

Heathfield Knoll School

Complaints Policy

This policy is supported and complemented by the following policies:

- Acceptable Use of ICT
- Admissions
- Anti-bullying / Child on Child
- Behaviour and Discipline
- Data Protection
- Safeguarding and Child Protection
- Substance Misuse

Key personnel:

Headteacher	Lawrence Collins
Deputy Headteacher	Emma White
Chair of Governors	Claudia Bickford-Smith

This document is reviewed at least annually by L. Collins, Headmaster or as events change or legislation requires. This is then approved by the Governing Board.

Chair of the Governing Board is Claudia Bickford-Smith.
The Governors have the skills to support and advise the school in its decision making.

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1. Policy Statement

Heathfield Knoll School prides itself on the quality of teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils; however, it recognises that parents will, from time to time, have normal and legitimate complaints about the progress, achievement, behaviour or welfare of their son or daughter. Parents are encouraged to make those complaints known to staff so that they can be addressed in partnership with the school.

Heathfield Knoll School will take all complaints seriously and will make every effort to address them informally at an early stage, in the spirit of continued respect and partnership.

At Heathfield Knoll School, we MUST:

- Ensure that complaints are addressed in accordance with the procedures outlined in this document.
- Ensure that complaints are resolved either to the complainant's satisfaction or with an otherwise appropriate outcome which balances the rights and duties of pupils.
- Ensure that, where appropriate, a thorough and impartial investigation of the issue is conducted.
- Ensure that no one, including a pupil, is penalised for making a complaint in good faith.
- Keep a written record of all complaints, including the action taken and the stage at which they were resolved, regardless of whether the complaint is upheld. (Note: EYFS -This information is provided to Ofsted at their request.)
- Regularly review the records of all written complaints and their outcomes to identify whether a review or change in practice is needed, or to identify patterns that can inform appropriate interventions. This review will be carried out by the Head (or a designated senior leader).
- Keep confidential all records relating to individual complaints except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act, as amended, requests access to them.
- Complaints which do not have Safeguarding implications should be retained for a minimum of 7 years (a period determined by the 6-year inspection cycle with allowance for unseen circumstances) Where there is a Safeguarding angle (Records concerning allegations of abuse must be preserved for the term of the Independent Enquiry into Child Sexual Abuse and at least until the accused has reached normal pension age or for 10 years from the date of the allegation if it is longer)
- Any appeals against exclusion are handled in accordance with the complaints procedure.

A record of formal complaints and their outcomes is kept in a locked filing cabinet in the Headteacher's office and is reviewed regularly by the Head.

The number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the last school year (2025 to 2026) was 0. There were zero formal complaints registered under the formal procedure in the EYFS.

Parents are also free to make a complaint to ISI. If concerning the EYFS, ISI or OFSTED if they believe the provider/school is not meeting the EYFS requirements. Relevant contact details are set out below.

ISA: CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA
Phone: 0207 6000100 or e-mail via the ISI website: [ISI Complaints](#)

OFSTED: Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD
Phone: 0300 123 4666 or e-mail [Ofsted Complaints](#)

This policy applies to all members of our school community, including those in our EYFS setting.

Should a parent, pupil or member of staff believe their personal data has been mishandled a formal complaint to the school should be made initially. This will then be handled by the DPO (Data Protection Officer) and may result in the ICO being contacted.

This document is available to all interested parties on our website and on request from the school office.

2. Procedures for School Complaints (excluding data protection)

There are three stages in the Complaints procedure:

Stage 1 – An informal Complaint

Stage 2 – A formal complaint in writing to the Headteacher

Stage 3 – A Complaints panel hearing

2.1. Stage 1: Informal Complaint

At Heathfield Knoll School, we recognise that, almost invariably, the sooner complaints are raised, the easier it is for an appropriate resolution to be found. Initially, you are encouraged to raise your complaint with any member of staff. This would normally be your child's Form Teacher.

That person will try to identify areas of agreement and clarify any misunderstandings that might have occurred. They will create a written record of your complaint, including the date it was received, and then attempt to resolve the matter themselves or refer you to the appropriate person. The Deputy Head or Head of EYFS may be involved.

If the matter cannot be resolved within five working days, or if you are not satisfied, you may make a Stage 2 formal complaint in writing to the Headteacher. If the complaint concerns the Headteacher, then you will be referred to the Chair of Governors.

2.2. Stage 2: Formal Complaint

Formal complaints should be in writing and sent to the Headteacher.

The Headteacher may delegate the task of collating the information to another staff member, but not the decision on the action to be taken. The Headteacher also decides whether it would be helpful to meet with you to discuss your complaint.

In most instances, an investigation will be necessary to understand the circumstances surrounding the complaint. That investigation will usually be overseen by the Deputy Head or the Head of EYFS (as appropriate)

If an investigation is needed, the investigating member of staff will:

- Establish what has happened so far and who has been involved
- Clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved
- Meet with the complainant or contact them (if unsure or if further information is necessary)
- Clarify what the complainant feels would put things right
- Interview those involved in the matter and/or against whom the complaint has been made, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
- Conduct the interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning.
- Keep notes of any interviews.

The decision regarding the resolution of your complaint will usually be made within 10 working days of the Headteacher receiving the complaint.

A written complaint in the EYFS regarding the fulfilment of EYFS requirements must be investigated, and the complainant must be notified of the investigation's outcome within 28 days. The record of the complaint must be made available to Ofsted and ISI upon request.

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of this stage, if you feel that your complaint is sufficiently serious, or if you are dissatisfied with how your complaint has been handled, you may take your complaint to the third stage of this procedure.

2.3. Stage 3: Complaints Panel Hearing

The third stage of the formal complaints procedure is the Complaints Panel. If you wish to take your complaint to this stage, you are required to put your complaint in writing to the Chair of Governors. It is crucial that you set the matter out in sufficient detail.

On receiving a written complaint, a hearing by a Complaints Panel will be arranged, usually within 15 working days. You may attend the hearing in

person and may be accompanied if you so wish; in which case, you are required to notify the school of the name and occupation of such a person.

2.4 Panel Hearing

- The panel will consist of at least three people who are not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and operation of the school. The Chair of Governors shall appoint each of the panel members on behalf of the panel, which will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable, generally within fifteen working days.
- The parent/s may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation is not typically appropriate.
- If possible, the panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.

The hearing is held in private and, acknowledging that many complainants feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting, the proceedings are made as welcoming as possible. Care is taken to ensure the setting is not adversarial and is as informal as possible. Extra care is taken in this respect where the complainant is a child.

The primary objective of the hearing is to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. However, it is recognised that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the hearing does not find in their favour. Therefore, it is possible to establish the facts and make recommendations that will satisfy the complainant that their complaint has been taken seriously.

After due consideration, the panel will decide to do one or more of the following:

- Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part
- Uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- Recommend changes to the school's/systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur

The Chair of the panel ensures that the Governors, the Headteacher, the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about, are notified in writing of the panel's findings and recommendations, typically within 5 working days of the hearing taking place.

A copy of the panel's findings is also made available for inspection in the school premises by the Governors and the Headteacher.

The decision of the Complaints Panel is final.

3. Procedures for data protection complaints only

3.1 Scope

A data protection complaint is a complaint about how the school has collected, used, disclosed, stored, secured or otherwise handled personal data. It may be made by a parent, pupil, member of staff, former pupil, applicant, contractor or any other individual whose personal data the school processes.

Data protection complaints are recorded and managed separately from the school's general complaints log. This ensures that the school can evidence compliance with the specific data protection complaints requirements while avoiding the disclosure of personal data through the general complaints record.

A data protection complaint is **not** required to pass through the three-stage general complaints procedure, although the school may coordinate the two processes where a complaint contains both data protection and non-data-protection issues.

3.1 How to make a data protection complaint

A data protection complaint may be made:

- by email or letter to the school's Data Protection Officer (DPO), using the contact details published in the school's privacy notice;
- through the school office, either in writing or verbally; or
- by any other accessible route offered by the school.

A complaint should explain what happened, when it happened, what personal data or processing activity is concerned, and what outcome the complainant is seeking. The school may request proportionate identity or authority evidence where this is necessary to investigate the complaint safely.

A verbal complaint must be written up by the recipient and entered into the data protection complaints register. The record must include the date received, the complainant's contact details, the substance of the complaint and the person responsible for handling it.

3,2 Separate data protection complaints register

The DPO, or a person authorised by the DPO, will maintain a restricted-access Data Protection Complaints Register separately from the general complaints log. Each entry should include, as appropriate:

- a unique reference number;
- the date and method of receipt;
- the identity and contact details of the complainant, held only where necessary;
- whether the complaint was made on behalf of another person and, if so, evidence of authority;
- a summary of the alleged data-handling issue and the relevant processing activity;
- the date and method of acknowledgement;
- the investigator and any conflicts of interest considered;
- relevant correspondence, evidence, interviews and decisions;
- progress updates and reasons for any delay;
- the outcome and date communicated to the complainant;
- remedial or preventative actions, including any personal-data breach assessment or referral; and
- the date and reason for closure and the applicable retention or deletion decision.

The register must be stored securely with access limited to the DPO, authorised staff and others with a legitimate need to know. It must not include more personal information than is necessary. The DPO will review anonymised themes and trends periodically and report relevant learning to the Headteacher and Governors without unnecessarily identifying complainants or other individuals.

3,3 Required timescales and response

The school must:

- acknowledge receipt of a data protection complaint within 30 days of receiving it;
- begin appropriate enquiries without undue delay;
- keep the complainant informed of progress, including any significant delay and the expected completion date; and
- communicate the outcome without undue delay, explaining the findings, any action taken and any further available route of complaint.

The 30-day acknowledgement period starts on the day after receipt. Arrangements must be in place to receive and acknowledge complaints during school holidays, staff absence and other closure periods.

The school will investigate complaints proportionately and fairly. This may include reviewing relevant records, speaking to staff, comparing the complaint with the information held by the school, checking compliance with relevant policies and considering whether a personal-data breach or other regulatory notification is required. The school will not delay the investigation while waiting for the acknowledgement deadline.

The school must not retain personal information in the data protection complaints register for longer than necessary. Retention and deletion will be managed in accordance with the school's Data Protection Policy, retention schedule and any applicable safeguarding, legal-hold or regulatory requirements.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied after the school's response, they may complain to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). The school should provide the ICO's contact information in its outcome letter and privacy information.

4. Amendments to the policy:

July 22	Changes staffing	T. Stooksbury
July 23	Updated complaints	L. Collins
March 24	Changes Local Advisory Board to Governors	T.Stooksbury
July 24	Updated number of complaints. Improved wording. to allow improved clarity.	L. Collins
Oct 24	Company name change	T.Stooksbury
June 25	Updated with 2024-25 number of complaints	L. Collins
July 2026	Updated with 2025-26 number of complaints and addition of data protection complaint policy	L. Collins