



QUEENS' SCHOOL
Dare to be Great

Complaints Policy

1. Introduction

This document sets out for students, parents, carers and members of the public the policy and procedure for making and dealing with complaints about matters at Queens' School. This has been based on the model suggested by the Hertfordshire Local Authority, amended to reflect the School's Academy Status

2. Our Approach

Queens' School provides the best possible student experience through its teaching, learning opportunities, professional services and facilities.

Each day the school makes many decisions and tries to do the best for each student. We understand however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, the Headteacher will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

We are committed to continuously improving our standards and constructively handling any complaints, taking any reasonable action to ensure that similar situations do not occur in the future.

The difference between a concern and a complaint

A concern may be defined as *'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'*.

A complaint may be defined as *'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'*.

It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Queens' School takes concerns and complaints seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

If you have difficulty discussing a concern or complaint with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, the Headteacher will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, the Headteacher will refer you to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important.

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

3. The aims of the Complaints Procedure are:

- To resolve complaints in a timely, effective and fair manner

We seek to ensure:

- Your complaint will be dealt with honestly, politely and in confidence.
- Your complaint will be looked into thoroughly and fairly.
- If your complaint is urgent we will deal with it more quickly.
- We will keep you up to date with progress at each stage.
- You will get an apology if we have made a mistake.
- You will be told what we are going to do to put things right.

You will get a full and clear written reply to formal complaints within **28 school days (5½ weeks)***. **If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, safeguarding teams or Tribunals, this may impact on our ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations. If a complainant commences legal action against Queens' School in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure in relation to their complaint until those legal proceedings have concluded.*

4. Scope of the Complaints Procedure:

Nature of Concern	Appropriate Policy	Location
Student Admissions	Admissions Policy	School website
Student Exclusions	Behaviour for Learning Policy	School website
Complaints about services provided by other provider who may use the school premises or facilities	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them directly.	
Subject Access Requests	Privacy Notice	School website
Freedom of Information requests	Freedom of Information Policy	School website
Whistleblowing	Whistleblowing Policy	School website
Staff grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.	
Staff conduct	Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal	

	<p>disciplinary procedures, if appropriate.</p> <p>Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.</p>	
National Curriculum - content	<p>Please contact the Department for Education at:</p> <p>www.education.gov.uk/contactus</p>	

5. How to raise a concern or make a complaint

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf on a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so. Concerns should be raised with either the class teacher or Headteacher. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

Complainants should not approach individual trustees to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at Stage 2 of the procedure.

Complaints against school staff (except the Headteacher) should be made in the first instance, to the Headteacher via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints that involve or are about the Headteacher should be addressed to the Chair of Trustees, via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints about the Chair of Trustees, any individual governor or the whole governing body should be addressed to the Clerk to the Governing Body via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

For ease of use, a template complaint form is included at the end of this procedure. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office. You can also ask third party organisations like the Citizens Advice to help you.

In accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure. For instance, providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

6 Overview of the Procedure

There are three Stages to the School's Complaints Procedure:

1. **Informal Stage:** Local resolution of the concern with the relevant staff member
2. **Stage 1:** Raising your complaint with the Headteacher
3. **Stage 2:** Formal complaint

Early resolution of the complaint should be sought and it is expected that the vast majority of complaints will be resolved at the informal stage. Should any complaint not be resolved through this the School's internal process, complainants have the opportunity to have their complaint independently reviewed by the EFA. Further details follow.

To make a complaint, you must first begin at the informal stage unless there are truly exceptional circumstances that make it inappropriate to do so.

7. Informal Stage: local resolution of the concern with the relevant staff member

The majority of concerns can be resolved informally, and as close to the origin of the complaint as possible. In most cases this approach provides a quick solution and avoids the formality of submitting a formal written complaint. A constructive approach by all parties will most often provide a corrective/preventative solution or an explanation of what has happened why further action is not appropriate. This is usually the most useful and effective means of resolving a complaint and should be the first recourse.

If there is something you are not happy about, or you do not understand why we are doing something in a particular way, please come in and discuss it with the class teacher or another appropriate member of staff. You may prefer to speak to a Head of Department, Director of Learning or the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) if it is about special needs. If you are in doubt as to whom to refer your complaint, please seek advice from any member of staff.

The Informal Stage should be instigated as early as possible and within 3 months of the date of the event(s) giving rise to the complaint.

In most cases a personal response to the complaint, by staff, may be adequate. But if appropriate, or where requested, a written response (by e-mail or letter) may be provided.

If this approach does not resolve your concern, then the issue should be raised with the Headteacher at Stage1 of the Complaints Procedure.

8. Stage 1: Raising your concerns with the Headteacher

If you are unable to resolve your concerns informally (in accordance with the Informal Stage) or feel unable to approach the relevant individual(s) directly (for good, exceptional reason), you escalate your concerns to Stage 1:

- Within 21 school days of the date of the response to the complainant's informal complaint (if applicable); or
- (where no informal complaint has been submitted) within 3 months of the date of the event(s) giving rise to the complaint.

If a complaint is not received within the time limits stipulated, the complaint will not normally be considered unless the complainant can show that there is compelling reason for not having submitted the complaint within the time limits.

In order to invoke Stage 1, you should make an appointment via the Headteachers PA. The Headteacher's PA will acknowledge your complaint within **5 school days** and try and organise a meeting with the Headteacher to see you normally **within 10 school days** to listen to your concerns.

After the meeting, the Headteacher will then investigate your complaint and may gather further evidence from relevant persons at his/her discretion. The Headteacher shall report back to you in writing **within 10 school days (2 weeks)**. If it is not possible to complete the investigation within this timescale the complainant will be informed of the delay. The outcome will confirm whether the Headteacher has decided to:

- Uphold the complaint, in full or in part. Where a complaint has been fully or partially upheld, the Headteacher will confirm any action to be taken.
- Dismiss the complaint where it is found to be unsubstantiated. Where a complaint has been dismissed, the complainant will be provided with full reasons for the decision together with copies of the relevant documentation considered.

The outcome letter should highlight that you have the option to escalate your complaint, should you remain dissatisfied with the outcome, to Stage 2 of the Complaints Procedure within **21 school days** of the date of the notification of the outcome of their informal complaint.

In the event the complaint is about the Headteacher, you should write to the Chair of the Trustees who will follow the above steps.

9. Stage 2: Formal Complaint

In order to submit a Stage 2 complaint, you can complain formally by filling in the School's **Complaint Form** available at **Annex A** within **21 days of the Stage 2 outcome**. The completed complaint form should be sent to the Chair of the Governing Board and will clearly set out:

- i. The nature of the concern;
- ii. Supporting evidence;
- iii. Any actions that have been taken to try and resolve the complaint;
- iv. The outcome/resolution sought.

The Chair of the Governing Board will confirm safe receipt of the complaint **within 5 school days** and will inform you of the next steps. The Chair will arrange for your complaint to be considered and investigated by a Panel, consisting of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, including one panel member who is independent of the management and running of the School. The Governor in charge of investigating the complaint may also ask to meet you to discuss your concerns. The complaint will not be shared with the entire Governing Body whilst it is still being considered, in case a complaints committee needs to be organised.

As part of the investigation you and the Headteacher will be invited to attend a meeting with the Panel to discuss your complaint. In addition, the Chair of the Panel may invite any person who may help establish the facts of the complaint. You will be given at least **15 school day's** notice of the date and time of the scheduled hearing and the membership of the Panel and any invited attendees. Any additional evidence that you wish to bring to the attention of the Panel 10 school days before the hearing, and you will receive details of any evidence submitted by the School at least **5 school days** prior to the hearing.

You may bring a friend, representative or interpreter to any meeting if you wish. If you wish to have legal representation at the hearing the Clerk to the Trustees must be advised of this at least 10 school days in advance of the hearing.

If any member of staff is required by the Governing Body to attend a meeting they will have the opportunity to be accompanied or represented as they wish. A member of staff named in a complaint may also choose to attend a meeting, even if not required to do so by the Trustees. They may be represented. If this happens, we will inform you in advance.

At this meeting, all parties to the complaint will have the opportunity to ask questions via the Chair of the Panel. The aim of the meeting is to hear all sides of a complaint with a view to resolving the issues raised and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. When the Panel has fully investigated your complaint, the Chair of the Panel or the Governor in charge of the investigation will write to you to tell you the findings. These findings will be reported to the Governing Body. The Chair of Trustees will then write to you confirming the outcome of your complaint and any agreed actions to be taken. Our Governing Body will aim to deal with your complaint **within 28 school days (5½ weeks)**. However, there are occasions where further investigations are necessary and new time limits need to be set. In these circumstances you will be sent details of the new deadlines and an explanation for the delay.

10. Further Recourse

Most complaints are the responsibility of the School's Board of Trustees and will be resolved by them using the above process. A small number of complaints may not be resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant. In the event that you are not satisfied that your complaint has been handled appropriately then you should contact the Educational Funding Agency ("EFA") via the Schools complaint form available via the following link: https://form.education.gov.uk/fillform.php?self=1&form_id=cCCNJ1xSfBE&noLoginPrompt=1

The EFA will only consider complaints where:

- a) There has been undue delay or the school did not comply with its own complaints procedure when considering a complaint.
- b) Where the school is in breach of its funding agreement with the Secretary of State.
- c) Where the school has failed to comply with any other legal obligation.

The EFA cannot overturn the School's decision, but if they find the school did not deal with a complaint appropriately they can request that the school look at it again. If we did not meet with regulations they will

ask the school to put that right and they may, on behalf of the Secretary of State, if appropriate, seek to enforce the decision under the terms of the school's funding agreement. Contact details for the EFA are as follows:

Academies Central Unit (Academy Complaints)

EFA

Earlsdon Park

53-55 Butts Road

Coventry

CV1 3BH

E-mail: academyquestions@efa.education.gov.uk

In the case of complaints about **Special Educational Needs provision**, you may complain further to the Local Authority. This should be done by writing to the Children's Services Complaints Manager.

It should be noted however, that if you wish to pursue this route, you must do so within **20 school days (4 weeks)** of receiving the written outcome of the hearing into your complaint. After **20 school days (4 weeks)**, neither the school nor the Local Authority is under any obligation to investigate or progress your complaint any further.

1. Definitions

A complaint is more than purely an objection to the merits of a decision or action by the School, its students or its staff. In other words, a complaint is concerned with the manner in which a decision has been made or action taken, rather than with the decision or action itself. Examples of a complaint may be:

- If the School is not obeying the 1988 Education Reform Act or other relevant legislation;
- The provision of religious education and worship;
- The operation of charging policies;
- Provision of information for parents;
- Issues about the operation of the School;
- The implementation of School policies.

Although the above list is not exhaustive, not every concern raised with the School can be categorised as a complaint. The following are examples are not complaints and would not be eligible for consideration under the Complaints Procedure:

- Complaints by Trustees about other Trustees ;
- Child Protection Procedures;
- Appeals about admissions;
- Complaints about fixed term or permanent exclusions from school;
- Issues relating to Staff Disciplinary Procedures

Please note this list is not exhaustive.

1.1 Who can use this policy?

This complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children that are registered at the school. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to [Queen's School](#) about any provision of facilities or services that we provide. Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as appeals relating to exclusions or admissions), we will use this complaints procedure.

1.2. How the School will handle complaints

Complaint made about the Chair of Trustees, any individual governor or the whole governing body

These should be addressed to the Clerk of the Governing Body via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

1.3 Complaint made by one member of Staff against another (including the Headteacher)

Complaints from members of Staff are not covered by this procedure. They should be dealt with by the Headteacher (where appropriate) or the Chair of Trustees informally in the first instance. If this approach fails to resolve the issue, the next step would be for the Staff Grievance Procedure to be invoked (by the person bringing the grievance).

1.4. Complaint made by a Governor about a member of Staff

This should be dealt with through the complaints process outlined in this document. The Governor concerned would have to withdraw from any meeting at which the complaint or its outcome was being discussed. If the complaint is related to the conduct of a member of Staff, it may be considered through the School's Disciplinary Procedures.

1.5. Complaint by a member of Staff against an individual Governor acting in a personal capacity

The Chair of the Governing Body (or the Vice-Chair if the complaint is against the Chair) should attempt to resolve the matter informally. If such a resolution is not possible, and with the agreement of the Governor concerned, a Panel of Trustees could be set up to consider the matter as per the complaints process outlined in this document.

1.6. Complaint by a member of Staff against the action/decision of the Governing Body

If the decision was taken at a meeting of the full Governing Body the matter would have to be put on the agenda for review at another meeting and if the decision was then confirmed, that would be the end of the matter. If a committee or individual with delegated authority took the original decision then a Panel of Trustees who were not involved in the decision should review the matter, ensuring that the member of Staff concerned was given an opportunity to state his/her case to the Panel. Any decision by the Panel would be final.

1.7. Complaint by a member of the public (not a Parent)

Complaints from members of the public are most likely to be dealt with by the Headteacher and beyond that the Chair of Trustees.

1.8. Complaint by a Parent whose child no longer attends the school

The purpose of this complaints process is to ensure that if an error has been made, or an injustice done, some action can be taken to remedy matters for the injured party. Where Parents have removed their child from the roll of a school it is clearly impossible for the Governing Body to put things right for that child. However, the Governing Body has a duty of care to the pupils who remain on roll and it would be advisable for Trustees to investigate the circumstances to satisfy themselves that no-one had acted inappropriately and that procedures and policies had been followed correctly. Whilst it is not necessary to convene a Governor's Complaint Panel, it would be good practice to inform Parents whether the complaint had been upheld or otherwise and of any changes to practice and procedures which have been agreed by the Governing Body.

1.9. Complaint campaigns

Should we receive a large volume of complaints that are all based on the same subject or from complainants unconnected with the School, these will be investigated as a complaint campaign by the Headteacher. After acknowledging the complaint, you may be informed that this is part of a larger campaign. A single response may be published on the School website.

1.10 Withdrawal of a complaint

If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

2. Principles

2.1 Timescales

For good practical reasons, complaints should be made as soon as possible. Complainants should be aware that any lengthy delay might limit the way in which the School can investigate the complaint or the School's ability to put things right.

The School will not normally consider a complaint received **more than 3 months** after the event(s), giving rise to the complaint, first arose, unless the complainant shows there to be compelling reason (supported by independent evidence) for why the complaint has been submitted late.

If a complaint is not received within the time limits stipulated, the complaint will normally be treated as **not eligible** for consideration on the basis that it was received "out of time", unless the complainant shows there to be compelling reasons for not having submitted the complaint within the time limits. Where it is decided that a complaint is not eligible for consideration, the complainant will be advised of this outcome by letter. A complaint may also be deemed not eligible for consideration if the complainant does not escalate their complaint as per the timescales set out in this procedure.

The School may deem parts of a complaint not eligible for consideration relating to any issues of a complaint which has arise more than 3 months before the complaint was submitted, but proceed to consider any remaining issues of a complaint in accordance with this Procedure.

Where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

2.2 Collective or Group Complaints

Complaints will normally be made by individuals, but may be brought by a group of individuals where the subject matter is the same or similar. A complaint may not be lodged by a third party.

2.3 Anonymous Complaints

Complainants are discouraged from making anonymous complaints as it hinders investigation and there is little prospect of appropriate resolution. Complaints submitted anonymously will only be considered if sufficient information is provided to enable the School to investigate the complaint. If sufficient information is not provided the School will be unable to pursue the investigation and the complaint will be closed.

2.4 Confidentiality during the Complaints Process

Complainants will not suffer any disadvantage or recrimination as the result of making a complaint in good faith. Confidentiality of the complaint and its contents will be maintained as far as possible. It is likely, however, that the complaint or aspects of it will need to be shared with other staff members involved in resolving the complaint or relevant staff and students during the investigation.

Should allegations be made within a complaint directly against another individual, these elements of the complaint would typically need to be shared with them so they have the opportunity of reply in their own defence as required by natural justice.

3.5 Frivolous or Vexatious Complaints

The school may reject any complaint without full consideration if it is considered frivolous or vexatious. The following are examples of complaints which are likely to be regarded as frivolous or vexatious:

- The matter complained about is being dealt with (or has been dealt with) under this procedure, and there is no good reason to reopen the Complaint
- The complaint arises from a historic and irreversible decision or incident;
- The matter complained about relates to an issue or event which a fair-minded observer would consider to be trivial
- The complaint is obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, or repetitious. For example, contact with the school is frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful for Staff;
 - The complainant insists on pursuing unmeritorious complaints and/or unrealistic outcomes beyond all reason
 - The complainant insists on pursuing meritorious complaints in an unreasonable manner
 - The complaint is designed to cause disruption or annoyance
 - The complaint seeks redress which lacks any serious purpose or value
- The complainant changes aspects of the complaint partway through the complaint process;
- The complainant makes and breaks contact with the school on an ongoing basis; or
- The complainant persistently approaches the school (and in some cases the Local Authority) through different routes about the same issue in the hope of eliciting different responses.
- The complainant behaves in an aggressive manner to Staff when he/she presents his/her complaint or is verbally abusive or threatening – where an individual's behaviour is a cause for concern, the School has the right to bar the complainant from the school premises;

This list is not exhaustive.

If the School considers that your complaint falls into this category, you will be advised that your complaint will not be considered further. You will be given the opportunity to appeal against this decision by submitting written reasons to the Chair of the Board of Trustees within 14 school days of the date on the letter.

2.6 Accessibility

Where you have declared a disability to the School, the School will endeavour to ensure that information is available to you at all stages of the procedure in appropriate formats, and where needed, reasonable adjustments will be made to the complaint investigation process.

2.7 Recording and Monitoring of Complaints

In the spirit of institutional learning, it is important that the number, level and range of complaints are monitored in order to improve the student experience. The School will record complaints escalated to Stage 2 of the Complaints Procedure on a central database and report from it (without divulging the details of specific complainants) to indicate the nature of complaints and any resultant action. Such reports will:

- Feed into the monitoring and evaluation procedure at various levels (i.e. Department, School).
- Feed directly into appropriate School-wide committees;
- Assist in identifying problems and trends across the University;
- Form the basis of positive publicity, in demonstrating that identified issues have been resolved.

In addition, the Governing Body can monitor the level and nature of complaints and review the outcomes on a regular basis to ensure the effectiveness of the procedure and make changes where necessary. Preferably, complaints information shared with the whole Governing Body will not name individuals. Where there is a

complaint outstanding for a former pupil, their data may be held in accordance with the School's Privacy Notice.

Governor approved: December 2022

Review date: December 2025

Queens' School (Bushey) Ltd (registered number: 076506090)

Useful contacts

Queens' School
Aldenham Road
Bushey
Herts
WD23 2TY

Chair of the Board of Trustees

Mr Julie Raybould, who can be contacted at the above address

Advisory Centre for Education

Education Advice & Training
72 Durnsford Road
London
N11 2EJ
Web: www.ace-ed.org.uk
Phone: **0300 0115 142**

POhWER

Hertlands House
Primett Road
Stevenage
SG1 3EE
Web: www.pohwer.net
Phone: **0300 456 2370**

Children's Legal Centre

Riverside Office Centre
Century House North
North Station Road
Colchester
Essex
CO1 1RE
Web: www.childrenslegalcentre.com
Phone: **0345 345 4345**

National Youth Advocacy Service

(NYAS)
Egerton House
Tower Road
Birkenhead
Wirral
CH41 1FN
Web: www.nyas.net
Phone: **0345 345 4345**

SENDIASS (Special Educational Needs & Disability Information Advice Support Service – formerly Parent Partnership)

Registry Office Block
CHR102
County Hall
Hertford
SG13 8DF
Web: www.hertsdirect.org/parentpartnership
Email: parent.partnership@hertfordshire.gov.uk
Phone: **01992 555847**

Family Lives

(Formerly Parentline Plus)

15-17 The Broadway
Hatfield
Hertfordshire
AL9 5HZ
Web: www.familylives.org.uk
Phone: **0808 800 2222**



QUEENS' SCHOOL

Dare to be Great

Formal Complaint Form (Stage 2 of the Complaints Procedure)

Your details		
Title (Mr/Mrs, etc):		Name: <input type="text"/>
Address:	<input type="text"/>	
Postcode:	<input type="text"/>	
E-mail address:	<input type="text"/>	
Telephone:	Day	<input type="text"/>
	Evening	<input type="text"/>
	Mobile	<input type="text"/>

What is it that you wish to complain about?
<input type="text"/>

Have you raised your complaint at Stage 1 of the Complaints Procedure?	
YES:	<input type="text"/>
	NO: <input type="text"/>
If yes, what date did you do this?	<input type="text"/> dd/mm/yyyy
What happened when you complained to the Headteacher?	
<input type="text"/>	

What would you like us to do to put things right?

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Signed

--

Date

dd/mm/yyyy

Please return this form to:

Private & Confidential
The Headteacher
Queens' School
Aldenham Road
Bushey
Herts
WD23 2TY

