

Our visions and values:

- Protecting children's right to play learn and have a voice.
- Keeping parents involved in children's development
- Governors and staff leading the way on quality
- Working partnership with health professionals and schools
- Being ethical, respectful and tolerant

Complaints policy and procedure

Status	Statutory
Review timetable	3 years
Responsible governors	Finance, Pay and Personnel Committee
Last review date	Spring 2025
Date of next review	Spring 2027
The policy is available for staff at:	School offices and shared drive
And for parents/carers at:	School offices and shared drive

Policy audit

version	Revision date	Revised by	Section revised
V1, Department for Education model	March 2019	Alison Emmett	none
V2	January 2022	Alison Emmett	formatting
V3	January 2025	Alison Emmett	P3: Chair of Governors is Abs Malik, school policies are at www.fans.waltham.sch.uk/our-policies P3, 4 & 9: complaints to the Department for Education about schools are now via an online form at https://www.gov.uk/complain-to-dfe P10: GDPR is now UK GDPR

Approval for FPP

Name	Signature	Role	Date

Who can make a complaint?

This complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children that are registered at the schools. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to Church Hill and Low Hall Nursery Schools about any provision of facilities or services that we provide. Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as appeals relating to exclusions or admissions), we will use this complaints 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'*. A concern can easily become a complaint if no reassurance is forthcoming.

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. Church Hill and Low Hall Nursery Schools take concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

How to raise a concern or make a complaint

You can make an informal complaint in person or by telephone. Please put formal complaints in writing, using the template complaint form at the end of this procedure, by letter or by email. Mark written, Formal complaints 'Private and Confidential'. Full details of the procedure are on page 6 of this policy.

A concern or complaint may also be made by a third party acting on behalf on a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

For ease of use, a template complaint form is included at the end of this procedure. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office. You can also ask third party organisations like the Citizens Advice to help you.

In accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure, for example, providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

Just as we expect our staff to behave with respect and courtesy towards someone making a complaint, we also expect that the person making the complaint will conduct themselves in a courteous and respectful manner. Aggressive behaviour towards a member of staff will not be tolerated under any circumstance.

Who to complain to about specific things

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, Mrs Helen Currie (Executive Head teacher), will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, Mrs Helen Currie (Executive Head teacher), will refer you to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important.

Complainants should not approach individual governors to raise concerns or complaints. Governors have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints during the Formal Stage of the Complaints procedure.

Complaints against school staff (except the Executive Head teacher) should be made in the first instance to Mrs Helen Currie (Executive Head teacher) via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints that involve or are about the Head teacher should be addressed to Mr Abs Malik (the Chair of Governors), via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor or the whole governing body should be addressed to the Clerk to the Governing Body via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by Church Hill and Low Hall Nursery Schools, other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below:

Exceptions	Who to contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs School re-organisation proposals 	<p>Concerns about statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with the local authority: London Borough of Waltham Forest. You can call the Divisional Director of Children and Families at LBWF 020 8496 3206</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation 	<p>Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our Safeguarding Policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance. Talk to one of the Designated Safeguarding Leads whose photos are displayed around the schools, or read the 'What to do if you have a concern about a child' section on our website www.fans.waltham.sch.uk</p> <p>If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) on 020 8496 3646. The LADO has local responsibility for the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). If you have concerns out of school hours you can call the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) on 020 8496 2317.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exclusion of children from school* 	<p>Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions.</p> <p><i>*complaints about the application of the behaviour policy, Getting Along Together, can be made through the school's complaints procedure. Getting Along Together is available on our website: https://www.fans.waltham.sch.uk/our-policies</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whistleblowing 	<p>We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors. Staff can read this on the staff secure area of our website, or as hard copy in the school offices.</p> <p>The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: https://www.gov.uk/complain-to-dfe.</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</p>

	complaint.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff grievances 	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff conduct 	Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate. 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.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities 	Providers will have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Curriculum - content 	Please contact the Department for Education at: https://www.gov.uk/complain-to-dfe

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 a complainant commences legal action against Church Hill Nursery School or Low Hall Nursery School in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure in relation to their complaint until those legal proceedings have concluded.

How we will handle concerns and complaints

Concerns and complaints are taken seriously and valued. We will investigate as soon as is practically possible and will always give feedback, either verbally or in writing, to the person raising the concern.

We record and file all complaints.

We treat concerns and complaints as confidential, and share information only on a 'need to know' basis.

All staff will endeavour to seek to help, even when the issue is not that individual's area of responsibility. We will take care to:

- Clarify the nature of the complaint.
- Clarify the outcomes you seek.
- Check whether the person making a complaint requires support of any kind, for example with translation or accessibility.
- Explain the complaints procedure.

We expect that all school staff dealing with a person making a complaint will act in a courteous and respectful manner.

Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, Church Hill Nursery School and Low Hall Nursery School want to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- an explanation
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- an assurance that 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.

Anonymous complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Executive Head teacher or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

Time scales

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.

The school will acknowledge formal complaints in writing (either by letter or email) within 5 school working days, and investigate and provide a response within 20 school days.

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.

Withdrawal of a Complaint

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

What to do

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

Stage 1: Put the complaint in writing to the Executive Head teacher

Formal complaints must be made to the Executive Head teacher (unless they are about the Executive Head teacher), via the school office. This may be done in person, in writing (preferably on the Complaint Form), or by telephone.

The Executive Head teacher will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 5 school days.

Within this response, the Executive Head teacher will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The Executive Head teacher may wish to meet the complainant to discuss the matter directly, as might the complainant. The Executive Head teacher will provide an opportunity for this to happen. The complainant may be accompanied to such a meeting by a friend or relative who can offer them support. We acknowledge that this can be an intimidating process. The Executive Head teacher may be accompanied by an adviser, if necessary.

Note: The Executive Head teacher 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 Executive Head teacher (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 Executive Head teacher will provide a formal written response within 20 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint.

If the Executive Head teacher 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 Church Hill and/or Low Hall Nursery Schools will take to resolve the complaint.

The Executive Head teacher will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1.

If the complaint is about the Executive Head teacher, 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 1.

Complaints about the Executive Head teacher or member of the governing body must be made to the Clerk, via 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 1 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 2

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 1 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 2 – a meeting with members of the governing body's complaints committee, which will be formed of the first three, impartial, governors available. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.

A request to escalate to Stage 2 must be made to the Clerk of the governing body, via the school office, within 20 school days of receipt of the Stage 1 response.

The Clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 5 school days.

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

The Clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within 20 school days of receipt of the Stage 2 request. If this is not possible, the Clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates, without good reason, the Clerk will decide when to hold the meeting. It will then proceed in the complainant's absence on the basis of 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 from Church Hill and Low Hall Nursery Schools available, the Clerk will source any additional, independent governors through another local school or through the LA's Governor Services team, in order to make up the committee. Alternatively, an entirely independent committee may be convened to hear the complaint at Stage 2.

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.

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 staff disciplinary procedures, if appropriate, but outcomes will not be shared with them.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

At least 10 school days before the meeting, the Clerk 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 6 school days before the meeting.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 4 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 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 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 Church Hill and Low Hall Nursery Schools with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 5 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 Church Hill and Low Hall Nursery Schools.

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 heard by a committee of independent, co-opted governors.

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 Church Hill and Low Hall Nursery Schools will take to resolve the complaint.

The response will also advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied.

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 Church Hill and Low Hall Nursery Schools. They will consider whether Church Hill and Low Hall Nursery Schools have 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: <https://www.gov.uk/complain-to-dfe>, or by writing to:

Department for Education, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD

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 Executive Head teacher or complaints committee that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.

The Executive 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 Co-ordinator

(this could be the Executive Head teacher / designated complaints governor or other staff member providing administrative support)

The complaints co-ordinator should:

- ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure
- liaise with staff members, Executive Head teacher, Chair of Governors, Clerk and LAs (if appropriate) to ensure the smooth running of the complaints procedure
- be aware of issues regarding:
 - sharing third party information
 - 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
- keep records.

Clerk to the Governing Body

The Clerk is the contact point for the complainant and the committee and should:

- 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 United Kingdom General Data Protection Regulations (UK 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 1 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 UK 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 co-ordinator, 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.

Annual Review

The Governing Committee will monitor and review annually the nature of formal complaints and the school's response to them, to ensure that the schools are effectively meeting the expectations of parents, carers and the local community.

Publicising the Procedure

- The short statement of the Complaints procedure will be displayed on school noticeboards and included in the school welcome packs
- A written record will be kept of all complaints and their outcomes. The record includes the date, circumstances of the complaint and how it was managed. This record will be available for Ofsted Inspectors to inspect.
- The short statement and the full policy and procedure are both available on the schools' website.

end

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Complaints Record

Date of Complaint:			
A. Source of Complaint			
Parent [in writing, including email]	<input type="checkbox"/>	Staff Member	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parent [in person]	<input type="checkbox"/>	Anonymous	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parent [phone call]	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ofsted [include complaint number]	
		complaint no. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Other [please state] _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
B. Nature of Complaint			
[please tick all standards that the complaint relates to]			
Standard 1: Suitable Person	<input type="checkbox"/>	Standard 8: Food & Drink	<input type="checkbox"/>
Standard 2: Organisation	<input type="checkbox"/>	Standard 9: Equal Opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>
Standard 3: Care, Learning & Play	<input type="checkbox"/>	Standard 10: Special Educational Needs	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Standard 11: Behaviour	<input type="checkbox"/>
Standard 4: Physical Environment	<input type="checkbox"/>	Standard 12: Working in Partnership with Parents & Carers	<input type="checkbox"/>
Standard 5: Equipment	<input type="checkbox"/>	Standard 13: Child Protection	<input type="checkbox"/>
Standard 6: Safety	<input type="checkbox"/>	Standard 14: Documentation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Standard 7: Health			<input type="checkbox"/>
Please give details of the Complaint:			



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C. How it was dealt with	
Internal Investigation	[]
Investigation by Ofsted	[]
Investigation by other Agencies [please state] _____ _____	[]
Please give details of any internal investigation or attach any outcome letter from Ofsted:	
D. Actions and Outcomes	
Internal actions	[]
Actions agreed with Ofsted	[]
Changes to conditions of registration	[]
Other action taken by Ofsted	[]
No action	[]



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Actions imposed or agreed with other agencies	[]
Please give details:	
Has a copy of this record been shared with parents/carers? Yes [] No []	
Name of recorder:	
Signed by Executive Head teacher:	
Date:	
Outcome notified to parent [within 5 school days]	
Yes [] No []	
Date:	
Signed by Parent:	
Date:	
Signed by Senior Leadership Team:	
[if appropriate]	
Date:	
Signed by mediator:	
[if appropriate]	
Date:	



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Please complete and return to the Executive Head teacher who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:
Pupil's name (if relevant):
Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):
Address:
Postcode:
Day time telephone number:
Evening telephone number:
Please give details of your complaint. If you can, include dates, times, and the names of anyone who was a witness. Please also include whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it and what they said or did.

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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:

Date: