



Complaints POLICY

Reviewed Aug 2023
Director: Colin Bernard

Policy Statement

FUEL believes that if a service user wishes to make a complaint or register a concern, they should find it easy to do so. It is each establishment's policy to welcome complaints and look upon them as an opportunity to learn, adapt, improve and provide better services. This policy is intended to ensure that complaints are dealt with properly and that all complaints or comments by service users and their relatives and carers are taken seriously.

The Policy is not designed to apportion blame, to consider the possibility of negligence or to provide compensation. It is NOT part of FUEL's Disciplinary Policy.

FUEL believes that failure to listen to or acknowledge complaints will lead to an aggravation of problems, service user dissatisfaction and possible litigation. FUEL supports the concept that most complaints, if dealt with early, openly and honestly, can be sorted out at a local level between just the complainant and FUEL.

The policy is based on the procedures outlined in the DfE's ['The Independent School Standards'](#) guidance which sets out requirements concerning managing complaints in independent schools. In order to meet the requirements, independent schools must have three stages in their complaints procedures: informal, formal and a hearing before a panel which must include an independent member

Aim

The aim of FUEL's Complaints Policy is to ensure that its complaints procedure is properly and effectively implemented, and that service users feel confident that their complaints and worries are listened to and acted upon promptly and fairly.

Statement of Intent

FUEL aims to resolve all complaints at the earliest possible stage and is dedicated to ensuring all complaints are managed sympathetically and efficiently.

Any complaint or concern will be taken seriously, whether formally or informally, and the appropriate procedures will be implemented. This policy has been created to deal with any complaint against a member of staff, or the school, relating to any aspects of the school or the provision of facilities or services.

FUEL will ensure the complaints procedure is:

- Easily accessible and publicised on the school's website.
- Simple to understand and put into practice.
- Impartial and fair to all parties involved.
- Respectful of confidentiality duties.
- Continuously under improvement, using information gathered during the procedure.
- Fairly investigated, by an independent person when necessary.
- Used to address all issues to provide appropriate and effective responses where necessary.

Legal framework

This policy has due regard to legislation including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education and Skills Act 2008
- The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014
- Equality Act 2010
- The UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Freedom of Information Act 2000

This policy also has due regard to related guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- DfE (2019) 'The Independent School Standards'

This policy will be implemented in accordance with the following FUEL policies:

- Data Protection Policy
- Data Retention Policy
- Grievance Policy

Definitions

For the purpose of this policy:

- A **"complaint"** can be defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction' towards the actions taken or a perceived lack of action taken.
- A **"concern"** can be defined as 'an expression of worry or doubt' where reassurance is required; concerns will be classed and addressed as complaints.
- **"Complainants"** are those who have raised a concern or a complaint.
- A **"grievance"** is an issue raised by a member of staff where they feel the school has not implemented a policy or process fairly or properly. Grievances will be dealt with in line with the FUEL's Grievance Policy.
- **"Days"** relate to school days.

Eligibility to make a complaint

Parents of pupils currently being educated at FUEL are able to make a complaint in line with this policy.

All complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Parents will be assured that their children will not be penalised if they raise a complaint.

This policy does not cover complaints made by the following:

- Parents of pupils who have left voluntarily or as a result of being excluded (except where the complaints process was started when the pupil was still being educated at the school)
- Prospective pupils and their parents, and the failure to admit such pupils.

Timescales

Complaints are expected to be made as soon as possible after an issue arises to ensure the issue is addressed in an appropriate timescale.

FUEL upholds a three-month time limit in which a complaint can be lodged following an incident. Complaints made outside this time limit will not be automatically refused and exceptions will be considered.

Timescales for managing complaints at specific stages are outlined in the relevant sections of this policy. In the case of any timescale change, all parties involved will be informed of the changes in a timely manner.

Complaints Procedure

Good communication is vital for building a partnership between home and school and it also builds understanding and co-operation between parents, staff and Directors.

Stage	Action	Response
1	Contact FUEL and try to sort problem out informally.	Discussion/Meeting with either the headteacher or a member of SLT.
2	If can't be resolved informally, write to the Headteacher Sarah Powell as soon as possible, setting out why you remain dissatisfied and to raise a formal complaint. Headteacher, will investigate and invite the parent to a meeting to discuss the complaint and to attempt to reach a resolution.	Acknowledges complaint within 2 school days. Meets with complainant within 5 further school days Replies within 3 school weeks – with written information about their decision on the complaint and the reasons.
3	If still dissatisfied, or your complaint is about the headteacher write to Adrian McGregor the Operations Director (nominated director) setting out why you are unhappy and what you would like the school to do to resolve the complaint. The Operations Director will investigate the complaint and invite the complainant to a meeting to discuss the complaint and attempt the reach a resolution explaining options available including a Panel Hearing.	Acknowledges complaint within 2 school days. Meets with complainant within 5 further school days Replies within 3 school weeks – with written information about their decision on the complaint and the reasons.
4	If still dissatisfied, your complaint should be taken to a panel hearing where it will be heard by the C.E.O and a panel of Directors & Governors (minimum 3 individuals) (members of which will not have had any previous involvement in the matter. One member of	The CEO will organise a Panel Hearing within 3 school weeks of receiving the written request.

	<p>the committee will be independent of the management and running of the organisation)</p> <p>At each stage it will be clarified exactly who will be involved, what will happen, and how long it will take. CEO will communicate the information to parents. Parents have the right to attend any such hearing and be accompanied.</p> <p>If the parent does not act on their right to attend the panel hearing, it will still proceed as scheduled.</p>	<p>Panel may request additional investigations or documents which will be shared 5 school days before the hearing.</p>
4a)	<p>Panel Hearing:-</p> <p>The panel consider all relevant facts.</p> <p>The panel make a decision on the complaint and record the findings and recommendations.</p> <p>Any such findings and or recommendations arising from the hearing will be: -</p> <p>i) Provided to the complainant and the person complained about if relevant.</p> <p>ii) Available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and head teacher.</p>	<p>CEO will provide a written copy of the panel's decision, findings and recommendations within 2 school weeks.</p> <p>The panel hearing decision is final.</p>
5	<p>If still dissatisfied, contact the Secretary of State for Education or the Government Ombudsman.</p>	<p>Children and Families staff can provide details of how to contact these organisations.</p>

Managing and Recording Complaints.

The progress of any complaint and the final outcome will be recorded. A complaint may be made in person, telephone, or in writing. At the end of a meeting or telephone call, the member of staff will ensure that the complainant and the school have the same understanding of what was discussed and agreed.

A written record will be kept of any complaint made, detailing:

- Whether the complaint was resolved following an informal route, formal route or panel hearing.
- Actions taken by the school as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint was upheld).

Additional records may be kept containing the following information:

- The date the issue was raised.
- The name of the complainant and, where relevant, their child
- A description of the issue
- Records of all the investigations

- Witness statements
- The name of the staff member responsible for handling the issue at each stage
- Copies of correspondence on the issue

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

Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the head teacher and board of directors. The next scheduled review date of this policy is August 2024.

All changes made to this policy will be communicated with all relevant stakeholders.