

Parents Complaints Policy

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Approved by	Governing Body
Review	August 2027 or sooner if required

Daffodil standard

Every Daffodil document is written to be understood, applied, evidenced and reviewed.

- Know the non-negotiable requirements, the responsible lead and the point for escalation.
- Put pupils' welfare, dignity, equality and access at the centre of each decision.
- Act promptly where safety or safeguarding may be at risk; do not wait for certainty.
- Make reasonable adjustments and listen to the pupil's voice in an accessible way.
- Keep factual, dated and secure records; review whether action made the intended difference.

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Policy summary

The school aims to resolve concerns early, fairly and respectfully. Raising a complaint will not adversely affect a pupil. Safeguarding action, statutory referrals and urgent risk controls take priority over the complaint timetable.

Stage	Purpose	Normally led by	Target completion
1 — Informal	Clarify the concern and seek prompt local resolution	Relevant staff member or line manager	Within 10 school days
2 — Formal	Independent investigation and written determination	Headteacher or appointed investigator	Within 15 school days
3 — Panel	Review the handling and unresolved complaint	Three-person panel, including an independent member	Hearing within 20 school days; outcome within 5 school days

- Timescales run during school terms. Complaints received in a holiday are acknowledged promptly and treated as received on the next school day unless urgent action is required.
- If a target cannot be met, the complaint handler explains the reason, action already taken and revised date before the deadline expires.
- The school may move directly to a formal or panel stage where seriousness, conflict of interest, prior attempts or safeguarding context makes the earlier stage unsuitable.

1. Purpose, principles and scope

This procedure meets Part 7 of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and applies to complaints from parents of current registered pupils about the provision of education or other services by Daffodil Preparatory School.

Related policies: Safeguarding and Safer Working Policy; Data Protection and Information Governance Policy; Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policy; Inclusion, Equality, SEND and Wellbeing Policy; Admissions Policy; Fees Policy.

- Be accessible, understandable, impartial and non-adversarial.
- Address every substantive point and explain findings using the evidence available.
- Resolve concerns at the earliest appropriate level without preventing escalation.
- Protect pupils and complainants from retaliation or disadvantage.
- Respect confidentiality while sharing information needed for a fair process or safeguarding.
- Use learning from complaints to improve policy, communication and practice.

A complaint should normally be raised within three months of the event or of the complainant reasonably becoming aware of it. The school may accept a later complaint where there is good reason, safeguarding significance or it remains possible to investigate fairly.

Complaints from former parents are considered under this procedure where the complaint was raised while the pupil was registered or concerns events during registration and it remains fair and practicable to investigate. Concerns from other people are handled respectfully but are not required to follow the statutory parent procedure.

2. What can be complained about

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Teaching, curriculum delivery, relationships education or support for learning.
- Pastoral care, communication, supervision, bullying or the application of behaviour arrangements.
- SEND provision, reasonable adjustments, accessibility or equality concerns.
- Attendance support, medical arrangements, school trips, clubs, premises or safety.
- Fees administration, admissions process, data handling or information supplied to parents.
- Conduct of a staff member, volunteer, contractor, governor or school leader.
- Failure to follow a published policy, unreasonable delay or failure to act.

A parent does not need to use legal terminology. The school clarifies the issues, desired outcome and any urgent risk rather than rejecting a complaint because it is imperfectly expressed.

3. Matters handled under another procedure

Some concerns require a specialist statutory or contractual process. The school will explain the correct route and, where appropriate, pause or coordinate the complaint rather than closing it without direction.

Matter	Primary route
Immediate risk, abuse, neglect or allegation against an adult	Safeguarding procedure; DSL/LADO/police or children's social care as required
Pupil suspension or permanent exclusion decision	Behaviour/exclusion review arrangements; a complaint may address procedural service issues not determined there
Staff grievance, capability or disciplinary matter	Confidential employment procedure; the complainant may be told whether the concern was addressed, not confidential sanctions
Whistleblowing by a worker	Whistleblowing procedure
Subject access, correction, erasure or data-protection objection	Data-rights procedure and Data Protection Lead/ICO route
Contractual fee or debt dispute	Parent contract and Fees Policy, with the complaints route available for service or process failures
Admissions outcome	Admissions process; the complaints route can examine fairness and policy compliance but does not create a statutory admission appeal

4. Accessibility and support

- Accept a complaint by email, letter or an accessible alternative; help a parent put the substance in writing without changing their account.
- Provide reasonable adjustments for disability and consider language, literacy, communication, faith and caring needs.
- Allow a parent to be accompanied at meetings and the panel. A companion may support and take notes but should not answer in place of the parent unless agreed as an adjustment.

- Offer interpretation where reasonably necessary; pupils should not be used to interpret a parent's complaint.
- Keep the pupil's welfare central and consider whether the child should be heard in an age-appropriate, non-pressured way.

5. Roles and impartiality

- The Complaints Coordinator logs the complaint, acknowledges it, tracks deadlines, checks conflicts and maintains the central record.
- The Stage 1 handler is normally the person closest to the issue or their line manager.
- The Headteacher determines Stage 2 complaints unless involved; a complaint about the Headteacher is handled by the Chair of Governors or proprietor's nominee.
- A complaint about the Chair, a governor or the Governing Body is allocated to an uninvolved governor, proprietor's representative or suitably independent investigator.
- Anyone with prior material involvement, personal interest or apparent bias declares it and does not investigate or decide the complaint.
- The Governing Body assures compliance and improvement but does not collectively investigate a live complaint unless formally appointed within the procedure.

6. Stages and published timescales

A complaint may be resolved at any stage by agreement. Resolution does not prevent the school from completing safeguarding, disciplinary, regulatory or improvement actions that remain necessary.

- Acknowledge the complaint and identify the handler normally within two school days at Stage 1 and three school days at Stages 2 and 3.
- At the end of each stage, give the outcome, reasons, any action that can be disclosed, the next escalation step, deadline and contact details.
- A request to escalate should normally be made within 10 school days of the outcome. A later request may be accepted where there is good reason.
- Where multiple procedures apply, tell the complainant which issues are being considered under each route and how this affects timescales.

7. Stage 1 — informal resolution

- The parent contacts the relevant staff member, line manager or school office and identifies the concern, relevant dates, people involved and preferred outcome.
- The handler checks immediate safety, listens without defensiveness, clarifies misunderstandings, gathers proportionate information and seeks a practical solution.
- The school keeps a brief record of the issue, contact, action and outcome even where resolved informally.
- The parent receives a clear response normally within 10 school days and is told how to make a Stage 2 formal complaint if dissatisfied.

Mediation or a facilitated meeting may be offered but is voluntary and will not be used where it may pressure a harmed person, compromise an investigation or create further risk.

8. Stage 2 — formal written complaint

The parent submits the formal complaint to the Complaints Coordinator, normally within 10 school days of the Stage 1 response. It should identify the unresolved issues, why the response was insufficient and the outcome sought. The school will clarify rather than reject an unclear submission.

- Acknowledge within three school days, confirm the issues to be investigated, identify the investigator/decision-maker, disclose any relevant conflict arrangements and state the target outcome date.
- Secure relevant records and invite evidence from the complainant and those complained about; interview people separately where appropriate and keep accurate notes.
- Apply the balance of probabilities to factual findings while recognising that safeguarding or disciplinary thresholds may differ.
- Give the person complained about a fair opportunity to respond to material allegations without disclosing information that would create risk or breach another person's rights.
- Provide a reasoned written outcome normally within 15 school days, addressing each issue as upheld, partially upheld, not upheld or unable to determine and explaining the evidence and action.

9. Stage 3 — independent review panel

If dissatisfied with Stage 2, the parent may request a panel within 10 school days, explaining the unresolved grounds. The panel reviews whether the complaint was handled fairly, whether findings were reasonably supported and what further resolution or recommendation is appropriate; it is not automatically a complete reinvestigation.

Panel composition and independence

- At least three panel members who were not directly involved in the matters complained about.
- At least one member independent of the management and running of the school. Independence is considered in substance, including relationships and prior involvement.
- A clerk who has no decision-making role and records attendance, documents, procedure, findings and recommendations.
- No panel member with a conflict, prior determination or reasonable appearance of bias.

Before the hearing

- Acknowledge the request within three school days and aim to hold the hearing within 20 school days.
- Consult on reasonable adjustments, attendance, companion, remote participation and any pupil evidence.

- Send the complaint, Stage 2 response, relevant evidence and hearing arrangements to all participants normally at least five school days before the hearing.
- Late evidence is admitted only where fairness permits; the panel may adjourn so all parties can consider material new information.

Hearing procedure

- The Chair explains the issues, confidentiality, respectful conduct and the panel's authority.
- The complainant explains the complaint and may be questioned by the panel; the school responds and may be questioned by the panel.
- Questions normally go through the Chair. Witnesses attend only for their evidence and are not subjected to hostile or repetitive questioning.
- Each side gives a brief final summary. Both withdraw together so the panel deliberates privately on the same evidence.
- The panel may uphold, partially uphold, not uphold or be unable to determine each ground and may recommend action, mediation, apology, correction, review, training or policy improvement.

Panel outcome

The written findings and recommendations are normally issued within five school days to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about, and are available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and Headteacher. The Stage 3 decision is the end of the school's internal complaints procedure.

10. Investigation and evidence standards

- Define the complaint issues before gathering evidence and notify the complainant if a new issue requires a separate or extended process.
- Seek relevant evidence from both sides, distinguish fact from opinion and do not rely on anonymous information without considering reliability and fairness.
- Keep an investigation chronology and notes of meetings; invite participants to identify material inaccuracies in notes without requiring agreement with the investigator's view.
- Use the balance of probabilities for complaint findings and explain where evidence is conflicting or insufficient.
- Do not disclose confidential pupil, family or employment information merely to demonstrate that action occurred.
- If criminal, safeguarding or regulatory enquiries may be prejudiced, coordinate and pause only what is necessary, maintain communication and continue safe actions.

11. Outcomes and remedies

A proportionate remedy addresses the effect of the failing and reduces recurrence. Depending on the finding, this may include:

- An explanation, acknowledgement or apology.
- Correcting a record, communication, invoice or decision process where lawful.

- Providing missed support, arranging a review or reconsidering a decision through the proper authority.
- Staff guidance, supervision, training or formal management action, the confidential detail of which may not be disclosed.
- Policy, system, premises, curriculum or communication improvement.
- A named owner and date for each recommendation, with completion checked by leadership or governors.

12. Safeguarding, confidentiality and data protection

- Refer any safeguarding concern immediately to the DSL; call 999 where a child or other person is in immediate danger.
- Manage allegations about adults under KCSIE and LADO arrangements; the complaint route does not replace statutory safeguarding action.
- Share complaint information only with people who need it for investigation, advice, safeguarding, insurance, regulation or legal duties.
- Keep correspondence, statements and outcomes confidential except where the Secretary of State, an inspection body or another lawful authority requires access.
- Handle subject access and other data rights separately where needed; redact third-party information lawfully rather than refusing all disclosure.
- Do not promise anonymity. Consider anonymous concerns according to seriousness, credibility, welfare and available evidence.

13. Unreasonable or repeated contact

A complaint is not unreasonable because it is persistent, forcefully expressed or upheld. Restrictions are considered only where conduct—rather than the issue itself—substantially impedes the process or affects safety or welfare.

- Examples include abusive or threatening contact, excessive repetition after a final answer, refusal to identify the complaint, knowingly false information or demands that are unlawful or outside the school's authority.
- Before restricting contact, warn the person, explain the behaviour causing concern, offer a reasonable communication plan and consider disability or other adjustments.
- Any restriction is authorised by the Headteacher or Chair, proportionate, specific, time-limited and reviewed; it preserves a route for new complaints and urgent safeguarding information.
- A duplicate complaint with no material new evidence may receive the previous final response and external-route information rather than restarting all stages.

14. Records, reporting and learning

- Keep a written record of every Stage 2 complaint, whether resolved at that stage or proceeding to panel, the action taken and the outcome.
- Retain panel findings and recommendations and make them available for inspection by the proprietor and Headteacher.

- Record informal concerns sufficiently to identify recurrence while avoiding unnecessary personal data.
- Publish or make available the number of formal complaints registered during the preceding school year as required by the Independent School Standards.
- Report anonymised themes, timeliness, outcomes, repeat issues, equality considerations and completion of recommendations to governors at least termly.
- Retain records in line with the retention schedule and any safeguarding, litigation or regulatory hold.

15. External routes

- Department for Education: after the school's procedure, a parent may report concerns about whether an independent school is meeting the Independent School Standards. The DfE does not normally reinvestigate an individual dispute or replace the panel.
- Ofsted: where the school provides registered early years provision, parents may contact Ofsted about EYFS requirements. EYFS complaints are investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome within 28 days where that statutory framework applies.
- Local authority, police or children's social care: concerns that a child is at risk should be reported without waiting for the complaints process.
- Information Commissioner's Office: data-protection concerns may be raised after giving the school an opportunity to respond.
- Nothing in this policy removes any legal right or prevents a person obtaining independent advice.

16. Training, monitoring and review

- Staff receive role-appropriate training on early resolution, impartiality, records, safeguarding escalation, accessibility and confidentiality.
- The Complaints Coordinator monitors deadlines and immediately escalates overdue actions or conflicts.
- The Governing Body reviews anonymised assurance, verifies panel independence and completion of recommendations, and challenges recurring or discriminatory patterns.
- Review this policy at least annually and sooner after a serious complaint, inspection finding, legal change, repeated delay or evidence that the procedure is unclear or ineffective.

References and statutory guidance

Linked titles open the current published source. Check the source page for later updates when this policy is reviewed.

1. [Education Independent School Standards Regulations 2014](#) - Schedule, Part 7 and paragraph 32.
2. [Independent School Standards guidance](#) - Department for Education, April 2026.

3. [Keeping children safe in education 2026](#) - Department for Education; in force from 1 September 2026.
4. [UK General Data Protection Regulation](#) - Data-protection requirements applying in the United Kingdom.
5. [Data Protection Act 2018](#) - UK legislation.
6. [Equality Act 2010](#) - UK legislation.
7. [Early years foundation stage statutory framework](#) - Department for Education; where applicable.