



Complaints Policy

Date Approved	24 September 2025
Frequency	Annually
Date for Renewal	23 September 2026
Approved by	CHS Governing Body
Owner/Written by	Governors
Type	Statutory
Audience	All

This policy has been adopted by Crowdys Hill School Governing Body.

Signed:

Headteacher

Signed:

Nicki Read & Bryony Hallows Co-Chair of Governors

Date:

24 September 2025





Contents

1. Introduction and Aims
2. Legislation and Guidance
3. Definitions – concern vs complaint
4. Roles and Responsibilities
5. Principles of Complaint Handling
6. Scope of the Policy
7. Time Limits
8. The Complaints Procedure
9. Anonymous Complaints
10. Respectful Behaviour and Unreasonable Complaints
11. Safeguarding and LADO Referrals
12. Escalation Beyond the School
13. Monitoring, Learning and Review
14. Related Policies
15. Appendices

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following “live” policies, which provide essential compliance links:

Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy (including LADO procedures).

SEND Policy and SEND Information Report.

Accessibility Plan (statutory three-year plan).

Equality Policy and Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) Statement.

Behaviour Policy and Anti-Bullying Policy.

Data Protection and Records Retention Policy.

Freedom of Information Policy.

Whistleblowing Policy

Online Safety suite: ICT Acceptable Use, Filtering & Monitoring, ICT Safe Use, Staff Online Safety.

Managing Unreasonable Complaints Policy (LIVE).

Health & Safety Policy.

Governor Code of Conduct and Staff Code of Conduct.

Further information is available in the DfE’s Best Practice Guidance:
[Best practice guidance for school complaints procedures 2020 - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/best-practice-guidance-for-school-complaints-procedures-2020)



1. Introduction and Aims

Crowdys Hill School values open communication with parents

This is a live policy, owned by governors, implemented by leaders and reviewed annually.

2. Legislation and Guidance

This policy fulfils duties under Section 29 of the Education Act 2002, the School Information Regulations 2008/2016. It also reflects Equality Act 2010, SEND Code, GDPR, FOIA, KCSIE 2025, and DfE Best Practice Guidance 2024.

This policy is underpinned by the following statutory requirements and guidance:

Legislation / Guidance	Relevance to Complaints Handling
Education Act 2002, Section 29	Requires governing bodies to establish complaints procedures.
School Information (England) Regulations 2008 (amended 2016)	Requires the full complaints procedure to be published on the school's website.
Equality Act 2010 (incl. Public Sector Equality Duty)	Ensures reasonable adjustments are made so no complainant is disadvantaged by disability, SEND, language, or protected characteristic.
Children and Families Act 2014 & SEND Code of Practice (2015)	Requires that complaints involving SEND are accessible and fairly considered
UK GDPR & Data Protection Act 2018	Complaints records are personal data and must be processed, retained, and stored lawfully.
Freedom of Information Act 2000	FOI requests must follow separate statutory processes and are not covered by this policy.
Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE 2025)	Safeguarding complaints must be escalated through safeguarding procedures, including referral to the LAD
Health and Safety at Work Act 1974	It requires schools to protect the wellbeing of staff and pupils, including protection from abusive complainant behavior.
DfE Best Practice Guidance for School Complaints Procedures (2024)	Provides the recommended structure and standards for school complaints handling.

3. Definitions: Concerns vs complaints

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 however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'*.

It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaint procedure. Crowdys Hill School takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible. Serial/unreasonable complaints may be subject to the Unreasonable Complaints Policy.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

The complainant sets out concerns respectfully, and staff will listen and investigate fairly. The Headteacher oversees the formal Stage 1 of the process. A governor panel hears Stage 2 if applicable. The Governing Body monitors this policy annually.



5. Principles of Complaint Handling

Complaints will be handled with accessibility, fairness, timeliness, respect, and transparency. Verbal complaints will be formally recorded and confirmed with the complainant.

6. Scope of the Policy

Crowdys Hill complaints procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services that the school provides other than complaints for which there are separate (statutory) procedures, including those listed below.

Admissions to schools

School re-organisation proposals

Statutory assessments of special educational needs

Matters likely to require a child protection investigation

Exclusion of children from school

Whistleblowing

Staff grievances

Staff conduct complaints

Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities

Schools should direct complainants to follow the external provider's own complaints procedure.

Complaints about the curriculum

Complaints about collective worship

Withdrawal from the curriculum

For data protection concerns, complaints may be made to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO):

<https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/>

For Freedom of Information (FOI) matters, see: <https://ico.org.uk/for-the-public/official-information/>

7. Time Limits

Complaints should normally be raised within three months. Late complaints will be considered if there are good reasons (for example, safeguarding, SEND, illness or bereavement).

8. The Complaints Procedure

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf on a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

Concerns should be raised with the class teacher in the first instance. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint – see below for stages.

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

Complaints against school staff (except the headteacher) should be made in the first instance, to the headteacher via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.



Complaints that involve or are about the headteacher should be addressed to the Chair of Governors, via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor or the whole governing body should be addressed to the Clerk to the Governing Body via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

In accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure. For instance, providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

Stage 1

Formal complaints must be made to the headteacher (unless they are about the headteacher), via the school office. This may be done in person, in writing, or by telephone.

The headteacher will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 5 school days.

Within this response, the headteacher will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The headteacher can consider whether a face-to-face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

Note: The headteacher may delegate the investigation to another member of the school's senior leadership team but not the decision to be taken.

During the investigation, the headteacher (or investigator) will:

- if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, 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 their investigation, the headteacher will provide a formal written response within 10 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint.

If the headteacher is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant 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 Crowdys Hill School will take to resolve the complaint.

The headteacher will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1.

If the complaint is about the headteacher, or a member of the governing body (including the Chair or Vice-Chair), a suitably skilled governor will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 1.

Complaints about the headteacher or member of the governing body must be made to the Clerk, via the school office.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire governing body or
- the majority of the governing body



Stage 1 will be considered by an independent investigator, appointed by the governing body. At the conclusion of their investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response.

Stage 2

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 1 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 2 – a meeting with members of the governing body’s complaints committee, which will be formed of the first three, impartial, governors available. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.

A request to escalate to Stage 2 must be made to the Chair of Governors, via the school office, within 5 school days of receipt of the Stage 1 response.

The Chair of Governors will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 5 school days.

Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

The Chair of Governors will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within 25 school days of receipt of the Stage 2 request. If this is not possible, the Chair of Governors will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates, without good reason, the Chair of Governors will decide when to hold the meeting. It will then proceed in the complainant’s absence on the basis of written submissions from both parties.

The complaints committee will consist of at least three governors with no prior involvement or knowledge of the complaint. Prior to the meeting, they will decide amongst themselves who will act as the Chair of the Complaints Committee. If there are fewer than three governors from Crowdys Hill School available, the Chair of Governors will source any additional, independent governors through another local school or through their LA’s Governor Services team, in order to make up the committee. Alternatively, an entirely independent committee may be convened to hear the complaint at Stage 2.

The committee will decide whether to deal with the complaint by inviting parties to a meeting or through written representations, but in making their decision they will be sensitive to the complainant’s needs.

If the complainant is invited to attend the meeting, they may bring someone along to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. Generally, we do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the committee meeting. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate.

For instance, if a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by union and/or legal representation.

Note: Complaints about staff conduct will not generally be handled under this complaints procedure. Complainants will be advised that any staff conduct complaints will be considered under staff disciplinary procedures, if appropriate, but outcomes will not be shared with them.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

At least 15 school days before the meeting, the Chair of Governors will:

- confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that, if the complainant is invited, the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the committee at least 10 school days before the meeting.



Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 5 school days before the date of the meeting. The committee will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

The committee will also 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.

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

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

- uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- dismiss 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 Chair of the Committee will provide the complainant and Crowdys Hill School with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 10 school days.

The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the Department for Education if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by Crowdys Hill School

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire governing body or
- the majority of the governing body

Stage 2 will be heard by a committee of independent governors.

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 Crowdys Hill School will take to resolve the complaint.

The response will also advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied.



9. Anonymous complaints

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

10. Respectful Behaviour and Unreasonable Complaints

All parties must act respectfully. Abusive behaviour may trigger the Unreasonable Complaints Policy: restrictions, single contact point, site bans, legal/police action.

11. Safeguarding and LADO Referrals

If a complaint indicates risk of harm or staff harming pupils, the process stops, and safeguarding procedures followed with immediate referral to the LADO.

12 Escalation Beyond the School

If a complainant remains dissatisfied after Stage 3, they may:

Contact Swindon Borough Council (Children's Services, Civic Offices, SN1 2JH) for a procedural check only. Please note, the local authority cannot overturn the school's decision but may advise on whether the procedure has been followed correctly.

Escalate the complaint to the Department for Education (DfE), which is the final route for escalation. The DfE will not re-investigate the complaint but will consider whether the school has acted lawfully and reasonably. Further details and an online form are available here: <https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school>

13. Monitoring, Learning and Review

The Headteacher will maintain a Complaints Register. Governors will review the policy each year, checking for Equality Act and SEND compliance.

14. Related Policies

This policy should be read with Safeguarding & Child Protection, Managing Unreasonable Complaints, Accessibility Plan & SEND Policy, Equality Policy, Data Protection, FOI, Whistleblowing, Online Safety.



Appendices

Appendix A - Complaint Form

Crowdys Hill School – Complaint Form

Please complete this form if you wish to make a formal complaint. If you cannot complete it in writing, a member of staff will record the details for you.

Complainant's name: _____

Pupil's name (if relevant): _____

Address and postcode: _____

Daytime phone number: _____

Email address: _____

Details of complaint (include dates, staff, events, and any steps you have already taken):

Outcome you are seeking: _____

Do you require adjustments (e.g. interpreter, large print, SENDIASS support)? Yes / No

Signed: _____

Date: _____



Appendix B - Timescales Table

Stage	Action	Timescale
Stage 1	Concern raised with Headteacher	N/A
Stage 1	Acknowledge receipt of complaint	Within 5 school days
Stage 1	Written outcome issued	Within 10 school days
Stage 2	Complaint to governors	Within 5 days
Stage 2	Acknowledge receipt of complaint	Within 5 school days
Stage 2	Meeting held	Within 25 school days
Stage 2	Written outcome issued	Within 10 school days

Timescales pause outside of term time. Revised dates will always be confirmed in writing

Appendix C - Conduct and Conflicts Guidance

- Audio or video recordings are not permitted unless agreed as a reasonable adjustment.
- Governors or staff with prior involvement must withdraw to avoid conflict of interest.
- All parties must act respectfully. Abusive conduct may result in restrictions under the Managing Unreasonable Complaints Policy.

Appendix D - Contact Points

Acting Headteacher: Mrs Hibbard, Crowdys Hill School, Jefferies Avenue, Swindon SN2 7HJ.
Tel: 01793 332400 | Email: info@crowdyhill.swindon.sch.uk

Chair of Governors: Nicki Read (via School Office).

SENDIASS Swindon: <https://www.swindon.gov.uk/SENDIASS>

Swindon Borough Council: Group Director, Children's Services, Civic Offices, SN1 2JH.

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

Appendix E - Equality Impact Log

Date Reviewed	Reviewer	Protected Groups Considered	Changes Required?	Notes



Appendix J - Complaints Register Template

Ref	Date Received	Subject	Stage	Outcome	Closed Date	Notes / Learning

Appendix F - Verbal Complaint Statement Form

Taken by (name/role): _____

Date and time: _____

Complainant's account (verbatim as far as possible):

Read back and confirmed by complainant: Yes / No

Adjustments used: _____

Logged on [date] by [staff name]

Appendix G - Governor Annual Review Checklist

DfE Best Practice Guidance reviewed: Yes / No

Equality Act 2010 compliance confirmed: Yes / No

SEND Code of Practice compliance confirmed: Yes / No

Safeguarding and LADO procedures aligned: Yes / No

Data Protection / GDPR compliance reviewed: Yes / No

Escalation routes correct: Yes / No

Appendices and flowchart up to date: Yes / No

Accessibility adjustments reviewed: Yes / No

Signed by Governing Body: _____ Date: _____

Appendix H - Learning and Improvement Log

Date	Theme of Complaint	Learning Identified	Action Taken	Outcome

Appendix I - Accessibility Adjustments Log

Date	Complainant	Adjustment Made	Staff Responsible	Outcome



Appendix J - Policy Control Sheet

Version number: _____

Approval date: _____

Review date: _____

Amendments made: _____

Approved by Full Governing Body: Yes / No

Policy Control Sheet

Version Number	[Insert]
Approval Date	[Insert]
Review Date	[Insert]
Approved By	Full Governing Body