



Longacre School Concerns and Complaints Policy

This policy includes the Early Years Foundation Stage

This policy is published on the website and a copy can be obtained via the school office. It is available to staff via Teacher Share.

Introduction:

Longacre School ("the School") has always prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to all of its pupils. We seek to encourage responsibility and personal fulfilment so that pupils attain their maximum potential. We value and respect all pupils equally and to provide equality of opportunity wherever possible.

However, if parents of pupils do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School with respect and in accordance with this Complaints Policy. This is a whole-school policy, which also relates to the Early Years Foundation Stage. It is in everyone's interest that any issues are resolved at the earliest possible stage.

Although this Complaints Policy is made available to parents of prospective students, it is not available for use by them; it may only be used by parents of current students.

The following are exempt from this Complaints Policy, because they are covered by separate procedures:

- Admissions
- Safeguarding matters or matters likely to require Child Protection Investigation
- School re-organisation proposals
- Statutory assessments of Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)
- Exclusion
- Whistleblowing

AIMS

When responding to complaints the school aims:

- to be impartial and non-adversarial
- to facilitate a full and fair investigation by an independent panel if necessary
- to address all the points at issue and provide an effective and prompt response
- to respect complainants' desire for confidentiality
- to treat complaints with respect

- to keep complainants informed of the progress of the complaints process
- to consider how the complaint can feed into school improvement evaluation processes

PRINCIPLES FOR INVESTIGATION

When investigating a complaint, the main principles are to clarify:

- what has happened
- who was involved
- what the complainant feels would put things right

This Complaints Policy is consistent with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2014 as amended and the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework 2021, paragraphs 3.75 and 3.76. 2.3

The School will make available to parents of pupils and of prospective pupils details of this complaints procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding academic year. These details will also be provided, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate.

This policy distinguishes 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’.

Concerns

Concerns can often be resolved without the need to use the stages of the Complaints Policy. The School takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve them as quickly as possible.

A concern should be raised with the most appropriate member of staff and can be raised in writing, including by email, by telephone or in person.

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views and the Head will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, the Head will refer you to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior than the original member of staff dealing with the matter, but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartiality is more important than seniority.

If you feel that your concern has not been satisfactorily dealt with, you may pursue it as a complaint.

Complaints

A complaint 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 has failed to do something that it should have done or has acted unfairly.

Parents can be assured that all complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially and that a pupil will not be penalised for a complaint made in good faith.

A complaint can be made in person, in writing, including by email, or by telephone. It may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant, as long as the third party has appropriate consent to do so.

Complaints against a pupil should be made to your child's form tutor in the first instance. Complaints against school staff (except the Head) should be made in the first instance to the Head via the school office or email: jyeats@longacreschool.co.uk Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints that involve or are about the Head should be addressed to the Chair of Governors, via the school office or email: clerk@longacreschool.co.uk Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor or the whole Governing Body should be addressed to the Clerk to the Governing Body via the school office or email: clerk@longacreschool.co.uk Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

In accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access this Complaints Policy.

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Head or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation (for example in relation to a Child Protection issue).

Any action that needs to be taken under staff disciplinary procedures will be handled strictly confidentially within the school. Details of any disciplinary action taken against a member of staff cannot be disclosed.

Time limit for bringing a complaint

You must raise the complaint within three months of the incident or, 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.

Scope of this Complaints Procedure

The procedure set out below covers all complaints from parents of current pupils about any provision of facilities or services by the School. Other school policies and statutory procedures will apply to other complaints, including: Child protection and safeguarding matters; Exclusions; Whistleblowing; Staff grievances; Staff conduct; Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

If you have any concerns about safeguarding please contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead, Tara Pandy immediately: T@longacreschool.co.uk and refer to the School's Safeguarding Policy.

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority (LA) 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 this happens, we will inform you of a proposed new timescale.

If a complainant commences legal action against the School in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure until those legal proceedings have concluded.

Resolving complaints

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

Stage 1: Informal complaint Stage

2: Formal complaint Stage

3: Panel hearing

At each stage in the procedure, the School will endeavour to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

An explanation

An admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better

An assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur

An explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made

An undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint; and/or

An apology.

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

It is not within the powers of the panel to make any financial reward, nor to impose sanctions on staff, pupils or parents. The panel will generally make recommendations to the Head and/or Board of Governors for consideration in addition to offering one of the above solutions.

Stage 1 (Informal):

It is to be hoped that complaints can be expressed and resolved quickly and on an informal basis. We accept that it may be appropriate for some complaints to be dealt with at Stage 2 at the outset.

Complaints should be raised with the member of staff/individual concerned.

The recipient will make a written record of the complaint and the date on which it was received. The recipient will acknowledge your complaint in writing within 3 days of receipt.

On some occasions, the complaint raised may require investigation or discussion with others. At the conclusion of their investigation, the appropriate person investigating the complaint will provide an informal written response within 7 days of the date of receipt of the complaint. It is anticipated that the vast majority of complaints will be satisfactorily dealt with in this way.

If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

Stage 2 (Formal):

- If the concern or complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis the parents should put a formal complaint in writing to the Head. The nature of the complaint must be stated as clearly and precisely as possible, with supporting evidence; it must also contain the actions parents have already taken to resolve the matter and it must include actions that parents believe should resolve the complaint. The Head will decide, after considering the circumstances, the appropriate course of action to take.
- The Head will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 3 days.
- In most cases, the Head will meet with or speak to the parents concerned as soon possible and within five school working days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage. Deviation from the normal timescales may be necessary during school holiday periods due to staff and pupils being unavailable.
- It may be necessary for the Head to carry out further investigations. The Head may delegate the investigation to another member of the school's senior leadership team but not the final decision. These will be completed in seven working days. If more than seven working days are required to investigate then the Head will advise parents of this in writing before the allotted seven days have lapsed.
- During the investigation, the Head (or investigator) will:

If necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish; and keep a written record of all meetings and interviews in relation to their investigation.

- Once the Head is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of the decision in writing. The Head will also give reasons for his decision.
- The written decision should be issued within ten working days of the Head receiving the complaint. If for any reason this is not possible, the Head will write to the parents within the ten working day period referred to above, stating the reason or reasons why he is unable to issue his decision and informing the parents when he will do so, which will be within twenty-eight days of the original receipt of the complaint.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they may proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

Stage 3 (Formal – Panel Hearing):

- If parents or the School seek to invoke Stage 3 following a failure to reach an earlier resolution, they will be referred to a named Governor, appointed by the Board of Governors, who will organise a Panel to consider the complaint.
- The Panel will consist of at least three persons appointed by the responsible Governor. The Panel members shall not have been directly involved previously in the matters detailed in the complaint and one of the Panel members shall be independent of the management and running of the School. The DfE's guidance on the identity of the independent panel member is as follows:
"Our general view is that people who have held a position of responsibility and are used to scrutinising evidence and putting forward balanced arguments would be suitable. Examples of persons likely to be suitable are serving or retired business people, civil servants, heads or senior members of staff at other schools, people with a legal background and retired members of the Police Force might be considered."
- The responsible Governor will acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and within ten working days.
- The panel hearing should, therefore, proceed notwithstanding that the parent subsequently decides not to attend. If necessary, the panel should consider the parent's complaint in his/her absence and issue findings on the substance of the complaint thereby bringing the matter to a conclusion. The requirement for the panel to proceed does not prevent the school from accommodating parental availability for dates or considering comments concerning panel composition.
- 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 not later than three working days prior to the Hearing.

- The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate. Where a parent wishes to bring legal representation, the school will need a week's prior notice of this.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.
- However, should the Panel decide further investigation is required; such investigations should be carried out within ten working days.
- The Panel will reconvene and, after due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, will reach a decision. This procedure will take place within five working days of the hearing.
- The Panel's decision will then be sent in writing by post or by electronic mail to the parents, the Head, the Governors and where relevant, the person against whom the complaint was made.
- After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and can:
 - uphold the complaint in whole or in part; and/or
 - dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.

If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the Panel will:
confirm the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint; and
where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues arising in the future

- The decision of the Panel will be final.
- A copy of the decision will be held on confidential file and be made available for inspection.

Arrangements for Record Keeping

In accordance with Regulation Part 7, paragraph 33 (j), written records will be kept of all complaints, informal or formal, including whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or at a hearing and any action taken by the school as a result of these complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld) for six years after the date of the resolution of the complaint. The written record of all complaints is reviewed regularly by the Head or a senior member of staff. Complaints are resolved either to the complainant's satisfaction, or with an otherwise appropriate outcome which balances the rights and duties of pupils.

The record will include:

- The date when the issue was raised;
- The name of the complainant;
- The name of the pupil(s);

- A description of the issue;
- The desired outcome of the complainant
- Records of all investigations (if appropriate);
- Witness statements (if appropriate);
- The name(s) of staff handling the issue at each stage;
- Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of telephone conversations);
- A clear account of what action was taken as a result of the complaint.

Confidentiality

Except as required by law, the School and its staff shall not be required to divulge to the Parents or others any confidential information or the identities of pupils or others who have given information which has led to the complaint or which the Head has acquired during an investigation.

The correspondence, statements and records of complaints are to be kept confidential except in so far as where a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act, or the Secretary of State, requests access to the records or other documents involved in the complaint.

The School may be required to declare the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the previous year to parents of pupils or prospective pupils and on request to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or a body approved under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act.

Ofsted and/or ISI will, on request, be provided with a written record of all complaints made during a specific period and the action taken as a result of each complaint.

Parents may wish to raise their complaint with ISI on 020 7600 0100.

Parents of pupils in EYFS can also contact Ofsted on 08456 404040 or the Independent School's Inspectorate (ISI) on 020 7600 0100 at ISI, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA, or to concerns@isi.net to make a complaint should they so wish. The School will notify complainants of the outcome of an investigation within 28 days of having received the complaint and will provide Ofsted and ISI on request, a written record of all complaints made during any specified period, and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint.

Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education
EYFS	Early Years Foundation Stage
ISI	Independent School's Inspectorate

Policy Review and number of complaints

This policy is reviewed every year by the Governing Body or before that date if there are relevant changes to legislation or guidance.

The nature and frequency of all complaints (though not the names of complainants or any employees involved) are reported to the Governing Body on a termly basis so that any patterns can be identified. A summary of all complaints and the stage at which they were resolved, is presented to the Governing Body annually.

Parents should contact the Head should they wish to know the number of complaints registered under the formal complaints procedure during the preceding school year.

Reviewed by	Date of Review/ Approval	Review Cycle	Next Review Date
Head and Governing Body	September 2024	Annually	September 2025