



# Complaints Procedure

<b>Date</b>	<b>April 2023</b>
<b>Written by</b>	<b>Hannah Doran</b>
<b>Approved by</b>	<b>Joe Creswick</b>
<b>Approval date</b>	<b>19/4/2023</b>
<b>Review date</b>	<b>April 2024</b>



## Introduction and Aims

Ivel Valley School & College is committed to providing the best education for our young people and we want our pupils to be healthy, happy and safe and to do well. We also recognise the importance of establishing and maintaining good relationships with parents, carers and the wider community that we serve. We hope that you will be entirely satisfied with the standard of education and the level of service that we provide.

We try very hard to get things right, but we also recognise that there may be occasions where people have concerns that they want to share with us and that on occasion, very rarely we hope, things can go wrong and you may feel that you need to complain.

Section 29 of the Education Act 2002 requires Governing Bodies of maintained schools in England to have in place and to publish a procedure to deal with complaints relating to the school and to any community facilities or services that the school provides.

## Making a complaint

We define a complaint as a clear statement of dissatisfaction about any specified aspect of the school's work.

Anyone can make a complaint, for example pupils, parents, carers, guardians, grandparents, neighbours of the school or anyone with an interest in the work that we do or the services that we provide. However, we expect that it is likely to be parents and carers who will make most use of this procedure.

Our complaints procedure deals with specified day-to-day complaints against the management and/or operation of the school. It does not extend to those issues where there are statutory or other procedures established for dealing with the matter. The table below provides information on who to contact for other issues:

Exceptions	Who to contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Admissions to schools</li> <li>Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs</li> <li>School re-organisation proposals</li> </ul>	Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with Central Bedfordshire Council SEND team.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation or any safeguarding concerns</li> </ul>	Complaints about child protection or safeguarding matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exclusion of children from school*</li> </ul>	<p>Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: <a href="http://www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions">www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions</a>.</p> <p>Complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whistleblowing</li> </ul>	<p>We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors.</p> <p>The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus">www.education.gov.uk/contactus</a>.</p>



	Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the LA or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.
● Staff grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.
● Staff conduct	Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate.  Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.
● Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them directly.
● Curriculum, including collective worship, religious education	Please contact Central Bedfordshire Council or the Department for Education at:  <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus">www.education.gov.uk/contactus</a>

## Fundamental principles

It's sometimes difficult to differentiate between a concern, a problem and a formal complaint. Whatever the issue, we want to work with you to resolve the matter to your satisfaction. To achieve this we will:

- Listen to any concerns, problems or criticisms and respond positively; and
- Treat all concerns and complaints seriously and courteously; and
- Deal with any complaint against the school in a fair, open and impartial way, with the aim of achieving a speedy and satisfactory resolution.

## Dealing with a complaint

### Informal resolution

We recognise that dealing with a concern positively when it first arises is in everyone's best interests and can often lead to improvements in school practices and provision for pupils, whilst avoiding more time consuming and potentially stressful formal complaints procedures.

Most concerns can be sorted out quickly by speaking with either the class teacher, a member of the school's administration team, a member of the senior leadership team or, if the matter is more serious, with the Headteacher personally. You can raise your concern in person, in writing, by e-mail or by telephone. It may be necessary to make an appointment to discuss the matter further.

Who you choose to approach is a matter of personal choice, but all staff will make every effort to resolve your concern quickly and efficiently. We will make sure that we understand your concerns, and we will explain the school's



perspective. The aim is to arrive at an amicable and realistic resolution as quickly as possible. We will make a short written record of the concern that has been raised and any actions that have been agreed and give you a copy.

If the matter has not been resolved satisfactorily, you may choose to make a formal complaint to the school authorities.

### Formal resolution

Ivel Valley School operates a three-tier system for investigating and resolving formal complaints.

Stage One	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● You should normally make your complaint in writing and submit it to the Headteacher by email to <a href="mailto:admin@ivelvalley.beds.sch.uk">admin@ivelvalley.beds.sch.uk</a> or by post to Ivel Valley School, Hitchmead Road, Biggleswade, SG18 0NL. Your complaint should explain the nature of the problem and why you feel that the matter has not been satisfactorily resolved.</li> <li>● The complaint will be recorded and we will formally acknowledge receipt within five working days of receiving it. The Headteacher (or delegated member of staff) will either provide a response or contact you to discuss the matter and gather more information.</li> <li>● The Headteacher (or delegated member of staff) will decide whether there is a need to conduct a full investigation into the matter.</li> <li>● As soon as the investigation is complete, the Headteacher will provide a written response to the complaint. We would hope to issue a response within ten working days from receipt of the complaint; however, this may take longer if the matter is particularly complex or if key personnel are absent from school. If there is going to be a delay, we will let you know and explain why.</li> </ul>
Stage Two	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation, you can write to the Chair of Governors at <a href="mailto:clerk@ivelvalley.beds.sch.uk">clerk@ivelvalley.beds.sch.uk</a> or Ivel Valley School, Hitchmead Road, Biggleswade, SG18 0NL. Your letter should explain why you feel that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved.</li> <li>● The complaint will be recorded and we will formally acknowledge receipt within five working days of receiving your letter/email. The Chair of Governors will then either appoint another Governor to investigate the matter or will personally investigate the complaint.</li> <li>● Once the investigation is complete, the Chair of Governors will provide a written response to the complaint. The Chair of Governors would normally hope to respond within fifteen working days of receipt of your letter. If there is any delay, the Chair of Governors will let you know and explain why.</li> </ul>



<b>Stage Three</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Complaints rarely reach Stage Three and are usually resolved amicably long before this; however, if you are still not satisfied, you can request a formal review of the investigation by the Governing Body. You should write to the Clerk to the Governors at <a href="mailto:clerk@ivelvalley.beds.sch.uk">clerk@ivelvalley.beds.sch.uk</a> or send it to Ivel Valley School, Hitchmead Road, Biggleswade, SG18 0NL. The Clerk will acknowledge receipt and invite you to attend a formal review hearing at the school, which will normally take place within 20 working days of receipt of your letter.</li> <li>● At the review hearing, the complaint will be heard by a panel of three governors who have no previous knowledge of the problem and so will be able to give it fresh assessment. You will be invited to speak to the panel and to detail the nature of your complaint. You will also be able to submit evidence or call witnesses in support of your complaint if you wish. The panel may question you to seek further clarification of the detail of your complaint. The panel will also hear representations from the Headteacher and other members of the school staff as appropriate.</li> <li>● The panel will then withdraw to consider its findings and all parties will be notified in writing of the outcome within three working days.</li> <li>● In reaching its decision, the panel can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.</li> <li>○ Uphold the complaint in whole or in part.</li> <li>○ Decide on any appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint.</li> <li>○ Recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● This will bring to a close the school's involvement with the complaint. The decision of the panel is final and the school will consider the matter closed.</li> </ul>
--------------------	---

### Complaints about the Headteacher

Complaints about the Headteacher should be referred direct to the Chair of Governors as outlined in Stage Two, bypassing Stage One.

### Vexatious complaints

Whilst we are committed to the open, fair, impartial and effective resolution of problems, Ivel Valley School and its Governing Body reserves the right to decline to investigate or respond to vexatious complaints which, in our opinion, are designed solely to cause nuisance or mischief.

### Complaints received outside of term time

We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

### Anonymous complaints

Ivel Valley School will not normally respond to anonymous complaints. However, the headteacher or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.



## Complaining to the Secretary of State

If the complainant believes the school did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact the Department for Education after they have completed Stage 2.

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by the school. They will consider whether the school has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint.

The complainant can refer their complaint to the Department for Education online at: [www.education.gov.uk/contactus](http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus), by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:

Department for Education  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD.

## Legal framework & statutory guidance

### Linked policies:

- Whistleblowing Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Dealing with Allegations Procedures
- Admissions Policy
- Behaviour Policy (including Exclusions)
- Staff Discipline and Grievance Policy

## Equalities & inclusion

The school will have due regard for the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty. Any complaints that relate to discrimination or any other aspect of equality legislation will be fully investigated. We will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure e.g. providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

The school will consider the protected characteristics of the subject of the complaint should this be pertinent to the investigation.

## Safeguarding implications

Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.