

## Complaints Policy

|                            |                               |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>Document number:</b>    | 6                             |
| <b>School:</b>             | <i>All Schools</i>            |
| <b>Issue:</b>              | 5.0                           |
| <b>Owner:</b>              | <i>The Complaints Officer</i> |
| <b>Approved by:</b>        | <i>The Executive Board</i>    |
| <b>Effective date:</b>     | 25/03/2026                    |
| <b>Next review due by:</b> | 25/05/2027                    |

## **1. Summary**

Educ8 Group aims to meet its statutory obligations when responding to complaints from a Learner, parent/carer, visitor, customer, local authority, regulatory body or any other interested party.

This document meets the requirements set out in Part 7 of the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

Educ8 does not draw a rigid distinction between a “concern” and a “complaint.” Any expression of dissatisfaction, however made, will be taken seriously and handled under this procedure.

We adopt a 3-stage process:

- **Stage 1 – Informal Resolution**
- **Stage 2 – Formal Written Stage**
- **Stage 3 – Appeal Panel Hearing**

If, after completion of this procedure, a complainant believes the school is not meeting regulatory standards, they may refer the matter to the Department for Education (DfE).

Complaints should normally be raised within 3 months of the incident.

This time limit will not apply where there are good reasons for the delay and it remains possible to conduct a fair investigation.

## **2. Document Release**

This document has been reviewed in accordance with the Educ8 Quality System and the requirements of this policy. Staff have been made aware of its issue, including any updates/amendments to its contents and where necessary appropriate training has been provided to those staff.

Where policies are available for download online, the previous version is removed and this new version replaces it.

The release of this document is indicated by the effective date.

This policy will be approved by the Executive Board before release.

## **3. Purpose & Scope**

This policy applies to all complaints received by any site or function within Educ8 Group.

It applies to parents, carers, learners, members of the public and third parties acting with appropriate consent.

This policy does not apply to:

- Admissions
- Statutory SEN assessments
- Safeguarding matters (handled under Child Protection Policy)
- Exclusions
- Whistleblowing
- Staff grievances or discipline

#### **4. The Process**

##### **Timescales**

Complaints must normally be raised within 3 months of the incident.

Where complaints are received outside term time, they will be considered received on the next working day.

Working days exclude weekends, bank holidays and school holidays.

If timescales cannot be met, we will:

- Inform the complainant
- Provide revised timescales with explanation

#### **5. Complaints Procedure**

##### **5.1 Stage 1 – Informal Resolution**

Many matters can be resolved quickly through discussion.

- A complaint may be made in person, in writing, or by telephone.
- It will be acknowledged within 3 working days.
- A response will be provided within 10 working days.

If dissatisfied, the complainant may proceed to Stage 2 within 10 working days of the response.

##### **5.2 Stage 2 - Formal Written Stage**

The complainant should submit their complaint in writing.

The complaint should include:

- Relevant dates and times
- Names of witnesses
- Desired resolution

The complaint will be:

- Acknowledged within 3 working days
- Investigated

- Responded to within 20 working days

If dissatisfied, the complainant may request Stage 3 within 10 working days of receiving the response.

### 5.3 Stage 3 – Appeal Panel Hearing

If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they may request a panel hearing.

#### **Request**

Must be submitted within 10 working days of the Stage 2 outcome.

#### **Acknowledgement**

Within 3 working days.

#### **Panel Hearing**

Will normally be convened within 15 working days of the request (where reasonably practicable).

#### **Panel Composition**

The panel will consist of at least three persons who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint.

At least one member will be independent of the management and running of the school and the wider Educ8 Group.

The independent member will not be:

- An employee of any Educ8 entity
- A Director, Governor or member of the Executive Board
- A person otherwise involved in the management or governance of any Educ8 school within the group.

The independence of the panel member will be confirmed and recorded prior to the hearing.

The panel will not be made up solely of Executive Board members.

#### **Attendance**

The complainant:

- Will receive reasonable notice of the hearing.
- Has the right to attend.
- May bring a friend, relative or supporter.

If three reasonable dates are declined without good reason, the panel may proceed in the complainant's absence using written submissions.

Legal representation will not normally be permitted, as the hearing is not a legal proceeding.

#### **Outcome**

The panel chair will provide the decision in writing within 7 working days of the hearing.

The decision of the panel is final within the school's complaints procedure.

## **6. Record Keeping and Confidentiality**

### **6.1 Recording**

The school will keep a written record of:

- All formal complaints (Stage 2 and Stage 3)
- Actions taken at each stage
- Whether the complaint was upheld
- The stage at which it was resolved

Records will be treated as confidential and stored securely.

Records will be made available to inspectors on request.

Subject Access Requests will be handled in accordance with the UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018.

### **6.2 Retention**

Records of formal complaints (Stage 2 and Stage 3), including actions taken and outcomes, will be retained for a minimum of 7 years from closure.

Where complaints involve safeguarding concerns or allegations of abuse, retention will follow safeguarding retention requirements and may extend beyond 7 years in accordance with the Educ8 Data Retention & Secure Disposal Policy.

### **6.3 Independent Panel Requests**

If senior leaders or governance members are aware of the substance of the complaint prior to Stage 3, Educ8 will ensure the panel includes a fully independent member.

Complainants may request an independent panel where they believe bias may exist. This request will not be unreasonably refused.

### **6.4 Persistent Complaints**

No substantive change required except:

- Removal of CQC reference.
- DfE remains the correct referral body.

### Parent/ Carer Guide - The 3 Stages

#### Stage 1 – Informal

Raise your complaint with the staff member or Head of School.

- > Response within 10 working days.

#### Stage 2 – Formal (in writing)

Submit your complaint in writing.

- > Response within 20 working days.

#### Stage 3 – Appeal Panel

If dissatisfied, you may request a panel hearing within 10 working days of the Stage 2 response.

- > We will acknowledge within 3 working days
- > Panel normally convened within 15 working days
- > Written decision within 7 working days

The panel includes at least one independent member.

You may attend and bring a supporter.

The panel decision is final within the school's procedure.

## Issue & Revision History

| Issue | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Author                   | Effective Date |
|-------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------|
| 1.0   | Initial Release                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | T. Warner                | 10/03/05       |
| 1.1   | Update of responsibilities and titles                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | T. Warner                | 01/09/12       |
| 1.2   | Update reference documents 3 Equality and Diversity policy                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | T.Warner                 | 2/09/13        |
| 2.1   | Annual Review                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | T.Warner/<br>Jevon Payne | 30/08/14       |
| 2.2   | Annual Review                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | T.Warner                 | 2/09/15        |
| 2.3   | Annual Review add 2-7 Whistle-blowing policy to reference Documents                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | D.Payne                  | 1/09/16        |
| 3.0   | Annual Review                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | D.Payne                  | 30/09/17       |
| 3.1   | Addition of specific contact details for Complaints Officer and MD                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | T. Warner                | 15/08/19       |
| 4.0   | Annual Review<br>Addition of compliments at 4.5<br>Reference to Compliment/Complaint Log<br>Reference to F0055QT You Said We Did Form<br>Update to metrics section<br>4.2.5 Change working days to 7 from 15                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | T. Warner                | 12/10/21       |
| 4.1   | Annual Review<br>8.1 Update and reformat                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | T. Warner                | 01/09/22       |
| 4.2   | Annual Review<br>Change Executive Head to Proprietor throughout document<br>Include Proprietor in definitions/acronyms<br>Include Proprietor in 8.1 Key Contacts<br>Update Educ8 HQ address                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | T. Warner                | 29/08/23       |
| 4.3   | Annual Review                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | T. Warner                | 26/08/24       |
| 4.4   | Annual Review <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengthened record-keeping section to include actions taken at all stages</li> <li>Clarified availability of policy (website, office, prospective parents, Ofsted/DfE)</li> <li>Added explicit right for parents to attend panel hearings with a supporter</li> <li>Stated that panel decision is final within school procedure</li> <li>Clarified confidentiality arrangements and inspector access to records</li> <li>Updated to reflect Independent School Standards (Part 7) compliance</li> <li>Appendix A added - Parent Guide</li> </ul> | T. Warner                | 26/08/25       |
| 5.0   | Annual Review                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | T. Warner                | 25/03/26       |

|  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |  |  |
|--|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|--|
|  | Updated to clarify no distinction between concerns and complaints (Com para 659); strengthened independent panel wording to group-wide independence (Reg 33(g)); confirmed 7-year retention (Com para 680); inserted explicit Stage 3 timescales; updated data protection references to UK GDPR/DPA 2018. |  |  |
|--|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|--|