



**Progress
Schools**

Complaints Policy

2023 2025


Policy issue and updates

<i>Pages</i>	<i>Issue No.</i>	<i>Date</i>
Whole Document – new format and template used.	1	January 2016
Cover page - logo	2	February 2016
Whole document – checked and revised where necessary	3	August 2016
Process – points 2.4-2.6 amended	4	April 2017
Whole document – annual review and revised where necessary	5	September 2017
Whole document – annual review	6	August 2018
Whole document – annual review	7	August 2019
Whole document – annual review and logo change	8	August 2020
Whole document – annual review	9	August 2021
Whole document – annual review	10	August 2022
Whole document – annual review	11	August 2023

The following policy has been approved by the Managing Director and Senior Leadership Team.

The policy will be reviewed on a biennial basis unless circumstances arise requiring the policy to be reviewed earlier.

Approved by Executive Team: August 2023

Board signatory: 

Planned review: August 2023

1. Policy overview

- 1.1 The majority of issues raised by parents/carers, members of the public, employers, or students, are concerns rather than complaints. We are committed to taking concerns seriously, at the earliest stage, in the hope of keeping the number of formal complaints to a minimum and without needing formal procedures. However, depending on the nature of the complaint, you may wish or be asked to follow the school's formal complaints procedure. To enable us to investigate a complaint, it needs to be made within six months of the incident occurring or within 6 months of the incident coming to your attention. If a complaint is older than 6 months it will not be investigated.

We aim to resolve the complaint as fairly and speedily as possible. Formal complaints will be dealt with in a sensitive, impartial, and confidential manner. Malicious complaints may incur appropriate action by Progress Schools.

All complaints are upheld, and the policy revised where necessary based on the review on the complaints tracker. Any outcomes which require Progress Schools to review additional policies and/or procedures will be completed swiftly with notification to all staff.

2. Process for school-based complaints

- 2.1 The following details outline the stages that can be used to resolve complaints.

The Complaints Policy has four main stages:

- Stage 1 – A concern is raised informally with a staff member.
- Stage 2 – Formal complaint is heard by the Head of School.
- Stage 3 – Formal complaint is passed to a member of the WLT who will seek advice from Leadership Team where appropriate. The WLT may opt to recruit an external to carry out an investigation or will do so themselves
- Stage 4 – Formal complaint is heard by one of the Senior Leadership team (Directors)
- Stage 5 – Formal complaint is heard by the Managing Director of Progress Schools

This is the policy and procedure for complaints. If the complaint/appeal relates to a suspension or permanent exclusion, the details of who to write to or appeal to will be documented on the suspension/permanent exclusion letter.

Every concern and/or complaint, regardless of the stage at which it is dealt with, will be reported to the Senior Leadership Team and recorded on the complaints tracker. This allows themes and trends to be identified.

2.2 Stage 1 - Raising a concern:

Concerns can be raised with the school at any time and will often generate an immediate response, usually by telephone or email, which will resolve the concern. We request that parents/carers make their first contact with a member of staff or the Head of School. If the complaint is in relation to the Head of School, we request that the Central Wider Leadership Team is contacted (details on website).

On some occasions the concern raised may require investigation, or discussion with others, in which case you will receive an informal but informed response within a day or two. Most concerns will be satisfactorily dealt with in this way. However, if you are not satisfied with the result at stage 1, please write to or call the Head of School within 10 working days. We will then look at your complaint at the next stage.

Any staff member that takes responsibility for dealing with a concern will ensure the Head of School is aware, even if resolution is achieved. Complaints from stage 2 onwards are logged on the complaint's tracker. Concerns resolved at stage one are logged on the concern tracker.

2.3 Stage 2 - Complaint heard by the Head of School:

The member of staff receiving and logging the complaint will report it to the Head of School to follow up or the Head of School will investigate if the parent/carer has contacted them directly. If the complainant is not satisfied that it has been addressed at stage 1, they can be advised to write a formal complaint, addressed to the Leadership Team at the school address.

The complaint will be logged, including the date it was received. We will normally acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 2 working days of receiving it. In many cases this response will also report on the action that we have taken to resolve the issue. Alternatively, a meeting may be convened to discuss the matter further. This meeting will normally take place within 10 working days. The aim will be to resolve the matter as speedily as possible. However, if you are not satisfied with the result at stage 2, please write to or call the school within 10 working days of getting our response. You will need to tell us why you are still not satisfied and what you would like us to do.

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- 2.4 Stage 3 - Formal complaint is passed to a member of the WLT who will seek advice from the leadership team where appropriate. The WLT may opt to recruit an external to carry out an investigation or will do so themselves.

If the matter has not been resolved at Stage 2, the complaint will be passed on to the organisation WLT. Dependent on the nature of the complaint, the WLT will investigate or will instruct an external partner/source to complete a full, unbiased investigation if deemed more appropriate. Following the investigation, the external partner/source or WLT will normally give a written response within 10 working days. If you are dissatisfied with the result at stage 3, you should let Progress Schools know within 10 working days of getting the response.

- 2.5 Stage 4 – Formal complaint heard by a member of the Senior Leadership Team (Directors).

If the matter has still not been resolved at Stage 3, then you should write to or request the complaint is passed to the Progress Schools Director Team giving details of the complaint. The Director Team will go over all evidence and investigation outcomes before providing a response and/or additional actions carried out to resolve the complaint. The further investigation will normally take place within 7 working days of the receipt of the written request for Stage 4 investigation. Any letter addressed to the Director Team should be addressed to: Progress Schools Head Office, Switch House, Northern Perimeter Road, Bootle, Liverpool, L30 7PT.

- 2.6 Stage 5 – Formal complaint heard by the Managing Director (MD) of Progress Schools

If the matter has still not been resolved at Stage 4, then you should write to or request the complaint is passed to the Progress Schools MD giving details of why you are not happy with previous outcomes. The MD will convene a complaints panel hearing with at least 1 Director and an external if it cannot be resolved by the MD alone. The hearing will normally take place within 10 working days of the receipt of the written request for Stage 5 investigation.

The aim of the appeal panel hearing is to impartially resolve the complaint and to achieve reconciliation between Progress Schools and the complainant. All parties will be notified of the panel's decision in writing within 3 working days after the date of the panel hearing. The letter will also contain what you need to do if you wish to take the matter further.

2.7 Panel Hearings:

Where it has been necessary to convene a panel hearing for a complaint, a person independent of the management and running of the Progress Schools organisation will be appointed to the panel (usually drawn from the relevant referring agency of the complainant) to act as an independent advisor and mediator if required. The other members of the panel will be appointed by the MD and consist of at least 1 member from the Progress Schools Governing Board of Directors who have not been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint.

The panel hearing allows for parents/carers to be in attendance (if they wish) and to be accompanied by another person for supportive purposes only.

2.8 Findings & Recommendations:

The panel hearings are intended to make findings and recommendations that will be sent using electronic mail or given to the complainant in the form of a letter and where relevant, to the person(s) complained about.

2.9 Written Records:

A written record will be kept of all complaints made at all stages of the complaints process (from the preliminary stage to panel hearing). Records and the complaints log will indicate whether complaints have been resolved at the preliminary stages or whether they proceeded to a panel hearing.

All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidentially secured on the school premises available for inspection by the proprietor and the Head Teacher or a body conducting an inspection (referring agencies, Local Authority) and governmental bodies (Secretary of State) who require access to them. Additional copies will be held electronically to ensure evidence is always available.

N.B. In cases where the matter concerns the conduct of the Head of School, the Head of School will be informed of the complaint. The MD will arrange for the matter to be investigated. In cases where the matter concerns the conduct of a member of the Progress Schools Directors, the Director will be informed of the complaint by the MD and Progress Group Chief Executive Officer.

3. Process for safeguarding complaints/concerns about a member of staff

- 3.1 Further details regarding safeguarding complaints against staff are explained in our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.
- 3.2 Any complaint received regarding a member of staff in relation to safeguarding is to be passed to the Head of Safeguarding and Welfare for investigation who will support the Head of School to and/or liaise with the Local Authority Designated Officer.
- 3.3. The People Team will be informed of the investigation. Dependent on the outcome, they may follow the capability or disciplinary procedures once the complaint has been satisfied with the Local Authority Designated Officer.

4. Process for general complaints/concerns about staff

- 4.1 Any other form of complaint lodged about a member of staff must be passed to the People Team.
- 4.2 The People Team will work with the line manager to determine the best course of action to provide a satisfactory outcome for all.
- 4.3 Further details of this process and accompanying appeals process can be found in the capability, disciplinary and grievance policies.