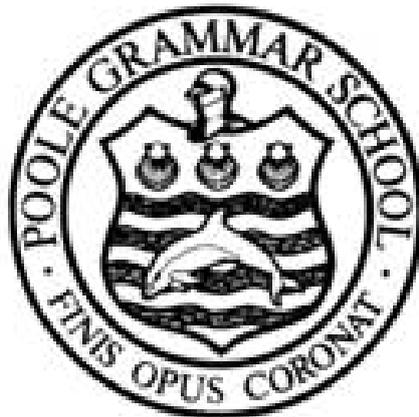


Poole Grammar School	Mandatory Policy	PGS/P/9
Complaints Policy		Issue 3
		November 2016

# Poole Grammar School



## Complaints Policy

Procedure on the Handling of Concerns and Complaints

**Application:**

This policy applies to all concerns and complaints other than those relating to Child Protection issues or to cases where parents wish to appeal against a decision by the Headteacher that a student be required to leave the School and if the parents seek a Governors' Review of that decision. Separate procedures apply to each of these exceptional cases.

**Timescales:**

We aim to resolve any complaints in a timely manner. Timescales for each stage of the Complaints Procedure are set out below in the relevant paragraphs. For the purposes of this policy, a "working day" is defined as a weekday during term time, when the School is open. The definition of "working day" excludes weekends and Bank Holidays. For the avoidance of doubt, term dates are published on the School's website, and information about term dates is made available to parents and students periodically.

**Policy Aim and Statement****Aim:**

The aim of this policy is to ensure that a concern or complaint by a parent (including a prospective parent) is managed sympathetically, efficiently and at the appropriate level and resolved as soon as possible. Doing so is good practice, it is fair to those concerned and it helps to promote parents' and students' confidence in our ability to safeguard and promote welfare. We will try to resolve every concern or complaint in a positive way with the aim of putting right a matter which may have gone wrong and, where necessary, reviewing our systems and procedures in the light of circumstances.

This policy has due regard for the Equality Act 2011 whereby the policy's actions advance equality of opportunity, foster good relations and seek to eliminate discrimination for all members of the school community.

**Policy statement:**

We need to know as soon as possible if there is any cause for dissatisfaction. We recognise that a difficulty which is not resolved quickly and fairly can soon become a cause of resentment, which could be damaging to relationships and also to our School culture. We intend that parents and students should never feel – or be made to feel – that a complaint will be taken amiss or will adversely affect a student or his/her opportunities at School. The policy, however, distinguishes between a concern or difficulty which can be resolved informally and a formal complaint which will require investigation.

**Stage 1: Concerns and Difficulties**

1. **Concerns:** We expect that most concerns, where a parent seeks intervention, reconsideration or some other action to be taken, can be resolved informally. Examples might include dissatisfaction about some aspect of teaching or pastoral care, or about allocation of privileges or responsibilities, or about a timetable clash or some other aspect of the School's systems or equipment, or a billing error. When dealing with complaints the following principles should be respected:-

- Confidentiality
- Give and expect courtesy and consideration
- Concerns and complaints should be dealt with fairly and speedily
- Complainants should be kept informed at every stage, whether it is an informal or formal complaint

**2. Notification:** Please raise the concern initially as follows:

**2.1 Education issues** – if the matter relates to the classroom, the curriculum or special educational needs please speak or write to the Teacher or Head of Department

**2.2 Pastoral care** – for concerns relating to matters outside the classroom, please speak or write to the Tutor or relevant Head of Year, as appropriate.

**2.3 Disciplinary matters** – a problem over any disciplinary action taken or a sanction imposed should be raised first of all with the member of staff who imposed it then, if not resolved, with the relevant Year Head.

**2.4 Financial and administrative matters** – a query relating to any financial or to other administrative matters should be raised either with the Finance Office or with the Bursar.

**2.5** Should an informal concern or complaint be raised with a member of staff other than those designated at item 2.1 to 2.4 above, he or she is asked to redirect it to the appropriate individual under this policy.

**3. Unresolved concerns:** A concern which has not been resolved by informal means within ten working days from the receipt of the complaint can be notified as a formal complaint in accordance with Stage 2 below.

**4. Anonymous Complaints:** it will be left to the Headteacher's discretion to decide whether the gravity of an anonymous complaint warrants its investigation

**5. Record of concerns:** In the case of concerns raised under Stage 1 of this procedure, the only record of the concern and its resolution will be file notes by the person dealing with the complaint and/or file correspondence between the person raising the concern and the respondent.

### **Stage 2: Formal complaints**

**6. Notification:** An unresolved concern under Stage 1, or a complaint which needs investigation, or a more serious dissatisfaction with some aspect of the School's policies, procedures, management or administration should be set out in writing with full details and sent with all relevant documents and your full contact details for the attention of the Deputy Headteacher (Curriculum) or the Bursar and Company Secretary, as appropriate. Should a formal written complaint be received by another member of the School's staff, he or she will immediately pass it to the Headteacher, Deputy Head or the Bursar.

**7. Acknowledgement:** Your complaint will be acknowledged by telephone or in writing normally within five working days of receipt during term time and as soon as practicable during the holidays. The acknowledgement will indicate the action that is being taken and the likely timescale for resolution.

**8. Investigation and resolution:** The Headteacher, Deputy Head (curriculum), Bursar may deal with the matter personally or may ask a senior member of staff to act as "investigator" and/or may involve one or more Governors. The investigator may request additional information from you and will probably wish to speak to you personally and to others who have knowledge of the circumstances. Following appropriate investigation, the Headteacher, Deputy Head (curriculum), Bursar will then notify you in writing of the decision and the reasons for it.

**9. Outcome:** The aim of the Headteacher, Deputy Head (curriculum), and Bursar will be to inform any complainant of the outcome of an investigation and the resolution to the complaint within one calendar month from the receipt of the complaint. Please note that any complaint

received during a School vacation or within one month of the end of term or half term is likely to take longer to resolve owing to the presence of School holidays and the unavailability of personnel.

**10. Record of complaints.** The Headteacher is responsible for keeping a log of all complaints received by or referred to him under this stage of the procedure. The log should provide a brief written summary of the name of the complainant, the date the complaint was received, the matter complained of, and the manner and date of its resolution. Written records will also be kept of any meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

### **Stage 3: Reference to the Chair of Governors**

**11. Notification:** If you are dissatisfied with the decision of the Headteacher, Deputy Head (curriculum), Bursar will under Stage 2, your complaint may be renewed in writing to the Chair of the Governing Body. You should write to the Chair within five working days of receiving the decision. Your letter to the Chair should give full details of your complaint and enclose all relevant documents and your full contact details. Your letter will normally be acknowledged within five working days during term time, indicating the action that is being taken and the likely timescale.

**12. Action by the Chair:** The Chair will arrange for your complaint to be investigated following procedures equivalent to those described in Stage 2 (above). When the Chair is satisfied that s/he has established all the material facts and relevant policies, so far as is practicable, s/he will notify you in writing of her decision and the reasons for it. She will aim to provide a response within fifteen working days of receiving your letter but will inform the parents if this timescale will need to be increased. If you are not satisfied with the Chair's decision you may ask for the complaint to be referred to the Review Panel, by writing to the Company Secretary (see paragraph 16 below).

### **Stage 4: Reference to the Review Panel**

**13. Notification:** Only if you have been through the earlier stages of this procedure, and are dissatisfied with the decision that has been notified to you by the Chair, may you request a final hearing by a Review Panel. To request a hearing before the Review Panel, please write to the Company Secretary within five working days of the decision you wish to appeal. Your request will only be considered if you have completed the relevant procedures at Stages 1-3. Please ensure that copies of all relevant documents accompany your letter to the Company Secretary, and state all the grounds for your complaint and the outcome that you desire. The Company Secretary will acknowledge your request in writing within five working days.

**14. Review Panel:** The review will be undertaken by a panel of at least three members appointed on behalf of the Governing Body and selected by the Company Secretary. The Panel members will have no detailed previous knowledge of the case, will not include the Chair of Governors, and one member will be independent of the management and running of the School. Fair consideration will be given to any bona fide objection to a particular member of the Panel.

**15. Convening the Panel:** The Company Secretary will convene the Review Panel as soon as is reasonably practicable but the Panel will not normally sit during School holidays.

**16. Notice of hearing:** Every effort will be made to enable the Panel hearing to take place within ten working days of the receipt of your request. As soon as reasonably practical and in any event at least five working days before the hearing, the Company Secretary will send you

written notification of the date, time and place of the hearing, together with brief details of the Panel members who will be present.

**17. Attendance:** You will be asked to attend the hearing and may be accompanied by one other person such as a relative, teacher, or friend, who should not be legally qualified. Your child aged 13+ may attend part or all of the hearing at the discretion of the Chair. The Company Secretary or nominated deputy will also attend the hearing in order to keep a record of the proceedings. Copies of additional documents you wish the Panel to consider should be sent to the Company Secretary at least three clear days prior to the hearing.

**18. The Hearing:** The Chair of the Review Panel will conduct the hearing in such a way as to ensure that all those present have the opportunity of asking questions and making comments in an appropriate manner. The hearing is not a legal proceeding and the Panel shall be under no obligation to hear oral evidence from witnesses but may do so and/or may take written statements into account.

**19. Adjournment:** The Chair may at his/her discretion adjourn the hearing for further investigation of any relevant issue. This may include an adjournment to take legal advice.

**20. Decision:** After due consideration of the matters discussed at the hearing, the Panel shall reach a decision unless there is an agreed position. The Panel's decision, findings and any recommendations may be notified orally at the hearing or subsequently and shall be confirmed in writing to you by electronic mail where appropriate within ten working days. If you do not wish to receive the decision by electronic mail, a copy will be given or posted to you. The decisions, findings and any recommendations will be made available for inspection on the School premises by the Governing Body.

Note: The complainant may ask for his/her complaint to be withdrawn at any stage and this will be acknowledged in writing by the Chair of Governors or Chair of the complaint panel, whichever is appropriate.

**21. Confidentiality:** A written record will be kept of all complaints, and of whether they are resolved at Stage 1 or proceed to a panel hearing. The number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding School year will be supplied to parents on request. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except to the extent required by paragraph 25(k) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, that is where access is requested by the Secretary of State or where disclosure is required in the course of a School's inspection or under other legal authority. In accordance with data protection principles, details of individual complaints will normally be destroyed following each School inspection. In exceptional circumstances some details will be retained for a further period as necessary.

**22. Complaints received outside of term time:** Complaints delivered to the school outside of term time will be deemed to have been received on the first day the school returns from its break.

Author	Andy Baker	
Reviewed by	SLT	November 2016
Approved by	Full Governors	
Next Review		November 2019

## **Appendix 1 Contacting Ofsted**

The School is inspected by Ofsted, an independent organisation which reports to the Government on Schools. Parents and students have the right to contact an inspector if they have a complaint concerning a student's welfare. Ofsted will usually expect parents to have followed the School's formal complaints procedure before contacting them. However, you can report your concerns to Ofsted on 08456 404040 or you can write to the Ofsted Regional Office.

South  
Ofsted  
Freshford House  
Redcliffe Way  
Bristol  
BS1 6LX

Headteacher: *insert name*  
First Deputy Headteacher: *insert name*  
Director of Finance & Business: *insert name*  
Chair of Governors: *insert name*  
Company Secretary: *insert name*  
Other Deputy Headteachers: *insert names*