



CANSFIELD
ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE TOGETHER

Complaints Policy

<u>Approval Date</u>	20 th November 2025
<u>Policy Review Date</u>	November 2026
<u>Chair of Governors</u>	<i>Lachar</i>
<u>Headteacher</u>	<i>N Daniel</i>

1. Who can make a complaint?

The complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children that are registered at Cansfield High School. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to Cansfield High School about any provision of facilities or services that we provide. Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as appeals relating to exclusion or admissions), we will use this complaints procedure.

2. The difference between a concern and a complaint.

A concern may be defined as ‘an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought.’

A complaint may be defined as ‘an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action.’

It is in everyone’s interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. Cansfield High School takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, Mrs. Daniels will refer you to another member of staff. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, Mrs. Daniels will refer you to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important.

We understand, however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, Cansfield High School will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

3. How to raise a concern or make a complaint

A concern can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

Concerns should be raised with SLT or the Headteacher. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

Complainants should not approach individual governors to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at Stage 2 of the procedure.

Complaints against school staff (except the Headteacher) should be made in the first instance to Mrs. Daniels via the school office or the enquiries email. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints that involve or are about the headteacher should be addressed to Mr. Les Archer (Chair of Governors), via the school office or the enquiries email. Please mark them Private and Confidential.

Complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor or the whole governing body should be addressed to Mr. Jeff Picton (Clerk to the Governing Body) via the school office or email. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

For ease of use, a template complaint form is included at the end of this policy. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office. You can also ask third party organisations to help you.

In accordance with the equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure. For instance, providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

4. Anonymous complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

5. Time scales

You must raise the complaint within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

6. Complaints received outside of term time

We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

7. Scope of this complaints policy

This policy covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by Cansfield High School other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures including those listed below.

Expectations	Who to Contact
Admissions to school Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs School re-organisation proposals	Concerns about these should be raised with Wigan Council
Matters likely to require a Child Protection investigation	These are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with the relevant statutory guidance
Exclusion of children from school*	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-exclusion *Complaints about the application of the school's behaviour policy can be made through the school complaints procedure.
Whistleblowing	We have an internal whistle blowing procedure for all employees, including temporary staff and contractors. The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistle-blowers who do not want to raise matters directly with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaint procedure. You may also be able to complain directly

	to the LA or the Department for Education depending on the substance of your complaint.
Staff grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.
Staff conduct	Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's disciplinary procedures, if appropriate. Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a member of staff as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.
Complainants about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them directly.
National Curriculum - content	Please contact the Department for education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority (LA) safeguarding teams or tribunals, this may impact on our ability to adhere to the timescales within the procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations.

If a complainant commences legal action we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure until those legal proceedings have concluded.

8. Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, Cansfield High School wants to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- an explanation
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- an assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur
- an explanation of the steps that have been taken or will be taken to help ensure they do not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint
- an apology

9. Withdrawal of a complaint

If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

10. Stage 1

Formal complaints must be made to the Headteacher in writing (unless they are about the Headteacher) This must be done in writing (preferably on the complaint form) delivered in person or via email.

The Headteacher will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within five school days.

Within this response, the headteacher will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The Headteacher can consider whether a face-to-face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

Note: the Headteacher may delegate the investigation to another member of the school's senior leadership team but not the decision taken.

During the investigation the Headteacher (or investigator) will:

- if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
- keep a written record of any interviews/meetings in relation to their investigation

At the conclusion of the investigation, the Headteacher will provide a formal written response within 20 school days of the date of the receipt of the complaint.

If the Headteacher is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions Cansfield High School will take to resolve the complaint.

The Headteacher will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1.

If the complaint is about the Headteacher or a member of the Governing Body, a suitably skilled team of governors will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 1.

Complaints about the Headteacher or members of the governing body must be made to the Clerk, via the school office.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice-Chair or
- the entire Governing Body or
- the majority of the Governing Body

Stage 1 will be considered by an independent investigator appointed by the governing body. At the conclusion of their investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response.

11. Stage 2

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 1 and wished to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 2 – a meeting with members of the governing body's complaints committee, which will be formed of the first three, impartial, governors available. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.

A request to escalate to Stage 2 must be made by the Clerk, via the school office, within 20 school days of receipt of the Stage 1 response.

The Clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either letter or email) within 5 school days.

Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

The Clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within 20 school days of receipt of the Stage 2 request. If this is not possible, the Clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates without good reason, the Clerk will decide when to hold the meeting. It will then proceed in the complainant's absence on the basis of written submissions from both parties.

The complaints committee will consist of at least three governors with no prior involvement or knowledge of the complaint. Prior to the meeting, they will decide amongst themselves who will act as Chair of the Complaints Committee. If there are fewer than three governors from Cansfield High School available, the Clerk will source any additional, independent governors from another local school or through their LA's Governor Services team in order to make up the committee. Alternatively, an entirely independent committee may be convened to hear the complaint at Stage 2.

The committee will decide whether to deal with the complaint by inviting parties to a meeting or through written representations, but in making their decision they will be sensitive to the complainant's needs.

If the complainant is invited to attend the meeting, they may bring someone along to provide support. This can be a friend or relative. Generally, we do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to a committee meeting. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate.

For instance, if a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by union and/or legal representation.

Note: Complaints about staff conduct will generally not be handled under this complaints procedure. Complainants will be advised that any staff conduct complaints will be considered under staff disciplinary procedures, if appropriate, but outcomes will not be shared with them.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

At least 10 school days before the meeting, the clerk will:

- confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that, if the complainant is invited, the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible.
- request copies of any further written meeting to be submitted to the committee at least 5 school days before the meeting.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 5 school days before the date of the meeting. The committee will not accept as evidence recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

The committee will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

The committee will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented and all the evidence presented. The committee can:

- uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part
- if the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the committee will

- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint.
- where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

The Chair of the Committee will provide the complainant and Cansfield High School with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it in writing, within 10 school days.

The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the Department for Education if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by Cansfield High School.

If the complaint is:

Jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or

The entire governing body

The majority of the governing body

Stage 2 will be heard by a committee of independent governors.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions Cansfield High School will take to resolve the complaint.

The response will also advise the complainant of how to escalate the complaint should they remain dissatisfied.

12. Next Steps

If the complainant believes the school did not handle the complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in their exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact the Department for Education after they have completed Stage 2.

The Department of Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by Cansfield High School. They will consider whether Cansfield High School has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint.

The complainant can refer their complaint to the Department for Education at

www.education.gov.uk/contactus 0370 000 02288

Department for Education

Piccadilly Gate

Store Street

Manchester

M1 2WD

Complaint Form

Please complete and return to enquiries@admin.cansfield.wigan.sch.uk or via the school office.

Your name:
Student's name (if relevant):
Your relationship to student (if relevant):
Address: Postcode: Phone Number:
Please give details about your complaint, including whether you have spoken with anyone at the school about it. If this is the case, please detail who you spoke to and when this was.
What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?
Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.
Signature: Date:

Official Use:
Date acknowledgement sent:
By who:
Complaint referred to:
Date:

Roles and Responsibilities

Complainant

The complainant will receive a more efficient response to the complaint if they:

- Explain the complaint in full as early as possible, including a timescale of events if relevant.
- Co-operate with the school in seeking a solution to the complaint
- Respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint.
- Ask for assistance as needed.
- Treat all those involved in the complaint with respect.
- Refrain from publishing the details of the complaint on social media and respect confidentiality.

Suitable Nominated Investigator

The investigator's role is to establish the facts relevant to the complaint by:

- Providing a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint through:
 - Sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved.
 - Interviewing staff and children/young people and other people relevant to the complaint
 - Consideration of records and other relevant information
- Liaising with the complainant and the complaints co-ordinator as appropriate to clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.

The investigator should:

- Conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning.
- Keep notes of interviews or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of the meeting.
- Ensure that any papers produced during the investigation are kept securely pending any appeal.
- Be mindful of the timescales to respond.
- Prepare a comprehensive report for the relevant parties that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of actions to resolve problems.

The Headteacher or complaints committee will then determine whether to uphold or dismiss the complaint and communicate that decision to the complainant providing the appropriate escalation details.

Complaints Co-Ordinator

The complaints co-ordinator should:

- Ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure.
- Liaise with staff members, Headteacher, governing body representatives, Clerk and LA (if appropriate) to ensure the smooth running of the complaints procedure.
- Be aware of issues regarding
 - Sharing third party information
 - Additional support necessary
- Keep records

Clerk to the Governing Body

The Clerk is the contact point for the complainant and the committee and should:

- Ensure that all people involved in the complaint procedure are aware of their legal rights and duties, including any under legislation relating to school complaints, education law, the equality Act 2010, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

- Set the time, date and venue of the meeting, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties (if they are invited to attend) and that the venue and proceedings are accessible.
- Collate any written material relevant to the complaint (for example: stage 1 paperwork, school and complainant submissions) and send it to the parties in advance of the meeting within an agreed timescale.
- Record the proceedings in writing.
- Circulate the minutes of the meeting when applicable.
- Notify all parties of the committee's decision.

Committee Chair

The committee's chair, who is nominated in advance of the complaint meeting, should ensure that:

- Both parties are asked (via Clerk) to provide any additional information relating to the complaint by a specified date in advance of the meeting.
- The meeting is conducted in an informal manner, it is not adversarial and that, if all parties are invited to attend, everyone is treated with respect and courtesy.
- The remit of the committee is clearly explained.
- Written material is seen by everyone in attendance, provided it does not breach confidentiality or any individual's rights to privacy under the DPA 2018 or GDPR.
- If a new issue arises it would be useful to give everyone the opportunity to consider and comment upon it; this may require a short adjournment of the meeting.
- Both the complainant and the school are given the opportunity to make their case and seek clarity, either through written submissions ahead of the meeting or verbally in the meeting itself.
 - The issues are addressed
 - Key findings of facts are made
 - The committee is open-minded and acts independently
 - The member of the committee is open-minded and acts independently
 - No member of the committee has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure
 - The meeting is minuted
 - They liaise with the Clerk

Committee Member

Committee members should be aware that:

- The meeting must be independent and impartial and should be seen to be so.
- No governor may sit on the committee if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it.
- The aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant.

We recognise that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the meeting does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations.

Many complainants will feel nervous in this setting.

Parents/carers often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child.

Extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child/young person and present during the meeting.

Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings should ensure that the child/young person does not feel intimidated.

The committee should respect the views of the child/young person and give them equal consideration to those of adults.

The welfare of the child/young person is paramount.