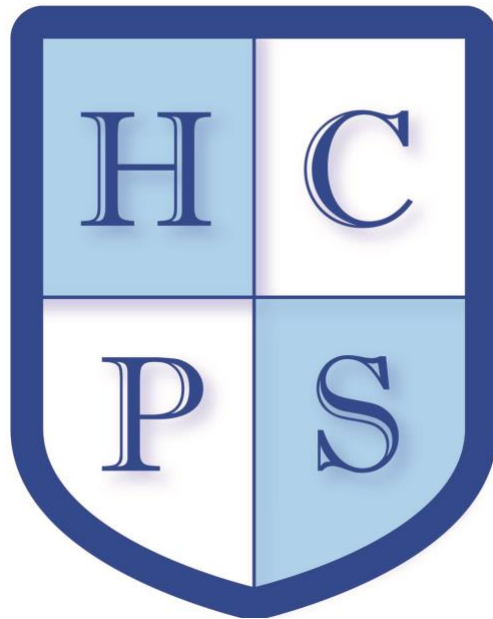


# Hunslet Carr Primary School



## Complaints

**High Expectations  
Caring  
Positive Attitudes  
Successful**

Policy reviewed: Sep 2024

To be reviewed: Sept 2026

*High Expectations, Caring, Positive Attitudes, Successful*



The office blocks of Leeds are visible from our classrooms and it is our belief and desire that children from Hunslet Carr Primary School should be able to grow up and be successful within their own city. We want our children to aspire to be the lawyers, doctors and professionals that work in our city every day and to give them experiences to inspire their self-belief.

The key to ensuring our children succeed, both while pupils at the school and in the future, is having a caring stimulating and stable environment in which to enjoy their early years. We work hard to ensure the school allows our pupils to grow in to happy, caring members of the community.



**What does Impossible is Nothing means to us?**

**Impossible is Nothing means you can achieve anything when you are resilient and you persevere.**

## **Introduction and Aims**

This policy aims to let everyone connect with Hunslet Carr Primary School know how to make a complaint about an aspect of the school's provision and how the school will respond to that complaint.

## **Who can make a complaint?**

This complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children that are registered at the school. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint about any provision or services that we provide.

Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (e.g. appeals relating to exclusions or admissions), we will use this procedure.

## **The difference between a concern and a complaint**

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 complaints procedure. We take concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, the Headteacher will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff involved feels unable to deal with a concern, the Headteacher will refer you to another staff member who will consider the concern objectively and impartially.

We understand that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, the Headteacher will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

## **How to raise a concern or make a complaint**

An **informal** concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing (letter or email) 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.

**Informal** complaints against school staff (except the head teacher) should be made in the first instance, to Martin Lumb (the Headteacher).

**Informal** complaints that involve or are about the Headteacher should be addressed to Sarah Gardner (the chair of governors), via the school office.

**Informal** complaints about the chair of governors, any individual governor or the whole governing body should be made in the first instance, to Martin Lumb (the Headteacher).

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 or languages, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

## **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.

### **Timescales**

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.

### **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.

### **Scope of this complaints procedure**

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by the Headteacher other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

Exceptions	Who to contact
Admissions to schools; Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs; or School re-organisation proposals	Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with <a href="mailto:complaints.children@leeds.gov.uk">complaints.children@leeds.gov.uk</a>
Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.  If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the LA designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding. You can contact the LADO for Leeds on 0113 378 9685 or <a href="mailto:lado@leeds.gov.uk">lado@leeds.gov.uk</a>
Exclusion of children from school*	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at <a href="http://www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions">www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions</a> .  *complaints about the application of the Relationship policy can be made through this complaints procedure.
Staff grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.

Whistleblowing	We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors.
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	<p>The secretary of state for education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistle-blowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus">www.education.gov.uk/contactus</a>.</p> <p>Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the LA or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.</p>
Staff conduct	<p>Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate.</p> <p>Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.</p>
National Curriculum - content	<p>Please contact the Department for Education at: <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus">www.education.gov.uk/contactus</a></p>

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, 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 investigations. If this happens, we will inform you of a proposed new timescale.

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

### **Resolving complaints**

At each stage in the procedure, Hunslet Carr Primary School wants to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- an explanation
- an admission the situation could have been handled differently/ better
- an assurance we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur
- an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint
- an apology.

### **Withdrawal of a complaint**

If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

### **Stage one – informal complaints**

It is hoped most concerns can be expressed & resolved on an informal basis. Concerns should be raised with either the class teacher, Assistant Head or Headteacher.

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 three of the procedure.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the appropriate person investigating the complaint will provide an informal written response within ten school days of the date of receipt of the complaint.

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

### **Stage two – formal complaints**

Formal complaints must be made to the Headteacher (unless they are about the Headteacher), via the school office or official email address [martin.lumb@hunsletcarr.co.uk](mailto:martin.lumb@hunsletcarr.co.uk).

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 five school days.

The complainant **must** use the template complaint form, included at the end of this procedure. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office. You can also ask a third-party organisation (for example the Citizens Advice) to help you.

The template complaint form seeks to clarify the nature of your complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome you would like to see.

The Headteacher may delegate the investigation to another member of the school's senior leadership team but the decision, based on the investigation, will always be taken by them.

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 fifteen school days from the school acknowledging they received 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 Hunslet Carr Primary 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 two.

If the complaint is about the Headteacher, the Chair of Governors (or a suitably skilled governor) will be appointed to complete all the actions at stage two.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the chair and vice chair or
- the entire governing body or
- the majority of the governing body.

Stage two 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 three – panel hearing**

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at stage two and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to stage three – a panel hearing consisting of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint with one panel member who is independent of the management and running of the school. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.

A request to escalate to stage three must be made to the School Office, within ten school days of receipt of the stage two response.

The school will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing within five school days.

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

The school will aim to convene a meeting within twenty school days of receipt of the stage two request. They will write to the complainant to inform them of three possible dates of the meeting. If it is not possible to convene a meeting within twenty school days, the school will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates, without good reason, the school will decide whether to hold the meeting in the complainant's absence based on 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 available, the school will source any additional, independent governors through another local school or through their LA's Governor Support Services team, in order to make up the committee.

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.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the chair and vice chair or
- the entire governing body or
- the majority of the governing body.

Stage three will be heard by a completely independent committee panel.

Complaints about staff conduct will not generally be handled under this 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 ten school days before the meeting, the school 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 five school days before the meeting.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least five 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 one of the procedure.

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not 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 Hunslet Carr Primary School with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within five school days.

The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by Hunslet Carr Primary 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 Hunslet Carr Primary School will take to resolve the complaint.

The panel will ensure that those findings and recommendations are sent by email 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.

All correspondence 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.

### **Next steps**

If the complainant believes the school 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 2.

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by <School Name>. They will consider whether <School Name> has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint.

The complainant can refer their complaint to the Department for Education online at: [www.education.gov.uk/contactus](http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus), by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:

DfE, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD.

### **Managing serial and unreasonable complaints**

We are committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with our 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.

Hunslet Carr Primary School defines unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the school, such as, if the complainant:

- 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 investigation process
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of this procedure/process

- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways incompatible with the procedure or with good practice
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information they expect to be considered
- 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
- 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 DfE
- seeks an unrealistic outcome
- makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while dealing with the complaint
- uses threats to intimidate
- uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence
- knowingly provides falsified information
- publishes unacceptable information on social media or other forums
- Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school that relates to their complaint, while the complaint is being progressed
- Whenever possible, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors will discuss with the complainant why they're applying an '*unreasonable*' decision
- If the behaviour continues, the h=Headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact the 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 be reviewed after six months
- In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing.

### **Managing complaint campaigns**

Occasionally we may become the focus of a campaign and receive large volumes of complaints all based on the same subject and/ or from complainants unconnected with the school. If this happens, we will:

- send a template response to all complainants, or
- publish a single response on the school's website.

### **Complaint form**

Please complete and return to:

- Martin Lumb (Headteacher) - If the complaint is about school procedures or a member of school staff
- Sarah Gardner (Chair of Governors) – If the complaint is about the Headteacher
- Martin Lumb (Headteacher) – If the complaint is about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor or the whole Governing body.

Your name:
Pupil's name (if relevant):
Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):
Address:  Postcode: Day time telephone number: Evening telephone number: Email address:
Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it.
What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.

Signature:

Date:

Official use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By who:

Complaint referred to:

Action taken:

Date:

## **Roles and responsibilities**

### **Complainant**

The complainant will receive a more effective response to the complaint if they:

- explain the complaint in full as early as possible
- co-operate with the school in seeking a solution to the complaint
- respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint
- ask for assistance as needed
- treat all those involved in the complaint with respect
- refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality.

### **Investigator**

The investigator's role is to establish the facts relevant to the complaint by:

- providing a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint through:
- sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved
- interviewing staff and children/young people and other people relevant to the complaint
- consideration of records and other relevant information
- analysing information
- liaising with the complainant and the complaints co-ordinator as appropriate to clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.

### **The investigator should:**

- conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning
- keep notes of interviews or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of the meeting
- ensure that any papers produced during the investigation are kept securely pending any appeal
- be mindful of the timescales to respond
- prepare a comprehensive report for the head teacher or complaints committee that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.
- The head teacher or complaints committee will then determine whether to uphold or dismiss the complaint and communicate that decision to the complainant, providing the appropriate escalation details.

Complaints coordinator (this could be the Headteacher or Chair of Governors or other staff member providing administrative support)

### **The complaints coordinator should:**

- ensure the complainant is updated at each stage of the procedure
- liaise with staff members, head teacher, chair of governors or the Clerk and to ensure the smooth running of the complaints procedure
- keep records
- be aware of issues regarding sharing third party information
- be aware of additional support. This may be needed by complainants when making a complaint including interpretation support or where the complainant is a child or young person.
- ensure that all people involved in the complaint procedure are aware of their legal rights and duties, including any under legislation relating to school complaints, education law, the Equality Act 2010, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)
- set the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties (if they are invited to attend) and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- collate any written material relevant to the complaint (for example: stage one paperwork, school and complainant submissions) and send it to the parties in advance of the meeting within an agreed timescale
- record the proceedings
- circulate the minutes of the meeting
- notify all parties of the committee's decision.

### **Committee chair**

The committee's chair, who is nominated in advance of the complaint meeting, should ensure that:

- both parties are asked (via the Clerk) to provide any additional information relating to the complaint by a specified date in advance of the meeting
- the meeting is conducted in an informal manner, is not adversarial, and that, if all parties are invited to attend, everyone is treated with respect and courtesy
- complainants who may not be used to speaking at such a meeting are put at ease. This is particularly important if the complainant is a child/young person
- the remit of the committee is explained to the complainant
- written material is seen by everyone in attendance, provided it does not breach confidentiality or any individual's rights to privacy under the DPA 2018 or GDPR – if a new issue arises it would be useful to give everyone the opportunity to consider and comment upon it; this may require a short adjournment of the meeting
  
- both the complainant and the school are given the opportunity to make their case and seek clarity, either through written submissions ahead of the meeting or verbally in the meeting itself
- the issues are addressed
- key findings of fact are made

- the committee is open-minded and acts independently
- no member of the committee has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure
- the meeting is minuted
- they liaise with the Clerk (and complaints coordinator, if the school has one).

### **Committee member**

Committee members should be aware that:

- the meeting must be independent and impartial, and should be seen to be so
- no governor may sit on the committee if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it
- the aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant
- we recognise that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the meeting does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations
- many complainants will feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting
- parents/carers often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child
- extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child/young person and present during all or part of the meeting
- careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings should ensure that the child/young person does not feel intimidated.
- the committee should respect the views of the child/young person and give them equal consideration to those of adults.
- if the child/young person is the complainant, the committee should ask in advance if any support is needed to help them present their complaint. Where the child/young person's parent is the complainant, the committee should give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the meeting, if any, the child/young person needs to attend. However, the parent should be advised that agreement might not always be possible if the parent wishes the child/young person to attend a part of the meeting that the committee considers is not in the child/young person's best interests.
- the welfare of the child/young person is paramount.