

GLC COMPLAINTS POLICY

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| This policy was ratified by the GLC Board of Directors on | Spring 2026 |
| This Policy will be reviewed by the GLC Board on : | Spring 2027 |

GLC Mission Statement

The GLC's mission is to develop active and thriving citizens within a diverse, truly fair and equal community.

This will be achieved through:

- High quality teaching that deliberately develops competencies of curiosity, creativity, communication and critical-thinking;
- An inspiring and meaningful curriculum;
- The development of productive relationships by instilling the values of compassion, resilience, responsibility and aspiration to prepare our young people for learning and life;
- A commitment to the wellbeing of our staff;
- A culture of professional generosity, collaboration, challenge and support throughout the GLC;
- The development of effective external partnerships for the benefit and wellbeing of our community.

Equalities Statement

The GLC's commitment to equality is enshrined in our mission statement to develop 'active and thriving citizens within a diverse, truly fair and equal community'.

We are a vibrant, innovative and successful organisation: we work hard to be the place of choice to work and to learn. Across the 5 academies of the GLC, we pledge that everyone enjoys an equality of opportunity. We work tirelessly to ensure that individual characteristics including age, ethnicity, socio-economic background, academic ability, disability, gender, religious beliefs, sexual orientation are not discriminated against in any way. We create inclusive environments characterised by mutual respect where difference is celebrated.

The GLC Complaints Policy

1. Aims

The GLC aims to meet its statutory obligations when responding to complaints from parents of pupils at the GLC academies.

When responding to complaints, we aim to:

- Be impartial and non-adversarial;
- Facilitate a full and fair investigation by an independent person or panel, where necessary;
- Address all the points at issue and provide an effective and prompt response;
- Respect complainants' desire for confidentiality;
- Treat complainants with respect and courtesy;
- Ensure that any decisions we make are lawful, rational, reasonable, fair and proportionate, in line with the principles of administrative law;
- Keep complainants informed of the progress of the complaints process;
- Consider how the complaint can feed into academy improvement evaluation processes.

We try to resolve concerns or complaints by informal means wherever possible. Where this is not possible, formal procedures will be followed.

The academy will aim to give the complainant the opportunity to complete the complaints procedure in full. To support this, we will ensure we publicise the existence of this policy and make it available on the academy website.

Throughout the process, we will be sensitive to the needs of all parties involved, and make any reasonable adjustments needed to accommodate individuals.

2. Legislation and guidance

This document meets the requirements set out in part 7 of the schedule to [the Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), which states that we must have and make available a written procedure to deal with complaints from parents of pupils at the academy.

It is also based on guidance published by the Department for Education [DfE] and refers to [good practice guidance on setting up complaints procedures](#).

3. Definitions and scope

3.1 Definitions

The DfE guidance explains the difference between a concern and a complaint:

- A **concern** is defined as "an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought". The academy will resolve concerns through day- to-day communication as far as possible;
- A **complaint** is defined as "an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action".

3.2 Scope

The academy intends to resolve complaints informally where possible, at the earliest possible stage. There may be occasions when complainants would like to raise their concerns formally. This policy outlines the procedure relating to handling such complaints.

This policy does not cover complaints procedures relating to:

- Admissions;

- Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs [SEN];
- Safeguarding matters;
- Exclusion;
- Whistle-blowing;
- Staff grievances;
- Staff discipline.

Please see our separate policies for procedures relating to these types of complaints.

Arrangements for handling complaints from parents of children with special educational needs [SEN] about the academy's support are within the scope of this policy. Such complaints should first be made to the educational needs co-ordinator [SENCO]; they will then be referred to this complaints policy. Our SEN policy and information report includes information about the rights of parents of pupils with disabilities who believe that an academy has discriminated against their child.

Complaints about services provided by other providers who use academy premises or facilities should be directed to the provider concerned.

Complaints are not limited to parents or carers, any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint.

Anonymous complaints will not normally be investigated unless the Head of School or Chair of the Board determines otherwise.

If a complainant wishes to withdraw their complaint, they must confirm this in writing.

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 The complainant

The complainant will get a more effective and timely response to their complaint if they:

- Follow these procedures;
- Co-operate with the academy throughout the process, and respond to deadlines and communication promptly;
- Treat all those involved with respect;
- Not publish details about the complaint on social media.

4.2 The investigator

An individual will be appointed to look into the complaint, and establish the facts. They will:

- Interview all relevant parties, keeping notes;
- Consider records and any written evidence and keep these securely;
- Prepare a comprehensive report to the Head of School or complaints committee which includes the facts and potential solutions.
- Keep an 'open mind' and be prepared to persist in questioning.

4.3 Clerk to the governors

The clerk will:

- Be the contact point for the complainant and the complaints committee, including circulating the relevant papers and evidence before complaints committee meetings;
- Arrange the complaints hearing;
- Record and circulate the minutes and outcome of the hearing.

4.4 Committee chair

The committee chair will:

- Chair the meeting, ensuring that everyone is treated with respect throughout;

- Make sure all parties see the relevant information, understand the purpose of the committee, and are allowed to present their case.

5. Principles for investigation

When investigating a complaint, we will try to clarify:

- What has happened;
- Who was involved;
- What the complainant feels would put things right.

If a complainant commences legal action against the GLC in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure until those legal proceedings have concluded. Similarly, if the police or local authority are investigating an aspect of the complaint, the school procedure should be suspended until those investigations are complete.

If other bodies such as the police, local authority safeguarding teams, or Tribunals are investigating aspects of the complaint, the school's procedure should be suspended until those investigations are complete.

5.1 Time scales

The complainant must raise the complaint within 3 months of the incident. If the complaint is about a series of related incidents, they must raise the complaint within 3 months of the last incident.

We will consider exceptions to this time frame in circumstances where there were valid reasons for not making a complaint at that time and the complaint can still be investigated in a fair manner for all involved.

When complaints are made out of term time, we will consider them to have been received on the next school day.

If at any point we cannot meet the time scales we have set out in this policy, we will:

- Set new time limits with the complainant;
- Send the complainant details of the new deadline and explain the delay.

6. Stages of complaint [not complaints against the Head of School or governors/directors]

6.1 Stage 1: informal

The academy will take informal concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve the matter quickly. It may be the case that the provision or clarification of information will resolve the issue.

The complainant should raise the complaint as soon as possible with the Head of Year, Phase Leader or a member of the Senior Team as appropriate, either in person or by letter, telephone or email. If the complainant is unclear who to contact or how to contact them, they should contact the academy office.

The academy will acknowledge informal complaints within 3 school days, and investigate and provide a response within 10 school days.

The informal stage will involve a meeting between the complainant and the Head of Year, Phase Leader or a member of the Senior Team, as appropriate.

If the complaint is not resolved informally, it will be escalated to a formal complaint.

6.2 Stage 2: formal

Formal complaints can be raised:

- By letter or email;
- Over the phone;
- In person.

The complainant should complete the complaints form [**Appendix 1**] and provide details such as relevant dates, times, and the names of witnesses of events, alongside copies of any relevant documents, and what they feel would resolve the complaint. If complainants need assistance raising a formal complaint, they can contact the academy office. Alternatively a complainant may seek help from third party organisations such as the Citizens Advice Bureau/SENDIASS.

The Head of School [or designated member of the senior leadership team] will call a meeting to clarify concerns, and seek a resolution. The complainant may be accompanied to this meeting, and should inform the academy of the identity of their companion in advance.

In certain circumstances, the academy may need to refuse a request for a particular individual to attend any such meeting – for example, if there is a conflict of interest. If this is the case, the academy will notify the complainant as soon as they are aware, so that the complainant has the opportunity to arrange alternative accompaniment.

The Head of School [or other person appointed by the Head of School for this purpose] will then conduct their own investigation. The written conclusion of this investigation will be sent to the complainant within 10 school days.

How to escalate a complaint

Complaints can be escalated by contacting the clerk to the governors:

- By letter addressed to the Clerk and sent to the academy;
- By email to the clerk diane.pierson@theglc.org.uk;
- Through a third party acting on behalf of the complainant who must have appropriate consent to do so.

The clerk will need the details of the complaint as set out above, as well as details from the complainant on how they feel the previous stage of the procedure has not addressed their complaint sufficiently, and what they feel would resolve the complaint.

The written conclusion of this investigation will be sent to the complainant within 10 school days. If the complainant wishes to proceed to the next stage of the procedure, they should inform the clerk to the governors in writing within 10 school days. Requests received outside of this time frame will be considered in exceptional circumstances.

The clerk will acknowledge receipt of the request within 5 school days.

6.3 Stage 3: Submit the complaint to the CEO

The complainant should complete the complaints form and provide details such as relevant dates, times, and the names of witnesses of events, alongside copies of any relevant documents, and what they feel would resolve the complaint. If complainants need assistance raising a formal complaint, they can contact the academy office.

The CEO [or designated member of the senior leadership team] will call a meeting to clarify concerns, and seek a resolution. The complainant may be accompanied to this meeting, and should inform the academy of the identity of their companion in advance.

In certain circumstances, the academy may need to refuse a request for a particular individual to attend any such meeting – for example, if there is a conflict of interest. If this is the case, the academy will notify the complainant as soon as they are aware, so that the complainant has the opportunity to arrange alternative accompaniment.

The CEO [or other person appointed by the CEO for this purpose] will then conduct their own investigation. The written conclusion of this investigation will be sent to the complainant within 10 school days.

If the complainant wishes to proceed to the next stage of the procedure, they should inform the clerk to the governors within 10 school days.

6.4 Stage 3: Submit the complaint to the review panel

Convening the panel

The review panel consists of 3 governors/directors, who don't have direct knowledge of the complaint. These individuals will have access to the existing record of the complaint's progress [see section 10]. The governors/directors will select a panel chair from amongst themselves.

We will make sure the governors/directors we source are suitably skilled and can demonstrate that they are independent and impartial with the aim to achieve reconciliation between the school and complainant.

The complainant must have reasonable notice of the date of the review panel; however, the review panel reserves the right to convene at their convenience rather than that of the complainant. The clerk will aim to find a date within 20 school days of the request, where possible.

If the complainant rejects the offer of 3 proposed dates without good reason, the clerk will set a date. The hearing will go ahead using written submissions from both parties. Any written material will be circulated to all parties no later than 10 school days before the date of the meeting.

At the meeting

At the review panel meeting, the complainant and representatives from the academy, as appropriate, will be present. Each will have an opportunity to set out written or oral submissions prior to the meeting. The complainant must be allowed to attend the panel hearing and be accompanied by a suitable companion if they wish. We don't encourage either party to bring legal representation, but will consider it on a case-by-case basis. For instance, if an academy employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by their union.

At the meeting, each individual will have the opportunity to give statements and present their evidence, and witnesses will be called as appropriate to present their evidence. Representation from the media is explicitly prohibited at any panel meeting. There cannot be any recording of the meeting and any notes should be confidential to the meeting.

The panel, the complainant and the academy representative will be given the chance to ask and reply to questions. Once the complainant and academy representatives have completed presenting their cases, they will be asked to leave and evidence will then be considered.

The panel will then put together its findings and recommendations from the case. The panel will also provide copies of the minutes of the hearing and the findings and recommendations to the complainant and, where relevant, the subject of the complaint, and make a copy of the findings and recommendations available for inspection by the Head of School.

The outcome

The committee can:

- Uphold the complaint, in whole or in part;
- Dismiss the complaint, in whole or in part.

If the complaint is upheld, the committee will:

- Decide the appropriate action to resolve the complaint;

- Where appropriate, recommend changes to the academy systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.
- Recommend an admission that the situation could have been handled differently.
- Undertake to review school policies.
- Give an apology.

The academy will inform those involved of the decision in writing within 10 school days.

6.5 Stage 4: Submit the complaint to an independent reviewer

The independent reviewer is appointed by or on behalf of the proprietor. This person must not, at any time, have been a governor/director of the academy, or a member of staff or supply staff at the academy, and must not have been the parent of a registered or former registered pupil at the academy. They must also not have been directly involved in any matter detailed in the complaint.

The independent reviewer will convene a review meeting with the complainant and representatives from the academy, as appropriate. Each will have an opportunity to set out written or oral submissions prior to the meeting.

At the meeting, each individual will have the opportunity to give statements and present their evidence, and witnesses will be called as appropriate to present their evidence.

The independent reviewer, the complainant and the academy representative(s) will be given the chance to ask and reply to questions.

The complainant, proprietor and Head of School, and where relevant, the subject of the complaint, will be given a copy of the findings and recommendations made by the independent person.

The academy will inform those involved of the decision in writing within 10 school days.

7. Complaints against the Head of School, a governor or the board, or the CEO

7.1 Stage 1: informal

Complaints made against the Head of School, any governor or the CEO should be directed to the clerk to the governors in the first instance via diane.pierson@theglc.org.uk

If the complaint is about the Head of School or a governor/director [including the chair or vice- chair], the CEO will carry out the steps at stage 1 [set out in section 6 above].

If the complaint is about the CEO, a governor/director nominated by the Chair of the Board will carry out the steps at stage 1.

7.2 Stage 2: Formal

If the complaint is jointly about the chair and vice-chair, the entire Quality of Education Board or the majority of the Quality of Education Board, an independent investigator will carry out the steps in stage 2 [set out in section 6 above]. They will be appointed by the Quality of Education Board, and will write a formal response at the end of their investigation.

7.3 Stage 3: Review panel

If the complaint is jointly about the chair and vice-chair, the entire Quality of Education Board or the majority of the Quality of Education Board, a committee of independent governors/directors will hear the complaint. They will be sourced from local schools, the local authority and will carry out the steps at stage 3 [set out in section 6 above].

8. Referring complaints on completion of the academy's procedure

If the complainant is unsatisfied with the outcome of the academy's complaints procedure, they can refer their complaint to the DfE. The DfE will check whether the complaint has been dealt with properly by the academy. The DfE will not overturn an academy's decision about a complaint. However, it will look into:

- Whether there was undue delay, or the academy did not comply with its own complaints' procedure;
- Whether the academy was in breach of its funding agreement with the secretary of state;
- Whether the academy has failed to comply with any other legal obligation.

If the academy did not deal with the complaint properly, it will be asked to re-investigate the complaint. If the academy's complaints procedure is found to not meet regulations, the academy will be asked to correct its procedure accordingly.

For more information or to refer a complaint, see the following webpage:

<https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school>

Academy Complaints and Customer Insight Unit

Department for Education

We will include this information in the outcome letter to complainants.

9. Persistent complaints

9.1 Unreasonably persistent complaints

Most complaints raised will be valid, and therefore we will treat them seriously. However, a complaint may become unreasonable if the person:

- Has made the same complaint before, and it's already been resolved by following the academy's complaints procedure;
- Makes a complaint that is obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, defamatory or repetitive;
- Knowingly provides false information;
- Insists on pursuing a complaint that is unfounded, or out of scope of the complaints procedure;
- Pursues a valid complaint, but in an unreasonable manner e.g., refuses to articulate the complaint, refuses to co-operate with this complaints procedure, or insists that the complaint is dealt with in ways that are incompatible with this procedure and the time frames it sets out;
- Changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation goes on;
- Makes a complaint designed to cause disruption, annoyance or excessive demands on academy time;
- Seeks unrealistic outcomes, or a solution that lacks any serious purpose or value.

Steps we will take:

We will take every reasonable step to address the complainant's concerns, and give them a clear statement of our position and their options. We will maintain our role as an objective arbiter throughout the process, including when we meet with individuals. We will follow our complaints procedure as normal [as outlined above] wherever possible.

If the complainant continues to contact the academy in a disruptive way, we may put communications strategies in place. We may:

- Give the complainant a single point of contact via an email;
- Limit the number of times the complainant can make contact, such as a fixed number per term;
- Put any other strategy in place as necessary.

Stopping responding

We may stop responding to the complainant when all of these factors are met:

- We believe we have taken all reasonable steps to help address their concerns;
- We have provided a clear statement of our position and their options;
- The complainant contacts us repeatedly, and we believe their intention is to cause disruption or inconvenience.

Where we stop responding, we will inform the individual that we intend to do so.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from the academy site.

We will take legal advice and action where required.

9.2 Duplicate complaints

If we have resolved a complaint under this procedure and receive a duplicate complaint on the same subject from a partner, family member or other individual, we will assess whether there are aspects that we hadn't previously considered, or any new information we need to consider.

If we are satisfied that there are no new aspects, we will:

- Tell the new complainant that we have already investigated and responded to this issue, and the local process is complete;
- Direct them to the DfE if they are dissatisfied with our original handling of the complaint. If there are new aspects, we will follow this procedure again.

9.3 Complaint campaigns

Where the academy receives a large volume of complaints about the same topic or subject, especially if these come from complainants unconnected with the academy, the academy may respond to these complaints by:

- Publishing a single response on the academy website;
- Sending a template response to all of the complainants.

If complainants are not satisfied with the academy's response, or wish to pursue the complaint further, the normal procedures will apply.

10. Use of AI tools in parent communication and complaints

We understand that many families may use AI tools to support communication with the school. While these tools can be helpful we ask that parents and carers keep the following guidance in mind:

- Please ensure that any messages or documents generated with the help of AI reflect your genuine concerns, questions or feedback. AI can assist with wording but it is important that communication remains personal and relevant to your child's experience;
- When using AI make sure your complaint is clearly stated and that you fully understand what is being communicated;
- Our staff will always respond to communications that are clear, respectful and appropriate. If a message appears to be generated by AI and lacks clarity or context then this will delay the response time, we may need to ask for further clarification to ensure we fully understand your concerns.

11. Record keeping

The academy will record the progress of all complaints, including information about actions taken at all stages, the stage at which the complaint was resolved, and the final outcome. The records will also include copies of letters and emails, and notes relating to meetings and phone calls.

This material will be treated as confidential and held centrally, and will be viewed only by those involved in investigating the complaint or on the review panel.

This is except where the secretary of state [or someone acting on their behalf] or the complainant requests access to records of a complaint through a freedom of information [FOI] request or through a subject access request under the terms of the Data Protection Act, or where the material must be made available during an academy inspection.

Records of complaints will be kept securely, only for as long as necessary and in line with data protection law and our privacy notices.

The details of the complaint, including the names of individuals involved, will not be shared with the whole Quality of Education board in case a review panel needs to be organised at a later point.

Where the Quality of Education Board is aware of the substance of the complaint before the review panel stage, the academy will [where reasonably practicable] arrange for an independent panel to hear the complaint.

Complainants also have the right to request an independent panel if they believe there is likely to be bias in the proceedings. The decision to approve this request is made by governors/directors, who will not unreasonably withhold consent.

12. Learning lessons

The Quality of Education Board will review any underlying issues raised by complaints with the Head of School, where appropriate, and respecting confidentiality, to determine whether there are any improvements that the academy can make to its procedures or practice to help prevent similar events in the future.

13. Monitoring arrangements

The governors/directors will monitor the effectiveness of the complaints procedure in ensuring that complaints are handled properly.

This policy will be reviewed annually.

14. Links with other policies

Policies dealing with other forms of complaints include:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures;
- Admissions policy;
- Suspensions and Exclusions policy;
- Staff grievance procedures;
- Staff disciplinary procedures;
- SEN policy and information report;
- Privacy notices.

Appendix 1 - The Gateway Learning Community Complaints Form

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| FORMAL COMPLAINTS FORM - STAGE 2 | |
| This form should be made available on request to any person who wishes to make a formal complaint and has exhausted stage 1 as set out in the policy. It should be addressed to the Head of Academy [or the CEO as appropriate]. | |
| 1. What is the nature of the complaint? (Please tick) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Staff Conduct: | <input type="checkbox"/> Parental Conduct: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching Standards : | <input type="checkbox"/> Pastoral Care: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Condition of Premises: | <input type="checkbox"/> Time Tabling: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Matters of Regime and Routine: | <input type="checkbox"/> Access to or Regulation of Extra Curricular Activities: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please give details): | |
| 2. Please give details of your complaint: | |
| Date/s of Incident: | Time/s: |
| 3. If you are complaining about someone's behaviour please give the names of any witnesses to the incident/s: | |
| 4. What actions, if any, have you taken to try and resolve your complaint. [Who did you speak to and what was the response]? | |
| 5. Please indicate the outcome you are seeking. | |
| Name: | Contact Details: |
| Signed: | Date: |