Complaints Policy

Policy Statement
Graduately Developing Futures (GDF) is committed to ensuring that all complaints are acted upon fairly, promptly and without prejudice. We need to know as soon as possible if there is any cause for dissatisfaction. Those who make a complaint should never feel, or be made to feel, that a complaint made in a reasonable and appropriate way will be taken amiss or will reflect adversely on any student or their opportunities at our school. We will investigate and try to resolve a complaint in a positive manner and will treat every complaint as an opportunity to put right any matter which may have gone wrong and/or to review our systems and procedures in the light of the relevant circumstances. The information below outlines the process for making a complaint about our school.

Throughout this policy, the term “parents” means all those having parental responsibility for a child. GDF also wishes to work closely with other members of the public and will deal with concerns and complaints as per the Complaints Policy.

Policy Aim
The aim of this policy is to provide guidelines for the consistent management of and response to complaints. Sometimes, when concerns are more specific, there are alternative and appropriate policies or routes for dealing with them. The following list details specific topics of complaints, and the correct policy or route to refer to.

- Pupil admission; please see GDF's admissions policy
- Pupil exclusions; please see GDF's behaviour or exclusion policy
- Anonymous complaints; please refer to GDF's whistleblowing policy
- Subject Access Requests and Freedom of Information Requests; please see GDF's Freedom of Information policy
- Child Protection matters should be handled under the Safeguarding and Child Protection policy
- Complaints about the content of the national curriculum should be sent to the Department for Education. Complaints about the delivery of the curriculum are for the school to resolve through our complaints procedures. This includes, religious education and sex and relationships education

Confidentiality
All concerns will be dealt with confidentially, although a staff member or other school representative will need to take notes. Any such notes will be kept in accordance with the principles of the Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR. However, such notes would be able to be used as evidence if further investigation was required, or if the concern became a formal complaint.

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In the event that a staff member breaches confidentiality by discussing or disclosing information concerning the process or facts of any such matter, GDF may take disciplinary action against that staff member.

In order for complaints to be resolved as quickly and fairly as possible, GDF requests that complainants do not discuss complaints publicly via social media such as Facebook and Twitter. Complaints will be dealt with confidentially for those involved, and we expect complainants to also observe confidentiality.

Safeguarding

Wherever a complaint indicates that a child's wellbeing or safety is at risk, the school is under a duty to report this immediately to the local authority. Any action taken will be in accordance with GDF's Safeguarding Policy, which can be found on the school website.

If at any formal stage of the complaint it is determined that staff disciplinary or capability proceedings are necessary in order to resolve the issue, the details of this action will remain confidential to the CEO, Principal and/or the individual's line manager. The complainant is not entitled to participate in the proceedings or receive any detail about them.

Procedure

If you need to raise an issue in the first instance, please do so with the relevant member of staff who will be happy to talk to you and seek to establish a solution. If you are not satisfied with this response and believe the issue has not been resolved, please use the following procedure as detailed below.

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Stage 1 Raising Concerns	• Informal investigation and immediate addressing of issues by a relevant staff member • Where dissatisfied with outcomes, progress to Stage 2
Stage 2	• Formal investigation by Principal or member of Senior Leadership Team • Where dissatisfied with outcomes, progress to stage 3
Stage 3	• Formal investigation by a member of the Governing Body with opportunity for escalation to an IRP, this is the final stage of the school's complaints procedure. • Where dissatisfied with outcomes, progress to stage 4
Stage 4	• Where dissatisfied with the outcomes of the school's complaints procedure, contact the Department for Education

GDF will endeavour to abide by timeframes stated under each stage but acknowledges that in some circumstances, this is not always possible due to the complexity of information needed to review a complaint, or difficulties regarding an individual's availability to deal with the complaint. If it becomes apparent that it is not possible to complete any stage of the complaints procedure within a given timeframe, the individual responsible for handling the complaint will contact the complainant to explain the reasons why and to give a revised timeframe.

GDF reserves the right not to investigate complaints that have been made three months after the subject of the complaint took place, except in exceptional circumstances. What is meant by exceptional circumstances is where new evidence has come to light, where the complaint is of an especially serious matter, or where there is reasonable justification for why the complainant has been unable to raise the complaint before this time. The Chief Executive Officer will review the situation and decide whether or not to enact the complaints procedure, informing the Principal of their decision.

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Stages of the Complaint

Stage 1: Informal Investigation by a staff member

The majority of concerns can be dealt with without resorting to the formal procedure. Where you have a concern about any aspect of the school or your child's education or wellbeing, raise this with the relevant staff member via the phone or in person. Ideally, they will be able to address your concerns on the spot, or can arrange a meeting with you to discuss the issue.

GDF will respect the views of a complainant who indicates that they would have difficulty discussing a complaint with a particular member of staff. In these cases, the line manager can refer the parent to another staff member. Similarly, if a member of staff directly involved feels too compromised to deal with a complaint or concern, the complainant can be referred to another staff member after consultation with the Principal. The ability to consider the complaint objectively and impartially is crucial.

Informal complaints will be investigated thoroughly but are not subject to the procedure for formal complaints detailed below, unless the person making the complaint is dissatisfied with the outcome.

In this case the complaint can be escalated to formal status by completing the complaint form. A response to an informal complaint will be given verbally or in writing within 5 working days (excluding those which fall in the school holidays) of the issue being raised. Where a response requires a greater time, the complainant will be contacted to explain the reasons why and will be given a new timescale within which a response will be provided.

Stage 2: Formal Investigation by the Principal or member of senior leadership team

If the parent is dissatisfied with the way the issue was handled at the informal stage, the complainant may refer it to the Principal. This may be done in person, in writing by using the Formal Complaint Form (Appendix 1), or by telephone. The Principal or a member of the senior leadership team will investigate the complaint.

The Principal will arrange for the complaint to be acknowledged and provide a written response within 15 working days (excluding those which fall in the school holidays) of receipt of the complaint. The complainant will be kept informed of any complaint which will require a more detailed investigation and a new timescale will be provided.

Stage 3: Complaint heard by the Governing Body Investigation Officer

If the matter has not been resolved by the Principal investigation or the complaint involves the Principal, the complainant will need to write to the Chair of the Governing Body. The Chair of the Governing Body will arrange for the complaint to be acknowledged and appoint themselves or another member of the Local Governing Body as the Investigating Officer.

If the complaint is about the Chair of Governors or any individual governors, the complainant will write to The Clerk.

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A meeting may be convened to discuss the matter further as this provides a helpful mechanism for discussion when a concern is raised. The complaint will be acknowledged and reviewed and a written response will be provided no later than 15 working days (excluding those which fall in the school holidays) after the date of acknowledgement. The complainant will be kept informed of any complaint which will require a more detailed investigation and a new timescale will be provided.

Notification of the Governing Body's decision
The Chair of the Governing Body will ensure that the complainant is notified of the decision, in writing, along with a copy of the minutes, within 5 working days (excluding those which fall in the school holidays). If applicable, the Chair will provide the complainant with details of the new deadline and an explanation for the delay.

Escalation
If the Governing body uphold the decision by the Principal and parents are not satisfied with the response by the Governing Body, parents have the right to request that their decision is reviewed by an Independent Review Panel (IRP) appointed by, or on behalf of the school. Parents should request in writing their decision to escalate the complaint to an IRP within 5 working days (excluding those which fall in the school holidays). The Panel will consist of at least 3 people who were not directly involved in the areas detailed within the complaint; at least one panel member will not be involved in the management and running of the school. Parents are invited to attend the hearing of the complaint if they so wish and be accompanied by a nominated person. Following the hearing the IRP will document their findings and recommendations which will be provided to parents and, if relevant, the person complained about within 5 working days. This information will be available for inspection by the Principal.

This is the final stage at which GDF will consider the complaint.

No further appeal against a decision can be made to GDF once the appeal procedure has been exhausted.

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the result at this stage, they may escalate this to Stage 4 of the Complaints procedure.

Stage 4: Refer to DfE. If a complainant believes that the governing body is acting unreasonably or is failing properly to carry out its statutory duties, the complainant may appeal to the Secretary of State for Education by writing to the Department for Education. https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school

Ofsted will also consider complaints about schools. Ofsted's complaints guidance states that it would normally expect a complainant to have first followed the schools complaints procedure.

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-to-ofsted-about-schools-guidance-for-

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parents

Unreasonably Persistent Complaints

Complaints will be treated as unreasonably persistent if the above procedure has been exhausted and the complainant meets one or more of the below criteria:

- Submits multiple complaints which focus on trivial matters
- Continually changes the substance of a complaint or raises new concerns whilst the original complaint is being addressed
- Is unwilling to accept documented evidence in response to a complaint
- Does not clearly identify the issues which they wish to be investigated
- The complainant seeks an unrealistic outcome
- Threatens or uses physical violence towards staff
- Subjects staff to verbal abuse or harassment

Record Keeping and Data Protection

A complaints register is held by the school. The register contains details of the complaint and at which stage the complaint was resolved.

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are stored confidentially by the school, except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section s108/109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 request access to them.

Written records taken and used throughout the complaints process, including correspondence, notes of meetings, telephone calls etc., will be kept securely and in accordance with the principles of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018.

Publication of Information

A copy of the Complaints Policy and Procedures will be available on the school's website

Review

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis as a minimum. Next review date 01.09.2027

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GDF Formal Complaints Form

This form is available on request or via the website to any person who wishes to make a complaint.

Your Name	
Name of pupil, year group and your relationship to them (where applicable)	
Contact Address	
Contact Telephone Day	
Contact Telephone Mobile	
Contact Email Address	
Details of the Complaint	
Action taken so far (including staff member who has dealt with it so far) or solutions offered	
The reason that this was not a satisfactory resolution for you	
What action would you like to be taken to resolve the problem?	

Signed.....Dated.....

Official Use

Date Received:

Signed:

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GDF Complaints Recording

For Year: 2025

Month	Number of Complaints received	Number resolved at Stage 1	Number resolved at Stage 1	Number resolved at Stage 1	Number resolved at Stage 1
January	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
February	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
March	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
April	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
May	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
June					
July					
August					
September					
October					
November					
December					

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