

## HARROW HIGH SCHOOL-COMPLAINTS POLICY



### Key points and summary

1. The Academy takes all concerns or complaints seriously. Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage reduces the numbers of complaints and reflects the commitment to working effectively with all members of the community.
2. This policy aims to ensure that:
  - as far as possible all concerns should be dealt with as informally as possible. In most cases this will address the concern and prevent a formal complaint being made.
  - all complaints are dealt with as quickly and sensitively as possible, and by the person best able to do so;
  - where a formal process is required, the steps involved are clearly outlined
  - people are aware of their responsibilities
3. The emphasis is to understand, investigate and resolve the complaint as early as possible.
4. The formal process has four stages:
  - a. Complaint heard by a member of staff
  - b. Complaint heard by an appropriate member of senior staff appointed by the Headteacher
  - c. Appeal heard by Governors
  - d. Further appeals should be made to the Education Ombudsman

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# HARROW HIGH SCHOOL-COMPLAINTS POLICY

## 1. Introduction and statement of intent

5. The Academy takes all concerns or complaints seriously. Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage reduces the numbers of formal complaints and reflects the commitment to working effectively with all members of the community.
6. This policy aims to ensure that:
  - as far as possible all concerns should be dealt with as informally as possible.
  - all complaints are dealt with as quickly and sensitively as possible, and by the person best able to do so;
  - where a formal process is required, the steps involved are clearly outlined
  - people are aware of their responsibilities

## 2. Scope and applicability

7. This policy applies to all formal complaints received by the academy.
8. This policy applies to all staff and governors.

## 3. The policy

### Types of complaint

9. The majority of complaints received by the Academy are likely to fall into the following categories:
  - financial and administrative;
  - academic (course programme, unsatisfactory teaching, too much/too little homework, progress in a particular subject etc);
  - pastoral (discipline/indiscipline, inappropriate sanctions, bullying, overall progress of the student, unhappiness of child etc);
  - child protection (allegations against staff, handling of sensitive issues); and
  - health and safety

### Reporting and recording

10. A complaint may be made in person, by telephone, or in writing. At the end of a meeting or telephone call, the member of staff involved should ensure that the complainant and the Academy have the same understanding of what was discussed and agreed, including the completion of a Complaint Form (with any additional information appended).

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11. All completed Complaint Forms will be held by the Headteachers' PA.
12. All correspondence and material relating to a complaint is confidential.

### Investigating complaints

13. The person investigating the complaint will make sure that they:
  - establish what has happened so far, and who has been involved;
  - clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved;
  - meet with the complainant or contact them (if unsure or further information is necessary);
  - clarify what the complainant feels would put things right;
  - interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
  - conduct the interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning; and
  - keep notes of the interview.

### Resolving complaints

14. At each stage in the procedure the person attempting to resolve the complaint will keep in mind ways in which a complaint can be resolved. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is a valid complaint (in whole or in part) without admitting liability. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:
  - an apology;
  - an explanation;
  - an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
  - an assurance that the event complained of will not recur;
  - an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again; and
  - an undertaking to review Academy policies in light of the complaint.
15. Complainants will be encouraged to state what actions they feel might resolve the problem at any stage. An admission that the Academy could have handled the situation better is not the same as an admission of negligence.
16. At all stages those hearing the complaint will attempt to identify areas of agreement between the parties, and to clarify any misunderstandings that might have occurred in order to create a positive atmosphere in which to discuss any outstanding issues.

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### 4. Stages of complaint

#### Stage 1: Complaint heard by a member of staff

17. It is in the interests of everyone that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. The experience of the first contact between the complainant and the academy can be crucial in determining whether their complaint will escalate.
18. Staff need to be sensitive to any potential actual or perceived conflicts of interest or difficulties of a particular member of staff being involved in hearing and investigating the complaint.
19. To ensure clarity of understanding, a Complaint Form needs to be completed. This ensures that there is no conflict in determining what the complaint consists of and the action taken by members of staff.
20. The member of staff hearing the complaint needs to ensure that they have investigated it appropriately.
21. If the complaint is resolved, the Complaints Form should be completed and passed to the Headteacher's PA for retention.
22. If the complaint is not resolved, the Complaint Form should be passed to the Headteacher who will determine which senior member of staff should be involved in Stage 2.

#### Stage 2: Complaint heard by appropriate senior member of staff appointed by the Headteacher

23. The designated senior member of staff will consider both the original complaint and the process followed during Stage 1.
24. If the complaint is resolved, the Complaints Form should be completed and passed to the Headteacher's PA for retention.
25. If the complaint is not resolved, the complainant has the option of appealing to the Governing Body.

#### Stage 3: Appeal heard by Governors

26. The complainant should write to the Chair of Governors giving details of the complaint and the process followed to that point. The Chair, or a nominated Governor, will convene a Governing Body complaints panel, none of whose members will have been directly involved in previous consideration of the complaint. The panel will have the powers to determine the complaint.
27. Individual complaints would not be heard by the whole Governing Body at any stage, as this could compromise the impartiality of any panel set up for a disciplinary hearing against a member of staff following a serious complaint.
28. The appeal hearing should be heard within 10 school days of the Chair receiving notice of the complaint.

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29. The appeal hearing will be heard in private, will give careful consideration to the substance of the complaint, consider all the views expressed, and decide the outcome. The complainant may be accompanied by a friend / colleague.

30. The panel can:

- Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part
- Uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- Decide on appropriate action to resolve the complaint; or
- Recommend changes to the academy's systems or procedures.

31. The decision of the panel is binding. The decision must be communicated within three working days of the hearing.

## 5. Responsibilities under the policy

### Governing Body

32. The Governing Body is responsible for:

- approving the Academy policy, procedures, and guidelines;
- hearing and deciding on appeals at "stage 3"
- monitoring the level and nature of complaints and review the outcomes annually or earlier if so determined by the Chair.

33. The Chair of the Governing Body is responsible for:

- receiving complaints at Stage 3 of the complaints procedure;
- nominating a panel from the Governing Body to hear the appeal; and
- checking that the correct procedure is followed.

34. The Chair of the Governors Panel at Stage 3 is responsible for ensuring that:

- the parties understand the procedure;
- the issues are addressed;
- key findings of fact are established;
- complainants are put at ease;
- the hearing is conducted as informally as possible;
- the panel is open-minded and acts independently;
- no member of the panel has a vested interest in the outcome, or has been involved in the issues previously;
- all parties have the chance to be heard;
- any written material is seen by all parties; and

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- related Child Protection and Data Protection rules are observed and maintained.

### Headteacher

35. The Headteacher is responsible for:

- the overall internal management of the procedures;
- Identifying who will hear complaints at stage 2 of the procedure;
- ensuring that the procedures are monitored and reviewed and reports made to the Governing Body.

### Complaints Co-ordinator

36. The Complaints Co-ordinator is responsible for:

- the efficient operation and management of the policy and procedures;
- training staff on how to deal appropriately with complaints;
- keeping parents, students and others informed of the procedures;
- compiling reports for the Headteacher as required; and
- may be required to hear and/or resolve complaints at stage 1 of the procedures

### All staff

37. All staff are responsible for:

- listening to any concerns brought to them by parents and students;
- reassuring them that they will be dealt with as soon as possible by the appropriate member of staff;
- for informing the relevant staff of the concerns being raise; and
- passing any complaints received from other people who are not parents or students to the Complaints Coordinator.

## 6. Appendices

### Appendix One: Complaint Form

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Complaint form



Please complete and return to the Headteacher's PA who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your Name:	
Student's Name:	
Your relationship to the student:	
Address:	
Daytime phone number:	
Evening phone number:	
Mobile phone number:	
Please give details of your complaint:	
What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve the complaint? Who did you speak to and what was the response?	
What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?	
Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details:	
Signature	
Date	
<b><i>School use only</i></b>	

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Date acknowledgement sent:	
Who sent acknowledgement:	
Signature	
Please complete the following, acknowledge the stages of the complaints procedure that have been followed and make any comments as necessary	
Stage 1 (complaint heard by staff)	Date: Signature:
Stage 2 (complaint heard by senior member of staff)	Date: Signature:
Stage 3 (appeal heard by Governors)	Date: Signature: