



Hillingdon Complaints Process Guidance

It is important to follow the correct complaints process when raising concerns about a school or academy. This helps ensure there are no unnecessary delays and enables the appropriate people to investigate the matter and provide accurate information.

This guidance clearly outlines the process you should follow.

School Complaints Process:

1. Informal Resolution

- The concern is raised with the relevant teacher, member of staff, or school leader at the school.
- The school investigates and provides a response.

2. Formal Complaint

- If the complainant is dissatisfied, they submit a formal complaint in line with the school's published **complaints procedure**.
- The complaint is usually investigated by a senior leader or headteacher/Member of the Trust.

3. Governors' Complaints Panel (Trust Board for Academies)

- If the complainant remains unhappy after the formal investigation, they can progress to the **next stage of the complaints procedure** which is normally where the complaint may be considered by a governors' complaints panel/Trust Board for Academies.
- The panel reviews the complaint, hears from relevant parties, and issues a final decision on behalf of the school.

4. Escalation Outside the School (see below)

- Once the school's complaints procedure has been exhausted, the complainant may refer the matter to the appropriate external body:
 - **Department for Education (DfE)** for maintained schools and academies where there is concern that the school did not follow its complaints procedure correctly. The DfE will not normally reinvestigate the complaint itself but will look at whether the process was followed properly.

- **Ofsted**, where concerns relate to matters affecting the school as a whole. Ofsted records concerns and may use the information to inform future inspections, but it does not overturn school decisions or resolve individual complaints.
- Other statutory routes may apply for specific issues such as SEND, admissions, exclusions, safeguarding, or discrimination.

The Local Authority is not an appeal body for school complaints. Complainants must first exhaust the school's or academy trust's complaints procedure. If they remain dissatisfied because they believe the procedure has not been followed correctly, they should refer the matter to the Department for Education.

Complain to DfE

You need to complete the school's complaints procedure before you complain to DfE, unless one of the following applies:

- a child is not getting an education
- a child has been exposed to harm
- the school is stopping you from following its complaints procedure

DfE will consider your complaint. They may use the information you provide to recommend improvements to school policies.

DfE cannot deal with complaints about:

- fines for taking holidays in term time (sometimes known as a 'fixed penalty notice')
- lack of compensation or apologies from the school
- the behaviour of school staff

If you have followed all the steps in the school's complaints procedure and believe your complaint was not dealt with correctly, you can [complain to DfE](#).

Complain to Ofsted

If you've complained to the school and the problem has not been resolved, you can complain to Ofsted. This does not mean that Ofsted will then inspect the school.

They will record your complaint and may use the information you've provided to help them decide what areas to focus their next inspection on.

Ofsted considers complaints about things that affect the whole school rather than individuals.

Ofsted cannot:

- resolve issues between you and the school
- ask the school to respond directly to your complaint or take action on it
- change the outcome of a complaint
- change the school's complaints process because of a complaint

You can [complain about a state school to Ofsted](#).

Safeguarding Complaints

If the complaint relates to **safeguarding**, and the complainant believes there remains a risk to a child or that safeguarding procedures have not been followed, the matter may also be referred to:

- The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) (for concerns about adults working with children)
- Children's Social Care

Other Types of Complaint:

Complaint	Who to contact
Child protection	Local council
Criminal behaviour	Police
Data protection	Information Commissioner's Office
Discrimination	Equality Advisory and Support Service
Employment	An employment tribunal
Exam malpractice or maladministration (SATs)	Standards and testing agency
Exam malpractice or maladministration (secondary school)	Ofqual and the awarding body