

# Gosforth East Middle School



**Policy Number: 12**

**Policy Name: Complaints Procedure Policy**

**Approved By: Full Governing Body**

**Approved On: March 2025**

**Review Date: September 2026**

## **Who do I complain to?**

The school itself. There are generally three main steps in making a complaint.

### **Stage 1 (informal)**

It is always useful to talk through your complaint with an appropriate member of school staff. This could be your child's form teacher, head of year or member of the senior management team. Complaints should be emailed to [admin@gosfortheast.newcastle.sch.uk](mailto:admin@gosfortheast.newcastle.sch.uk) Parents should not turn up at the school office to speak to a member of staff as they may not be available.

The school may request that you make an appointment to discuss this matter, as this will ensure they can listen to your concerns fully and allocate an appropriate amount of time for the conversation. Hopefully your concerns can be addressed at stage 1. However, you may progress this matter further if you remain dissatisfied with the outcome at stage 1.

### **Stage 2**

You are required to put your complaint in writing to the Head teacher (or the Chair of Governors if the complaint is about the Headteacher). This should be acknowledged in writing by the school with an indication of the timescales that will be followed. The Headteacher (or Chair of Governors) will then investigate your complaint and respond directly. If you remain dissatisfied at this stage 2 you may escalate the complaint to stage 3.

### **Stage 3**

You are required to make a formal complaint in writing to the Governing Body. You should contact the Chair of Governors outlining your complaints. These will be investigated by either the Chair of Governors or a Governing Body Complaints Committee, depending on the nature of the complaint. You should send the documentation you have from stage 2 for their information.

Correspondence to the Chair of Governors can be handed in at the school office and it will be forwarded on. Alternatively, the letters can be sent c/o Governor Services, Room 400, Civic Centre, Barras Bridge, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 8PU or

email to [governorservices@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:governorservices@newcastle.gov.uk)

## **What if I remain dissatisfied after I have been through each stage of the school complaint's process?**

Stage 3 is the last school-based stage of the complaints process. However, complainants have a lawful right to approach the Secretary of State for Education if they believe that the Governing body is acting, or proposing to act unreasonably. The Secretary of State would only follow up a complaint if they believed the school had either acted unreasonably or failed to carry out a statutory duty. This should be a last resort, and you should highlight the steps you have already taken to resolve the problem. You should be aware that the Department for Education will not usually be able to investigate a complaint if the child no longer attends the school where the incident took place.

Contact details for the Department of Education can be found at:

[www.gov.uk/complain-about-school](http://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school)

Or write to: Secretary of State for Education, House of Commons, London, SW1 0AA

## **Complaining to Ofsted**

Ofsted do have the powers to investigate certain types of complaints from parents and carers about their child's school. The types of complaint to which Ofsted can respond include:

- The school is not providing a good enough education
- The pupils are not achieving as much as they should, or their needs are not being met
- The school is not well led and managed, or is not using its resources efficiently
- The pupils' personal development and well-being are being neglected.

When considering a complaint, Ofsted can require the school or local authority to provide information, or require the school to arrange a parents meeting to seek their views.

Ofsted can also record parents' concerns for consideration during the school's next inspection.

Where a complaint is serious, Ofsted can arrange an immediate inspection of the school. Ofsted are not in a position to judge how well the school investigated or responded to a complaint, or to mediate between a parent and a school to resolve a dispute.

## **Contacting Ofsted**

Parents can contact Ofsted at any time and give their views about the school on:

<http://parentview.ofsted.gov.uk>

## **Why are complaints referred to the governors rather than the Local Authority?**

Under the Local Management of Schools legislation, Head teachers are directly accountable to the governing body of the school, and not the Local Authority.

Complaints and concerns must therefore be dealt with by the governors of a school, with guidance and advice from relevant officers within the Local Authority where they request it. The Local Authority has no power to direct a school in relation to a complaint from a parent or pupil, unless there is a statutory basis for doing so (see below)

If a written complaint is received into the Local Authority 'prematurely' this will be forwarded to the school to deal with under their own procedures. Anyone making a telephone complaint to the Local Authority about a specific school will be transferred to Governor Services who will clarify the correct procedures and refer them back to the relevant school. Although Governor Service will inform the school about the contact received, the responsibility remains with the parent/carer to follow the correct procedure and raise the issue with the school themselves.

## **Are there any exceptions to schools' complaints procedures?**

Some complaints are dealt with in a slightly different way. There are special arrangements if you want to appeal or complain about the following:

- Admissions to school
- Exclusions from school
- School reorganisation proposals
- Special educational need provision

- Religious education and collective worship
- Curriculum issues

If you have any queries about the school complaints procedure or if your complaint relates to any of the above areas please contact the Civic Centre on 0191 2787878

### **Timescales**

The complainant must raise the complaint within 3 months of the incident. If the complaint is about a series of related incidents, they must raise the complaint within 3 months of the last incident.

We will consider exceptions to this timeframe in circumstances where there were valid reasons for not making a complaint at that time and the complaint can still be investigated in a fair manner for all involved.

When complaints are made out of term time, we will consider them to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

If at any point we cannot meet the timescales we have set out in this policy, we will:

- Set new time limits with the complainant
- Send the complainant details of the new deadline and explain the delay

### **Unreasonable complaints**

Most complaints raised will be valid, and therefore we will treat them seriously. However, a complaint may become unreasonable if the person:

- 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
- Refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure
- Insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice
- Introduces trivial or irrelevant information that they expect to be taken into account and commented on
- 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
- Makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with
- Uses threats to intimidate
- Uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence

➤ Knowingly provides falsified information

➤ Publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums

**Please note:** the above list is not intended to be exhaustive and is for guidance purposes only. It is at the discretion of the school what is deemed to be unreasonable.

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school while the 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.