

# Complaints Policy

Links to other Policies, please see:  
[Whistleblowing Policy](#)  
[Staff Handbook](#)

Policy Information		
Policy Author: Emma Shutt Governing Board approval date/date policy is in effect from: October 2020		
Latest Review information:	Summary of amendments	Date of next review:
Date: March 2026 Name of reviewer/s: Amy Clewlow	Minor amendments to wording (Ombudsman to DFE), added most recent complaint data.	<b>March 2027</b>

## Complaints Policy and Procedure

### Introduction

At Intuition School and Diamond Families Farm, we are committed to providing a high standard of education and care for all students. We believe that a strong partnership between the school/farm, parents, carers, and the wider community is essential in achieving this goal. However, we acknowledge that there may be times when concerns or complaints arise. This Complaints Policy is designed to provide a clear, transparent, and accessible procedure for addressing concerns in a fair and timely manner. Our aim is to resolve complaints as quickly and effectively as possible, ensuring that all parties feel listened to and valued.

This policy applies to parents, carers, students, staff, and other stakeholders who wish to raise a complaint about any aspect of the school/ farm's provision. We encourage concerns to be raised informally in the first instance, as many issues can be resolved swiftly through open communication. However, if a resolution is not reached, this policy outlines the formal steps available to escalate a complaint.

We are committed to handling complaints with sensitivity, impartiality, and confidentiality, ensuring that all individuals are treated with respect throughout the process.

### Links to Legislation

This Complaints Policy aligns with the following legislation and statutory guidance:

1. **The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014** – Requires independent schools to have a clear complaints procedure in place and ensure it is available to all stakeholders.
2. **The Children Act 1989 and 2004** – Outlines the duty of care schools have in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, which may be relevant to certain complaints.
3. **The Equality Act 2010** – Ensures that complaints related to discrimination, accessibility, or inclusion are handled fairly and lawfully.
4. **The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018** – Protects personal data shared as part of the complaints process and ensures confidentiality.
5. **The Human Rights Act 1998** – Ensures that complaints processes align with fundamental rights, such as the right to a fair hearing and respect for private and family life.
6. **Statutory Guidance on Handling Complaints (DfE)** – Provides best practice recommendations for independent schools in handling complaints effectively and equitably.

### Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to complaints from:

- Parents and carers of current students
- Parents of students who have recently left the school (within three months)
- Members of the public, staff, or other stakeholders with a concern about the school's policies, procedures, or practices

This policy does not apply to complaints regarding:

- Safeguarding concerns (which should be addressed via the school's Safeguarding Policy)
- Staff grievances (which should follow the Staff Grievance Policy)

- Exam results or assessment decisions (which should follow the Appeals Procedure)
- Disciplinary issues involving students (which should follow the Behaviour Policy)

If a complaint falls outside the scope of this policy, the complainant will be informed and advised on the appropriate course of action.

### **Complaints Procedure**

(see Appendix 1 for further information on the complaints process)

#### **Stage 1. Informal expression of concern made to the school**

In the first instance, the matter should be discussed with the student's Keyworker. In our experience most matters of concern can be resolved positively in this way with apologies where necessary. There is no doubt that if a concern is shared with the Keyworker they can either reassure worried parents or devise steps together to take to address the concern. They will always be taken seriously, and due consideration given to a mutually agreeable resolution.

#### **Stage 2. Discussion and investigating**

If the matter has not been resolved and needs further investigation parents may request that the Keyworker fully investigates the matter further involving other members of staff. Feedback from the investigation will be given to parents within 7 school days. Members of the school/farm's leadership team may also be involved at this stage.

#### **Stage 3. Principal**

Complaints rarely reach this formal level, but should you need to you should make a formal complaint to the Principal or Farm Service Coordinator, please follow the steps below.

Within 10 school days of the issue a written complaint should be addressed to the Principal or Farm Service Coordinator and marked "Private and Confidential" and left in the school office or sent via email to [principal@intuitionsschool.co.uk](mailto:principal@intuitionsschool.co.uk) for Intuition School or [Manager@diamond-families.org.uk](mailto:Manager@diamond-families.org.uk) for the farm. The letter should say why you remain unhappy and what you wish to see happen. The Principal/Farm Manager will let you know when your complaint is to be considered. If a meeting with you and others involved is considered necessary, you will be given adequate notice to prepare. You will be informed of the outcome of the Principal/Farm Manager's investigation and decision on what further action will be taken within 10 school days of the letter being received.

#### **Stage 4. Governors**

You may take your complaint to the school Governors or farm Trustees within 2 months of the Principal/Farm Service Coordinator/Proprietor's response.

If the complaint is not resolved, and all previous stages have been explored, a parent may make representation to the Governors or Trustees. A letter addressed to the Chair of Governors/Trustees marked "private and confidential" can be left at the school office. If the Governors/Trustees consider the complaint warrants further investigation they may ask you to explain your case in person before a specially appointed panel, who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. The panel will consist of at least three members of the Governing Body/Trust Board who have had no prior involvement in the complaint. A clerk may be present to record proceedings. The parents/carers are welcomed to the panel if they so should wish and can choose to be accompanied and supported. This could be by advocacy teams such as Parent Partnership/SENDIASS. However, it is

also possible that, following investigation, they may make a decision without needing you to appear. A decision will be provided within 15 days where possible. The panel will provide a report of its findings and recommendations. These will then be provided to the complainant and where relevant the person who the complaint is about. These are then available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the Principal/Farm Service Coordinator.

### **Stage 5. Further Representation**

If you remain dissatisfied, you may make further representations.

If the complainant believes the school has acted unlawfully or failed to follow its procedures, they may refer the complaint to the Department for Education (DfE). This is usually appropriate where concerns relate to regulatory compliance rather than disagreement with the outcome.

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman does not usually investigate complaints about independent schools.

If stakeholders have a complaint about the Principal/Farm Service Coordinator, they should first make an informal approach to the Chair of the Governors/Trustees (as at stage 4 above) who is obliged to investigate it. The Chair will do all they can to resolve the issue through a dialogue with the school/farm, but if parents are unhappy with the outcome, they can make a formal complaint, as outlined above.

If, despite all stages of this policy being followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied they are not entitled to reopen the same issue. In such cases the Chair of Governors/Trustees is able to inform them in writing that the process has been exhausted and that the school may consider the complaint closed unless new evidence or safeguarding concerns arise.

If an anonymous complaint is received it will not be investigated under this procedure unless there are exceptional circumstances or serious concerns such as child protection issues or bullying allegations, where the school might consider it appropriate to contact outside agencies.

### **Investigating complaints**

The person investigating the complaint will:

- Establish what has happened so far and who has been involved.
- Clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved.
- Meet with the complainant or contact them if further information is required
- Clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.
- Conduct any interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning.
- Complete all necessary notes.
- Involve any relevant agencies or seek advice. For example, LADO, safeguarding leads, HR, or external legal advice where appropriate.

## **Resolving Complaints**

At each stage in the complaint, the school/farm and the complainant will want to keep in mind ways in which a complaint can be resolved. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- An apology
- An admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better\*
- Assurance that the event that was the basis of the complaint will not recur
- Explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure it does not happen again. Details of any disciplinary procedures that have taken place as a result of the complaint will not be shared.
- An undertaking to review school/farm policy or procedure in light of the complaint
- An explanation that there is insufficient evidence and thus the complaint cannot be upheld
- An explanation that, following investigation, the evidence does not substantiate the concern

\*An admission that the school could have handled things better is not the same as an admission of negligence

## **Confidentiality and Record-Keeping**

- All complaints will be handled sensitively and shared only on a need-to-know basis, with records kept securely.
- A summary of complaints and resolutions will be shared with the Governing/Trustee Board for review, ensuring continuous improvement.

<b>Number of formal written complaints by academic year for Intuition School</b>					
<b>2020-2021</b>	<b>2021-2022</b>	<b>2022-2023</b>	<b>2023-2024</b>	<b>2024-2025</b>	<b>2025-2026</b>
0	0	0	0	0	

  

<b>Number of formal written complaints by academic year for Diamond Families Farm</b>					
<b>2020-2021</b>	<b>2021-2022</b>	<b>2022-2023</b>	<b>2023-2024</b>	<b>2024-2025</b>	<b>2025-2026</b>
0	0	0	0	0	

## **Unreasonable or Vexatious Complaints**

A complaint may be considered unreasonable if:

- It is repeatedly raised despite being fully addressed.
- The complainant is abusive, aggressive, or threatening.
- It places excessive demands on school/farm staff without valid justification.

In such cases, the school/farm reserves the right to:

- Limit communication with the complainant.
- Refuse to consider further complaints on the same issue.
- Report any abusive behaviour to external authorities.

### **Monitoring and Review**

The Governors/Trustees/Proprietor will monitor the complaints procedure, in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The Principal/Farm Service Coordinator will log all Stage 2 complaints received by the school/farm – whether resolved or proceeded to a panel hearing and action taken by the school/farm as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether they are upheld). All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting a standard inspection of a non-association independent school requests access to them.

The Governors of Intuition School/Trustees of Diamond Families Farm review this policy as necessary. The Principal/Farm Service Coordinator will review this policy annually.

## Appendix 1: Complaint Process Timescales

<p><b>Stage 2</b> Parents/Carers request further investigation by the Keyworker and staff involved {Response in 7 days}</p>	<p>←Unresolved <b>Stage 1</b> Resolved→</p>	<p>No further action</p>
<p><b>Stage 3</b> Written complaint to Principal/Farm Service Coordinator on paper or via email. {Response in 10 days}</p>	<p>←Unresolved <b>Stage 2</b> Resolved→</p>	<p>No further action</p>
<p><b>Stage 4</b> Within 2 months of the Principal/Farm Service Coordinator's response Parents can make representation to the Governors/Trustees in writing</p>	<p>←Unresolved <b>Stage 3</b> Resolved→</p>	<p>No further action</p>
<p><b>Stage 5</b> Parents to be heard by a Panel including one independent representative separate from the management and governance of the school/farm {response within 15 days of the Panel}</p>	<p>←Unresolved <b>Stage 4</b> Resolved→</p>	<p>No further action</p>
<p>Further representation to the Secretary of State for Education/ Ombudsman if parents/carers believe the school/farm is acting illegally</p>	<p>←Unresolved <b>Stage 5</b> Resolved→</p>	<p>No further action</p>
<p>Governors/Trustees will write to the complainant saying to complaint cannot be taken further or reopened</p>	<p>←Still unresolved</p>	

### Useful Links

<http://parentalengagement.co.uk/getting-it-right-for-ofsted/4574813099>

<https://www.sendiass-stoke.co.uk/>

<https://stoke-on-trent.cylex-uk.co.uk/company/stoke-on-trent-parent-partnership-14633659.html>