



Complaints Policy

Policy reviewed by	Headmaster
Date Reviewed on	October 2025
SLT Review Period	Annual
Next SLT Review Date Due	October 2026
Governor Review Period	Annual
Governing Committee	FGB
Approved by Governors On	October 2025
Next Governor Review Due	October 2026

COMPLAINTS POLICY

From October 2025 onwards

Scope

This policy applies equally to the parents of all pupils at the School, regardless of age and is reviewed, authorised and approved annually by the Head and Bursar on behalf of the Full Governing Board and updated as needed on an interim basis by the Bursar.

Whilst the policy is available to the parents of current pupils, the policy may, solely at the School's discretion, also be applicable to the parents of pupils who have left the School where the complaint has been received prior to the pupil leaving the School.

This policy is also available, at Stage 3 only, under circumstances where parents may wish to appeal against a decision to permanently exclude a pupil from the School.

This policy is not available to the parents of prospective pupils or pupils who have, at the time, not yet joined the School.

No complaint may be brought under the Policy in relation to the non-payment of any sum(s) owing to the School. If a parent has a complaint regarding any action taken (or proposed to be taken) by the School as a result of his/her failure to pay any sum(s) owing to the School the parent may write to the Clerk to the Governors at the School who will refer the matter to the Chair of the Governors.

Similarly, if a parent wishes to make a complaint, their attention will be drawn to the School's Terms & Conditions under which a place is accepted; the making of a complaint does not remove the obligation to settle fees due and payable under those terms and conditions.

Related Policies & Documents

- School Mission and Values;
- Child Protection Policy;
- Health and Safety Policy;
- Pupil Behaviour Policy;
- Pupil Anti-Bullying Policy;
- School Terms and Conditions of Entry, as updated;
- The Alternative Dispute Resolution for Consumer Disputes (Competent Authorities and Information) Regulations 2015;
- The Alternative Dispute Resolution for Consumer Disputes (Amendment) Regulations 2015.

Introduction

Edge Grove prides itself on the quality of the teaching, co-curricular activity and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, there may be occasions when parents are unhappy about some aspect of School life. We believe that parents should feel comfortable in expressing any reasonable concern and that the School will respond in a positive, non-defensive manner.

Publication

Edge Grove makes available to parents of all pupils details of the complaints procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding School year. This is either available on the school's website or upon request to the school.

This element of the policy is in accordance with paragraph 33(k) of Part 7, Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2014 (published in January 2015).

The School will also provide details provided, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or the ISI for the purposes of section 162A(1) of the Education Act 2002 (as subsequently amended).

What Constitutes a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. It may be made about the School as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the School has done something wrong, or failed to do something that it should have done or acted unfairly. Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. The School is here for your child and you can be assured that your child will not be penalised for a complaint that you raise in good faith.

Making a Complaint

Should a parent wish to make a complaint, they can expect it to be taken seriously by the School in accordance with this policy and procedure.

Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

The School will acknowledge a complaint within five working days if received during term time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods. It is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible: the School's target is to complete the first two stages of the procedure within 28 days if the complaint is lodged during term-time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods. The School will complete Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing within a further 28 days if the appeal is lodged during term-time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

Recording Complaints

Following resolution of a complaint, the School will keep a written record of all complaints and at which stage they may be resolved and any action taken as a result of the complaint. At the School's discretion, additional records may be kept which may contain the following information:

- Date when the issue was raised;
- Name of parent;
- Name of pupil;
- Description of the issue;
- Records of all the investigations (if appropriate);
- Witness statements (if appropriate);
- Name of member (s) of staff handling the issue at each stage;
- Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of phone conversations).

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except to the extent required under paragraph 33(k) of Part 7, Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2014 by the Secretary of State or where disclosure is required by the ISI under Section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 (as amended), or under other legal authority.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution - Parents' first point of contact is their child's Form Teacher

- If parents have a concern they contact their child's Form Teacher, who in the vast majority of cases will resolve the matter straight away to the parents' satisfaction before it becomes any more serious;
- If the Form Teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for them to consult the Assistant Head, Junior or Assistant Head Middle. For complaints concerning pupils in the Senior Department, Form Teachers may consult the Senior Deputy Head (Pastoral) or the Deputy Head (Academic);
- The Form Teacher will make a written record of all concerns and complaints, including the date on which they were received and the action taken as a result of the complaint;
- The Form Teacher will copy this written record to the Head to save onto the Complaints Drive.

Should the matter not be resolved within 14 days or in the event that the Form Teacher and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Procedure.

If, however, the complaint is against the Head, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chair of Governors, who can be contacted in confidence via clerk@edgegrove.com

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

If the complaint cannot be resolved under Stage 1, parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head. The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate member of the Senior Leadership Team to resolve the complaint.

- The Senior Leadership team member will meet the parents concerned to discuss the matter as soon as possible and within 14 days during School term-time and, during School holidays, within 28 days of receiving the complaint. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage;
- The Senior Deputy Head (Pastoral) or Deputy Head (Academic) will investigate all complaints about the fulfilment of EYFS requirements in conjunction with the Assistant Head, Junior and the complainant notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days;
- The record of any such complaints investigated under Stage 2 will be made available to Ofsted and ISI on request;
- It may be necessary for the Senior Leadership Team member to carry out further investigations and, in such cases the parents will be informed of this process with a date agreed for follow up action and meetings;
- The Senior Leadership Team member will keep a written record of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint as well as a note of any resolution at this stage;
- Once the Senior Leadership Team member is satisfied that, in so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Head will also give reasons for his decision;
- If the complaint is against the Head, the Chair of Governors will call for a full report from the Head and for all the relevant documents. The Chair may also call for a briefing from members of staff, and will, in most cases, speak to or meet with the parents to discuss the matter further. Once the Chair is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed of the decision in writing. The Chair will give reasons for his/her decision;
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to the more formal Stage 3 of this Procedure.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following failure to reach an earlier resolution at Stage 2), the Head will refer them to the Chair of Governors, or in his/her absence or in the case of a complaint against the Head in which the Chair has already been involved at Stage 2, the Clerk to the Governors, who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints' Panel;
- The matter will then be referred to the Complaints' Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management of the School. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Board of Governors. The Chair of the Governors (or, in

cases where the Chair has been involved in Stage 2, the Clerk to the Governors), on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable within 14 days of the referral. This time frame may not necessarily be achievable during School holiday periods.

- If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing to all parties not later than seven days prior to the hearing;
- The parents may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person should they wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate;
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the further need for investigation;
- Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out;
- After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within 14 days of the Hearing;
- The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it within 14 days of the hearing.
- The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the parents, and, where relevant, the person about whom the complaint had been lodged as well as to the Head and Board of Governors; a file copy of the decision will be available for inspection on the School premises by the Board of Governors and the Head. The Head will ensure that a copy of the Panel's findings is maintained along with the files referred to under stages 1 & 2 together with the details of any action taken.

Further guidance on the Stage 3 process can be found in Appendix 1 of this policy.

The same procedure detailed in Stage 3 above will also form the appeals process for parents wishing to appeal against an exclusion decision taken by the School.

For further details see the Pupil Behaviour Policy, available on the School's website or on request from the School Office.

Record Keeping

The School maintains records of all complaints made under this policy and any subsequent actions taken and the number of complaints dealt with under this policy in the preceding School year is advised to parents through updates to this policy which is also available from the School Office at any time.

Complaints Record

The School received one complaint to Stage 1 and three were resolved under Stage 2 for the academic year 2024/25

External Agencies

Parents may, at any stage of the complaint procedure, feel free to contact the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) on 020 7600 0100 or by email at concerns@isi.net

Parents of pupils in the EYFS setting, who believe the School is not meeting the EYFS requirements, may contact either ISI as above or directly to Ofsted via email to enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk or by telephone on 0300 123 4666.

Edge Grove School will provide ISI (and Ofsted for EYFS), on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period, and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint. The record of any such formal complaints will be kept for at least 5 years.

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)

ADR applies to all contracts for services and the School's contracts with parents therefore fall within its scope.

ADR takes effect when the School's internal complaint-handling procedures detailed above in Stages 1 – 3, is exhausted without resolution of the matter. In this unlikely eventuality, the School is required to provide parents in writing with the following:

- An appropriate statement to the effect that the School is unable to settle the parental complaint; and
- The name and website address of an ADR provider that could deal with the complaint, if the parent wishes to use ADR. The School is not required to submit to an ADR procedure.

END

Richard Stanley
Headmaster
October 2025

Procedural Guidance for the Stage 3 Panel Hearing

- i. The Panel will adopt whatever procedure it considers most appropriate bearing in mind all relevant factors including the nature of your complaint. While observing the solemnity appropriate to the nature of the hearing it will endeavour to make it as friendly and informal as practicable.
- ii. Parents have the option of being accompanied by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. If a companion is to attend the hearing the Panel must be notified of his or her name and relationship with the Parents as soon as possible, and no later than two working days in advance of the hearing. As the intention is to make the hearing as informal as practicable, legal representation will not be appropriate and the companion (for the Parents or the Stage 2 decision-taker) should not be a lawyer. The Panel will decide whether it would be helpful for witnesses to attend.
- iii. The Panel will afford reasonable opportunity to the Parents and any companion, provided they are permitted to attend, to explain their complaint and make representations. Companions may not answer questions on behalf of the Parents.
- iv. Parents may attend the Panel remotely via Zoom/ Microsoft Teams (or similar) if preferred by the Parents and agreed by the Panel. If Parents are accompanied, it is typically a friend or family member who is there to provide support, but not to speak on their behalf. There is no right for a parent to have a legal representative to make representations on their behalf at the hearing.
- v. It is not standard practice for pupils to attend Stage 3 Panel hearings in relation to a parental complaint that was not resolved at Stage 2, even if the proposal is that they attend as the person accompanying the Parents. If the Parents insist on their child attending the Panel hearing it is for the Panel to decide whether to agree to this request. Ultimately the Panel are entitled to reach the conclusion, supported with reasons that the pupil is not allowed to attend.
- vi. If the reason the Parents would like their child to attend the hearing is to give evidence to the Panel, the Panel may consider that this evidence can be given in writing instead, in which case the child would not need to attend the hearing. Alternatively, or in addition, the Panel may agree that the pupil can sit in a waiting area (not in the room where the hearing is being conducted) and be called in to speak to the Panel, if needed. This would be entirely a matter for the Panel.
- vii. The Panel will conduct the hearing fairly and carefully. The hearing does not form part of any formal legal proceedings but is an internal school process and the Panel will not be bound by the strict rules of evidence and will reach its decision on the civil standard of proof, namely the balance of probabilities. It will give such weight as it considers appropriate to the evidence in whatever form it is tendered.
- viii. It is expected that Parents will provide any relevant information and evidence on which they wish to rely along with their Stage 3 complaint. Relevant papers will be submitted to the Panel and circulated to all participants five working days in advance of the hearing. If the Parents have any additional information relevant to their complaint they would like the Panel to consider, they must provide this to the Clerk to the Governors c/o the School as soon as possible. The Panel will have discretion as to whether further information will be taken into account. It should be noted that any documentation which is submitted late may result in a delay in the Panel reaching their decision. Please note that correspondence between Parents and the School to date in relation to the complaint will be circulated to all participants.
- ix. The School will provide a note taker to record the substance of the proceedings. Parents are not entitled to record the hearing or require the School to record the hearing. Neither is it a requirement to produce and circulate a transcript of any recorded hearing that may be requested by Parents.
- x. The Panel may, for any reason it considers appropriate, adjourn the hearing at any time; but if it does so it shall reconvene as soon as practicable. In exercising its discretion under this paragraph, the Panel will give full consideration to any reasonable request made on behalf of the Parents.
- xi. After due consideration of the merits of the complaint and all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will make findings. If the Panel concludes that the Stage 2 decision in relation to the complaint was a reasonable decision to take in the circumstances, it will dismiss the complaint in whole or in part. If the Panel concludes that the Stage 2 decision was unreasonable it will uphold the complaint in whole or in part. The Panel may also recommend appropriate action to resolve the complaint or make recommendations to change or review the School's systems or procedures. The Panel is unable to make a financial award on behalf of the School.
- xii. The Panel's decision, which is final, will be communicated to Parents in writing within 14 working days of the hearing.

1. Process at the Hearing

- 1.1 The Panel convenes with the Secretary/Clerk to the Panel (or his/her representative) present as note taker.
- 1.2 The Parents and their Companion (if attending) and Stage 2 decision taker/School representative (and their Companion) are asked into the room.

The Chair of the Panel (Chair) identifies all of the people present and their roles, i.e. Panel members, note taker, Parents (and their Companion), Stage 2 decision taker (and their Companion). It is helpful (if not already clear) to identify the independent member of the Panel.

The Chair explains that the role of the note taker is not to take a verbatim note but rather an accurate reflection of what was discussed. Notes of the hearing will be circulated to all attendees, as soon as reasonably practicable. Any comments on the notes will be considered by the Chair and appended to the notes.

- 1.3 The Chair checks that all parties have received copies of the bundle of documents prepared for the hearing and explains any redactions.
- 1.4 The Chair may wish to remind participants that recording the hearing (audio and/or visual) is not permitted.
- 1.5 The Chair makes a general enquiry as to whether there are any preliminary points that need to be raised before the hearing begins.
- 1.6 The Chair may wish to emphasise the confidential nature of the panel hearing process.
- 1.7 If there are any particular circumstances (such as anticipated breaks, adjustments to the process) then the Chair should raise these at the preliminary stage.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 The Chair outlines the reason for the Panel hearing and identifies what steps have been taken so far in terms of process.
- 2.2 The Chair explains that, after due consideration of the merits of the complaint and all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will make findings as to whether or not the Stage 2 decision was a reasonable one. The outcomes which may be reached by the Panel include:
 - Dismissing the complaint(s) in whole or in part;
 - Upholding the complaint(s) in whole or in part; and
 - Making recommendations, where appropriate.
- 2.3 The Chair explains that the Panel's decision will not be given today but the Panel will write to the Parents with the decision and reasons within 14 working days.
- 2.4 Where relevant, the Chair may need to explain to the Parents that they are unable to make a financial award (i.e. such as a refund of fees) on behalf of the School.

3. The Hearing

- 3.1 The Chair asks the Parents to explain their complaint and may ask the parents to refer to documents contained in the bundle where appropriate. Alternatively, the Parents may confirm that they will simply rely on the grounds of complaint as submitted to the Panel in writing in advance of the hearing.
- 3.2 The Chair and other members of the Panel ask the Parents any questions that they have regarding the grounds of complaint.
- 3.3 If the Stage 2 decision taker is present in the hearing, the Chair asks the Stage 2 decision taker if s/he would like to make any comments.

- 3.4 The Chair and other members of the Panel ask the Stage 2 decision taker any questions that they have. Parents are not permitted to ask questions directly of the Stage 2 decision taker and any witnesses brought by the Stage 2 decision taker.
- 3.5 The Chair and other members of the Panel ask any further questions of either party that arise and need consideration.
- 3.6 The Chair invites the Parents to make any concluding remarks.

4. Adjournments, Deliberation and Decision

- 4.1 The Panel thanks the parties for attending and, if necessary, the Chair adjourns the hearing for any cause including to undertake further investigation or to seek expert guidance on any matters that have arisen. If any other party desires that the hearing be adjourned on a temporary basis a request should be made to the Chair. If the Chair accedes to the request he or she will inform the parties on how and when the Panel will reconvene either verbally at the hearing or in writing as soon as reasonably practicable following the adjournment. The Chair has the discretion to reconvene on paper only or the hearing itself can be reconvened.
- 4.2 The Chair explains to the parties that the Panel will retire to consider their decision which will be notified to the parties in writing within 14 working days and that the decision is final.
- 4.3 If any further investigation is required, the Chair will explain to the Parents that there may be a delay in providing the outcome and set out any revised timescales.
- 4.4 The Chair closes the hearing and reminds the parties of the confidential nature of the proceedings.
- 4.5 The Panel deliberates in private.
- 4.6 The Secretary/Clerk to the Panel types up the minutes of the meeting which will be sent to the parties with the decision letter. Any comments on the minutes from the Parents will be appended to them.

In accordance with any instructions given by the Chair or the Secretary/Clerk to the Panel and in accordance with applicable data protection rules and regulatory requirements, the Panel members and parents will return any hardcopy bundles of the hearing papers to the Secretary/Clerk to the Panel who will determine whether to store them all securely or keep one copy in accordance with applicable policies. All parties are reminded of the confidentiality of the process and will be asked to ensure that any electronic copies of materials are deleted securely. The exception to this is where it is necessary for an independent panel member to securely retain an electronic bundle in accordance with any applicable data protection regulations and/or regulatory requirements.