



# COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY

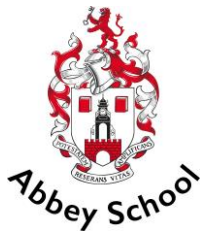
## Abbey School

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Other relevant policies and documents:

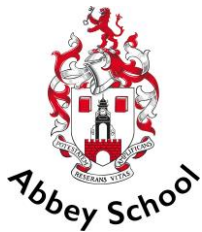
Children and Young Person's Guide to Abbey Green

Staff Grievance policy



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## 1. Aims

Abbey School aims to provide the highest standard of service and believe that stakeholders are entitled to a voice and encourage feedback to enable us to evaluate our service and continually improve. The purpose of this policy is to provide clarity on the procedure which the school will follow upon receipt of compliments or complaints.

When receiving and responding to compliments and complaints we aim to:

- Take all concerns and complaints seriously and with impartiality
- Provide an accessible, transparent, simple framework for listening to and responding to all feedback and complaints
- Review and evaluate all compliments and complaints in order to strive towards the highest standards and improve our services
- Consider all concerns and complaints initially on an informal basis and endeavour to resolve issues without the need for formal procedures
- Facilitate a full and fair investigation by an independent panel, where necessary
- Provide an effective and prompt response with respect and courtesy
- Keep complainants informed of the progress during the process
- Keep a written record of all complaints, the action taken and at what stage they were resolved
- Respect confidentiality except where Ofsted requests access to records during an inspection

## 2. Legislation and guidance

This document has due regard to legislation and guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- [Data Protection Act 2018](#)
- [UK General Data Protection Regulation \(UK GDPR\)](#)
- [Equality Act 2010](#)
- [Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014, Part 7](#)
- [Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework](#)
- [National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools](#)

## 3. Eligibility to make a complaint

Parents of pupils currently being educated at the school are able to make a complaint in line with this policy.

All complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Parents will be assured that their children will not be penalised if they raise a complaint.

This policy does not cover complaints made by the following:

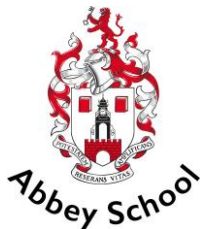
- Parents of pupils who have left voluntarily or as a result of being excluded (except where the complaints process was started when the pupil was still being educated at the school)
- Pupils
- Prospective pupils and their parents, and the failure to admit such pupil

## 4. Timescales

Complaints are expected to be made as soon as possible after an issue arises to ensure the issue is addressed in an appropriate timescale.

The school upholds a three-month time limit in which a complaint can be lodged following an incident. Complaints made outside this time limit will not be automatically refused and exceptions will be considered.

Timescales for managing complaints at specific stages are outlined in the relevant sections of this policy. In the case of any timescales changing, all parties involved will be informed of the changes in a timely manner.



## 5. Informal raising of a concern

The school will endeavour to resolve most concerns informally.

Concerns will be raised initially as follows:

Educational issue	Teacher – it may then be passed to a more senior member of staff if appropriate
Pastoral/welfare issue	Assistant Principal (Pastoral, Workforce Development)
Behavioural issue	Assistant Principal
Financial matters	School Business Manager
Other issue	Principal
Concerns regarding the Principal	Chair of Advisory Body

A complaint may be made in person, by telephone or in writing. A written record will be kept of all concerns and the date on which they were received. A concern provided in writing will be acknowledged by telephone or in writing within five working days of receipt during term time and as soon as practicable during school holidays.

If the concern is not resolved within five working days or, in the event that the complainant is not satisfied with the response to their concern, the complainant will be advised to proceed in accordance with the 'Formal complaint' stage of this procedure.

## 6. Formal complaint

The school will deal with matters that are unable to be informally resolved as a formal complaint or where it would be inappropriate to resolve an issue through informal means.

Formal complaints can be raised by:

- Letter or email
- Telephone
- In person
- A third party acting on behalf of the complainant

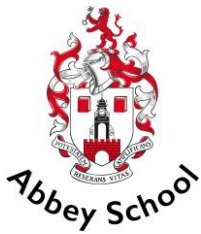
The complainant should provide sufficient information such as relevant dates, times and the names of witnesses of events, alongside copies of any relevant documents, and what they feel would be required in order to resolve the complaint.

If complainants need assistance to raise a formal complaint, they can contact the school office by phone 01244 960000 or email [office@abbey.school](mailto:office@abbey.school)

On receipt of a formal complaint, the Office Manager will log the complaint on the register of complaints and acknowledge receipt within three working days, wherever possible and as soon as practicable during the school holidays. They will arrange a meeting to clarify concerns and seek a resolution. The complainant may be accompanied to this meeting and should inform the school of the identity of their companion in advance.

An appropriate member of the senior leadership team (SLT) will meet with the complainant within five working days of acknowledging receipt of the complaint to discuss the matter. If the complaint is about the Principal, the discussion will take place with the chair of the advisory body.

In certain circumstances, the school may need to refuse a request for a particular individual to attend any such meeting, for example, if there is a conflict of interest. If this is the case, the school will notify the complainant as soon as they are aware, so that the complainant has the opportunity to arrange the alternative accompaniment.



During the meeting, the member of SLT will attempt to reach a resolution; however, it may be necessary for further investigations to be carried out by a designated member of staff (Complaints Officer).

The Complaints Officer will then conduct their own investigation. Written records will be kept of all meetings and other communications held in relation to the complaint. Once all facts are established, the Principal will inform the complainant of their decision and their reasoning in writing and what action is being proposed as a result. If the complaint is about the Principal, the Chair of the Advisory Body will inform the complainant of their decision and reasoning in writing.

The complainant will be informed of the decision within 15 days from the receipt of the complaint. Where there are exceptional circumstances resulting in a delay, the complainant will be notified of this and informed of the new timescales as soon as possible.

If the complainant is not satisfied and wishes to proceed to the next stage of the procedure, (Independent Review) they should inform the school within five working days. Requests received outside of this time frame will be considered in exceptional circumstances.

The school will acknowledge receipt of the request within three school days

## **7. Independent review**

If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the formal complaint, they may request an independent review. They must submit any request in writing to the Proprietor within five working days of receipt of the written conclusion.

A hearing before a Panel will be arranged by or on behalf of the school's proprietor. The Panel will be comprised of members of the Advisory Body and include at least one "independent person" who are independent of the management and running of the school – meaning they are not a member of the school's workforce or proprietary body and are not otherwise involved in the management of the school, e.g. a solicitor who regularly acts for the school.

A clerk will gather and circulate written and oral submissions and to the complainant and Panel members prior to the meeting.

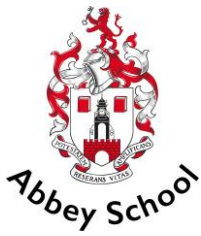
The complainant may be accompanied at the hearing if they wish by a suitable companion. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate and permission must be sought and will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

The Panel will meet to review the complaint and the complainant will be given reasonable notice of the date of the meeting. The clerk will aim to find a mutually acceptable date. Where a mutually acceptable date cannot be found within 14 days then a date will be set. The Panel can convene meetings in the complainant's absence and reach a conclusion in the interests of drawing the complaint to a close.

At the meeting, each individual will have the opportunity to give statements and present their evidence. Witnesses may be called as appropriate to present their evidence. The independent person, the complainant and the Panel will be given the chance to ask and reply to questions.

After considering all of the relevant facts, the panel will make findings and recommendations. The decisions, findings and recommendations will be provided to the complainant in writing within five days of the hearing. A copy of the decision, findings and recommendations will be sent to, where relevant, the person complained about, the Principal, the chair of the advisory body and the Proprietor.

The decision will be final and represents the conclusions of the school's complaints procedure.



## **8. Recording complaints**

The school will record the progress of all complaints, including information about action taken at all stages, the stage at which the complaint was resolved and the final outcome. The records will also include copies of correspondence and notes relating to meetings and phone calls.

This material will be treated as confidential and held centrally, and will be viewed only by those involved in investigating the complaint or on the review panel. Exceptions being where the complainant requests access to records of a complaint through a subject access request under the terms of the Data Protection Act, or where the material must be made available during a school inspection.

The school holds the right to use recording devices, where appropriate, to ensure all parties involved are able to review the discussions at a later date.

Where there are communication difficulties or disabilities, the school may provide recording devices to ensure the complainant is able to access and review the discussions at a later point.

No recording devices will be used without the prior consent of all parties.

Records of complaints will be kept securely, only for as long as necessary and in line with data protection law, our privacy notices and record retention schedule.

## **9. Complaints received outside of term-time**

Complaints or concerns made outside of term-time will be considered to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

## **10. Compliments process**

It is the responsibility of all Abbey School staff to record verbal or written compliments in the Central Record of Compliments which is kept in the main school office. Managers are responsible for ensuring that staff named within a compliment are informed and thanked. Feedback on compliments will be shared with the staff at regular intervals.

## **11. The use of social media**

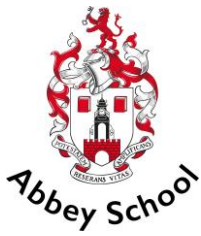
Social media should not be used to make or progress a complaint. Complaints should be made through the channels that ensure information is recorded safely and securely and to be sure that the complaint can be progressed in a timely way and in accordance with a set of clear procedures. Complaints should be made through a personal meeting, by letter, telephone call and/or email. In the case of social media being used to express a negative opinion about an aspect of the work of Abbey School, the following four steps will be taken by the school:

### **11.1. Gather evidence**

When the school becomes aware of a negative opinion being expressed through social media channels (Facebook, Twitter, etc) about any aspect of its work and/or its staff, evidence will be gathered to establish what has been posted on social media and by whom. Staff will not respond to any postings deemed to be negative. The person (most likely to be a staff member) who identifies the post(s) will inform the communications team as soon as possible.

### **11.2. Reassure staff**

The content of negative posts may upset staff members. The Principal or other appropriate senior staff member should reassure staff and offer support through whole staff emails, meetings and individual discussions. If a complaint or allegation refers to a specific member of staff, the Safeguarding Children and Young People in Education Policy and Procedure will be followed. We take all allegations relating to the safeguarding of children and young people very seriously.



### **11.3. Report offending material and remove**

The communications team will be approached to remove content if it breaches the terms and conditions of the platform. If the content does not breach the terms and conditions of the platform, then the team will hide the post and/or review our settings including around posting to our page, posting about us, tagging.

### **11.4. Legal advice**

In cases of malicious allegations, Abbey School may seek legal advice. In some cases, this may result in a letter from a solicitor being sent to individuals warning that the allegations could result in legal action.

## **12. Managing serial and persistent complaints**

The school will do its best to be helpful to people who contact with a complaint or a concern. However, there will be occasions when, despite all stages of the complaint procedure having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied.

If a complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the school can inform them that the procedure has been completed and that the matter is now closed. If the complainant contacts the school again on the same issue, the correspondence may then be viewed as “serial” or “persistent” and the school may choose not to respond.

The application of “serial” or “persistent” marking will only be made against the subject or the complaint itself rather than the complainant.

## **13. Learning lessons**

The Advisory body will review any underlying issues raised by complaints with the Senior Leadership Team, where appropriate, to determine whether any improvements can be made to the school’s procedures or policies to help prevent similar instances in the future.

## **14. Outside agencies**

Parents, pupils and learners may also take their concerns or complaints to the following outside agencies:

Ofsted <https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school>

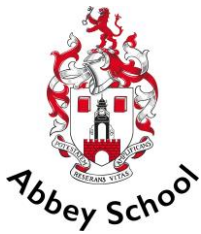
Cheshire West and Chester <https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/residents/health-and-social-care/children-and-young-people/children-and-young-people.aspx>

## **15. Monitoring arrangements**

The Advisory body will monitor the effectiveness of the complaints procedure to ensure that complaints are handled properly. They will track the number and nature of complaints and follow up any trends.

The complaints records are logged and managed by the Complaints Officer.

This policy will be reviewed by Senior Leadership Team every two years and the policy will be approved by the Advisory Body.



## APPENDIX I: Complaint Record

### Details of person making the complaint

<b>Full name</b>	
<b>Pupil's name (if relevant)</b>	
<b>Connection to the school</b>	
<b>Post held (if employee)</b>	
<b>Home address</b>	
<b>Contact details:</b>	<b>Email</b>
	<b>Mobile</b>
	<b>Landline (day-time)</b>
	<b>Landline (evening)</b>
<b>If representing an individual – their details</b>	
<b>Details of relationship to anyone involved in the complaint</b>	

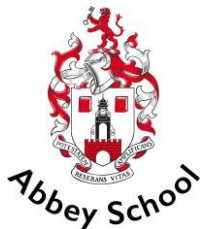
### Details of who the complaint is about

<b>Full name (s)</b>	
<b>Post(s) held in school</b>	
<b>Contact details</b>	
<b>Any other relevant information</b>	

### Details of other persons involved in the complaint

<b>Full name (s)</b>	
<b>Post(s) held in school</b>	
<b>Contact details</b>	
<b>Any other relevant information</b>	





## Details of the Complaint

<b>Date and time of any incident</b>		<b>Location of any incident</b>	
<b>Does the complaint refer to Education or Care? (Delete as applicable)</b>		<b>EDUCATION / CARE</b>	
<b>Details of the complaint</b>			
<b>What action has already been taken to try and resolve the complaint (if any)? Please give full details</b>			
<b>What actions do you feel might resolve the concern or complaint? Please give full details</b>			
<b>Please give details of any documents attached with this complaint</b>			
<b>Signature</b>			
<b>Name</b>		<b>Date</b>	
<b>OFFICIAL USE:</b>			
<b>Date acknowledgement sent</b>			
<b>Name of individual acknowledging complaint</b>			
<b>Complaint referred to</b>			
<b>Date complaint referred</b>			