

Complaints Policy

Parents and Placing Local Authority Social Workers must have the right to make a complaint about Elm House School, should they wish to do so. This policy sets out the process that will be followed if a parent or Placing Local Authority Social Worker wish to complain.

Staff at Elm House School actively encourage young people to explore their feelings constructively.

Young people are also encouraged to become more assertive and value themselves more highly.

Within this context young people are made aware of their right to complain should they feel they have been treated unfairly or disrespectfully.

As required by Ofsted, Elm House School has a written Complaints Policy and procedure that is available to the young person, the parent and Placing Local Authority Social Worker to consult.

Wherever possible, complaints are discussed on an informal level with the Lead Teacher in the hope that they can be resolved as quickly as possible with the minimum of anxiety to the young person.

Many complaints are, upon discussion, an expression of dissatisfaction and can be easily explored and remedied to the young person's satisfaction. For those complaints that cannot be remedied by informal discussion, the young person will be given the opportunity to follow the process through to formal investigation and resolution.

All young people will:

- Be heard by the staff team.
- Reassured by the staff team that they will not be punished for making a complaint.
- Will have their complaint acted upon.
- Be given support throughout.
- Be kept informed throughout.

They will be given names and telephone numbers of organisations who can help them independently if they are dissatisfied e.g. Ofsted, Independent Visitor, their local authority.

Unless the complaint is against the Head of Education it is they who will conduct any investigation. The Head of Education will inform the young person's social worker and other parties with a legitimate interest in the welfare of the young person and decisions may be made to involve other professionals such as Child Protection Teams.

Where the complaint has been made against a member of staff, the member of staff will be cautioned against personalising the complaint and, where necessary, will have their performance scrutinised and appraised. Complaints against staff can lead to the Disciplinary Procedure being invoked.

Due to the emotions evoked by complaints, the right for young people to complain and the responses from staff are issues that will be regularly reviewed at Team Meetings.

All complaints, whether made verbally or in writing are recorded on Complaints Forms and kept as a formal record, available to the young person, their social worker and Ofsted.

The Procedure

Making a complaint:

All complaints are treated both seriously and in confidence at all stages of this policy.

Step 1 - Tell the Lead Teacher immediately

Complaints can be made and initially considered on an informal basis. Very often simple mistakes or misunderstandings can be sorted out straight away.

Step 2 - Tell the Head of Education or Executive Headteacher

If things can't be sorted out straight away the people best able to deal with your complaint are those who manage the service. So, the second step is to tell the Head of Education or Executive Headteacher in writing. They will investigate and resolve your complaint within 10 days or let you know if there's a reason for delay. (If complaint is by a young person, then the Headteacher will complete the complaint form if the Young person involved does not want to themselves.) If the complaint is a verbal one the Head of Education or Executive Headteacher should complete a complaint form so full documentation is kept.

Step 3 - Review by Proprietors.

If you are still not happy with our response you can write to the Proprietors at Halliwell Homes explaining why, and what you expect from a review. We aim to carry out a full review of your complaint within 15 working days. If the complaint is complicated and other agencies are involved it may take longer but we will keep you informed.

Step 4 - If you are not satisfied with the response to your written complaint.

There is provision for a hearing before a panel appointed by the proprietors of 3 people who have not been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint with the Chair of the Panel being independent of the management and running of the school. The school will always allow a parent or social worker to attend and accompany the child at a panel hearing if they wish. The Panel will meet within 4 weeks of the complaint being taken there. This is so that all documentation needed for the Panel Hearing can be obtained and this time scale should also enable any representation that may be taking place at the Panel hearing to be put in place. (If for any reason this cannot be done in this time scale then all parties will be informed of the reason for the delay and a new date set.) The complainant may attend the hearing if they wish.

Step 5 - Recommendations and Findings

- A record of all complaints, written and verbal will be kept, and notes attached about the outcomes. Copies of these will be held in a Complaints file in the school Office.
- The panel will make findings and recommendations, all the findings and recommendation are confidential, and a copy will be given to the complainant, the proprietors and, where relevant, the person being complained about.
- All the findings of the Panel will be available to the Proprietor and the Head of Education or Executive Headteacher to review and act if this is highlighted.
- The record will specifically identify whether they are resolved following a formal procedure or proceed to a panel and action taken by the school as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).
- The written records of complaints and findings from the hearing will be kept in a secured file and available for inspection on the school premises. They are available for inspection by the proprietor and the Head of Education. These are available to be shown to OFSTED when they inspect the school. Copies will also be available for the Local Authorities, the school's authority and if the complaint is from a Looked After child from out of Authority, then that Authority also can have a copy on request.

Step 6 - Advice from Independent Visitors

If you feel after taking all the above steps that something else should happen you could contact the Independent Visitors; or the Social Services Inspectorate; or Department for Education (DfE).

In the preceding academic year Elm House School received no formal complaints.

Policy review

This policy document will be reviewed by the Education Director on an annual basis to ensure it is up to date with current legislation and best practice.

Date approved: December 2019

Date last reviewed: September 2026

Next review (or before): September 2027

Signed: 

Position: Education Director

Staff Acknowledgement

In signing this document, I am confirming I have read the information and have an understanding of the procedures outlined within the information provided.

I have had the opportunity to discuss this document with a Senior Leadership member of staff to gain further clarity.

I also know that if I feel I need further guidance I know I can access through the Head Of Education.

School name:

Staff member name:

Position:

Date:

School name:

Staff member name:

Position:

Date:

School name:

Staff member name:

Position:

Date:

School name:

Staff member name:

Position:

Date:

School name:

Staff member name:

Position:

Date:

Elm House School Complaint Form

Please complete and return to the Head Of Education or Executive Headteacher (or, in the case of complaints about the Head Of Education or Executive Headteacher to the Proprietor of the school) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:

Pupil's name:

Your relationship to the pupil:

Address:

Postcode:

Day time telephone number:

Evening telephone number:

Please give details of your complaint.

What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint.

(Who did you speak to and what was the response)?

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

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

Signature:

Official use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By who:

Complaint referred to:

Date: