

Complaints Policy

Aligned with Ofsted, NCFE, SEND Code of Practice, Equality Act, and KCSIE



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COMPLAINTS POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At Hatfield Wick Education, we are committed to providing a high-quality, therapeutic and inclusive education. We value feedback from pupils, parents, carers and other stakeholders as an important mechanism for continuous improvement.
- 1.2 We recognise that there may be occasions when individuals wish to raise concerns or make a complaint. Hatfield Wick Education aims to address all concerns openly, fairly and promptly, seeking early resolution wherever possible. Where concerns cannot be resolved informally, this policy sets out a clear, staged and accessible complaints procedure.
- 1.3 This policy does not apply to appeals against assessment outcomes, exclusions or employment grievances, which are addressed through separate procedures.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

- 2.1 Hatfield Wick Education is committed to resolving complaints in a manner that is:
 - fair, transparent and proportionate
 - respectful of all parties involved
 - focused on the welfare and best interests of pupils
 - compliant with statutory and regulatory requirements
- 2.2 Complaints are viewed as an opportunity to reflect, learn and improve practice.

3. SCOPE

This policy applies to complaints raised by pupils, parents, carers, staff or visitors relating to:

- educational provision and outcomes
- pastoral care and wellbeing
- safeguarding procedures (without prejudice to statutory safeguarding routes)
- operational or administrative matters

4. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- 4.1 Hatfield Wick Education's approach to complaints is underpinned by the CARES360 framework:
 - **Compassion:** Listening carefully and responding with empathy

- **Autonomy:** Encouraging early, direct dialogue
- **Respect:** Maintaining courteous and professional communication
- **Empathy:** Understanding individual perspectives
- **Support:** Working collaboratively towards resolution

4.2 Complaints will not be treated as unreasonable solely because they are persistent or challenging.

5. DEFINITIONS

5.1 **Concern:** An informal expression of worry or dissatisfaction that may be resolved without formal investigation.

5.2 **Complaint:** A formal expression of dissatisfaction requiring investigation and a written response.

6. LEGAL AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

This policy has regard to, and complies with, the following:

- Education Act 2002
- Independent School Standards
- Equality Act 2010
- SEND Code of Practice
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)
- UK GDPR and Data Protection legislation

7. GENERAL EXPECTATIONS

7.1 To support effective and timely resolution:

- concerns should be raised as soon as practicable
- communication should be respectful, factual and proportionate
- complaints should focus on issues rather than individuals

7.2 Hatfield Wick Education reserves the right to manage or pause complaints where behaviour becomes abusive, threatening or unreasonable.

8. STAGED COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Stage 1 – informal Resolution

- Concerns should initially be raised with the relevant member of staff (for example, a class teacher, tutor or key worker). Most concerns can be resolved at this stage through open dialogue.
- Where appropriate, brief records of concerns and outcomes may be kept.

Stage 2 – Formal Complaint

If a concern is not resolved informally, a formal complaint should be submitted in writing using Hatfield Wick Education's Complaints Form.

- The complaint will be acknowledged within **five working days**.
- An investigation will be undertaken by an appropriate senior leader.
- A written response will normally be provided within **ten working days**.

Stage 3 – Panel Review

If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they may request that the complaint is considered by a complaints panel.

- The panel will consist of at least three individuals, one of whom will be independent of Hatfield Wick Education.
- The complainant will be given at least five working days' notice of the hearing and may be accompanied by a friend or family member.
- The panel's written findings and recommendations will normally be issued within twenty working days.

The panel's decision represents the final stage of Hatfield Wick Education's internal complaints process.

9. EXTERNAL ROUTES

- 9.1 If a complainant remains dissatisfied after exhausting Hatfield Wick Education's internal procedures, they may contact the Department for Education.
- 9.2 Ofsted does not resolve individual complaints but may consider concerns as part of its inspection and regulatory role.

10. SOCIAL MEDIA AND PUBLIC COMMENTARY

- 10.1 Hatfield Wick Education encourages concerns to be raised directly and privately using this procedure. Public or collective complaints via social media or other public forums may hinder effective resolution and compromise confidentiality.

11. USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

Families may choose to use AI tools when drafting correspondence. Where this occurs, complainants are encouraged to ensure that submissions accurately reflect their own views and the facts of the situation. Hatfield Wick Education will respond to the substance of concerns rather than the volume or style of submissions.

12. MANAGING UNREASONABLE BEHAVIOUR

- 12.1 Hatfield Wick Education is committed to dealing with complaints fairly and impartially. However, behaviour that is abusive, threatening or places unreasonable demands on staff time may result in reasonable management measures being applied.
- 12.2 Such measures will be proportionate, communicated clearly and reviewed regularly.

13. SAFEGUARDING SEND CONSIDERATIONS

Where complaints involve safeguarding or pupils with SEND:

- the Designated Safeguarding Lead and/or SENDCo will be appropriately involved
- reasonable adjustments will be made to support accessibility

14. CONFIDENTIALITY AND RECORD KEEPING

- 14.1 Complaints will be handled with appropriate confidentiality. Written records of formal complaints and outcomes will be retained securely in line with data protection requirements.
- 14.2 Written records of complaints, including panel findings and recommendations, will be made available to the Secretary of State on request.

15. MONITORING AND REVIEW

This policy is reviewed annually and following any significant changes in statutory guidance.

16. STATUS

This Complaints Policy meets the requirements of the Independent School Standards and reflects current national guidance on respectful, staged complaint resolution.

17. LEGAL NOTICE

Company Number: 12382794

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