the person making the complaint:-

- 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 while still wishing their complaint to be resolved;
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaints procedure;
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice;
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant expects to be taken into account and commented on, or 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 including referral to the Department for Education;
- seeks an unrealistic outcome;
- is deemed to be acting unreasonably to the point of harassment of an individual or individuals;
- makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with.
- complaints about matters that are being dealt with using our internal behaviour policy

A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if the person making the complaint does so either face-to-face, by telephone or in writing or electronically: -

- maliciously;
- aggressively;
- using threats, intimidation or violence;
- using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language;
- knowing it to be false;
- using falsified information;
- publishing unacceptable information in a variety of media such as in social media websites and newspapers.

Complainants should limit the numbers of communications with the school while a 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.

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Whenever possible, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking.

If the behaviour continues the Headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and asking them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact our 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 usually be reviewed after 6 months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the concerns and actions taken will be put in writing immediately and the police informed. This may include banning an individual from our school.

In these cases, we will not provide responses beyond the initial complaint and will communicate our expectations, actions and communication plan.

Please also bear in mind that whilst your concerns may be valid and important to you, complaints that fall under this heading, take time away from school improvement and making every day count for the children within our school.

### **Next stages**

Anyone can complain to the Secretary of State for Education if they believe the governing body is acting "unreasonably" or is failing to carry out its statutory duties.

### **Staff and Complainant Conduct**

We expect all parties to act reasonably throughout this process.

### **Monitoring and Review**

The day to day monitoring of this policy is the responsibility of the Headteacher and the Governing Body. This policy will be reviewed on a yearly cycle or earlier if necessary.

Printed Name: Chris Heathcote

Signed:



Date policy agreed: June 2023

### **Record of Complaints**

**Academic Year 2020/2021: 0** formal complaints

**Academic Year 2021/2022: 1** formal complaints

**Academic Year 2022/2023: 0** formal complaints



## **Equality Duty**

In developing this policy, and in its implementation, we have had due regard to the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 and in particular our need to:

- Eliminate discrimination and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010,
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it,
- Foster good relations across all characteristics - between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

The protected characteristics are sex, race, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment and pregnancy or maternity.

## **Appendix 1: School Formal Complaint Form**

Once completed please return to: [office@peafieldlaneacademy.co.uk](mailto:office@peafieldlaneacademy.co.uk)

Your name:

Relationship with school (e.g. parent of a pupil on the school roll):

Pupil's name (if relevant to your complaint):

Telephone number:

E-mail address:

Please give concise details of your complaint, (including dates, names of witnesses etc.), to allow the matter to be fully investigated:

You may continue on separate paper, or attach additional documents, if you wish.

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Number of additional pages attached =

What action, if any, have you already taken to try to resolve your complaint? (i.e. who have you spoken with or written to and what was the outcome?)

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

Signed:

Date:

**School use**

**Date form received:**

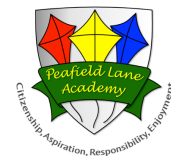
**Received by:**

**Date acknowledgement sent:**

**Acknowledgment sent by:**

**Complaint referred to:**





**This document will be provided at each stage of the complaints process and will be stored and disposed of in line with the school guidance on retention. By signing this form, I agree to these conditions.**

## **Appendix 2: School Complaint Appeal Form**

Once completed please return to: [office@peafieldlaneacademy.co.uk](mailto:office@peafieldlaneacademy.co.uk)

Your name:

Relationship with school (e.g. parent of a pupil on the school roll):

Pupil's name (if relevant to your complaint):

Telephone number:

E-mail address:

Dear Chair

I submitted a formal complaint to the school on ..... and am dissatisfied by the procedure that has been followed.

Complaint submitted to:

Date of submission:

I have attached copies of my formal complaint and of the response(s) from the school.

I am dissatisfied with the way in which the procedure was carried out, because:

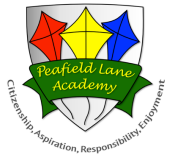
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What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

**School use**

**Date form received:**

**Received by:**

**Date acknowledgement sent:**

**Acknowledgment sent by:**

**Complaint referred to:**

**This document will be provided at each stage of the complaints process and will be stored and disposed of in line with the school guidance on retention. By signing this form, I agree to these conditions**