Whipman Woods Flying High Academy Complaints Policy 2026-2028

A policy for all Flying High Partnership schools

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Flying High Partnership

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Flying High Partnership

Overview:

Our school aims to be an inclusive school providing high quality teaching and learning, where everyone's contribution to school life is valued. We provide children with the opportunity to learn in a stimulating, caring, supportive and respectful environment where staff are committed to our aims. Your comments, either positive or developmental, are helpful for our future planning. As a school we are committed to continuous improvement and you are an important part of this. We recognise that there are occasions where you may need to discuss issues with us and this policy sets out the procedure for doing so.

Should you wish to register a complaint, the different stages of the process are detailed below.

Should you have any queries on the process please contact the school office via email: office@whipmanwoodsfha.co.uk.

The process should be followed sequentially. Occasionally it might be necessary to circumvent a stage or stages due to either the complexities of the case or the subject of the complaint. You will be kept fully informed as to what stage your complaint is being managed at.

For all complaints, a written record will be kept for each case, including the outcome and whether the complaint was resolved following a formal procedure or progressed to a panel hearing. Any resulting actions taken as a result of the complaint will also be documented by the school/Trust and available to the Headteacher, the Flying High Trust, and the complainant(s) electronically with hardcopies available on site at the school.

In this document 'we' is the school and 'you' refers to the person making the complaint. Flying High Partnership may also appear as FHP.

The Central Team are those that support schools in a wider context and form the 'employer'.

Expectations:

As a school we will:

- Look into your complaint thoroughly and fairly.
- Deal with your complaint with honesty, integrity, and in a professional manner.
- Keep you up to date with the progress and outcome of your complaint.
- Adhere to stated timeframes for response or communicate with you where the complaint investigation will require a longer period of time to manage expectations and ensure clear and timely communication.
- Where appropriate tell you what we are going to do to put things right in terms of actions to be taken or lessons learnt for the future.
- Give you a full and clear written reply providing you with intended next steps and an indication of time scales.
- Respect the confidentiality of all individuals involved.

You should:

- Inform the school of the complaint at the earliest possibility. 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. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.
- Follow this complaints procedure using the form provided in Appendix 1 of this document.
- Talk to staff or other adults in a calm and polite way.

General Principles

- Where possible we hope that we can make an informal resolution to any complaint.
- All stages of the complaints procedure will be based on thorough investigation not assumptions.
- The responsibility for dealing with initial general complaints lies solely with us the school. The Flying High Partnership will redirect complaints back to us unless all steps in this complaints procedure have already been undertaken or the nature, severity, or complexity of the complaint requires escalation to a later stage of the

process – you will be informed as to what stage the complaint is being managed in line with.

- An anonymous complaint will not be investigated under this procedure unless there are exceptional circumstances. These would include serious concerns such as Child Protection issues, where we would either involve appropriate external agencies or else conduct our own internal review to test whether there is any corroborative evidence which might trigger a formal investigation.
- It is unhelpful if a complaint is shared with the wider school community. Therefore, we will make it clear to any person who raises a concern that we will treat the matter with a high degree of confidentiality and ask you to do likewise. This enables the focus to be purely on the complaint you have raised.
- Where letters are sent the time taken for delivery is not included within stated timeframes for response.
- It might be decided that any new items will be treated as a separate complaint rather than an addition to an existing complaint – we encourage complainants to raise all concerns at the initial submission of a complaint whether informal or formal.
- A complaint may be escalated where the complainant remains dissatisfied with the way the complaint has been handled and/or believes that the outcome reached was unreasonable.

Complaint Timescales

The school aims to resolve concerns and complaints promptly and fairly. The following timescales will normally apply:

Formal complaints will be acknowledged within 2 school days.

- Stage 1 informal concerns will normally receive a response within 10 school days.
- Stage 2 formal complaints will normally receive a written response within 10 school days.

- Where additional investigation is required, the complainant will be informed of the reason for the delay and provided with a revised timescale.

- Requests for escalation to a complaints panel should normally be submitted within 10 school days of receiving the Stage 2 or Stage 3 outcome.
- A complaints panel will normally be convened within 15 school days of receiving a valid request for escalation.
- The complainant will normally receive the panel's findings and recommendations within 10 school days of the hearing.

Where these timescales cannot reasonably be met, the complainant will be informed and provided with a revised timetable.

Withdrawal of a complaint

If you wish to withdraw your complaint, you should do so in writing.

Stage One - Complaint heard by staff member (informal stage)

You should, wherever possible, arrange to visit us and discuss the concern directly with the member of staff concerned e.g. class teacher in the first instance.

It is in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible opportunity. Complaints concerning the school curriculum and other related matters are usually settled quickly and informally by visiting us, where the staff member will discuss and consider the matter of concern to you.

Should further information be required the outcome at this stage may be to mutually agree a timeframe and a follow-up in person meeting to resolve the matter.

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 potential later stages of the procedure.

At the conclusion of this informal stage, the appropriate person will provide an informal written response within 10 school days of the date of receipt of the informal complaint.

If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is for you to make a formal complaint.

Stage Two – Formal complaint: Complaint heard by member of the Senior Leadership Team

At this stage you should arrange to speak with a member of the Senior Leadership Team to discuss concerns in person with a view to resolution.

Should further information be required the outcome at this stage may be to mutually agree a timeframe and a follow-up in person meeting to resolve the matter.

Formal complaints must be made to the Headteacher (unless they are about the Headteacher), via the school office. This may be done in person or in writing by completing Appendix 1 of this document stating why you have escalated the complaint to the formal stage and the outcome(s) you would like to see.

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 2 school days.

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
- Review relevant documentation
- keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

At the conclusion of the 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 the 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 2.

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 2.

Complaints about the Headteacher or member of the governing body must be made to 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 2 will be escalated to the CEO of the Flying High Trust.

Stage 3 – Formal complaint submitted to Headteacher

You can raise this at the next stage with the Headteacher by completing the complaint form (Appendix 1) and submitting this to the Headteacher. We recognise providing a complaint in writing may not always be possible. Under these circumstances a complaint may be made in person or by telephone. We will document your complaint and provide you a copy in acknowledgement. Under some circumstances we will, with your prior permission, use a recording device to ensure that you are able to access and review the discussions at a later point. If the nature of your complaint is with regard to

the Headteacher this stage of the complaint will be heard by an appropriate member of the governing body or FHP central team.

When a formal complaint is received the matter is fully investigated by the Headteacher. We will inform you how long we expect our investigation to take and arrange a time to contact you again – we will provide an initial update or outcome normally within 10 working days as determined by the school calendar. Where the matter is not resolved within the 10 days an appropriate timeframe will be agreed.

A record of the complaint will be logged and reported to governors.

The aim at this stage is to conclude the complaint. If you wish to appeal the outcome, please refer to the guidance for Stage Four.

Contact Details for Headteacher:
Should you need to escalate a complaint to the Headteacher please contact:

Mrs Nicola Green (Headteacher) via email to head@whipmanwoodsfha.co.uk

Contact details for the governing body:
Should you need to escalate a complaint at this stage to the governing body please contact:

Mrs Charlotte Lax (Chair of Governors) via email to clax@whipmanwoodsfha.co.uk

Stage 4 - Complaint heard by the Local Governing Body Appeal Panel

At this stage you should contact the governing body to state the reason(s) why you are not satisfied with the process and/or outcome of the complaint.

If your complaint relates to the governing body you should contact the Flying High Partnership who will handle this stage of the complaint:

Contact FHP via info@flyinghightrust.co.uk

The complaints panel will consist of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. At least one panel member will be independent of the management and running of the school (this may include a representative from the governing body of another school). The panel will be appointed on behalf of the proprietor and will consider the complaint impartially
When a complaint has reached this stage, a panel will convene within 15 working days as determined by the school calendar. You will be invited to submit further representations to the panel, both written and orally. You will also be invited to attend the meeting (if you wish to) and to be accompanied if you wish to include an extra person in the meeting. Following the meeting you will receive a written outcome usually within ten working days. Copies will be sent to the governors, Headteacher and Flying High Partnership.

You may bring someone along to the panel meeting 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 (Human Resources) staff disciplinary procedures, if appropriate, but outcomes will not be shared with them. Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 2 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 panel 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 panel will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The panel 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 panel 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 Panel will provide the complainant and 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 the school.

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 or to reduce likelihood of future occurrence.

The panel will ensure that those findings and recommendations are sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about. Furthermore, they will be available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the Headteacher.

A written record will be kept of all complaints, and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing, along with what actions have been taken, regardless of the decision.

If the complaint is:

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

Stage 4 will be heard by the trustees and an independent panel member.

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where:

- access is requested by the Secretary of State or a representative acting on behalf of the Secretary of State;
- access is requested by a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008;
- disclosure is otherwise required by law.

Records will be retained in accordance with the Trust's records retention schedule and data protection requirements.

All correspondence statements and records relating to individual complaints will 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.

The Flying High Partnership:

At this stage, the remit of FHP is to ensure that a school has adhered to this policy and that the outcome is reasonable, not to re-hear the complaint. FHP will acknowledge

receipt of complaints and provide an initial or conclusive response usually within 10 school days and confirm an intended outcome time period for more complex cases.

Complaints should not be sent to FHP directly before this stage. The FHP will refer the complaint back to us if you have not been through the process.

If the complaint is about the governing body, then you can send it directly to FHP.

Contact Details for the Flying High Partnership:

The Flying High Trust Partnership
2A Vickery Way
Chilwell
Nottingham
NG9 6RY
Telephone: 0115 989 1915
Email: info@flyinghightrust.co.uk

Flying High Partnership Complaints Policy:
Key Documents | Flying High Partnership

Flying High Trust Central team support for school level complaints:

Where a complaint relates to a specialist area of Trust responsibility, the school may seek advice and support from the relevant Flying High Partnership team. This may include the Education Team, Inclusion Team, Safeguarding Team, Finance Team, Operations Team, Human Resources Team, Governance Team, Data Protection Officer or other specialist advisers. The involvement of a Trust team does not automatically escalate the complaint to a higher stage of the procedure, but ensures that complaints are investigated by colleagues with appropriate expertise.

Complaint area	Flying High Trust support
Teaching, Learning and Curriculum	Education Team
Behaviour and Attendance	Inclusion Team
Safeguarding and Pupil Welfare	Safeguarding Team
SEND Provision and Inclusion	Inclusion Team
Equality and Accessibility	Inclusion Team
Mental Health and Vulnerable Pupils	Inclusion Team
School Finance, Payments and Charges	Finance Team
Educational Visits	Head of Operations
Premises, Health and Safety	Operations Team
Catering, Cleaning and Facilities	Operations Team
Transport and Site Security	Operations Team
Governance and Governor Conduct	Deputy CEO
Complaint About Headteacher	Deputy CEO / Head of Operations / HR
Complaint About Governing Body	Deputy CEO
Staff Conduct	HR Team
Staff Employment Matters	HR Team
Whistleblowing Concerns	HR / Deputy CEO
Data Protection (UK GDPR)	DPO – Head of Operations
Subject Access Requests	DPO – Head of Operations
Freedom of Information Requests	DPO – Head of Operations
Admissions	Head of Operations
Suspensions and Exclusions	Inclusion Team
Complaints About Central Trust Services	Relevant Central Team

Complaints not covered by this policy:

- Admissions – refer to Admissions Policy and Appeals process
- SEND assessments and EHC plans
- Exclusions/suspensions
- Safeguarding investigations
- Staff grievances

- Staff disciplinary matters
- Whistleblowing

Please refer to the separate policies for each of the above as to how to raise a concern or complaint.

GDPR and Data Complaints:

Complaints Relating to Personal Data (UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018)

Where a complaint concerns the school's processing, use, security, retention or disclosure of personal data, the matter may be considered under the Trust's Data Protection Policy and relevant data protection procedures.

Individuals who have concerns about how their personal data has been handled should initially contact the school's Data Protection Lead or the Trust's Data Protection Officer (DPO), providing details of the concern and the outcome sought.

The Trust will investigate data protection concerns in accordance with its obligations under the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018.

Where an individual remains dissatisfied following the Trust's response, they have the right to raise the matter with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO):

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF
Website: www.ico.org.uk
Telephone: 0303 123 1113

A complaint about the handling of personal data may be considered alongside a school complaint where appropriate; however, the Trust reserves the right to manage data protection issues through its dedicated data protection procedures where this is considered more appropriate.

Flying High Partnership

Policy for Unreasonable Complainants

1. We are committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high-quality service to you. We will not normally limit the contact you have with the school. However, 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.

2. We define unreasonable complainants 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'. The complaint itself may also be deemed unreasonable if unsubstantiated and in such cases will not be accepted as a complaint. Or if the volume of complaints is deemed to be unreasonable.

3. 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 adopted 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 complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced;
- 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 that 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;
- is deemed to be acting unreasonably to the point of harassment of an individual or individuals;
- makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with.
- complaints about matters that are being dealt with using our internal behaviour policy

4. A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if the person making the complaint does so either face-to-face, by telephone or 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.

5. 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.

6. Whenever possible, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking.

7. 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 our 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.

8. In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the concerns and actions taken will be put in writing immediately and the police informed. This may include banning an individual from our school.

In these cases, we will not provide responses beyond the initial complaint and will communicate our expectations, actions and communication plan.

Please also bear in mind that whilst your concerns may be valid and important to you, complaints that fall under this heading, take time away from school improvement and making every day count for the children within our school.

Monitoring and Review

The day-to-day monitoring of this policy is the responsibility of the Headteacher and Leadership Team. This policy will be reviewed on a two-yearly cycle or earlier if necessary by the Flying High Central Team.

Record of Complaints

Number of formal complaints received in 2025-26: 0

Equality Duty

In developing this policy, and in its implementation, we have had due regard to the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 and in particular our need to:

- Eliminate discrimination and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010,
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it,
- Foster good relations across all characteristics - between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
- The protected characteristics are age, marriage or civil partnership, sex, race, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment and pregnancy or maternity.

Complaints received outside of term time

We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.
If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority (LA) safeguarding teams or Tribunals, this may impact on our ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations. If this happens, we will inform you of a proposed new timescale.

If a complainant commences legal action in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure until those legal proceedings have concluded.

Flying High Partnership

Next Steps

If the complainant believes our school / Flying High did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact the Department for Education after they have completed Stage 4.

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by our school. They will consider whether our school has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint and whether they have followed Part 7 of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

The complainant can refer their complaint to the Department for Education online at:

www.education.gov.uk/contactus, by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:

Academy Complaints and Customer Insight Unit
Cheylesmore House
5 Quinton Road
Coventry
CV1 2WT

Flying High Partnership

Appendix 1: School Formal Complaint Form

Once completed please return to: [insert email address/location]

Your name: Relationship with school (e.g. parent of a pupil on the school roll): Pupil's name (if relevant to your complaint): Telephone number: E-mail address:
Please give concise details of your complaint, (including dates, names of witnesses etc.), to allow the matter to be fully investigated: You may continue on separate paper, or attach additional documents, if you wish.
Number of additional pages attached =
What action, if any, have you already taken to try to resolve your complaint? (i.e. who have you spoken with or written to and what was the outcome?)
What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?
Signed: Date:
School use **Date form received:** **Received by:** **Date acknowledgement sent:** **Acknowledgment sent by:**

Flying High Partnersh

Complaint referred to:

This document will be provided at each stage of the complaints process and will be stored and disposed of in line with the school guidance on retention. By signing this form, I agree to these conditions.