

# Purbrook Park School

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## Complaints Policy

**Co-ordinator:** Paul Foxley  
Headteacher

**Start date:** January 2026

**Review date:** September 2026

## **Introduction**

Purbrook Park School is dedicated to providing the best possible education and support for all its pupils. This means having a clear, fair, and efficient procedure for dealing with any concerns or complaints against the school, so that any issues that arise can be dealt with as swiftly and effectively as possible.

This policy document explains the procedure for addressing such concerns and complaints and is addressed principally to those who wish to raise a concern or make a complaint.

The governors seek to work in partnership with all parties and therefore it is intended that this policy should make it easy for any aggrieved person to access the correct procedure.

## **Scope of this Procedure**

This procedure covers all concerns or complaints about any provision of facilities or services by the school, other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed in Appendix 1. Complaints will only be considered when they are written in your own words using our complaints form, which is in Appendix 2 of this document. Generic or AI generated complaints will not be considered.

This procedure is not limited to you as a parent of children who are registered on roll at the school. Any person, including members of the public, may express a concern or make a complaint about any facilities or services that the school provides. Complaints about services provided by third parties who may use the school's premises or facilities should be made direct to the third party.

## **The Difference between a Concern and a Complaint**

A **concern** may be defined as 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'.

A **complaint** may be defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction about actions taken or a lack of action'.

## **1. Expressing a concern**

It is in everyone's interest that your concerns are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many concerns can be resolved informally without the need to use the formal stages of the Complaints Procedure. The school takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the issue as quickly as possible. It encourages parents to approach the correct member of staff with any concerns they may have and to resolve them with open dialogue and mutual understanding.

If you have a concern over an issue which you consider to be important and for which you seek reassurance, you should initially inform a member of staff either in person, over the telephone or in writing. You may then be invited to an informal meeting with the member of staff most appropriate for dealing with your concern.

If the concern relates to your child, you may wish to approach your child's Tutor first as they will be best placed to help you either directly or by advising you about which other member of staff you should be speaking to. If it is subject specific, please contact the class teacher and/or Lead Teacher for that subject.

You may wish to provide a written explanation of your concern to the staff member that you speak to, so that it is easy to see what the initial problem was when concerns are taken further or referred back to at some time in the future.

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, the school will respect your views. In these cases, we will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, we will refer you to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not necessarily have to be. The ability to consider your concern objectively and impartially is more important.

There is no prescribed timescale for resolution at this stage given the importance of dialogue and informal discussion, although we expect to respond to most issues within ten school days. We expect parents to try and resolve the concern before making a formal complaint.

## **2. Making a complaint**

The school understands that there are occasions when you may be dissatisfied with actions taken or lack of action in response to your concerns and would like to raise them formally as a complaint. In this case, the school will attempt to resolve the issue through the stages outlined within this procedure.

You should not approach individual governors to make a complaint. They have no power to act on an individual basis, and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at Stage 2 or 3 of the procedure.

Our complaint form is included in Appendix 2 of this policy. Please complete this form for your complaint. Individual letters and emails will not be accepted.

Complaints should not be made in person, by email or telephone as this can lead to a lack of clarity about the complaint or its being passed to the wrong person.

Complaints against school staff (except the Headteacher) should be made via the complaint form and addressed to the Headteacher. Please either hand deliver the form via school reception, post the form to the school, or email your completed form to [admin@purbrook.hants.sch.uk](mailto:admin@purbrook.hants.sch.uk). Please mark the form as Private and Confidential.

Complaints about the Headteacher should be made via the complaint form and addressed to the Chair of Governors.

Complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor, or the whole governing body, should be made via the complaint form and be addressed to the clerk to the governing body.

In accordance with equality law, the school will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable you to access and complete this complaints procedure. For instance, this might be by providing further information, assisting you in raising your complaint, or holding meetings in accessible locations.

### **Anonymous complaints**

The school will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Headteacher, or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

### **Time scales**

You must raise the complaint within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. The school will consider complaints made outside of this time frame only if exceptional circumstances apply.

The school will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period or weekend.

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the Police, Local Authority (LA) Safeguarding Teams or Tribunals, this may impact on the school's ability to adhere to the timescales, or share outcomes of the complaint within this procedure, or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations.

If you commence legal action against the school in relation to your complaint, the school will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure in relation to your complaint until those legal proceedings have concluded.

### **Confidentiality**

It is important that you feel confident that your complaint will not penalise your child. However, you should be aware that some information may need to be shared with others involved in considering your complaint. Such disclosure of information will be limited and in accordance with the requirements for Data Protection.

All correspondence between you and the school concerning your complaint will be confidential. It is also requested that you respect that confidentiality. Parents are asked not to use social media to discuss complaints and/or their outcomes.

All meetings will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless you or others have special needs requiring it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations are recorded. The school will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

### **3. Resolving Complaints**

Your complaint will be addressed in three stages. At each stage in the procedure, the school seeks to resolve the complaint. Where your complaint is fully or partially upheld, the school may offer one or more of the following:

- an explanation,
- an apology,
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better,
- an assurance that the school will try to ensure that the event complained about will not recur,
- an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again, and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made,
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint.

### **4. Withdrawing a Complaint**

If you wish to withdraw your complaint, you should confirm this in writing.

## Stage 1

Formal complaints must be addressed in writing to the Headteacher (unless they are about the Headteacher). Please complete the complaints form in Appendix 2. Please either hand deliver the form via school reception, post the form to the school, or email your completed form to [admin@purbrook.hants.sch.uk](mailto:admin@purbrook.hants.sch.uk). Please mark the form as Private and Confidential.

The Headteacher's PA (or Clerk to Governors, if the complaint is about the Headteacher), will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing within ten school days. Where it is possible we will work swiftly to resolve the complaint.

Within this response, the Headteacher, where necessary, will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome you would like to see. The Headteacher will consider whether a face-to-face meeting is the most appropriate way of achieving this.

The Headteacher may delegate the investigation to another member of the Leadership Team, but not the decision to be taken.

During the investigation, the Headteacher, or designated member of the Leadership Team will, if necessary:

- interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained about, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish,
- keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

At the conclusion of this investigation, the Headteacher will provide a formal written response within twenty school days of the date of receipt of the complaint. If unable to meet this deadline, the Headteacher will provide you with an update and revised response date.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made, and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions the school will take to resolve the complaint. If required, a meeting can take place, and if you are not satisfied with the response, you have the right to take the matter further. The Headteacher will advise you of further action you may take if you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1.

If your complaint is about a member of staff, the Headteacher will talk to that employee and invoke the relevant procedure, if required. It will not be appropriate to inform you of the outcome of any investigation in relation to an individual member of staff.

If the complaint is about the Headteacher, the Chair of Governors will investigate the complaint. If the complaint is about the Chair of Governors, a member of the Governing Body will investigate the complaint. If the complaint is about the entire Governing Body, an independent investigator, appointed by the Governing Body, will investigate the complaint.

## **Stage 2**

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 1 and wish to take the matter further, you can escalate the complaint to Stage 2. A request to escalate to Stage 2 must be made in writing or by email to the Clerk to the Governing Body within ten school days of receipt of the Stage 1 response. The complainant must detail exactly what remains unresolved or unanswered at Stage 1.

The Clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing within ten school days. Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

The Chair of Governors, or a delegated member of the governing body, may invite you to attend a meeting to discuss your complaint and possible solutions, or to explain what has happened or will happen as a result of your complaint.

The Chair of Governors, or a delegated member of the governing body, will explain that the governing body has a strategic role and is responsible for the school's strategic framework, and that the school's leadership team are responsible for the internal organisation, management and control of the school, and for advising on and implementing the governors' policies. The Headteacher is responsible for making day to day decisions.

For delegated responsibilities and matters within the remit of the governing body, the Chair of Governors may look at the whole issue afresh. If the matter relates to the Headteacher's conduct, the Chair of Governors will decide whether the matter should be dealt with through the Complaints Procedure or Staff Disciplinary Procedure. Advice may be sought from the Local Authority and/or Education Personnel Services.

For matters that are the Headteacher's responsibility, the Chair of Governors is empowered only to look at whether the Headteacher's decision or action was reasonable in the light of the information available at the time. The Chair of Governors will keep a record of all interactions with you and any decisions made in reference to your complaint. At the conclusion of Stage 2, the Chair of Governors will provide a formal written response within thirty school days of the date of receipt of the Stage 2 complaint. If unable to meet this deadline, the Chair of Governors will provide you with an update and revised response date.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made, and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions the school will take to resolve the complaint. If you are not satisfied with the response, you have the right to take the matter further. The Chair of Governors will advise you of further action you may take if you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2.

### Stage 3

The complaint will be heard by the governing body's complaints panel. If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint, you should write to the clerk to governors within ten school days of the outcome of Stage 2, explaining in detail your concerns that remain unresolved and the steps that have resulted in you taking this course of action.

The clerk to governors will acknowledge receipt of your request within ten school days. The complaints panel will usually be convened within a further twenty school days of receiving the request for your complaint to be heard by the governing body's complaints panel. Where it is not possible to find a mutually convenient date within that timescale, all reasonable steps will be taken to agree a time and date mutually convenient to all parties.

The main function of the complaints panel will be to:

- a) ensure that the complaint has been properly handled by the Headteacher and Chair of Governors,
- b) ensure that a sufficient comprehensive investigation was carried out,
- c) ensure that the correct procedure/policies were followed.
- d) review whether the Headteacher, and Chair of Governors acted reasonably.

The clerk to governors will arrange and facilitate the meeting of the complaints panel. You are entitled to an independent panel to hear your complaint, and the complaints panel will consist of three governors who have no former knowledge or involvement in the matter being considered. The chair of the panel will be nominated from within the group of panel members. All panel members will have access to, and will be familiar with, this complaints policy. The clerk to governors will confirm to all parties in writing, the date, time and venue for the meeting in person at least five school days in advance.

The clerk to governors will request that you supply any paperwork you feel the panel will require to consider your complaint fully. The Headteacher and Chair of Governors will also be requested to supply copies of their responses to the previous stages of the procedure, and any further paperwork they consider the panel will require to consider the complaint fully. Copies of all paperwork will be distributed to all parties by the clerk to governors at least three school days in advance of the meeting.

No previously undisclosed evidence relating to the complaint can be introduced during the meeting.

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless you or others have special needs requiring it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations are recorded. The school will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded. Consent will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

The committee will not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.

You are welcome to bring a supporting adult or partner to the meeting in person, and the chair of the panel will ensure that the meeting is conducted in an appropriate manner, keeping to the formal agenda. The Headteacher, and Chair of Governors, if attending, is also invited to bring a representative or member of staff for support.

The committee will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The committee can:

- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part,
- uphold the complaint in whole or in part.

If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the committee will:

- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint,
- where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

The clerk, on behalf of the Chair of the Committee, will inform you (and the Headteacher and/or Chair of Governors) in writing of the panel's decision within five school days of the meeting.

The letter will include a summary of the issues, an outline of the main points of discussion, the reasons for the decision and the proposed actions or outcome. The panel may suggest you meet with the Headteacher and/or Chair of Governors again to agree a way forward. The letter may set out recommendations which will be made to the governing body.

The panel's decision is the final stage in the complaints procedure. If you feel that the school has acted unreasonably or has not followed the correct procedures in relation to your complaint, you may write to the Secretary of State for Education using the following contact details:

Department for Education, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD

[www.education.gov.uk/contactus](http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus)

Tel: 0370 000 2288

## Unreasonable Complaints

Purbrook Park School is committed to dealing with complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with the school. Operating from a position of mutual respect, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

Purbrook Park School defines unreasonable complaints as ‘those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with the school, hinder our consideration of their or other people’s complaints’.

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

- 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 co-operate 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 school’s 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 comments about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced or undermines confidence in them
- 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 a complaint where the school’s complaint 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/or stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with
- refers to complaints which have been previously resolved through informal or formal processes
- raises complaints which are more than three months old.

A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if the person making the complaint does so either face-to-face, by telephone, in writing or electronically:

- maliciously
- aggressively
- using threats, intimidation or violence

- using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language
- knowing it to be false
- using falsified information
- publishing unacceptable information in a variety of media such as in social media websites and newspapers

If any complaints are unreasonable in their approach they will not be considered.

Complainants should limit the numbers of communications with the 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 senior staff 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 Purbrook Park School causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will usually be reviewed after 6 months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, concerns and actions taken will be put in writing immediately and the police informed. This may include banning an individual from the site of Purbrook Park School or communication with a named member of staff.

### **Governing Body review and monitoring of complaints**

The Headteacher will report to the governing body regarding formal complaints received and the levels at which they have been resolved. No details identifying the complaint or any member of staff will be published. The governing body will review and evaluate complaints and their resolution to ensure that similar problems are avoided in the future or to see if they could have been managed more efficiently. We will review this complaints policy annually.

### **Staff Complaints**

Staff who have a concern about a colleague or volunteer in school should refer to the whistleblowing policy. The procedure for dealing with any other staff complaint is set out in the school's policies on staff discipline, conduct and managing workplace issues.

## Appendix 1

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by Purbrook Park School, other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

Exceptions	Who to contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Admissions to schools</li> <li>• Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs</li> <li>• School re-organisation proposals</li> </ul>	<p>Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with the Local Authority.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation</li> </ul>	<p>Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.</p> <p>If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exclusion of children from school*</li> </ul>	<p>Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: <a href="http://www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions">www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions</a>.</p> <p><i>*complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whistleblowing</li> </ul>	<p>The school has an internal whistleblowing procedure for all employees, including temporary staff and contractors.</p> <p>The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus">www.education.gov.uk/contactus</a>.</p> <p>Volunteer staff who have concerns about Purbrook Park School should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the LA or the</p>

	Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff workplace issues</li> </ul>	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal procedures to resolve workplace issues.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff conduct</li> </ul>	<p>Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate.</p> <p>Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities</li> </ul>	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Curriculum - content</li> </ul>	Please contact the Department for Education at: <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus">www.education.gov.uk/contactus</a>

## Appendix 2 - Complaints Form

Please complete and pass this form to reception either by hand, by post, or by emailing it to [admin@purbrook.hants.sch.uk](mailto:admin@purbrook.hants.sch.uk)

(complaints received in any other form will not be considered)

<b>Name of complainant:</b>	
<b>Pupil's name (if relevant):</b>	
<b>Contact details:</b>	<b>Address:</b>
	<b>Telephone:</b>
	<b>Email:</b>
<b>Parental Responsibility:</b>	<b>Yes / No</b>
<b>Outline of your complaint and how it has affected you (the complainant)/pupil</b>	

<p><b>Have you discussed the matter already with a member of staff? If so, who and when?</b></p>	
<p><b>What was the outcome?</b></p>	
<p><b>What would you like to happen as a result of your complaint?</b></p>	
<p><b>Signature:</b></p>	
<p><b>Date:</b></p>	

### **Appendix 3 – Code of Conduct Advice**

Purbrook Park School staff are here to help. Please ensure all communication, whether written or verbal, in person or at distance, is polite and courteous. School staff will not continue conversations, discussions or meetings if they feel intimidated, threatened or are abused. We have a complaints procedure for use when you are dissatisfied with how the school has dealt with an issue or concern. Some advice is given below to help ensure your concern is quickly resolved.

- Please use the form in Appendix 2 to write your complaint.
- Meetings will be arranged when appropriate and necessary, in the school's view. The school will decide who is best placed to discuss the matter with you. Please do not demand meetings with specific members of staff or refuse to meet with the staff identified by the school as best placed to deal with your concern.
- Child Protection concerns or those relating to safety will be dealt with swiftly. In other cases, appointments to see members of staff will need to be made further in advance. This is because school staff are busy and unlikely to be available straightaway. Please do not come into school reception in the hope that a forceful demand will mean you can circumvent an appointment.
- Inflammatory comments or statements should be avoided. When expressing concerns or making a complaint, the tone should be courteous at all times. Emotive and accusatory words such as 'disgusting', use of capitals or defamatory statements should not be included. Concerns should be limited to the current situation and not draw on past events or those which have been dealt with previously.
- Concerns and complaints should be taken up with the person who was most heavily involved in the incident, unless it is of a very personal nature to do with that staff member. In that case it should be addressed to their Line Manager. In line with the complaints policy, the Headteacher should not be involved immediately and will only become involved when the correct procedure has been followed. This is to ensure a suitably neutral review of your concern, if necessary, at a later stage.
- Your assumption should be that you have one version of the matter which is a concern, rather than concluding you have the totality of the information. Your complaint reflects the information you have currently received.
- You will represent your own views and should not seek to present yourself as a spokesperson for others.
- All complaints are taken seriously and dealt with in a timely manner. We will work to resolve them. Threatening staff with the press, local authority or Ofsted is not a means to fast-forward your complaint.

Please note that any concerns and complaints which are received and do not comply with our expectations indicated above will be unattended until the communications meet expectations. Parents who breach these terms will be subject to restricted access to staff. These standards apply to written and verbal communication.