

Intack Community Primary School — Complaints Policy

Date adopted: January 2026

Review date: January 2027

Approved by: [Governing Body / Headteacher]

This policy follows statutory requirements and best practice for maintained schools in England and aligns with relevant guidance including:

- Education Act 2002 and the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations where applicable,
- Part 7 of the Standards for British Schools Overseas guidance (complaints handling) where relevant,
- DfE guidance on handling complaints about schools,
- Local authority expectations for maintained schools,
- OFSTED and other inspectorate complaint procedures for inspections (as referenced),
- Data protection and confidentiality obligations (UK GDPR & Data Protection Act 2018).

Purpose

- To set out a clear, accessible and fair procedure for making and handling complaints relating to the school.
- To ensure complaints are dealt with promptly, consistently and in a manner that respects confidentiality and dignity of all parties.
- To enable effective resolution of concerns at the earliest possible stage and to learn from complaints so that school provision and relationships improve.

Scope

- This policy covers all complaints relating to the school, including those from parents / carers, pupils, staff, governors and members of the public about school operations, staff, governors or pupils.
- It does not cover staff grievances or disciplinary matters, which have separate procedures; or complaints about statutory assessments (eg SEND EHC assessment), which follow statutory appeal routes.
- This policy also sets out how complaints about an inspection or inspectors should be handled (see appendix / reference to relevant inspectorate procedure).

Principles

- Accessibility: the procedure is simple, publicised and available in writing and electronically. Translation/support offered where needed.

- Early resolution: wherever possible, concerns should be resolved informally by the relevant member of staff.
- Fairness and impartiality: investigations will be objective; people directly involved will not sit on decision-making panels.
- Timeliness: clear timescales for each stage are provided and adhered to (with extensions agreed in writing if necessary).
- Confidentiality: correspondence, statements and records relating to complaints will be kept confidential except where law requires disclosure.
- Record-keeping and learning: written records are maintained, outcomes recorded and senior leaders review trends to implement improvements.

Key definitions

- Complaint: an expression of dissatisfaction requiring a response. (Concerns may be raised informally.)
- Complainant: person making the complaint (parent, pupil, staff member, governor, member of the public).

Who this policy applies to

- Pupils (through parents / carers or as appropriate for older pupils), parents/carers, staff, governors, visitors, and third parties with concerns about the school.

Roles and responsibilities

- Complainant: raises concern promptly and provides necessary information and evidence.
- Member of staff (initial point of contact): listens, records, seeks to resolve informally, escalates if necessary.
- Senior leader oversees informal resolutions and manages formal investigations where required.
- Headteacher: responsible for ensuring complaints procedure is implemented; investigates Stage 2 formal complaints (or delegates investigation but retains oversight); reports outcomes to governors as required.
- Chair of Governors / Complaints Panel Chair: receives final stage requests for panel review; convenes complaints appeal panel when required.
- Complaints Panel: independent (at least one member independent from school management) panel of at least three people not directly involved in the complaint to hear appeals and make findings/recommendations.
- Clerk to the Governors: administrative support, records, convening panel and circulating documentation.
- Governing Body: responsible for maintaining and approving the complaints policy and ensuring fair implementation, reviewing complaints trends and outcomes.

Policy details and procedures

1) Informal stage — raising a concern

Purpose: resolve concerns quickly and at source.

Procedure:

- Complainants are encouraged to speak first to the most appropriate person:
 - For classroom issues: the pupil's class teacher
 - For pastoral concerns: the pupil's class teacher, key stage lead or SENCo (if SEND related)
 - For operational/administrative issues: school office or key stage lead
- The recipient should:
 - Listen carefully, record basic details (date, name, nature of concern).
 - Seek to understand desired outcome.
 - Endeavour to resolve the issue on the spot or arrange to respond within 5 school days.
 - Keep a brief log of the concern and outcome.
- If informal resolution is not possible the complainant should be given a copy of this complaints policy and advised on how to make a formal complaint (Stage 2).

Questions leaders need to answer to personalise this section:

- Who is the named point of contact for informal concerns in each phase / key area?
- What are clear time expectations for a response (e.g. 5 school days)?
- How will the school make this information accessible in other languages / formats?

2) Formal complaint — Stage 1 (written)

Purpose: For issues not resolved informally.

Procedure:

- Submission:
 - Complainant should submit a written complaint (email or letter) to the Headteacher, or if the complaint is about the Headteacher, to the Chair of Governors (contact details published).

- The complaint should be clear about the issue, dates, evidence and desired outcome.
- Acknowledgement:
 - The school will acknowledge receipt in writing within 5 school days, including details of the next steps and anticipated timescale for a full response (suggested maximum 20 school days for investigation and response).
- Investigation:
 - The Headteacher (or a delegated leader not previously involved) will investigate:
 - Review relevant records, interview staff/pupils as appropriate, and consider evidence supplied.
 - Keep written records of interviews, findings and actions.
 - The investigator will provide a written response to the complainant setting out findings, conclusions, any remedial action and whether further escalation is available.
- Outcomes:
 - Complaints may be upheld, partially upheld, or not upheld.
 - Where appropriate the school will offer an apology, explanation, or details of actions to resolve the issue.
 - If conduct requiring disciplinary action is found, this will be dealt with under separate personnel procedures; the complainant will be informed that action has been taken without breaching confidentiality of staff.

Questions leaders need to answer to personalise this section:

- Who will be the default investigator for Stage 1 complaints?
- Where will records of investigations be stored and who will have access?
- What standard letter templates will be used for acknowledgement and outcome?

3) Formal complaint — Stage 2 (Review by Complaints Panel) — Escalation and hearing

Purpose: Independent review where complainant remains dissatisfied after Stage 1.

Policy requirements (aligned to Standards for British Schools Overseas Part 7 and DfE expectations):

- The panel will consist of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. At least one panel member must be independent of the management and running of the school.
- The panel will be convened within 20 school days of receiving the request for escalation (unless an alternative timescale agreed).
- The complainant may attend and be accompanied by a friend or representative; staff complained about may also be accompanied.
- The panel will review written documentation, hear representations, and can interview witnesses.
- The panel will produce written findings and any recommendations, providing a copy to the complainant, the person complained about (where relevant), the Headteacher and the governing body; records are retained on school premises for inspection by governors and headteacher.
- The panel's decision is final as far as the school's procedure is concerned.

Procedure:

- Request for review:
 - Complainant must write to the Chair of Governors within [20 school days] of the Stage 1 outcome, stating grounds for escalation.
- Administration:
 - The Clerk to the Governors will arrange the panel, circulate paperwork at least 5 school days in advance.
- Hearing:
 - Panel chair explains process, both parties present case and questions, panel deliberates in private.
- Decision:
 - Panel issues written findings within 10 school days of hearing, setting out conclusions and recommended actions.

Questions leaders need to answer to personalise this section:

- Who is the Chair of Governors and how should a complainant contact them?
- Who will serve as independent panel members and how will the school ensure independence?
- What timeframe will the school commit to for convening a panel and issuing its findings?

4) Complaints about the Headteacher, Governors or the Governing Body

- Complaints about the Headteacher should be made in writing to the Chair of Governors (who will manage Stage 1 or appoint an investigator). Complaints about the Chair or Governor should be made to the Clerk to the Governors.
- If complainant remains dissatisfied, the process for a panel hearing is the same as Stage 2.

5) Complaints about third parties, contractors or services delivered off-site

- Where the complaint concerns a service or activity provided by a third party, the school will seek to resolve with the provider.
- The complainant will be kept informed of progress; some complaints may need to be referred to the LA or regulatory body.

6) Complaints involving pupils (including pupil complaints)

- Pupils may raise concerns directly or via parents. The school will handle pupil complaints sensitively and in an age-appropriate manner.
- Where the complaint is about another pupil, the school will follow its behaviour, safeguarding and anti-bullying policies and, where appropriate, exclusions guidance.
- Complainants should be reassured that confidentiality and welfare of pupils are paramount; information will be shared on a need-to-know basis.

7) Complaints alleging child protection / safeguarding failures

- If a complaint alleges safeguarding failure, the school's safeguarding procedures take precedence. The school will:
 - Refer to designated safeguarding lead (DSL) immediately,
 - Follow multi-agency safeguarding procedures and LA guidance,
 - Not delay referrals because of a parallel complaints investigation.
- The complainant will be informed of referral actions as appropriate and within safeguarding confidentiality constraints.

8) Complaints about inspections or inspectors

- For concerns about inspections (OFSTED) the school should follow the inspectorate's published complaints process. Complainants are encouraged to raise concerns during the inspection with the lead inspector and then, if unresolved, submit a written complaint to the relevant inspectorate authority within their timescales. (School will support by providing factual information but will not intervene in inspectorate-led processes.)

9) Record-keeping and data protection

- The school will keep a written record of all formal complaints (Stage 1 written complaints and Stage 2 panel hearings), including:

- Nature of complaint, dates, actions taken, outcomes, and whether upheld.
- Actions taken as a result including service improvements.
- Records will be kept securely in line with GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018. Correspondence and records relating to individual complaints are confidential, except where law permits access.
- Retention period: retain records in accordance with the school's retention policy and LA guidance.

10) Anonymous complaints

- Anonymous complaints will be considered at the discretion of the Headteacher and governors, taking into account the seriousness, credibility, availability of evidence and whether investigation is possible.

11) Unreasonable or persistent complaints

- The school will consider whether a complainant's behaviour is unreasonable (eg repeated, abusive, vexatious). In such cases the school may:
 - Require contact through a single nominated staff member,
 - Refuse to engage further until behaviour changes,
 - Take legal advice where threats or libellous allegations arise.
- Decisions to restrict contact will be reviewed periodically.

12) Remedies and redress

- Remedies may include:
 - Apology and explanation,
 - Review of decisions or policies,
 - Corrective actions (training, change of practice),
 - Mediation between parties.
- Where disciplinary action is required against staff, this will be handled confidentially under HR procedures; complainants will be told that action has been taken if appropriate, but not given full details.

13) Monitoring, evaluation and learning

- The Headteacher and governing body will:
 - Monitor complaints log termly to identify patterns/trends,
 - Report anonymously on complaints to governors as part of regular governance reports,
 - Use complaints as a source of school improvement, training and policy review.

- Annual complaints report to governors should include number of complaints, issues raised, outcomes and actions taken.

14) Publicising the policy

- This policy will be:
 - Published on the school website,
 - Available in print on request (and translated or interpreted where required).
- Staff induction will include complaints procedure training and responsibilities.

15) Timescales - summary

- Informal response: within 5 school days
- Acknowledgement of formal complaint: within 5 school days
- Formal investigation outcome (Stage 1): within 20 school days of acknowledgement
- Request for panel: submit within 20 school days of Stage 1 outcome
- Panel convened: within 20 school days of receipt of appeal
- Panel decision: issued within 10 school days of hearing
(Note: timescales are indicative — the school may adjust and must communicate any changes to the complainant.)

16) Review of this policy

- This policy will be reviewed by the Headteacher and governing body annually or sooner if statutory guidance changes.
- All changes must be approved by governors.

Appendices

A. Flowchart of complaint stages (informal → formal → panel)

B. Complaint form (for Stage 1 formal complaints) — to include:

- Complainant name, contact details, relationship to pupil (if relevant)
- Details of complaint (dates, people involved)
- What has been done informally and by whom
- Desired outcome
- Signature and date

C. Template letters: acknowledgement, outcome, invitation to hearing, panel findings

D. Contact details:

- Headteacher: [Mrs Fiona Salisbury, Fiona.salisbury@intack.blackburn.sch.uk, 01254 52815]
- Chair of Governors: [Mr Abdul Qadoos, contact via clerk]
- Clerk to the Governors: [Catherine Caton, catherine.caton@blackburn.gov.uk]
- Local Authority complaints/advice contact: [Tel: 01254 585184 Out of Hours: 01254 587547]

E. Links to relevant procedures and legislation:

- whistleblowing policies
- Safeguarding / child protection policy
- Behaviour policy
- OFSTED complaints:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted/about/complaints-procedure>

F. Special considerations for Intack Community Primary School (contextualisation guidance)

- High EAL, high transience, high deprivation, diverse community:
 - Provide translation and interpretation support proactively when parents require it.
 - Offer multi-channel submission routes (face-to-face, email, phone, translated letter).
 - Hold meetings at flexible times to support working parents.
 - Provide advocacy support (e.g., family liaison officer) where appropriate.
 - Ensure cultural sensitivity and impartiality in investigations; involve community liaison where appropriate without compromising impartiality.
- Pupil voice: include how pupil concerns will be captured (school council, mentoring, pastoral leads).



- Accessibility for families with limited literacy: offer to complete complaint form on their behalf when requested.

Complaints Form

Please complete and return The Headteacher who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:
Pupil's name (if relevant):
Address:
Day telephone number: Evening telephone number:
Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it.
What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.
Signature:
Date:
Official use:
Date acknowledgement sent:
By who:
Complaint referred to:

Review and approval

- Policy reviewed by: [Fiona Salisbury] on [date]
- Approved by governors: [Abdul Qadoos] on [date]
- Next review date: [January 2027]