



Derwent and Southill Federation

*We are a Values-led Federation
We respect ourselves; We respect others; We respect the environment.*



Complaints Policy 26 27

Derwent and Southill's approach

Derwent and Southill Schools aim to be fair, open and honest when dealing with any concerns or complaints. Pupils, parents and staff are encouraged to share their views, opinions and any concerns. These will be considered appropriately by the schools.

This Complaints Procedure is underpinned by a framework of principles

- To encourage the resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible
- To ensure the interests of the child or children are always considered
- To ensure all complaints are dealt with swiftly and within clear time limits
- To ensure a full and fair investigation of complaints

The term "Staff" covers **ALL** adult staff on site, including temporary, supply and ancillary staff, including volunteers working with children. Staff working within before and after school provisions are also included.

Please see appendix 1 for a summary of the complaints procedure, appendix 2 for information regarding panel hearings and appendix 3 regarding the handling of SEN complaints and issues that are determined as falling outside of this procedure.

Stage 1 – Initial Concerns

If you have any concerns about the school, or the education we are providing, at any time, please discuss the matter with your child's class teacher at the earliest opportunity. The school considers any concerns raised very seriously. Most problems can be resolved when there is a shared understanding of the issues following discussion with class teachers. All members of staff work very hard to ensure each child is happy at school and is making good progress. Staff always want to know if there is a problem so they can help to resolve it as soon as possible.

Please do not publicise any concerns you have on social networking sites as this does not assist staff to address issues, is unlikely to be in the best interests of the child or children.

Most concerns can be resolved at this level, however if after speaking to your child's class teacher, you are still concerned, please discuss the matter with the Headteacher - Mrs Tenille Rimmer at Derwent and Mrs Sonya Read at Southill.

Stage 2 – Formal Procedure

Most concerns are resolved at Stage 1, however if you remain dissatisfied and wish to take the matter further please put your complaint in writing to the Headteacher.

In order to assist the Headteacher to fully understand the nature of the complaint it should give concise details of the complaint, including dates, names of witnesses if appropriate, details of any action already taken to try to resolve the complaint, and what actions you feel might resolve the problem at this stage.

An acknowledgement of receipt of the complaint will be provided in writing within 5 working days. The Headteacher will carry out an investigation into the complaint. This may involve a review of any relevant documentation and information, and seeking the views of the relevant people. The Headteacher will usually write to you with the outcome of the complaint within 15 working days of receiving the complaint during term time.

If, at any time, it becomes apparent that the complaint concerns a staff disciplinary or capability issue, the matter will be dealt with by following the appropriate procedure rather than the complaints procedure. You will be notified if this is the case with your complaint. However, because of the right to confidentiality of the member of staff involved, you are not entitled to know which procedure has been applied or the final outcome.

If the complaint concerns the Headteacher or a governor, the complaint should be addressed to the Vice-Chair of the

Governing Body and step 3 of this procedure will be followed. Complaints should not be addressed to individual governors. Any written complaints addressed directly to individual governors or the Governing Board, which do not concern a governor or the Headteacher will be passed to the Headteacher for consideration under Stage 2 of this complaints procedure.

Stage 3 – Formal Procedure – Vice Chair of Governors

Should your complaint not be resolved by the Headteacher, and you wish to take the matter further, please communicate this in writing to the Vice Chair of the Governing Board.

In order to assist the Vice Chair of Governors to fully understand the nature of the complaint it should give concise details of the complaint, including dates, names of witnesses if appropriate, details of stages of complaint already undertaken to try to resolve the complaint, and what actions you feel might resolve the problem at this stage.

The Vice Chair of Governors will consider your complaint and nominate a suitably qualified governor to investigate your complaint. An acknowledgement of receipt of the complaint will be provided in writing within 5 working days detailing who has been appointed to investigate your complaint.

The appointed governor will meet with you to discuss your complaint and will agree the scope of the investigation. This may include speaking to relevant witnesses and reviewing documentation and information. The governor appointed will usually write to you with the outcome of the complaint within 15 working days of your initial meeting with them during term time.

The Vice Chair can be contacted for Derwent or Southill Schools at vicechairofgovernors@derwentschool.co.uk

Stage 4 – Appeal and Panel Hearing

Following the outcome of the complaint, if you feel your concern has not been resolved you can appeal to the Chair of Governors within 15 working days of the completion of Stage 3.

The Chair of Governors will consider your complaint and will make a determination on whether there are grounds to uphold your appeal. Should the Chair of Governors determine that there are no grounds to uphold your appeal the matter will be finalised and you will receive written notification within 15 days of your request to appeal.

If your appeal is upheld, a panel of three governors with no prior involvement in the complaint will be appointed. The panel will set a hearing date of 30 days not later than the date of your appeal. You will be invited to submit supporting written documentation ahead of the panel hearing. The Headteacher or nominated deputy will also be invited to submit relevant documentation for the hearing.

As the complainant you can decide if you would like the panel to review the evidence in your absence or if you would like to attend. This must be notified to the panel when the date for hearing is set.

If you choose to attend the hearing, you will be asked questions and you are entitled to ask questions of the panel and the Headteacher or their nominated deputy. You may bring a friend to support you, if you wish to put your case forward in person.

Guidance for the panel meeting is provided in Appendix two to this procedure.

The panel will consider all evidence and will write to you and the school with its decision within 15 working days of the meeting.

In the event that you are still not satisfied, you may put your complaint to the Secretary of State for Education who can review whether the school and the Governing Board has acted reasonably and followed the correct procedures. The Chair of Governors for either Derwent or Southill Schools can be contacted on chairofgovernors@derwentschool.co.uk

Unreasonably Persistent Complainants and Unreasonable Complainant Behaviour

Unfortunately, in a minority of cases, people pursue their complaints in a way which can either impede the investigation of their complaint or can have significant resource issues for the school. These actions can occur either while the complaint is being investigated, or once the school has concluded the complaint investigation and procedure. In such cases, the school will follow the Policy on Management of Unreasonable Complainant Behaviour which is based on the Local Government Ombudsman's Guidance Note on 'unreasonably persistent complainants' and 'unreasonable complainant behaviour.' Decisions regarding whether the complainant is unreasonably persistent or whether there has been unreasonable complainant behaviour will be taken jointly by the Headteacher and both the Chair of Governors and Vice Chair in accordance with the Policy. In this situation complainants will be notified in writing by the Headteacher and Chair of Governors.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Headteacher logs all formal complaints received by the school, records how they were resolved and provides information to the Governing Board as requested regarding any implications for policies or procedures. The Governing Board monitors the complaints procedure, in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly and reviews this procedure on an annual basis.

Governor Review - Alternate pathway for assessing stage 3 and 4 complaints where a child no longer attends the School (and is no longer on roll) and/or made by those who are not directly associated with the school. A decision on whether this pathway is appropriate will be made by the Chair or Vice Chair for complaints reaching stage 3 or 4.

The purpose of this complaints policy is to ensure that if an error has been made, or an injustice has occurred, action can be taken to try and provide a remedy. Where the complainant has removed their child from the School, it is often impossible for the School to provide a remedy that will directly benefit them or their child.

As the Governing Board has a duty of care to the pupils who are on roll, it will ensure that the circumstances of any complaint made are reviewed so that the Governing Board is satisfied that the School had acted appropriately and that the relevant policies and procedures had been correctly followed.

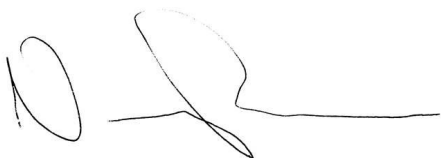
Governor review outcomes (and in general for any complaints raised by those who are not stakeholders) are for internal reflection, and where required, implementation.

Therefore it is not normally appropriate for detailed feedback to be given to external complainants at the end of the complaints process.

Policy Review

The Governing Body of our school is responsible for ensuring the review of this policy, and for reporting back to the Local Authority.

Date policy agreed: September 2026

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Neil Parsons', written in a cursive style.

Signed Neil Parsons (Chair of Governors)
Date of Review: September 2027

APPENDIX ONE

Summary of the Complaints Procedure

Stage 1 - Informal

You should try to resolve your concerns with your child's class teacher.

Resolved?

Yes. No further action

No

You should discuss your concerns with the Head Teacher

Resolved?

Yes. No further action

No - Stage 2 – Formal

You should put your complaint in writing to the Head Teacher, or the Vice Chair of the governing board, if the complaint is about the Headteacher or a governor.

Receipt of formal complaint acknowledged in 5 working days

Complaint investigated by Headteacher (or appointed governor if it is about the Headteacher or a governor) You will be informed of the outcome of the investigation within 15 working days of the initial meeting with you the complainant. Resolved?

Yes. No further action

No – Stage 3 Vice-Chair of Governing Board

You should put your complaint in writing to the Vice-Chair of the governing board.

Receipt of formal complaint acknowledged within 5 working days, notifying you of the allocated investigating governor.

You will be informed of the outcome of the investigation within 15 days of the initial meeting with you the complainant.

Resolved?

Yes. No further action

No –Stage 4 Chair of Governing Board/Panel Hearing

You can appeal to the Chair of Governors in writing, within 15 working days of the completion of Stage 3.

The Chair of Governors determines if your case should proceed to a panel hearing.

A panel of three governors with no prior involvement in the complaint will be appointed. The panel will set a hearing date of 30 days not later than the date of your appeal. You will be invited to submit supporting written documentation ahead of the panel hearing. The Head Teacher or nominated deputy will also be invited to submit relevant evidence for the hearing.

Guidance for the conduct of the meeting is provided in Appendix 1 to this procedure.

The panel will consider all evidence and will write to you and the school with its decision within 15 working days of the meeting.

Resolved?

Yes. No further action

No

The school procedure has been concluded. You may write to the Secretary of State for Education if you feel the

APPENDIX 2

Guidance for the Panel Hearing

After introductions, the complainant will be invited to explain their complaint, and be followed by their witnesses (if any).

- The Head Teacher or their nominated deputy may question both the complainant and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The Head Teacher or their nominated deputy is then invited to explain the school's actions and be followed by the school's witnesses (if any).
- The complainant may question both the Head Teacher or their nominated deputy and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The panel may ask questions at any point.
- The complainant is then invited to sum up their complaint.
- The Head Teacher or their nominated deputy is then invited to sum up the school's actions and response to the complaint.
- The Chairman of the panel explains that both parties will hear from the panel within fifteen working days. The outcome will be communicated to all parties in writing.
- Both parties then leave while the panel decides on the issues.
- The clerk remains to support the panel

APPENDIX THREE

Guidance regarding SEN complaints and those complaints outside of this procedure

Issues outside of the scope of the complaints policy

Issue	Who to contact	Legislation, policy/procedure
Complaint about an admission to school	Chair/Clerk in Foundation and Voluntary Aided schools followed by Local Authority	Admissions and Admissions Appeal Procedure For information, view the Local Authority Website.

Complaint about a Pupil Exclusion	Clerk to the Governing Board if the exclusion is over 5 days Local Authority Inclusion Support Officer on 0300 300 6924	Rights to make representations to the Governors' Discipline Committees about a fixed period exclusion vary according to the length of the exclusion. There is a right of appeal to governors if the pupil is permanently excluded with a further right of review by an Independent Panel.
Allegation that a child has been harmed	Headteacher or Chair if the complaint relates to the Headteacher. (The Local Authority Designated Officer telephone number is 0300 300 4491)	DfE procedures – 'Keeping Children Safe in Education'
Special educational needs - content of or failure to maintain an Education, Health and Care Plan	Headteacher Local Authority (the Statutory Assessment Team telephone number	Local Authority procedures, with appeals made to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal

	is 0300 300 8356)	
Services provided by an external contractor	Service Manager of contractor	Service provider's procedure
Staff capability (competence) or Staff conduct	Headteacher, or Chair of Governors if the complaint relates to the Headteacher	Staff Capability Procedure Staff Disciplinary Procedure
Whistleblowing	Designated staff	School Whistleblowing Procedure