

COMPLAINTS POLICY



HARTFORD
CHURCH OF ENGLAND
HIGH SCHOOL

Mission Statement:

Our mission at Hartford Church of England High School is to provide an outstanding, inclusive and ambitious education for all. Children develop and thrive both within and beyond the classroom. They are known, with their talents embraced and promoted. They develop into young people who will make a substantial contribution to the world. They enjoy an education rooted in a shared set of Christian values that radiate the love and truth of Jesus Christ.

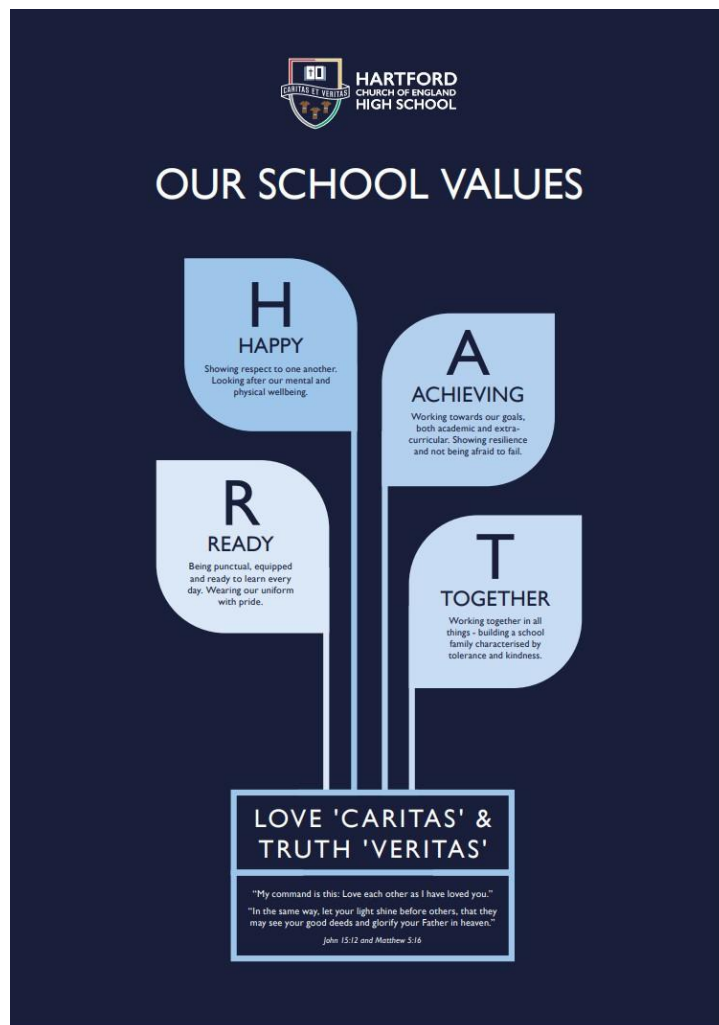
Everything we do at Hartford Church of England High School as students, staff, Governors and wider stakeholders, centres on the core values of our school:

Happy: Showing respect to one another. Looking after our mental and physical wellbeing.

Achieving: Working towards our goals, both academic and extra-curricular. Showing resilience and not being afraid to fail.

Ready: Being punctual, equipped and ready to learn every day. Wearing our uniform with pride.

Together: Working together in all things - building a school family characterised by tolerance and kindness.



"My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you."

"In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."

John 15:12 and Matthew 5:16

Equally, the educational offer at Hartford Church of England High School is based on the Church of England's four key principles for education:

- Educating for wisdom, knowledge and skills
- Educating for hope and aspiration
- Educating for community and living well together
- Educating for dignity and respect

The Complaints Policy for Hartford Church of England High School fully embodies our values, our mission statement and the key principles for education set out by the Church of England.

Contents

Section	Page
1. Aims	4
2. Legal Framework	4
3. Definitions	4-5
4. Making a Complaint	5
5. Complaints procedure for members of the school community	5-8
6. Complaints procedure for members of the public outside of the school community	8-9
7. Governors' Complaints Panel (GCP)	9-11
a. Independent Complaints Panel (ICP)	9-10
b. Governors' Complaints Panel (GCP) Procedure	10-11
c. Appeal Procedure	11
8. Complaints about Governors	11-12
9. Recording a complaint	12
10. Complaints not covered by this Policy	12-13
11. Exceptional circumstances	13
12. Managing serial and unreasonable complaints	13-14
13. Complaints campaigns	14-15
14. Barring from the premises	15
15. Standard of fluency complaints	15-16
16. Monitoring and review	16
17. Flow charts	16-19
a. Complaints procedure for members of the school community	16-18
b. Complaints procedure for members of the public outside of the school community	19

1. Aims

Hartford Church of England High School aims to resolve all complaints at the earliest possible stage, and where possible, informally, and is dedicated to continuing to provide the highest quality of education possible throughout the procedure.

This policy has been created to deal with any complaint against a member of staff or the school as a whole. It is designed to ensure that the school's complaints procedure is straightforward, impartial, non-adversarial, allows a full and fair investigation, respects confidentiality and delivers an effective response and appropriate redress.

This policy outlines the procedure that the complainant and school must follow. Once a complaint has been made, it can be resolved or withdrawn at any stage.

2. Legal Framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation including, but not limited to, the following:

- The Freedom of Information Act 2000
- The Education Act 2002
- The Education (Pupil Information) (England) Regulations 2005
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Immigration Act 2016
- The School Information (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016
- The UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
- The Data Protection Act 2018

This policy also has due regard to guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- HM Government (2016) 'Code of Practice on the English language requirement for public sector workers'
- Department for Education (2021) 'Best practice guidance for school complaints procedures 2020'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies and procedures:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour and Attitudes Policy
- Suspension and Exclusion Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Parent Code of Conduct
- Staff Code of Conduct

3. Definitions

For the purpose of this policy:

A **"complaint"** may be generally recognised as an expression or statement of dissatisfaction about actions taken or a lack of action.

A **"concern"** may be treated as an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important, and for which reassurances are sought.

"Members of the school community" refers to all staff, students, their parents and carers and Governors.

The school will class concerns as complaints and follow the same procedures for both, as outlined within this policy.

Complaints can be resolved formally, through this procedure, or informally dependent on the stage of the complaint. Any complaint or concern will be taken seriously, whether formally or informally, and appropriate procedures will be implemented.

The definition of “**unreasonable complaints**” is outlined in the ‘Managing serial and unreasonable complaints’ section of this policy.

For the purpose of this policy, “**duplicate complaints**” are identical complaints received from a complainant’s spouse, partner, grandparent or child. These complaints will not be addressed again, the individual making the second complaint will be informed that the complaint has been dealt with by the school and if they are dissatisfied with the result, they can appeal to the Department for Education. Any new details provided by a complainant’s spouse, partner, grandparent or child, will be investigated and dealt with in line with the complaint’s procedure.

4. Making a Complaint

The school will consider all complaints, providing they are not anonymous, and ensure that the Complaints Policy is:

- Easily accessible and publicised on its website.
- Simple to understand and put into practice.
- Impartial, non-adversarial and fair to all parties involved.
- Respectful of confidentiality duties.
- Continuously evaluated.
- Used to address all issues to provide appropriate and effective redress where necessary.

Complaints are expected to be made as soon as possible after an incident arises to address the issue in an appropriate timescale. The school upholds a three calendar month time limit in which a complaint can be lodged regarding an incident. Complaints made outside this time limit will automatically be refused unless there are exceptional circumstances.

The complainant will:

- Cooperate with the school in seeking a solution to the complaint.
- Express the complaint and their concerns in full at the earliest possible opportunity.
- Promptly respond to any requests for information or meetings.
- Ask for assistance as needed.
- Treat any person(s) involved in the complaint with respect.
- Throughout the process of a complaint, demonstrate our school values.

5. Complaints procedure for members of the school community

The school is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain. During a school term, complainants should expect an initial response acknowledging receipt of the concern raised, within two working days of making a complaint. Complainants cannot expect an initial response during school holidays, at the weekends or out of school hours; this includes INSET days when all staff participate in continuous professional development.

There are 6 stages to the school’s complaints procedure for members of the school community, as detailed below. At each of stages 1 to 5, the school aims to resolve complaints within 15 school days of a complaint being made. This may involve the complainant, and an appropriate member of staff discussing the issue in a respectful and informal manner to seek a mutual resolution. If this occurs, notes will be taken during this discussion;

recordings of meetings will not be permitted unless the consent is obtained from all parties. Information about a complaint will not be disclosed to a third party without the written consent of the complainant.

At all stages, the complaint investigator will:

- Ensure that all parties involved in the complaint are fully updated as to the progress of any investigations and subsequent outcome.
- Keep up-to-date records whilst investigating the complaint.
- Liaise with all parties involved to ensure the complaints procedure runs smoothly, including relevant members of staff, the Headteacher, the Clerk to Governors and the Chair of governors, as applicable.
- Ensure, where the complainant is dissatisfied with the response, they are allowed to escalate it to the next stage.
- Be aware of issues with regard to GDPR.
- Understand the complainant's need for any additional support, including interpretation support, and be aware of any issues concerning this.
- Throughout the process of a complaint, demonstrate our school values.

The Headteacher, where appropriate and dependent on previous stages of the complaint's procedure, will:

- Appoint an appropriate school leader to carry out the complaints procedure.
- Consider all records, evidence and relevant information provided and analyse all information in a comprehensive and fair manner.
- Liaise with the complainant, the complaint investigator and the Headteacher's PA to assist in determining an appropriate resolution to the problem.
- Identify and recommend solutions and courses of actions to take.
- Be mindful of timescales and ensure all parties involved are aware of these timescales.
- Respond to the complainant in a clear and understandable manner. Complainants should be aware that the Headteacher's PA may represent the Headteacher in this and/or liaise in this process.

At each formal stage of the complaint's procedure, where reasonable attempts have been made to accommodate the complainant with dates for a meeting and they refuse or are unable to attend, a meeting will be convened in their absence and a conclusion will be reached in the interests of drawing the complaint to a close. The complainant will then be informed of the outcome.

Where a complaint is made under the formal stages 4, 5 or 6, the school may manage this complaint via HR processes, the outcome of which the complainant will not be informed.

The complainant has a right to withdraw their complaint at any stage without prejudice.

Stage 1: (Informal) General welfare concerns made to a Head of Year or Head of Department

Where a complainant wishes to raise a general complaint, they should contact the relevant Head of Year (for pastoral concerns) or the relevant Head of Department (for educational subject concerns) in the first instance.

A list of the Heads of Year and Heads of Department can be found on the school's website. Heads of Year and Heads of Department can be contacted via parentshart@hartfordhigh.co.uk (ensuring that the email specifies that this is a Stage 1 complaint and contains the name of the relevant Head of Year or Head of Department from whom the complainant expects to receive a response) or by telephone (01606 786000), or in person (with an appointment).

Stage 2: (Informal) General welfare concerns not resolved under Stage 1, made to a Head of Key Stage or SLT Department Line Manager

Where a Stage 1 complaint has been made to a Head of Year or Head of Department and is deemed by the complainant not to have been resolved, the complainant may escalate the complaint to the relevant Head of Key

Stage (for pastoral concerns) or to the relevant Senior Leadership Team (hereafter “the SLT”) Department Line Manager (for educational subject concerns).

A list of the Heads of Key Stage and the SLT Department Line Managers can be found on the school’s website. Heads of Key Stage and SLT Department Line Managers can be contacted via parentshart@hartfordhigh.co.uk (ensuring that the email specifies that this is a Stage 2 complaint and contains the name of the relevant Head of Key Stage or SLT Department Line Manager from whom the complainant expects to receive a response) or by telephone (01606 786000), or in person (with an appointment).

Stage 3: (Formal) General welfare concerns not resolved under Stages 1 or 2, made to the SLT, or complaints regarding the conduct of members of staff, excluding complaints regarding the conduct of a member of the school’s SLT

- (1) Where a Stage 1 or 2 complaint has been made and is deemed by the complainant not to have been resolved, the complainant may escalate the complaint to a member of the SLT via the Headteacher’s PA. The Headteacher’s PA will make the Headteacher aware of the complaint and the Headteacher will decide which member of the SLT to whom the complaint should be passed. The Headteacher’s PA will then pass the complaint to the member of the SLT identified by the Headteacher and will notify the complainant of the identity of the member of the SLT to whom the complaint has been passed. The member of the SLT will then contact the complainant to discuss the matter further.
- (2) Where a complainant wishes to raise a concern regarding the conduct of a member of staff, excluding a complaint regarding the conduct of a member of the school’s SLT, they must do so to the Headteacher directly via the Headteacher’s PA. The Headteacher’s PA will pass the complaint to the Headteacher. The Headteacher will determine who is the most appropriate member of the school’s SLT to manage the complaint. This senior member of staff will then contact the complainant to discuss the matter further.

The Headteacher’s PA can be contacted via head@hartfordhigh.co.uk or by telephone (01606 786000), or in writing. The complainant must specify that this is a Stage 3 complaint.

Stage 4: (Formal) General welfare concerns not resolved under Stages 1, 2 and 3, made to the Deputy Headteacher, or complaints regarding the conduct of members of the school’s SLT, excluding complaints regarding the conduct of the Deputy Headteacher

- (1) Where a complaint has been made under Stages 1, 2 and 3 above, and is still deemed by the complainant not to have been resolved, the complainant may escalate the complaint to the Deputy Headteacher via the Headteacher’s PA. The Headteacher’s PA will pass the complaint to the Deputy Headteacher to manage. The Deputy Headteacher will then contact the complainant to discuss the matter further.
- (2) Where a complainant wishes to raise a concern regarding the conduct of a member of the school’s SLT, excluding the Deputy Headteacher, they must do so to the Headteacher directly via the Headteacher’s PA. The Headteacher’s PA will pass the complaint to the Headteacher. The Headteacher will then liaise with the Deputy Headteacher who will contact the complainant to discuss the matter further.

The Headteacher’s PA can be contacted via head@hartfordhigh.co.uk or by telephone (01606 786000), or in writing. The complainant must specify that this is a Stage 4 complaint.

Stage 5: (Formal) General welfare concerns not resolved under Stages 1, 2, 3 and 4, or complaints regarding the conduct of the Deputy Headteacher

- (1) Where a complaint has been made under Stages 1, 2, 3 and 4 above, and is deemed by the complainant not to have been resolved, the complainant may escalate the complaint to be dealt with directly by the Headteacher, via the Headteacher’s PA.
- (2) Where a complainant wishes to raise a concern regarding the conduct of the Deputy Headteacher, they must do so to the Headteacher directly via the Headteacher’s PA.

The Headteacher's PA can be contacted via head@hartfordhigh.co.uk or by telephone (01606 786000), or in writing. The complainant must specify that this is a Stage 5 complaint. The Headteacher's PA will pass the complaint to the Headteacher. The Headteacher will then manage the complaint and will contact the complainant to discuss the matter further.

Stage 6: (Formal) Concerns not resolved under Stages 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, or complaints regarding the conduct of the Headteacher

- (1) Where a complaint has been made under stages 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 is deemed by the complainant not to have been resolved, the complainant may escalate the complaint to be dealt with directly by the Chair of Governors, via the Clerk to the Governing Board.
- (2) Where a complainant wishes to raise a concern regarding the conduct of the Headteacher, they must do so to the Chair of Governors directly via the Clerk to the Governing Board.

The Clerk to the Governing Board can be contacted via email jwhite@hartfordhigh.co.uk or in writing. The Chair of Governors will then manage the complaint and will contact the complainant to discuss the matter further.

Where a complaint is made under Stage 6 of the procedure, the Chair of Governors will always seek to identify appropriate actions to take to resolve the matter. Such actions may include reviewing all evidence in relation to the matter as provided by the school and the complainant, initially meeting with the complainant and/or providing appropriate mediation between them and the school. Where it is deemed necessary to convene a Governor's Complaints Panel, or a request has been made by the complainant in writing to the Clerk of the Governing Board for a complaints panel to be convened, every effort will be made to ensure that this is convened within 20 school days. The Chair of Governors does not form part of the Governors' Complaints Panel.

6. Complaints procedure for members of the public outside of the school community

Stage 1: (Informal)

Where a complainant wishes to raise a concern, they must do so to the Headteacher directly via the Headteacher's PA.

The Headteacher's PA can be contacted via head@hartfordhigh.co.uk or by telephone (01606 786000), or in writing. The complaint must specify that this is a Stage 1 complaint. The Headteacher will then determine who is the most appropriate member of the school's Middle Leadership Team (hereafter "MLT") to manage the complaint. This member of staff will contact the complainant to discuss the matter further.

Stage 2: (Informal)

Where a complaint has been made under Stage 1 and is deemed by the complainant not to have been resolved, the complainant may escalate the complaint to be dealt with by a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT).

Where a complainant wishes to escalate a complaint to Stage 2, they must do so to the Headteacher directly via the Headteacher's PA.

The Headteacher's PA can be contacted via head@hartfordhigh.co.uk or by telephone (01606 786000), or in writing. The complainant must specify that this is a Stage 2 complaint. The Headteacher will then determine who is the most appropriate member of the school's SLT to manage the complaint. This senior member of staff will contact the complainant to discuss the matter further.

Stage 3: (Formal)

Where a complaint has been made under Stages 1 and 2 above, and is deemed by the complainant not to have been resolved, the complainant may escalate the complaint to be dealt with by the Deputy Headteacher.

Where a complainant wishes to escalate a complaint to Stage 3, they must do so to the Headteacher directly via the Headteacher's PA.

The Headteacher's PA can be contacted via head@hartfordhigh.co.uk or by telephone (01606 786000), or in writing. The complainant must specify that this is a Stage 3 complaint. The Headteacher's PA will pass the complaint to the Deputy Headteacher. The Deputy Headteacher will then manage the complaint and will contact the complainant to discuss the matter further.

Stage 4: (Formal)

Where a complaint has been made under Stages 1, 2 and 3 above, and is deemed by the complainant not to have been resolved, the complainant may escalate the complaint to be dealt with directly by the Headteacher, via the Headteacher's PA.

The Headteacher's PA can be contacted via head@hartfordhigh.co.uk or by telephone (01606 786000), or in writing. The complainant must specify that this is a Stage 4 complaint. The Headteacher will then manage the complaint and will contact the complainant to discuss the matter further.

Stage 5: (Formal)

Where a complaint is deemed by the complainant not to have been resolved under Stages 1, 2, 3 or 4 above, the complainant may escalate the complaint to be dealt with directly by the Chair of Governors, via the Clerk to the Governing Board.

The Clerk to the Governing Board can be contacted via email jwhite@hartfordhigh.co.uk or in writing. The Chair of Governors will then manage the complaint and will contact the complainant to discuss the matter further.

Where a complaint is made under Stage 5 of the procedure, the Chair of Governors will always seek to identify appropriate actions to take to resolve the matter. Such actions may include reviewing all evidence in relation to the matter as provided by the school and the complainant, initially meeting with the complainant and/or providing appropriate mediation between them and the school.

7. Governors' Complaints Panel (GCP)

Where it is deemed necessary to convene a Governor's Complaints Panel (hereafter "GCP"), or a request has been made by the complainant in writing to the Clerk of the Governing Board for a GCP to be convened, every effort will be made to ensure that this is convened within 20 school days. The Chair of Governors does not form part of the GCP.

The Chair of Governors, or another nominated Governor, will convene a GCP, comprising of three members of the Governing Board.

7a. Independent Complaints Panel (ICP)

If the whole Governing Board is aware of the substance of a complaint before the GCP has been convened, an Independent Complaints Panel (hereafter "ICP") will be arranged to hear the complaint.

If the complainant believes there is likely to be bias in the proceedings, they reserve the right to request an ICP. Complainants should provide evidence to support their request. Where the appearance of bias is sufficient to taint the decision reached, the request will likely be granted by the Governing Board.

To appoint a Governor from another school onto an ICP, the Governing Board does not have to enter into, or already be in, a formal arrangement under the School Governance (Collaboration) (England) Regulations 2003.

7b. Governors' Complaints Panel (GCP) Procedure

Prior to the GCP hearing, the Clerk to the Governing Board will write to all parties informing them of how the hearing will be conducted. At least five working days before the GCP hearing, all parties must provide any evidence to be considered by the GCP to the Clerk to the Governing Board. This evidence will then be circulated by the Clerk to the Governing Board to all those who will be attending the hearing.

At the GCP hearing, all participants will be given the opportunity to put their case across and discuss any issues.

The GCP will consider issues raised in the original complaint and any issues which have been highlighted during the complaint's procedure.

The GCP hearing will allow for:

- The complainant to be present (accompanied if they wish).
- The complainant to explain their complaint and the Headteacher to explain the reasons for their decision.
- The complainant to question the Headteacher, and vice versa, about the complaint.
- Any evidence, including evidence from witnesses whose attendance in person at the GCP hearing has been pre-approved by the Chair of the GCP.
- Members of the GCP to question the complainant, the Headteacher and any witnesses attending in person.
- Final statements to be made by all parties involved.

Neither the school, nor the complainant, should bring any legal representation to the GCP hearing. However, there are occasions where legal representation may be appropriate, e.g. where a school employee is a witness in a complaint, they may be entitled to bring union or legal representation.

Throughout the course of the GCP procedure detailed above, the Clerk to the Governing Board will:

- Continuously liaise with all parties.
- Set the date, time and venue of the hearing (including any short adjournments of the hearing, if required), ensuring that this is appropriate, convenient and accessible to all parties involved.
- Collate all written material and/or evidence for the consideration of the GCP at the hearing and ensure that copies of all the written material and/or evidence is sent to all parties five working days prior to the hearing.
- Liaise with the GCP prior to the hearing regarding any requests for a witness or witnesses to give evidence at the hearing in person and notify all the parties of any such request.
- Notify all parties, at least five working days prior to the hearing, of the GCP's decision regarding any request for a witness or witnesses to give evidence at the hearing in person.
- Take minutes at the GCP hearing.
- Ensure that the minutes of the GCP hearing are circulated to all parties.
- Notify all relevant parties of the GCP's decision and any other actions to be taken.

The Governors' Panel Chair will:

- Ensure that minutes of GCP hearing are taken.
- Explain the remit of the GCP to the complainant.
- Ensure that all issues are addressed and that outcomes are reached based on facts and evidence
- Be empathetic to all parties at the hearing.
- Conduct the hearing in a non-adversarial manner, ensuring that everyone is treated with respect and courtesy.
- Confirm that no member of the GCP has previously been involved in the earlier stages of the procedure or has an external interest in the outcome of the GCP.

- Give both the complainant and the school the opportunity to state their case and seek clarity without undue interruption.
- Ensure, via the Clerk to the Governing Board, that copies of any written material or evidence have been circulated to everyone in attendance of the hearing, ensuring that everyone has seen the necessary material.
- Organise a short adjournment of the hearing if required.
- Continuously liaise with the Clerk to the Governing Board, to ensure that the hearing runs smoothly.

All GCP members will be aware that:

- The GCP hearing is independent and impartial.
- No individual with prior involvement in the complaint, or the circumstances surrounding it, is permitted to sit on the GCP.
- The aim of the GCP is to achieve a reasonable resolution and, ultimately, attain a harmonious reconciliation between the parties involved.
- Reconciliation between the school and complainant is not always achievable, and it may only be possible to establish facts and make recommendations to reassure the complainant that their case has been taken seriously.

The GCP can:

- Dismiss or uphold the complaint, in whole or in part.
- Decide on appropriate action to be taken.
- Recommend changes that the school can make to prevent reoccurrence of the matter.

The outcome of the GCP hearing and any associated recommendations will be confirmed to all parties in formal written correspondence by the Clerk to the Governing Board within 15 school days. This response will also explain whether there are any further rights of appeal and to whom they need to be addressed.

7c. Appeal Procedure

If a complainant has exhausted the school's process, and the GCP procedure, but remains dissatisfied, they have the right to refer their complaint to the Secretary of State using the online form or in writing to:

Ministerial and Public Communications Division
Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

There are exceptional circumstances to when the complaints procedure applies. These are outlined in the 'Exceptional Circumstances' section of this policy.

The Secretary of State has a duty to consider all complaints raised but will only intervene where the governing board has acted unlawfully or unreasonably and where it is expedient or practical to do so. In this case, the word "unreasonably" is used in a strict sense and means acting in a way that no reasonable school or governing board could act in the circumstances.

8. Complaints about Governors

Complaints may be made against:

- The Chair of Governors.
- The Vice Chair of Governors.

- Any other member of the Governing Board.
- The Governing Board as a whole.

These complaints should be made to the Clerk to the Governing Board, who will then arrange for the complaint to be heard.

For complaints about the entire Governing Board, or the Chair or Vice Chair of Governors, the Clerk to Governors will determine the most appropriate course of action, depending on the nature of the complaint. This action may involve sourcing an independent investigator to initially deal with the complaint and then getting the complaint to be heard by co-opted governors from another school.

Under some circumstances, it may be necessary to deviate from the complaints procedure. Any deviation will be documented, along with the reasons.

9. Recording a complaint

A written record will be kept of any complaint made at stages 3 or above detailing:

- The main issues raised, the findings and any recommendations.
- Whether the complaint was resolved.
- Actions taken by the school as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint was upheld).

The school will not accept, as evidence, any recordings or evidence that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

Details of any complaint made will not be shared with the entire Governing Board. The exception to this is when a complaint is made against the whole Governing Board and they need to be aware of the allegations made against them, to respond to any independent investigation.

The school will hold all records of complaints at stages 3 and above centrally. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection request to access them.

As data controllers, the schools will ensure in all cases that they comply with their obligations and responsibilities as outlined in the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK GDPR.

10. Complaints not covered by this Policy

There are a variety of areas where this Complaints Policy does not apply because of other separate statutory procedures being in place. The school will deal with complaints regarding these topics in line with the procedures outlines below.

The following complaints should be directed to Cheshire West and Chester Local Authority:

- Statutory assessments of SEND.
- School reorganisation proposals.
- Admissions to schools.

Complaints about child protection matters will be handled in line with the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.

Complaints regarding admissions will be managed in accordance with the school's Admissions Policy.

Complaints regarding suspensions will be dealt with in accordance with procedures outlined in the school's Suspension and Exclusion Policy.

The school has an internal whistleblowing procedure for all employees, including contractors and temporary staff, as outlined in the Whistleblowing Policy.

Volunteers who have concerns about the school or a member of staff should make their complaint in line with this Complaints Policy or relevant statutory guidance.

Staff grievances and disciplinary procedures will be dealt with in line with the school's Grievance and Dignity at Work Policies.

This Complaints Policy is not to be used when addressing any complaints made about services provided by a third party who may use the school premises or facilities. In the case of complaints regarding a third party, a complaint should be made directly to their organisation following their complaints procedures.

Complaints about the content of the national curriculum should be made to the Department for Education. Complaints about how the school delivers the daily acts of collective worship or the curriculum, including RE and RSE and PSHE, will be dealt with using this complaints procedure.

Complaints from parents who are dissatisfied with the handling of a request to withdraw their child from RE, or collective worship will be handled in line with this complaint's procedure. However, in sending their child to a Church of England school, parents and carers are agreeing to support the school's Church of England foundation and ethos.

11. Exceptional circumstances

The Department for Education, Diocesan Board of Education and Cheshire West and Chester Local Authority expect complainants to have completed the school's complaints procedure before directing a complaint to them. The exceptions to this include when:

- Students are at risk of harm.
- Students are missing education
- A complainant is being prevented from having their complaint progress through the school's complaints procedure.
- The Department for Education has evidence that the school is proposing to act or is acting unlawfully or unreasonably

If a complainant commences legal action against the school in relation to their complaint, the school will normally suspend the complaints procedure, until those legal proceedings have been concluded.

12. Managing serial and unreasonable complaints

The school will not normally limit the contact complainants have with it. However, the school will not expect staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

A complaint may be regarded as unreasonable when the person making the complaint:

- Is anonymous. Any anonymous complaint will be disregarded and will not receive a response.
- Refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance.
- Refuses to cooperate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved.

- Refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaints procedure.
- Insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice.
- Introduces trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant expects to be taken into account and commented on, or raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales.
- Makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues and seeks to have them replaced.
- Changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds.
- Repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed).
- Refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaints procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education.
- Seeks an unrealistic outcome.
- Makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with.
- Uses threats to intimidate.
- Uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence.
- Knowingly provides falsified information.
- Publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

Complainants should limit the numbers of communications with a school while a complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text) as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking.

If the behaviour continues, the Headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and asking them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact the school causing a significant level of disruption, the school may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will usually be reviewed after six months.

A decision to stop responding will only be considered in circumstances where the following statements are true:

- Every reasonable step has been taken to address the complainant's concerns.
- The complainant has been given a clear statement of the school's position and their options.
- The complainant contacts the school repeatedly, making substantially the same points each time.

If the above criteria are met, in making a decision to stop responding the school will also consider if the complainant is often abusive or aggressive in their communication, makes insulting personal comments about staff or threats towards them, and if the school believes their intent is to disrupt or inconvenience the school.

The school will not stop responding to a complainant on the basis that they are difficult to deal with, or they ask complex questions.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the concerns and actions taken will be put in writing immediately and the police informed. This may include banning an individual from the premises.

13. Complaints campaigns

For the purposes of this policy, "**complaints campaigns**" are where the school receives large volumes of complaints that are all based on the same subject.

Where the school becomes the subject of a complaints campaign from complainants who are not connected with the school, legal advice and guidance on an appropriate response will be sought. If the school receives a large number of complaints about the same subject from complainants who are connected to the school, e.g. parents, each complainant will receive an individual response and general correspondence may also be sent to members of the school community.

If complainants remain dissatisfied with the school's response, they will be directed to the Department for Education.

14. Barring from the premises

The school premises is private property and therefore any individual may be barred from entering the premises.

If an individual's behaviour is cause for concern, the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher or Chair of Governors will ask the individual to leave the premises.

The Headteacher and Chair of Governors will notify the parties involved in writing, explaining that their implied licence for access to the premises has been temporarily revoked and why, subject to any representations that the individual may wish to make.

The individual will be informed of how long the bar will be in place, and when the decision will be reviewed.

Anyone wishing to make a complaint regarding a barring order can do so in writing, including email, to the Headteacher and Chair of Governors. Once the school's complaints procedure is completed, the only remaining avenue of appeal is through the Courts.

15. Standard of fluency complaints

As members of a public authority, all staff are subject to the fluency duty imposed by the Immigration Act 2016, which requires staff members to have an appropriate level of fluency in English in order to teach pupils.

The school is free to determine the level of spoken communication necessary in order for staff members to develop effective performance, but it will be matched to the demands of the role in question.

The school will be satisfied that an individual has the necessary level of fluency appropriate for the role they will be undertaking, whether this is an existing or potential new member of staff. If a member of the school community feels that a staff member has insufficient proficiency in spoken English for the performance of their role, they are required to follow the complaints procedure outlined in the 'Complaints procedure for members of the school community' section of this policy.

For the purpose of this policy, a "legitimate complaint" is one which is about the standard of spoken English of a member of staff; complaints regarding an individual's accent, dialect, manner or tone of communication are not considered legitimate complaints.

All legitimate complaints regarding the fluency duty will be handled in line with the processes outlined in this policy.

In addition to the processes outlined in this policy, the school will assess the merits of a legitimate complaint against the necessary standard of spoken English fluency required for the role in question. To assess the merits, the school will undertake an objective assessment against clear criteria set out in the role specification or, against the level of fluency descriptors relevant to the role in question. If the complaint is upheld, the school will consider what action is necessary to meet the fluency duty; this may include:

- Specific training.
- Specific retraining.
- Assessment.
- Redeployment.
- Dismissal.

Appropriate support will be provided to staff to ensure that they are protected from vexatious complaints and are not subjected to unnecessary fluency testing.

I 6. Monitoring and review

The complaints procedure will be reviewed annually, taking into account any legislative changes and the latest guidance issued by the Department for Education.

Responsibility for reviewing the procedure belongs to the Governors' Finance and Resources Committee. All projected review dates will be adhered to.

Information gathered through reviewing the complaints procedure will be used to continuously improve and develop the process.

The monitoring and reviewing of complaints will be used to help evaluate the school's performance.

I 7. Flow charts

I 7a. Complaints procedure for members of the school community

- Complaints regarding the general welfare or education of a student – start at Stage 1.
- Complaints regarding the conduct of a member of staff, excluding the school's SLT, the Deputy Headteacher and/or the Headteacher – start at Stage 3.
- Complaints regarding the conduct of the Deputy Headteacher – start at Stage 4.
- Complaints regarding the conduct of the Headteacher - start at Stage 5.

Stage 1 (Informal)

Contact relevant Head of Year (for pastoral concerns) or Head of Department (for educational subject concerns) via parentshart@hartfordhigh.co.uk



Stage 2 (Informal)

Escalate complaint to either Head of Key Stage (for pastoral concerns) or a Senior Leadership Team Department Line Manager (for educational subject concerns) via parentshart@hartfordhigh.co.uk for resolution.



Stage 3 (Formal)

- (1) Complaint unresolved at Stages 1 or 2 - Escalate to a member of the school's Senior Leadership Team (SLT) via the Headteacher's PA (head@hartfordhigh.co.uk) for resolution.
- (2) Complaint regarding the conduct of a member of staff, excluding a member of the school's SLT, the Deputy Headteacher and/or the Headteacher – Escalate to a member of the school's SLT via the Headteacher's PA (head@hartfordhigh.co.uk) for resolution.



Stage 4 (Formal)

- (1) Complaint unresolved at Stages 1, 2 or 3 – Escalate to the Deputy Headteacher via the Headteacher's PA (head@hartfordhigh.co.uk) for resolution.
- (2) Complaint regarding the conduct of a member of the school's SLT- Escalate to the Deputy Headteacher via the Headteacher's PA (head@hartfordhigh.co.uk) for resolution.



Stage 5 (Formal)

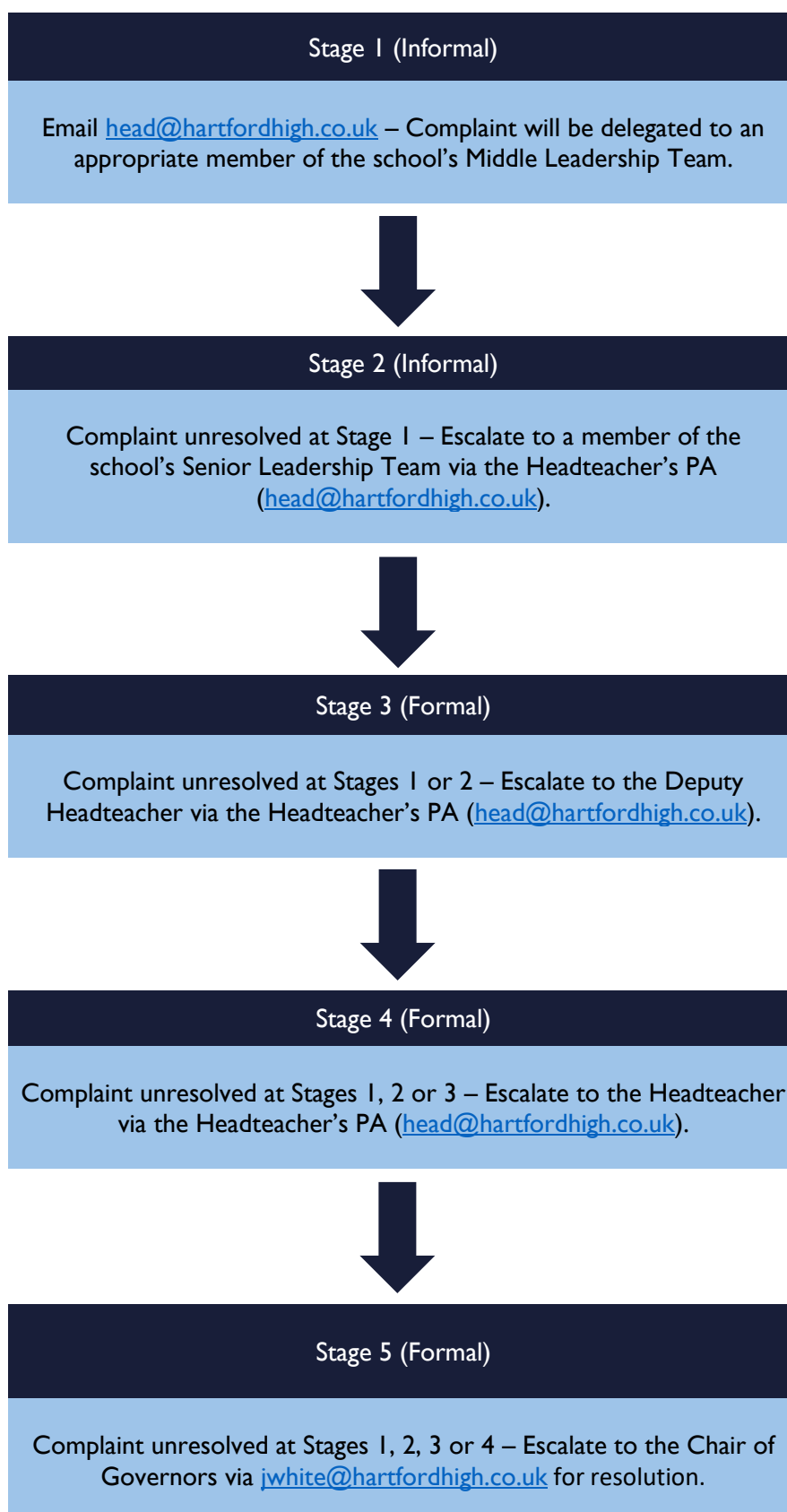
- (1) Complaint unresolved at Stages 1, 2, 3 or 4 – Escalate to the Headteacher via the Headteacher's PA (head@hartfordhigh.co.uk) for resolution.
- (2) Complaint regarding the conduct of the Deputy Headteacher - Escalate to the Headteacher via the Headteacher's PA (head@hartfordhigh.co.uk) for resolution.



Stage 6 (Formal)

- (1) Complaint unresolved at Stages 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5 – Escalate to the Chair of Governors via jwhite@hartfordhigh.co.uk for resolution.
- (2) Complaint regarding the conduct of the Headteacher – Escalate to the Chair of Governors via jwhite@hartfordhigh.co.uk for resolution.

17b. Complaints procedure for members of the public outside of the school community



Date approved by Governing Board: 06/10/2025

Applicable from: 06/10/2025

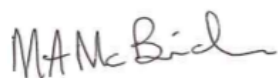
Signed by

Headteacher:



Date: 06/10/2025

Chair of Governors:



Date: 06/10/2025