



HOMEBROOK WOODS

Independent Special School

Complaints Policy and Procedure

Independent School Standards - Part 7 - Manner in which complaints are handled

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Policy Status:	Approved by Proprietor: 
Approval Date:	20 th March 2026
Implementation Date:	Upon DfE Registration
Next Review Date:	March 2027
Version:	1.0

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1. Policy Purpose and Assurance Statement

Homebrook Woods is committed to maintaining open, transparent and constructive relationships with pupils, parents and carers. The school recognises that concerns or complaints may arise from time to time and believes that such matters must be addressed promptly, fairly and in accordance with statutory expectations.

A clear and accessible complaints procedure:

- enables parents and carers to raise concerns confidently
- ensures that issues are investigated thoroughly
- supports transparency and accountability
- enables the school to learn from feedback and improve practice.

This policy establishes the procedures through which concerns and complaints may be raised, considered and resolved.

The policy ensures compliance with:

- Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014
- Part 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled
- relevant safeguarding legislation
- statutory guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

2. Regulatory Compliance

This policy is written to ensure compliance with the **Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014**, specifically **Part 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled**.

The policy ensures that:

- parents and carers can raise concerns and complaints easily
- complaints are handled through a clear staged procedure
- complaints are investigated fairly and transparently
- written records of complaints are maintained
- complainants are given the opportunity to attend a complaints panel hearing where appropriate
- the complaints panel includes **at least one independent member who is not involved in the management or running of the school**
- written findings and recommendations are provided following a panel hearing
- records of complaints and their outcomes are made available to the **Secretary of State or inspection authorities upon request**.

The policy also reflects relevant statutory guidance including:

- *Keeping Children Safe in Education*
- the Equality Act 2010
- safeguarding legislation relating to the welfare of pupils.

These arrangements ensure that complaints are managed fairly, transparently and in accordance with statutory expectations for independent schools.

3. School Ethos and Commitment to Partnership with Families

Homebrook Woods values strong, respectful relationships with parents and carers.

The school believes that effective communication between the school and families is essential in supporting pupils with additional needs.

Concerns raised by parents or carers are taken seriously and are viewed as opportunities to strengthen communication and improve practice.

The school encourages concerns to be raised as early as possible so that they can be resolved quickly and constructively.

Where possible, the school will seek to resolve concerns informally through discussion and collaboration with families.

4. Accessibility for Parents and Carers of Pupils with SEND

Homebrook Woods is a specialist SEND school supporting pupils with:

- Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC)
- Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN).

The school recognises that families may require additional support when raising concerns.

To ensure the complaints procedure is accessible and inclusive, the school may:

- provide assistance with written complaints
- allow concerns to be raised verbally where appropriate
- offer meetings rather than written correspondence
- provide clear explanations of the complaints procedure
- allow additional time for communication where needed.

The school aims to ensure that the complaints process remains accessible, respectful and supportive for all families.

5. Scope of the Complaints Policy

This policy applies to complaints raised by parents or carers about any aspect of the school's provision.

This may include concerns relating to:

- educational provision
- SEND support
- behaviour and regulation strategies
- safeguarding or pupil welfare
- health and safety
- communication with parents or carers
- school policies or procedures
- administrative decisions.

Safeguarding concerns will always be handled in accordance with the school's Safeguarding Policy.

6. Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is defined as:

An expression of dissatisfaction about the school's actions or decisions where the complainant believes that the matter has not been resolved satisfactorily through informal discussion.

7. Overview of the Complaints Procedure

The school operates a **three-stage complaints process**:

Stage 1 – Informal resolution

Stage 2 – Formal complaint investigation

Stage 3 – Complaints panel hearing.

The school encourages concerns to be addressed at the earliest stage possible.

8. Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

Parents and carers are encouraged to raise concerns directly with the relevant member of staff or with the Headteacher.

Staff will:

- listen carefully to the concern
- clarify any details
- consider appropriate actions to resolve the issue.

Where possible, concerns will be resolved within **five school days**.

If the concern cannot be resolved informally, the complainant may submit a formal complaint.

9. Stage 2 – Formal Complaint Investigation

A formal complaint should be submitted in writing to:

Proprietor / Headteacher
Homebrook Woods

The complaint should include:

- the nature of the complaint
- relevant dates and details
- actions already taken
- the outcome sought.

Acknowledgement

The school will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within **five school days**.

Investigation

The complaint will be investigated by the Headteacher.

The investigation may include:

- reviewing relevant documentation
- meeting with relevant staff
- considering evidence provided by the complainant.

Outcome

The school will provide a written response normally within **ten school days** of acknowledgement.

The response will explain:

- the findings of the investigation
- the reasons for the decision
- any actions taken.

Where it is not possible to meet the stated timescales, the complainant will be informed in writing and provided with an explanation and a revised timeframe.

Complaints Against the Headteacher or Proprietor

Where a complaint is made against the Headteacher or Proprietor, or where the Headteacher or Proprietor has been directly involved in the matters raised, the complaint will not be investigated by that individual.

In such circumstances, the complaint will be referred to an external independent investigator or considered directly by the complaints panel to ensure impartiality, fairness and transparency in the handling of the complaint.

10. Stage 3 – Complaints Panel Hearing

If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2, they may request a complaints panel hearing.

The request should normally be made within **ten school days** of receiving the Stage 2 outcome.

Once the school's complaints procedure has been exhausted, parents and carers may contact the Department for Education if they believe that the school is not meeting the Independent School Standards.

11. Complaints Panel Composition

The complaints panel will consist of **three members**.

The panel will include:

- individuals not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint
- **at least one independent member** with no connection to the management or running of the school.

This ensures fairness and impartiality.

12. Complaints Panel Procedural Rules

The panel will follow fair and transparent procedures.

The complainant will:

- be invited to attend the hearing
- be allowed to present their case
- be permitted to bring a companion if they wish.

The panel will:

- consider all relevant evidence
- review the investigation undertaken at Stage 2
- consider whether the complaint has been handled fairly.

The panel will reach a decision after considering all information presented.

The findings and recommendations will be provided in writing to:

- the complainant
- the Proprietor
- the Headteacher.

The written decision will normally be issued within **five school days of the hearing**.

13. Safeguarding Complaints

Complaints relating to safeguarding or pupil welfare will be managed in accordance with the school's Safeguarding Policy.

Where appropriate, concerns may be referred to:

- the local authority safeguarding team
- relevant statutory agencies.

Safeguarding considerations always take priority.

14. Complaints Relating to SEND Provision

Complaints relating to SEND provision will be considered carefully in the context of the pupil's:

- individual needs
- communication profile
- support strategies
- professional recommendations.

The school will work collaboratively with parents and professionals to identify solutions.

15. Recording Complaints

The school maintains a written record of formal complaints.

Records include:

- date received
- details of the complaint
- actions taken
- outcomes
- follow-up actions.

Records are stored securely.

16. Monitoring and Review of Complaints

The Proprietor / Headteacher reviews complaints regularly in order to:

- identify recurring issues
- identify patterns or trends
- inform improvements to school practice.

17. Leadership Oversight and Governance

Homebrook Woods operates under a proprietor-led governance structure.

The roles of:

- Proprietor
 - Headteacher
 - Designated Safeguarding Lead
- are held by the same individual.

This individual holds ultimate accountability for complaints handling.

The complaints panel stage provides additional oversight where required.

17. Confidentiality

Complaints will be handled sensitively and confidentially.

Information will only be shared with individuals who need it in order to investigate and resolve the complaint.

18. Availability of Records

Records of complaints and their outcomes will be made available to the Department for Education or Ofsted inspectors upon request.

Availability of the Complaints Policy

This Complaints Policy is available on the school's website and can be provided to parents or carers on request.

The policy is available in alternative formats where required to ensure accessibility for all families.

19. Serial, Persistent or Unreasonable Complaints

Homebrook Woods is committed to responding constructively and fairly to all concerns and complaints raised by parents or carers.

However, in a small number of circumstances a complainant may pursue a complaint in a way that places unreasonable demands on the school or on individual members of staff.

Examples of such behaviour may include:

- repeatedly raising the same issue after the complaints procedure has been completed
- refusing to accept the outcome of a properly conducted investigation
- pursuing complaints in a manner that is aggressive, abusive or intimidating
- making excessive or unreasonable demands on staff time
- sending large volumes of correspondence about the same issue.

Where this occurs, the school will consider whether the complaint may be considered serial, persistent or unreasonable.

Managing persistent complaints

Where a complainant continues to pursue a complaint that has already been investigated and concluded, the school may:

- inform the complainant that the complaints procedure has been exhausted
- decline to reopen the complaint unless significant new evidence is presented
- limit further correspondence relating to the matter.

Unreasonable behaviour

Where behaviour towards staff is considered unacceptable, including behaviour that is aggressive, abusive or threatening, the school may take appropriate steps to ensure the safety and wellbeing of staff.

This may include:

- requesting that communication takes place in writing
- limiting contact to a single named member of staff
- ending meetings where behaviour becomes unacceptable
- seeking advice from appropriate authorities where necessary.

Maintaining fairness

Even where a complaint is considered persistent or unreasonable, the school will ensure that:

- the complainant's concerns have been considered fully
- the complaints procedure has been followed appropriately
- decisions are made fairly and transparently.

The school will always aim to maintain respectful communication with families while also protecting staff from unreasonable behaviour.

19. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually.

APPENDIX A



Homebrook Woods – Complaints Form
(For use at Stage 2 of the Complaints Procedure)

Confidential

This form should be used to submit a **formal complaint** where a concern has not been resolved informally.
Support can be provided to complete this form if required.

Section 1: Complainant Details

Full name:

Relationship to pupil:

☐ Parent

☐ Carer

☐ Other (please specify):

Address:

Telephone number:

Email address:

Section 2: Pupil Details

Pupil's full name:

Date of birth:

Class / Year group:

Section 3: Details of the Complaint

Please provide clear details of your complaint.
You may attach additional pages if required.

Nature of the complaint:

Dates, times and individuals involved (where applicable):

Section 4: Actions Already Taken

Please explain any steps already taken to try to resolve this matter, including informal discussions.

Section 5: Outcome Sought

Please state what outcome or resolution you are seeking.

Section 6: Additional Information

Please provide any further relevant information or context.

Section 7: Declaration

I confirm that the information provided in this form is accurate to the best of my knowledge.

Signature:

Print name:

Date:

Submission Details

Completed forms should be returned to:

The Proprietor / Headteacher

Homebrook Woods

[Insert postal address or email address]

APPENDIX B



Homebrook Woods – Complaints Investigation Record

(For use at Stage 2 of the Complaints Procedure)

Confidential – Internal Use Only

This record should be completed for **all formal complaints** and retained securely in accordance with the school's Complaints Policy.

Section 1: Complaint Details

Complaint reference number:

Date complaint received:

Method of receipt:

☐ Written ☐ Email ☐ Other (please specify):

Section 2: Complainant Details

Name of complainant:

Relationship to pupil:

Pupil name (if applicable):

Section 3: Nature of the Complaint

Provide a brief summary of the complaint raised.

Section 4: Investigation Details

Investigating officer:

Role / position:

Date investigation commenced:

Date investigation concluded:

Section 5: Evidence Reviewed

List all documentation and evidence considered as part of the investigation.

- ☐ Policies and procedures
- ☐ Written statements
- ☐ Pupil records
- ☐ Emails / correspondence
- ☐ Other (please specify)

Details:

Section 6: Meetings Conducted

Record details of meetings held as part of the investigation.

Date	Attendees	Purpose / Summary

Section 7: Findings of the Investigation

Set out the findings clearly, including whether the complaint is upheld, partially upheld, or not upheld.

Section 8: Outcome

Outcome of complaint:

☐ Upheld ☐ Partially upheld ☐ Not upheld

Rationale for decision:

Section 9: Actions Taken

Detail any actions taken or planned as a result of the investigation.

Timescale for actions (if applicable):

Section 10: Communication with Complainant
Date written outcome issued:

Method of communication:

☐ Letter ☐ Email ☐ Other (please specify):

Section 11: Investigator Declaration

I confirm that this investigation has been conducted fairly, impartially and in accordance with the school's Complaints Policy.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

APPENDIX C



Homebrook Woods – Complaints Monitoring Log
(To be maintained by the Proprietor / Headteacher)

Confidential – Internal Use Only

This log is used to monitor formal complaints in order to:

- ensure procedures are followed correctly
- identify patterns or recurring issues
- inform school improvement and governance oversight

Complaints Monitoring Log

Date complaint received	Complaint reference	Name of complainant	Nature of complaint (summary)	Stage reached (1 / 2 / 3)	Action taken	Outcome	Follow-up actions required	Follow-up completed (date)

Monitoring and Review Notes

Use this section to record:

- themes or trends identified
- actions taken at a leadership or policy level
- learning points arising from complaints

Review and Oversight

Reviewed by (name and role):

Date of review:

Actions identified (if any):

APPENDIX D



Homebrook Woods – Complaints Panel Hearing Record
(For use at Stage 3 of the Complaints Procedure)

Confidential – Internal Use Only
This record must be completed following a complaints panel hearing and retained securely in accordance with the school's Complaints Policy.

Section 1: Hearing Details
Panel hearing date:

Time:

Location (or virtual platform):

Section 2: Panel Membership
Panel members (names and roles):

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Independent panel member (name and confirmation of independence):

Section 3: Attendance
Complainant present:

☐ Yes ☐ No

Companion present (if applicable):

School representatives present:

Section 4: Summary of the Complaint

Provide a concise summary of the complaint as considered by the panel.

Section 5: Evidence Presented

List all evidence considered by the panel.

- ☐ Complaint documentation
- ☐ Investigation report (Stage 2)
- ☐ Written statements
- ☐ Relevant policies and procedures
- ☐ Other evidence (please specify)

Details:

Section 6: Panel Considerations

Record the key points considered by the panel, including procedural fairness and evidence reviewed.

Section 7: Panel Findings

Decision:

- ☐ Complaint upheld
- ☐ Complaint partially upheld
- ☐ Complaint not upheld

Findings and rationale for the decision:

Section 8: Recommendations

Detail any recommendations made by the panel, including actions, improvements or monitoring requirements.

Timescales for implementation (if applicable):

Section 9: Communication of Outcome

Date written outcome issued to complainant:

Method of communication:

☐ Letter ☐ Email ☐ Other: _____

Section 10: Panel Declaration

We confirm that this complaints panel hearing was conducted fairly, impartially and in accordance with the school's Complaints Policy.

Panel Chair – Name:

Signature:

Date:

APPENDIX E



Homebrook Woods – Complaints Process Flow Diagram

