UNLOCKING POTENTIAL
LEVELLING THE SOCIAL AND ACADEMIC ARENA

COMPLAINTS POLICY

Mission Statement

The Levels School exists to provide a nurturing environment in which students with specific learning difficulties and co-occurring diagnoses can develop their self-esteem and aspire to be independent young adults who value the rights, responsibilities and rules that exist to promote and support their future welfare. Our approach toward establishing this ideology is predicated on trauma-informed practice and an obligation to develop the social skills required to build their future aspirational communities. We exist to help them find their level.

This policy covers all premises known as The Levels School.

Date of policy	September 2026
Next review date	September 2027
Frequency of policy review (annually, every two years)	Annually
Policy owner	Caroline Cook
Published policy	Yes ☒ No ☐
List of connected policies	Safeguarding Policy, Anti-bullying Policy, Whistleblowing
Approved by	Governing Body

The Board of Governors acknowledge their responsibility to ensure that this policy is effective and follows regulatory requirements. Governors undertake a review to satisfy themselves that the implementation of this policy is effective.

The Board of Governors ensures the establishment of familiarity with and the effective operation through monitoring, of school policies, approving those requiring GB sign-off in line with a regular cycle of school policy reviews. This occurs through a cycle of governor committee meetings and full board meetings.

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Introduction

At The Levels School we recognise that many of our parents have had to be the voice for their children. Parents/Carers may have had a difficult journey to The Levels School and may be reluctant to trust those in education. We make communication a priority encouraging both parents/carers and students to openly voice any concerns they have at any time. We do, however, acknowledge that there may be times when perhaps we should have listened a little more.

What Constitutes a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. It may be made about the school as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the school has done something wrong or failed to do so something that it should have done or acted unfairly. A concern may be defined as 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'.

In line with the DfE ruling of January 2015 the School will not distinguish between "concerns" and "complaints". Any matter about which a parent of a student is unhappy and seeks action by the school is now a complaint.

We recognise our duty under the Education Act 2002 to have in place a procedure to deal with complaints relating to the school and any services the school provides; and comply with The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

Accessibility - This Complaints Policy will be well-publicised and provided in a different, more accessible format on request.

Any complaint concerning the Head Teacher should be referred to Geraldine O'Sullivan, Chair of Governors (Geraldine.osullivan@thelevelsschool.co.uk) and copy in info@thelevelsschool.co.uk which is monitored by the clerk to the governors who will forward it accordingly.

Stage One: Informal Resolution

It is hoped that most complaints will be resolved quickly and informally.

Parents may complain in person, via telephone or email and any first contact will be taken as an informal complaint, even if it is in writing.

If parents have a complaint, they should contact their child's tutor in the first instance. In many cases this should lead to the matter being resolved quickly and to the parents' satisfaction. If the tutor feels unable to resolve this matter it may be necessary for them to consult the Head Teacher.

Complaints made directly to the Head Teacher may also be referred to the tutor if the Head Teacher feels it more appropriate for them to deal with the matter personally.

If the complaint is about the tutor, then it would be appropriate to make it to the Head Teacher. The Head Teacher will then deal with the complaint as set out in this policy.

The tutor will make a written record of the complaint, dating when it was received. A response will be provided within one working day of the complaint being received and an informal resolution within five working days.

Should the matter not be resolved satisfactorily then the parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.

Stage Two: Formal Resolution

If the complaint cannot be resolved informally then parents should put their complaint formally in writing to the Head Teacher. The Head Teacher will decide, after due consideration how to proceed.

It should be noted that while formal complaints must be put in writing that not all written complaints will be seen as a formal complaint, if for example the initial complaint is expressed in writing, for example by email.

In most cases the Head Teacher will meet with the parents concerned within 7 working days of receiving the complaint to discuss the matter and endeavour to resolve the complaint at this stage. However, it may be necessary for the Head Teacher to carry out further investigation.

Once the Head Teacher has established, so much as is possible, all of the relevant facts then a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing, giving reasons for this decision.

If the complaint is resolved at this stage, it will be recorded in the 'Complaints Logbook'.

The Head Teacher will take all reasonable steps to resolve the complaint to the satisfaction of the complainant. Should this not happen, the complainant is entitled to take the matter forward to Stage 3.

Stage Three: Complaints Panel

If the parent is not satisfied with the outcome of Stage 1 and 2, they can escalate to Stage 3 by contacting the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors can be contacted using the form found in Appendix A.

At this stage a complaints panel will be formed to consist of 3 people, not previously involved in the complaint and to include a person independent of the management and running of The Levels School, e.g. independent visitor/advocate, an officer of the local authority etc. The Levels School takes account of the guidance produced by the Department for Education (DfE) regarding the identity of the independent panel member and will endeavour to appoint someone who has held a position of responsibility and is used to scrutinising evidence.

A meeting of the panel will be arranged as soon as is practicable and within 14 working days in term time.

If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties normally not later than 5 working days prior to the hearing.

The complainant may attend and could be accompanied by a friend or relative. Legal representation is usually not appropriate.

If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.

After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within ten working days of the Hearing. The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it (i.e. its findings and recommendations). The decision of the Panel will be final.

Any findings and recommendations will be sent by electronic mail and in writing to the complainant, where relevant, the person complained about, the Chair of the Board of Governors and the Head Teacher. In any event, the findings and recommendations will be available for inspection by the Governors and Head Teacher.

Complaints from members of the public

If a member of the general public has a complaint, they may complain in person via telephone, email or in writing to the school office. The school will take all reasonable steps to resolve the complaint to the satisfaction of the complainant. Should this not happen then the complainant is entitled to take the complaint to the school governors by using the form in Appendix A.

All complaints will be recorded in a complaint logbook.

Recording Complaints

Following resolution of a complaint, the school will keep a written record of all complaints and whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing. This will be in a Complaints Logbook. At the School's discretion, additional records may be kept, for so long as is necessary and for a minimum of 7 years. The principles of the Data Protection Act will apply.

Where a complaint has safeguarding implications, the records will be retained at least until the accused has reached normal pension age, or for ten years from the date of the allegation if longer, in line with DfE advice. Records relevant to actual or contemplated litigation will not be destroyed while that remains the case. Complainants may have a right to access records relating to their complaint under the Data Protection Act 2018. Retention is subject to data subject rights under UK GDPR, including the right to erasure; from 31 March 2026 this includes strengthened erasure rights under Article 17(1)(g) for victims of stalking and harassment in respect of personal data relating to unfounded allegations made against them.

The records may contain the following information:

- Date when the issue was raised.
- Name of parent.
- Name of student.
- Description of the issue.
- Records of all the investigations (if appropriate).
- A note of any reflection/Lessons learned.
- Witness statements (if appropriate).
- Name of member(s) of staff handling the issue at each stage.
- Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of phone conversations).

Correspondence, statements and records relating to the individual complaint will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them. (For specific data protection points, please refer to the Data Retention Policy and our other relevant data protection policies and procedures).

The number of complaints at Stage 3 in the last academic year 2025/2026 was 0.

Complaints about the use of personal data:

Under section 164A of the Data Protection Act 2018, in force since 19 June 2026, anyone who believes the school has infringed data protection law in the handling of their personal data, including parents, students and staff, may make a complaint directly to the school. This route sits alongside, and does not replace, the right to complain to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

Data protection complaints should be addressed to the Data Protection Officer, **Mr Gian Floris,** via the school front desk or by email to info@thelevelsschool.co.uk

Complaints may be made electronically or in writing. The school must acknowledge a data protection complaint within 30 days of receipt, must take appropriate steps to respond, including making enquiries into the subject matter of the complaint, and must inform the complainant of the outcome without undue delay. A record of data protection complaints and their outcomes is kept.

Where a complaint made under this procedure is also a data protection complaint, the school will meet the section 164A obligations alongside the stages set out in this procedure. Complainants may contact the ICO at any time: ico.org.uk, telephone 0303 123 1113.

Review

This policy was reviewed in September 2026 and will be reviewed annually from there on. It will be reviewed earlier should there be a change of circumstances to the school's governance or registration.

Appendix A: Complaint Appeal Form

To be used at Stage 3 only

To: Chair of Governors

Name of Complainant:	Click or tap here to enter text.
Relationship of Complainant to the School:	Click or tap here to enter text.
Address of Complainant:	Click or tap here to enter 1st line of address. Click or tap here to enter 2nd line of address. Click or tap here to enter town/city. Click or tap here to enter postcode
Daytime telephone number:	Click or tap here to enter text.
Evening telephone number:	Click or tap here to enter text.

☐ I/We request that a sub-committee of the Board of Governors carries out a review of my complaint against the school.

☐ I/We have received with this form a copy of the Policy Statement on the Procedures where a Parent or Guardian makes a Complaint about the School and I/we agree to abide by its terms.

☐ I/We also agree that the proceedings are and will remain confidential and that this review will be final subject to such (if any) legal rights as may exist.

☐ The grounds upon which I/we complain, and the matters which I/we wish to discuss and to ask the sub-committee to take into account, are set out in the attached letter/statement sheet.

☐ I/We understand that I/we may be accompanied at the Complaint Hearing by a friend or relation who is not involved with the School who knows me and who is willing to speak on my behalf.

(Two signatures required where practicable)

Signature:	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Full Name:	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Date:	Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap to enter a date.