



Complaints and Compliments Policy

Name of policy	Complaints & Compliments
Review committee	Board of Trustees
Last review date	September 2024
Next review date	September 2025

Compliments

Compliments procedure

Compliments are always greatly received and can be passed on either directly to staff or formally through a letter. Young people also voice their compliments via our learner meetings, which are recorded. Compliments are also passed via telephone calls to GUST administration from parents/carers.

Complaints

Complaints procedure

This procedure is for use for complaints against the school, a member of staff or the board of trustees. This can be used in conjunction with the disciplinary procedure.

Stage One: Complaint heard by staff member/headteacher/chair of board of trustees

It is in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. The experience of the first contact between the complainant and the school can be crucial in determining whether the complaint will escalate. To that end, if staff are made aware of the procedures, they know what to do when they receive a complaint.

In the first instance, the complaint should be discussed between the person making the complaint and the member of staff involved; there should be allowance for a complaint to be made and considered on an informal basis. If a complainant indicates that they would have difficulty discussing a complaint with that particular member of staff, they should be referred to another staff member. Where the complaint concerns the headteacher or a trustee, the complainant should be referred to the chair of the board of trustees.

Similarly, if a member of staff/headteacher/chair of the board of trustees feels too compromised to deal with a complaint, it should be referred to another member of staff or another trustee. The ability to consider the complaint objectively and impartially is crucial, and it is also important to give an indication of the timescale if it is found that the complaint requires further investigation.

If a complainant first approaches a trustee, they should be referred to the appropriate person – i.e. the member of staff concerned or the chair of the board of trustees. Trustees should not act unilaterally on an individual complaint outside the formal procedure or be involved at the early stages in case they are needed to sit on a committee at a later stage of the procedure.

It is hoped the majority of complaints can be resolved at this stage, and to this end, it may be useful to involve the client relations service within the children's services directorate of the local authority (LA) and legal provider, who are available to advise parents on the complaints process and may on occasion help to facilitate contact with the school.

Stage Two: Formal consideration of complaint

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the way the complaint has been handled at stage one and wishes to pursue their initial complaint, the headteacher/chair of the board of trustees may delegate the task of investigating the complaint to another staff member or another trustee. The headteacher/chair of the board of trustees may also, in exceptional circumstances, commission an investigating officer report to be undertaken by an external consultant. The person making the complaint should be

informed that an investigation is underway and that they will receive a response within 25 working days or a letter explaining the reason for any subsequent delay.

Once the relevant facts have been established the headteacher/chair of the board of trustees should relay the decision, and the reason for the decision, in writing to the complainant.

Stage Three: Complaint heard by complaints committee

If the complainant is still dissatisfied with the outcome, they should write to the headteacher/chair of the board of trustees, giving details of the complaint within 10 school days of receipt of the decision letter. The chair or another nominated director will convene a complaints committee if they consider it appropriate after considering the report of the investigating officer.

The committee will consist of a minimum of three trustees with delegated powers who were not directly involved in the matters detailed within the complaint. The committee will be appointed by the chair of the board of trustees with the chair of the committee being appointed when they meet.

The complaints committee will take a decision as to any action to be taken in response to the complaint. For example, they may choose to:

- Convene a panel hearing at which the complainant will be invited to put forward their case; this should be held within 20 working days of the decision to hold a hearing
- Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part
- Uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- Recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur

In reaching a decision, the committee may take the advice of such bodies as they see fit, in particular the LA and legal provider.

Stage Four: Panel hearing

If it is decided that it is appropriate to hold a hearing, the clerk of the complaints committee will inform both parties in writing of the decision of the committee within 5 school days.

If a panel hearing is arranged, the panel should consist of at least three members, all of whom must not be directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. At least one member must be independent of the management and running of the school. The complainant will be invited to attend the hearing and can be accompanied. If the complainant is a pupil of the school or a child, they will be invited to attend the committee hearing and will be encouraged to come accompanied if they wish by a parent or guardian.

Following the panel hearing, findings and recommendations from the panel should be put in writing and provided to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about. This information would also be available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and headteacher.

Following a complaint

If, after following the school's own complaints procedure, the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome, or if there are reasons why they cannot use that procedure – for example, they feel their complaint has not been or will not be given a fair consideration due to a conflict of interest – they can forward their complaint to the Department for Education (DfE), using the online school complaints form.

Making a complaint to the department should only happen once all other routes have been followed.
The exception to this may be where there is a child protection concern or where a child is missing education.

More information about making a complaint can be found on the DfE website:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/schoolperformance/b00212240/making-complaint-school/how-to-complain>

If a complaint has been made by a number of parents and it is about whole school issues, they may, at any stage of the procedure, ask the chief inspector of schools to investigate their complaint. The chief inspector may or may not require the school's complaints procedure to be exhausted before they decide whether or not to investigate.

Recording complaints

A written record should be kept of all complaints, whether they are resolved following a formal procedure or proceed to a panel hearing, recording the action taken by the school as a result of complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld) to avoid future complaints.

If a child protection or safeguarding issue is raised at any point during the complaints procedure, this should be immediately shared with the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) (or their deputy). In case of an emergency, call 999.

Confidentiality

All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the secretary of state of a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests to access them.

Appeals

You have the right to lodge an appeal in respect of any capability/disciplinary action taken against you.

If you wish to exercise this right, you should apply either verbally or in writing normally within 5 working days to the headteacher.

It may be necessary, because of the size of our organisation, for the appeal to be heard by the person who took the original action, and it is therefore important that your appeal gives details of why the penalty imposed is either too severe, inappropriate or unfair in the circumstances.

If you are appealing on the grounds that you have not committed an offence, it may be necessary for the person conducting the appeal to have a complete re-hearing so that there can be a reappraisal of all matters before a decision is made to grant or refuse the appeal.

You may be accompanied at the appeal hearing by a fellow employee of your choice and the result of the appeal will be made known to you in writing, normally within 5 working days after the hearing. This is the final stage of the appeal process.

We reserve the right to allow third parties to chair any formal hearing.

In the 2023-2024 academic year, GUST Independent School had 0 formal complaints.

All complaints were dealt with through informal means.

Appendix A – Example of a complaints form



1 HALDANE ST ASHINGTON NORTHUMBERLAND NE63 8SF
TEL: 01670 850943 EMAIL: Rebecca.cutts@gustschool.com

Jonathan Blower (Headteacher)

Complaints form

Please complete and return to Mr Jonathan Blower, Headteacher (Complaints Coordinator), who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Name:	Date:
Pupil's name (if applicable):	
Relationship to pupil:	
Address:	
Contact telephone number:	
Please give details of your complaint: <i>Where possible, please include date, time and place or any other specific details that may be relevant to your complaint.</i>	
What action, if any, have you already taken to try to resolve your complaint? <i>Who did you speak to and what was the response?</i>	

OFFICIAL USE

Date acknowledgement sent:

By whom:

Complaint referred to:

Appendix B – Child-friendly complaints form



1 HALDANE ST ASHINGTON NORTHUMBERLAND NE63 8SF
01670850943 EMAIL: Rebecca.cutts@gustschool.com

Jonathan Blower (Headteacher)

Complaints form

Please complete and return to the school office.

Name:	Date:
Tell us about your complaint. Include what happened, who was there, where and when it happened.	
Have you already tried to speak to someone about it? Who did you speak to?	
What did they say?	

OFFICIAL USE

Parents' address:

Parents' contact telephone:

Parents contacted by:

Date:

Complaint referred to: