Fortitude School

Complaints Policy

Date Of Policy :	September 2026
Next Review Date:	September 2027
Frequency of Policy Review:	Annually
Policy Owner	Head Teacher
List of Connected Policies:	Safeguarding Policy, Anti-bullying Policy, Whistleblowing

Introduction

At Fortitude School we recognise that many of our parents have had to be the voice for their children. Parents/Carers may have had a difficult journey to Fortitude and may be reluctant to trust those in education. We make communication a priority encouraging both parents/carers and students to openly voice any concerns they have at any time. We do however, acknowledge that there may be times when perhaps we should have listened a little more.

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 so something that it should have done or acted unfairly. A concern may be defined as 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'.

In line with the DfE ruling of January 2015 the School will not distinguish between "concerns" and "complaints". Any matter about which a parent of a student is unhappy and seeks action by the School is now a complaint.

At Fortitude School, we recognise our duty under the Education Act 2002 to have in place a procedure to deal with complaints relating to the school and any services the school provides; and comply with The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

Accessibility - This Complaints Policy will be well-publicised and provided in a different, more accessible format on request.

Any complaint concerning the Head Teacher should be referred

Chair of Governors and copy in head@fortitudeschool.co.uk

Stage One: Informal Resolution

It is hoped that most complaints will be resolved quickly and informally.

Parents may complain in person, via telephone or email and any first contact will be taken as an informal complaint, even if it is in writing.

If parents have a complaint, they should contact their child's tutor in the first instance. In many cases this should lead to the matter being resolved quickly and to the parents' satisfaction. If the tutor feels unable to resolve this matter it may be necessary for them to consult the Headteacher.

Complaints made directly to the Headteacher may also be referred to the tutor if the Head Teacher feels it more appropriate for them to deal with the matter personally.

If the complaint is about the tutor then it would be appropriate to make it to the Headteacher. The Headteacher will then deal with the complaint as set out in this policy.

The tutor will make a written record of the complaint, dating when it was received. A response will be provided within one working day of the complaint being received and an informal resolution within five working days.

Should the matter not be resolved satisfactorily then the parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with stage 2 of this procedure.

Stage Two: Formal Resolution

If the complaint cannot be resolved informally then parents should put their complaint formally in writing to the Head Teacher. The Head Teacher will decide, after due consideration how to proceed.

It should be noted that while formal complaints must be put in writing that not all written complaints will be seen as a formal complaint, if for example the initial complaint is expressed in writing, for example by email.

In most cases the Head Teacher will meet with the parents concerned within 7 working days of receiving the complaint to discuss the matter and endeavour to resolve the complaint at this stage. However, it may be necessary for the Head Teacher to carry out further investigation.

Once the Head Teacher has established, so much as is possible, all of the relevant facts then a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing, giving reasons for this decision.

If the complaint is resolved at this stage, it will be recorded in the 'Complaints Log Book'.

The Head Teacher will take all reasonable steps to resolve the complaint to the satisfaction of the complainant. Should this not happen, the complainant is entitled to take the matter forward to Stage 3.

Stage Three: Complaints Panel

If the parent is not satisfied with the outcome of Stage 1 and 2, they can escalate to Stage 3 by contacting the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors can be contacted using the form found in Appendix A.

At this stage a complaints panel will be formed to consist of 3 people, not previously involved in the complaint and to include a person independent of the management and running of Fortitude School e.g. independent visitor/advocate, an officer of the local authority etc.

Fortitude School takes account of the guidance produced by the Department for Education (DfE) regarding the identity of the independent panel member and will endeavour to appoint someone who has held a position of responsibility and is used to scrutinising evidence.

A meeting of the panel will be arranged as soon as is practicable and within 14 working days in term time.

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. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties normally not later than 5 working days prior to the hearing.

The complainant may attend and could be accompanied by a friend or relative. Legal representation is usually not appropriate.

If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint without the need for further 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 ten working days of the Hearing. The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it (i.e. its findings and recommendations). The decision of the Panel will be final.

Any findings and recommendations will be sent by electronic mail and in writing to the complainant, where relevant, the person complained about, the Chair of the Board of Governors and the Head Teacher. In any event, the findings and recommendations will be available for inspection by the Governors and Head Teacher.

Complaints from members of the public

If a member of the general public has a complaint, they may complain in person via telephone, email or in writing to the school office. The school will take all reasonable steps to resolve the complaint to the satisfaction of the complainant. Should this not happen then the complainant is entitled to take the complaint to the school governors by using the form in Appendix A.

All complaints will be recorded in a complaint log book.

Recording Complaints

Following resolution of a complaint, the School will keep a written record of all complaints and whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing. This will be in a Complaints Log Book. At the School's discretion, additional records may be kept, for so long as is necessary and for a minimum of 3 years. The principles of the Data Protection Act will apply. The records may contain the following information:

- Date when the issue was raised.

- Name of parent.
- Name of student.
- Description of the issue.
- Records of all the investigations (if appropriate).
- A note of any reflection/Lessons learned.
- 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 the individual complaint will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them. (For specific data protection points, please refer to the Data Retention Policy and our other relevant data protection policies and procedures).

Appendix A: Complaint Appeal Form

To be used at Stage 3 only

To: Chair of Governors

Name of Complainant:	
Relationship of Complainant to the School:	Click or tap here to enter text.
Address of Complainant:	
Daytime telephone number:	
Evening telephone number:	

☐ I/We request that a sub-committee of the Board of Governors carries out a review of my complaint against the school.

☐ I/We have received with this form a copy of the Policy Statement on the Procedures where a Parent or Guardian makes a Complaint about the School and I/we agree to abide by its terms.

☐ I/We also agree that the proceedings are and will remain confidential and that this review will be final subject to such (if any) legal rights as may exist.

☐ The grounds upon which I/we complain, and the matters which I/we wish to discuss and to ask the sub-committee to take into account, are set out in the attached letter/statement sheet.

☐ I/We understand that I/we may be accompanied at the Complaint Hearing by a friend or relation who is not involved with the School who knows me and who is willing to speak on my behalf.

(Two signatures required where practicable)

Signature:		
Full Name:		
Date:		