2026

GRAVENEY TRUST

Your Suggestions and Complaints

Policy to be agreed on:	15th July 2026
Agreed by:	Trust Board of Directors
Next review date:	Summer 2027

YOUR SUGGESTIONS AND COMPLAINTS

Your suggestions are a very valuable way of helping us to improve the services that we provide to you and your child. If you can think of a way in which we can improve, we want to hear from you!

We will take all suggestions seriously and consider each on its merits. If we decide not to take up your suggestion, we will explain to you the reason for your decision.

If you want to make a suggestion, you should write to the Principal/Headteacher.

Unfortunately, there are sometimes occasions when things go wrong.

All complaints are important to us – there is always room to improve and as part of our commitment to excellence, we strive to identify areas for improvement and put things right as quickly as we can.

We aim to deal with your suggestions and complaints in an efficient and understanding way. To do this, we will:

- acknowledge your complaint within 24 hours if possible and no later than 48 hours
- take all complaints seriously and deal with them as quickly as possible
- investigate your complaint thoroughly
- treat your complaint in confidence
- make sure you get a letter explaining the outcome of your complaint

Timescales

We will always investigate your complaint (unless it has been made anonymously) provided it has been lodged with us within a 3 month period of the incident arising. Complaints lodged more than 3 months after the relevant incident will not be investigated. Anonymous complaints will be brought to the attention of the Principal or Chair of Governors who will determine whether or not proceed with an investigation.

How to raise your complaint or concern

General complaints that do not relate specifically to a member of school staff, a governor or the CEO or a Director of the Trust Board should be directed to the member of staff most closely involved in the concern or incident in the first instance (e.g. the class teacher, the Head of Year, Head of Department or Phase team). If this informal approach doesn't resolve the issue to your satisfaction you may then escalate your complaint to the formal parts of this procedure.

Complaints about school staff should be made to the Principal or Headteacher. These complaints should be marked private and confidential, and will be dealt with under the Stage 2 procedures.

Complaints about a governor, including the Chair of Governors should be addressed to the Clerk to the Governors at the school office. These complaints should be marked private and confidential and will be dealt with under the Stage 3 procedures with associated timescales.

Complaints about the Chief Executive Officer or a Director of the Trust should be addressed of the Chair of the Trust Board via the Trust Head Office. These complaints should be marked private and confidential and will be dealt with under the Stage 3 procedures with associated timescales. Please note that the phrase 'working days' refers to days on which the school is open to students.

If you do have a complaint you want to raise with us, you should follow the following procedures:

Stage 1 where possible, we try to deal with your complaint as near to its source as possible, in an informal manner. This usually means raising your complaint with the relevant Head of Department, Head of Year depending on the nature of the complaint. We can usually sort out simple mistakes or misunderstandings straight away. You can make your complaint in person, on the phone or in writing and you complaint will be acknowledged within 24 hours where possible and no later than 48 hours. At the conclusion of their investigation, the person investigating the complaint will provide an informal written response within 10 days of the date of receipt of the complaint.

Stage 2 If you are unhappy with the way your complaint has been dealt with at Stage 1, you should contact the Principal/Headteacher and explain the nature of your complaint in writing. You will need to do this no later than 10 days after the response received as a result of your Stage 1 complaint. The Principal/Headteacher will acknowledge receipt of your complaint, will look into it and let you know, in writing, the results of their findings. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, a response will be provided within 20 working days of the complaint reaching Stage 2. If there are exceptional circumstances, the complainant will be notified to this effect and told when a substantive response can be expected.

If your complaint is about the Headteacher or Principal, it will be referred straight on to Stage 3 of this process.

Should you remain unhappy with the way your complaint has been dealt with at Stage 2, we will need to receive your request to escalate your complaint to Stage 3 in writing within 10 working days of our response to you at Stage 2. If you do not inform us of your wish to proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure within this timescale we will consider your complaint closed and will not review or investigate the complaint again.

Stage 3 If you are still unhappy, you can write to the Clerk to the Governing Body who will refer your complaint on to the Chair of Governors for further investigation. The Chair of Governors will look at the evidence collected by the Principal/Headteacher and if necessary conduct further investigations to make sure all aspects are thoroughly examined. The Chair will examine both the process and the outcome of your complaint at the earlier stages. They will write to you about their conclusions and a response will be provided within 25 working days of the complaint reaching Stage 3. If there are exceptional circumstances which make the 25 day deadline unachievable, the complainant will be notified to this effect and told when a substantive response can be expected.

Should you remain unhappy with the way your complaint has been dealt with at Stage 3, we will need to receive your request to escalate your complaint to Stage 4 in writing within 10 working days of our response to you at Stage 3. If you do not inform us of your wish to proceed to Stage 4 of this procedure within this timescale we will consider your complaint closed and will not review or investigate the complaint again.

Stage 4 If you remain unhappy at this stage, you should write to the Deputy Chief Executive of the Trust who will arrange for a panel of three people, who will be appointed by the Trust Board of Directors and who will have had no prior involvement in the issue, to hear your complaint. Your request to escalate your complaint to this final stage must be made in writing within 10 days of our response to you at Stage 3. Your escalation to Stage 4 will be acknowledged within 3 working days and a meeting of the panel will be convened within 20 working days of receipt

of a request for escalation unless there are exceptional circumstances which render this impossible to achieve, in which event you will be provided with a reason and a delayed date. In your request to escalate your complaint you should specify any days in the 20 day period that you would be unable to attend the hearing to ensure the best chance of completing this process within the stated timescales.

At least one member of the panel will be independent of the management and running of the school. At this meeting, you will be invited to make written and oral representations to the panel and to be accompanied/represented if you wish. The panel will communicate their findings and recommendations to you in writing. Their findings will be communicated both to the complainant and the person complained about, if relevant, within 10 days of the panel hearing. The statement will also be available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor/Headteacher.

You may bring someone along to the panel meeting with you to provide support if you wish, ideally a relative or friend.

Any written material to be considered by the panel will be circulated to all parties at least 5 working days before the meeting.

The panel may uphold the complaint in whole or in part or dismiss the complaint in whole or in part. Where the complaint is upheld the panel will decide on the appropriate action to resolve the complaint and, where necessary, recommend changes to the school systems and procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

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

A log of all complaints from Stage 1 onwards is maintained and complaints from Stage 2 onwards are reviewed by the Governing Body of each institution and also by the Trust Board. The log includes the outcomes at each stage as well as any action taken by the school/Trust as a result of the complaint, regardless of whether or not the complaint has been upheld."

NEXT STEPS

If you feel that the school/Trust has not dealt with your complaint in accordance with this procedure, or if you feel they have acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties you can contact the ESFA, once all the avenues in this policy have been exhausted.

The ESFA will not normally re-investigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by academies. They will consider whether the school/Trust 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. You can contact the ESFA online at www.education.gov.uk/contactus or in writing to

Academy Complaints and Customer Insight Unit
Education and Skills Funding Agency
Cheylesmore House
5 Quinton Road
Coventry
CV1 2WT

Further information about how the ESFA handles complaints can be found here:
www.gov.uk/government/publications/setting-up-an-academies-complaints-procedure

VEXATIOUS/UNREASONABLECOMPLAINTS AND UNREASONABLE COMPLAINANT BEHAVIOUR

The Chief Executive and Board of Directors (the Trust) are committed to the improvement of Trust schools. They welcome feedback from parents/carers and will always try to resolve any concerns as quickly as possible (see above procedure). Sometimes, however, parents or carers pursuing complaints or other issues treat staff and others in a way that is unacceptable and or behave in an unacceptable manner. Whilst it is recognised that some complaints may relate to serious and distressing incidents, the Trust will not accept threatening, inappropriate or harassing behaviour.

The aim of this policy is to clarify the process for dealing with unreasonable complainants or parents who do not act appropriately.

Normally, people who wish to complain have full access to the Trust's arrangements for dealing with complaints. However, there are a small number of complainant who, because of their behaviour and the manner in which they approach Trust staff in relation to their complaint, may need to have their contact restricted. They may behave unacceptably or be unreasonably persistent in their contact. This can impede investigating their complaint(s) and can have significant resource implications. These actions can occur either while the complaint is being investigated, or after the Trust has completed the investigation.

When staff believe that a complainant's behaviour is unacceptable and unreasonable we will refer the complainant to this section of the policy. This is to help the complainant manage their expectations and understand any contact restrictions that may be put in place as well as provide an opportunity to reflect on their behaviour whilst the substance of the complaint is addressed.

The Trust and its staff will not discriminate against any complainant and will ensure that this aspect of the procedure is not used to restrict complainants who are not displaying unreasonable behaviour. Particular care will be given to ensure that the Trust's responsibility to meet the individual needs of complainants who may be vulnerable or disabled is fully met. Decisions on whether to invoke this element of the process will always be taken by two senior members of Trust staff.

What do we mean by unreasonable behaviour?

An unreasonable complaint may be so classified if the complainant engages in unreasonable behaviour when making the complaint. This will include parents and carers others who pursue complaints in an unreasonable manner and those who do not act in an appropriate manner towards staff in Trust schools.

Unreasonable behaviour may include:

- Actions which are
    - Out of proportion to the nature of the complaint, or
    - Persistent – even when the complaints procedure has been exhausted, or
    - Personally harassing, or
    - Unjustifiably repetitious, including submitting 'new' complaints whilst current complaints are being investigated
    - Insisting on the complaint being handled in ways which are incompatible with this complaints procedure
    - Making unjustified complaints about staff who are handling their complaint and seeking to have them replaced
    - Changing the basis of the complaint as it proceeds
    - Denying or changing statements made at an earlier staff
    - Raising detailed unimportant questions and insisting they are all answered
    - Submitting falsified documents from themselves or others
    - Adopting a 'scatter gun' approach, pursuing parallel complaints on the same issue with various organisations
    - Making excessive demands on the time and resources of staff with lengthy phone calls, emails to numerous staff or detailed contacts with an expectation of immediate responses

- Obsessive, harassing, or prolific

Refusal to accept a complaint decision, or the explanation offered, once the complaints process has been exhausted.
Refusing to specify the grounds for a complaint despite offers of help
Refusing to co-operate with the complaints investigation process
Refusing to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaint procedure

- Repetitious complaints where the complainant has no view about what would satisfy him/her and/or no intention to resolve the complaint.
- Acting in a way not in line with the aim of reaching a resolution and working with the school/Trust
- An insistence on
    - Pursuing unjustified or unmeritorious complaints and/or
    - Unrealistic outcomes to unjustified complaints
- An insistence on
    - Pursuing justifiable complaints in an unreasonable manner e.g. using abusive or threatening language;
    - Making complaints in public; or
    - Refusing to attend appointments to discuss the complaint.

What is harassment?

Harassment is regarded as the unreasonable pursuit of issues or complaints, particularly if the matter appears to be pursued in a way intended to cause personal distress rather than seek a resolution.
Behaviour will fall within the scope of this policy if:

- It appears to be deliberately targeted over a significant period of time at one or more members of school staff or others.
- The way in which a complaint or other issues is pursued (as opposed to the complaint itself) causes ongoing distress to school staff or others;
- It has a significant and disproportionate adverse effect on the school community.
- Actions are pursued aggressively or in any manner not appropriate to an effective resolution.

What is aggressive or abusive behaviour?

- A threat directed at any member of staff or other member of the Trust community
- Aggressive or threatening manner which continues after the complainant has been asked to change their approach
- Swearing, where it can be interpreted as abusive, threatening or unnecessarily persistent or vulgar
- Verbal abuse
- Racist, Sexist or homophobic language
- Derogatory remarks
- Offensive language
- Making inflammatory statements
- Raising unsubstantiated allegations

Staff are expected to report instances of such behaviour to their line manager and consideration may also be given to reporting matters to the police.

What can you expect from the Trust and its schools?

Anyone who raises informal or formal issues and complaints with the school can expect the school to:

- Follow the schools complaints procedure
- Respond within a reasonable time;
- Support complainants to raise legitimate queries or criticisms
- Give a proper contextualised consideration to decisions relating to a classification of unreasonable behaviour on the part of a complainant, which should not automatically invoke the responses described in this policy
- Ensure that there is documented evidence demonstrating that a complaint is unreasonable before invoking this section of this policy
- Warn the complainant that their behaviour is giving cause for concern and ask them to change it before taking any further action
- Be available for consultation within a reasonable time limit, bearing in mind the needs of pupils at the school and the nature of the complaint
- Respond with courtesy and respect;
- Attempt to resolve problems using reasonable means in line with the school's complaints procedure, other policies and practice and in line with guidance from Wandsworth Council;
- Keep those involved informed of the progress towards a resolution.

What the Trust and its schools expects of you

The Trust expects anyone who wishes to raise concerns to:

- Treat all staff with courtesy and respect
- Respect the needs of pupils and staff within the school;
- Never to use violence (including threats of violence) towards people or property;
- Recognise the time constraints under which members of staff in schools work and allow the school a reasonable time to respond to a complaint;
- Recognise that some problems may not be resolved in a short time;
- Follow the Trust/school's complaints procedure.
- Speak politely and respectfully using appropriate language and avoid any aggression or verbal abuse, including name-calling
- Raise concerns/complaints in an appropriate place and at an appropriate time (for example not in front of other parents or pupils and not in an open public space)
- To be prepared to work towards a resolution and in partnership with the school

Trust/school's responses to unreasonably persistent complaints, vexatious complainants, unreasonable complaints or harassment

This document sets out how we will always seek to work with parents, carers and others with a legitimate complaint to resolve a difficulty and reach a resolution.

However, in cases of unreasonably persistent complaints or harassment, the Trust/school may take any or all of the following steps, as appropriate:

- Inform the complainant informally that his/her behaviour is now considered by the Trust/school to be unreasonable or unacceptable, and request a changed approach;
- Inform the complainant in writing that the Trust/school considers his/her behaviour to fall under the terms of the Unreasonably Persistent Complaints/Harassment section of the policy;
- Require all future meetings with a member of staff to be conducted with a third person present. In the interest of all parties, notes of these meetings may be taken;
- Inform the complainant that, except in emergencies, the Trust/school will respond only to written communication.

- Inform the complainant in writing that his/her behaviour is now considered to fall under the terms of this policy and that any complaint will not be investigated further until it is pursued in a manner the Trust/school considers to be reasonable
- Place restrictions on the individual's access to school and/or Trust/school staff.
- Cease all correspondence and communication with the complainant other than that necessary for the health and safety of any adult/child in school.
- Involve the police
- Involve officers of the local authority

The Trust/school has a duty of care to staff and pupils and will take emergency measures should these become necessary in extreme cases.

Physical or verbal aggression

Neither the Trust nor school governing bodies will tolerate **any** form of physical or verbal aggression or personal harassment against Trust/school staff. If staff are subject to this type of aggression the Trust/school may:

- Prohibit the individual from entering the school site, with immediate effect;
- Inform the individual that communication with them will cease other than in an emergency
- Request an Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO);
- Prosecute under Anti-Harassment legislation.

Time Frame and Review

If a complainant's harassing/persistent/aggressive behaviour is modified but is then resumed at a later date within a reasonably short period of time, the Trust/school may resume the process identified above.

If a complainant's harassing/persistent/aggressive behaviour is modified and the complaint still lies within the time limit specified within the Trust/schools complaints policy, the Trust/school will use its discretion and may resume the investigation of the complaint. The Trust/school will review as appropriate, and at a minimum of once a year, any sanctions applied in the context of this policy.

Legitimate new complaints, if not pursued in a harassing or unreasonable way, will still be considered, even if the person making them is (or has been) subject to the vexatious or persistent complaints section of the policy. The Trust/school nevertheless reserves the right not to respond to communications from individuals subject to the policy.

The Complaints Officer will maintain a log of individuals to whom restricted access to the complaints process has been applied. Any restrictions imposed will be reviewed on a termly basis by the Board of Directors as part of their regular review of compliance items.

Next steps

If you continue to feel that your complaint is unresolved, you are entitled to complain to the Secretary of State for Education and Employment if you believe the Trust or Governing Body has exercised any of its functions unreasonably. You can do this by writing to: Department for Education, Castle View House, East Lane, Runcorn, Cheshire, WA7 2GJ. You can find out more about how to complain to the DfE by visiting

www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/complaintsprocedure/b00212240/making-complaint-school/how-to-complain