



Complaints policy

Version date: January 2025

Document review period: Spring Term 2027



1. Guiding Principles

1.1 Educational Ethos

Waldorf Education is inspired by the principles expressed by Rudolf Steiner and others in the early 20th century. Central to this ethos is the recognition of each individual's intrinsic value and spiritual uniqueness. We are committed to upholding the dignity of everyone in our school community.

1.2 Role of Trustees

The Trustees of LISAL hold both legal responsibilities and a commitment to our founding ideals. We encourage all members of the school community to carry out their roles with diligence, integrity and respect for others. This Complaints Policy supports those aims and contributes to the continual improvement of our school.

1.3 Values in Practice

This policy reflects the values outlined in the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship (SWSF) Code of Practice:

- Respect for the integrity and spiritual essence of every individual
- A positive and developmental approach to young people and humanity
- Recognition of lifelong learning as essential
- Commitment to educating children and encouraging the contributions of individuals and communities to a shared future

1.4 Alignment with Human Rights

We are also guided by Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948):

"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood."



2. Principles in Practice

This policy complies with the **Department for Education (DfE) guidance** as set out in: **Best Practice Advice for School Complaints Procedures (January 2021)**.

[Available here](#)

In addition to meeting regulatory requirements, our policy aims to:

- Foster a respectful and responsive school culture
- Provide a clear process for raising and resolving concerns
- Encourage continuous improvement by learning from feedback

We believe the best outcomes for children arise from mutual respect and co-operation between families and staff. We provide regular opportunities for dialogue including newsletters, parent-teacher meetings, parents' evenings, and community forums. We welcome suggestions and ideas for improvement at any time.

Where a complaint relates to serious allegations such as misconduct, safeguarding, or criminal matters, the relevant policy (e.g. Safeguarding Policy) will apply. Confidentiality will be maintained throughout such proceedings to ensure fair and lawful process.

If all stages of the procedure have been exhausted and resolution has not been achieved, the Trustees may consider the matter closed—except where external recourse remains available to the complainant.

Note: If the conduct of a complainant becomes unreasonable, the Trustees reserve the right to apply the **Vexatious or Habitual Complaints Procedure**.

3. Intended Audience

This policy is intended for:

- School staff (teachers, administrative staff, volunteers)
- Trustees



- Parents and carers
-

4. Scope

This policy sets out the process for raising concerns or making formal complaints. It applies to all parents, carers and LISAL personnel (including employees and volunteers).

5. Concerns

We encourage parents and carers to raise concerns informally in the first instance, as many issues can be resolved quickly through direct communication.

5.1 Who to Contact

- **Educational concerns** – Class Teacher or Key Stage Lead
- **Administrative concerns** – School Manager or Bursar (bursar@lisal.school)
- **General or sensitive concerns** – Senior Leadership Team / College of Teachers (teachers@lists.lisal.school)
- If none of the above routes feel appropriate, please proceed to the formal complaint stage (see Section 6).

5.2 Recording and Follow-up

Staff will record your concern and any actions agreed. If no action is required, a note to that effect will be recorded. You will be asked to sign this record. It will be reviewed by the



Designated Trustee responsible for complaints, who may contact you to confirm the matter has been addressed.

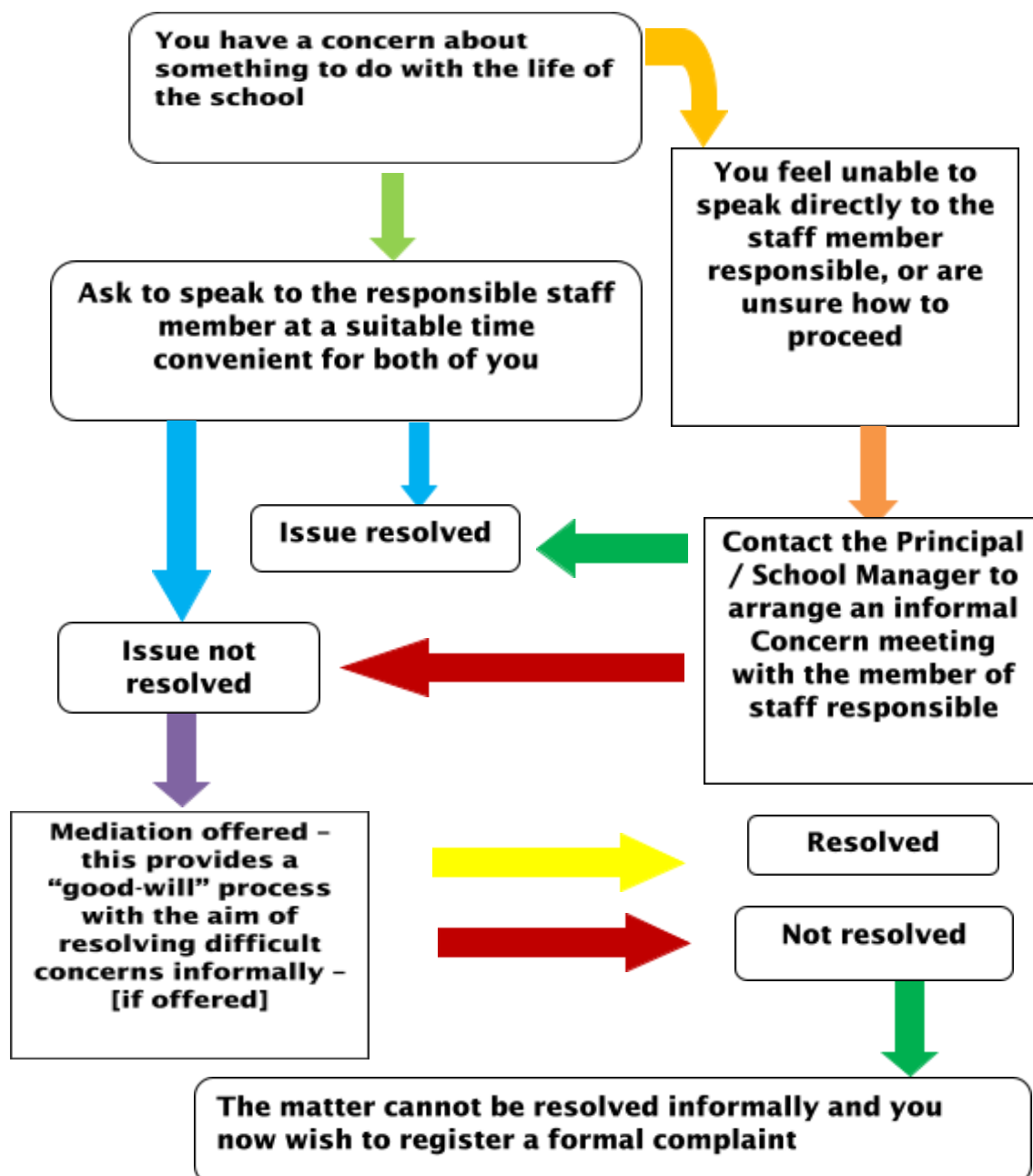
5.3 Informal Mediation

If concerns persist, a facilitated meeting may be arranged, potentially with a neutral note-taker, to support informal resolution.



Flowchart – Overview for Concerns & Complaints Procedure

Informal Concerns:



This part of the procedure is available to parents, prospective parents, young people aged 16 and over, members of staff or other people affected by the life of the school.



6. Complaints

If a concern cannot be resolved informally, or if the matter is serious (e.g. safeguarding, abuse), it should be raised as a **formal complaint in writing**.

6.1 Submitting a Complaint

Use the **Formal Complaint Form** (available on the website or in the School Office) and address your complaint to the **Designated Person**, marked for the **Chair of Trustees**. Other Trustees will not be involved at this stage.

The Designated Person can assist with completing the form if required.

6.2 Acknowledgement and Response

- A written acknowledgement will be provided within **24 hours**
- An investigative meeting will be offered within **5 working days**
- A full investigation will be carried out
- A written response will be provided within **10 working days**

Your personal details will remain confidential, although general data may be shared with inspectors in accordance with DfE requirements.

6.3 Review Panel

If you are not satisfied with the outcome, you may request a **Review Panel Hearing** by writing to the **Chair of Trustees**. The Governance Team will appoint the panel, consisting of:

- Two Trustees uninvolved in the complaint
- One independent member with no connection to the school

The Panel Chair will notify you within **48 hours** of the panel's composition and hearing date (normally within **14 days**). You may bring one supporter (e.g. friend or relative; legal representatives are not normally permitted).



You may submit further written information up to **one week before** the hearing. If new information is introduced at the hearing, the panel may adjourn to consider it properly.

The Panel will:

- Review the process and outcome of the original investigation
- Decide whether school procedures were followed appropriately
- Make any necessary recommendations for change

The Panel's decision is **final** and will be communicated in writing within **10 working days**.



Formal Complaint:

The matter cannot be resolved informally and you now wish to register a formal complaint



**Write to or email the school's Designated Person (Gabi Cani gabi@lisal.school). Please use the Formal Complaint Notification Form whenever possible.
The Chair of Trustees will be informed on receipt. Your form should be acknowledged within 24 hours of receipt**



**Designated Person carries out investigation and an investigative meeting is arranged with you
Investigation completed and report published to those involved, normally within 10 working days**



The report and recommendations are satisfactory



The report and recommendations are not satisfactory



**You write to the Chair of Trustees to call for a Review Hearing (panel) to adjudicate on your appeal
Panel formed and the Chair contacts you to inform you of when the Process Panel takes place (see outline procedure)
Final adjudication issued**



7. Record-Keeping

We maintain confidential records of all formal complaints, including:

- Date of complaint
- Nature of issue
- Dates of meetings and communications
- Resolution status
- Copies of all relevant correspondence

Records are stored securely and accessed only by those directly involved in investigating or resolving the complaint, inspectors, or where required by law.

Records are retained for **two years**. The number of formal complaints received each year will be published on the school website and made available to school inspectors.

8. Complaints from Non-Parents

At the Trustees' discretion, this procedure may be adapted for concerns raised by others (e.g. neighbours or members of the public affected by school operations).

9. External Recourse

The Panel's decision marks the end of the school's complaints process.

If you remain dissatisfied, you may contact the **Department for Education (DfE)**. The DfE does not investigate individual complaints but will consider whether a school is meeting its obligations under the **Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014**.



The DfE may intervene in the following areas:

- Educational provision
- Pupil welfare, health and safety
- Suitability of premises and staff
- Information made available to parents
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

The DfE may request an emergency inspection or consider issues during routine inspection.

Further information and forms are available at:

[DfE Complaints Guidance \(2021\)](#)



Complaints Policy

Acknowledgement

I, _____, confirm that I have read and understood the LISAL Complaints Policy.

If I have questions, I will speak with the **School Manager (Ola Mustapha)** or refer to the policy online at www.lisal.school, or in the policies binder available in the School Office.

Signed: _____

Date: _____



Appendix 1

Concerns Record Form

(For the informal stage of Concerns & Complaints Procedure)

Briefly summarise the nature of the concern(s):

Are there any further actions or agreed next steps following this meeting? If so, what are they?

Other observations:

Name

Name (member of staff):

Date:



Appendix 2

Formal Complaint Notification
(Formal stage of Complaint Procedure)

Your name and contact details: _____

Please set out the issues of your complaint. Please be as specific as possible, giving dates, sequence of events:

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please list it here.

What do you feel needs to be done to resolve this matter?

Signed:

Date:

Please return this form to the School Office or Designated Person, who will inform the Chair of Trustees that a formal complaint has been lodged.

We recommend that you keep a copy of this form for your own records.



Appendix 3

Review Hearing – Guidelines for Conduct

The Panel Chair is responsible for the conduct of the hearing. Normally the Panel Chair would be the “independent” panel member. The following notes provide a general overview of the way a hearing will normally be conducted:

The role of the Panel Hearing to verify whether the school has acted appropriately and to judge whether there is a need to change any of its procedures in the light of this complaint.

The Panel Chair will ensure that the proceedings are accurately recorded.

Normally, no new information, witnesses or other evidence can be allowed at the time of the Panel Hearing. New information should be made available 7 days prior to the hearing so that everyone has time to consider and respond to it. New evidence supplied later than this may lead to an adjournment of the hearing.

1. Prior to the hearing, the parties should wait in separate rooms. The Review Panel will hear evidence from the parties separately
2. The Chair welcomes the complainant and companion, introduces the Review Panel and outlines the process that will be followed
3. The complainant is asked to explain their objections to the conclusions of the investigation
4. Agreed witnesses may be called (normally witness evidence will be provided in written form)
5. The Panel may ask questions for clarification
6. The complainant and companion leave the meeting room
7. The Chair welcomes the member of staff representing the recommendations of the investigation, introduces the Review Panel and outlines the process that will be followed
8. The staff member explains the original response to the panel: steps 4, 5, 6 follow as above
9. The panel considers what it has heard and the evidence and may recall either party for to answer further questions
10. The panel considers its decision – either to
 - give a verbal summary of its unanimous decision
 - reserve its decision for to 36 hours, at the end of which a final judgement will be issued in writing



- state that it is unable to arrive at a decision, in which case the procedure should be restarted with a different panel¹
11. The deliberations of the panel are confidential. If there is a split decision, the Chair has the casting vote.
 12. The panel decision will –
 - uphold or deny the complaint according to the evidence available. In addition –
 - it may recommend changes to school procedure or other measures to help ensure similar complaints do not reoccur
 - it may require the school to take action to redress the complaint, e.g. to issue an apology, or statement of correction
 13. The parties will be recalled to the meeting room for either to –
 - hear a brief summing up from the panel, or
 - to be told of the decision to reserve judgement
 - to be told that the panel, having been unable make a decision, will dissolve with a new panel to be convened at the earliest possible opportunity
 14. If there is to be a summing up, the panel Chair should explain that he/she will give their view of what they have heard, that this is not an opportunity for either party to ‘argue the matter further, however, after the verbal summary has been made the parties may put a limited number of questions to the panel to assist their understanding of the adjudication.
 15. The outcome of the panel will be confirmed in writing within 10 working days
 16. The school’s internal procedure is complete

¹



Appendix 4

HABITUAL OR VEXATIOUS COMPLAINANTS POLICY

1) Introduction

- a. This policy applies to all complainants and applies to situations where a complainant, either individually or as part of a group is considered to be acting as an 'habitual or vexatious' complainant
- b. In this policy the term 'habitual' means 'done constantly or as a habit' and 'vexatious' is recognised in law and means 'denoting an action or the bringer of an action that is brought without sufficient grounds for winning, purely to cause annoyance to the defendant'. In this policy we are making provision to deal with people who seek to be disruptive or cause disproportionate work by pursuing an unreasonable course of conduct
- c. The term complainant in this policy includes requests made under the General Data Protection Rules 2018 (GDPR) for the collecting, storing and processing of personal data; The Environmental Information Regulations 2004 and reference to the complaints procedure may include the making of requests under these Acts.
- d. Habitual and / or vexatious complainants can be a problem for school staff and Trustees. The difficulty in handling such complaints can place a strain on time and resources. The School endeavours to respond with positivity, patience, and sympathy to the needs of all complainants. However, there are times when there is nothing further that can reasonably be done to assist or to rectify a real or perceived problem

2) Scope of Policy

- a. This policy should only be used in exceptional circumstances after all reasonable measures have been taken to try to resolve complaints under the School's complaints procedures. However, it is not necessary for a complaint to have reached the panel stage before this policy can be invoked. Judgement and discretion are essential in applying the criteria to identify potential habitual or vexatious complainants and in deciding on the appropriate action to be taken
- b. The policy should only be invoked following careful consideration of all the issues by the Designated Person and Senior Leadership Team (SLT). Authorisation has to be provided by the Chair of Trustees. If the complaint is principally or to a reasonable degree against the Chair of Trustees then authorisation will be from a 3 person panel as for a Review Panel Hearing



- c. No individual involved in the issues of the complaint may authorise for a complaint to be handled under this policy

3) Definition of Habitual or Vexatious Complainant.

Each case will be considered individually and decided on its merits. However, a complainant (&/or anyone acting on their behalf) may be deemed to be habitual or vexatious if previous or current contact with them shows that they may meet any or all of the following criteria to a significant degree where complainants:

- a. Persist in pursuing a complaint where the school's complaints procedure has been fully and properly implemented and exhausted (e.g. where several responses have been provided).
- b. Change the substance of a complaint: continually raise new issues or raise further concerns or questions upon receipt of a response. The school will take care not to discard new issues that are significantly different from the original complaints & which may need to be addressed as separate complaints
- c. Are unwilling to accept documented evidence of action
- d. Are unwilling to accept that the Trustees have reached a final decision on a chosen course of action
- e. Deny receiving an adequate response despite correspondence specifically dealing with the issues raised
- f. Persist in pursuing a matter when they have already exhausted all routes of appeal
- g. Do not clearly identify the precise issues which they wish to be investigated, despite reasonable efforts to help them specify their concerns
- h. Continue to seek to pursue a complaint where the concerns are not within the control of the school or its governance team
- i. Focus on trivial matters to an extent which it is out of proportion to their significance & continue to press only those points (we recognise that what is a 'trivial' matter is a highly subjective judgement and will exercise care in applying this criteria
- j. Have while addressing a complaint, had an excessive number of contacts with the school representatives placing unreasonable demands on staff time. A contact may be in person or by telephone, letter or e-mail. (Discretion will be used in determining the precise number of "excessive contacts" applicable under this section, using judgement based on the specific circumstances of each individual case)



- k. Make unreasonable demands on those dealing with a complaint, refusing to accept that these may be unreasonable, for example, insist on responses to complaints or enquiries being provided more urgently than is reasonable or within the Complaints procedure or normal recognised practice
- l. Make repeated counter-complaints against those dealing with the issue, especially with the clear intention of influencing the outcome of the procedure
- m. Are known to have recorded meetings or face-to-face / telephone conversations without the prior knowledge and consent of other parties involved
- n. Have threatened or used physical violence towards staff at any time. This will, in itself cause personal contact with the complainant and/or their representatives to be discontinued and the complaint will, thereafter, only be continued through written communication. All such incidences will be documented. The school will consider any complainant who make threats or uses actual physical violence towards staff as a vexatious complainant. The school will inform the complainant of the action to be taken with regard to any further communication received & reserves the right to take legal action in such cases
- o. Have harassed or been personally abusive or verbally aggressive on more than one occasion towards staff dealing with the complaint. We recognise that complainants may be sometimes act out of character in times of stress, anxiety or distress and will make reasonable allowances for this. However, the Trustees have a duty of care to their employees and reserve the right to take whatever action is deemed necessary to secure their reasonable safety Any form of harassment, abusive behaviour or verbal aggression will be recorded and legal action may be taken

4). Strategy for Dealing with Habitual or Vexatious Complainants.

- a. Where complainants have been identified as habitual or vexatious under the scope of this policy, taking account of the above criteria, the Trustees will determine what action to take. The Designated Person or School Manager will implement such action and will notify complainants, in writing, of the reasons why they have been classified as habitual or vexatious and what action will be taken. They will also be notified of the review procedure (See Section 5 below)
- b. This notification may be copied for the information of others already involved in the complaint or with matters closely related to it. A record must be kept, for future reference of the reasons why a complainant has been classified as habitual or vexatious.



- c. It may be decided to deal with habitual or vexatious complainants in one or more of the following ways:
1. Withdraw contact with the complainant either in person, by telephone, by e-mail, by letter or any combination of these, provided that at least one form of contact is maintained. If staff decide to withdraw from a telephone contact with a complainant there will be an agreed statement available for them to use at such times.
 2. To restrict contact to liaison through a designated person
 3. Notify the complainant in writing that the Trustees have responded fully to the points raised and have tried to resolve the complaint but there is nothing more to add and continuing contact on the matter will serve no useful purpose. The complainant should be notified that any form of contact, either orally or in writing, in relation to their complaint, or any further complaints relative to the same period of time, or the same or similar issues as an earlier complaint, is at an end, and that further contact received will be acknowledged but not answered
 4. Temporarily suspend, or terminate, the contract between the individual and the school
 5. In extreme circumstances inform the complainant that the school intends to take legal action

5). Review Decisions and Withdrawing 'Habitual or Vexatious' Status

- a. Once a complainant has been determined as habitual or vexatious such status will be regularly reviewed, & where appropriate, withdrawn at a later date. Such action may be appropriate where a complainant subsequently demonstrates a more reasonable approach or submits a further complaint for which the normal complaints procedures would appear appropriate
- b. Complainants also have an opportunity to have their habitual or vexatious status withdrawn
- c. The Trustees will review their decisions to categorise a complainant as habitual or vexatious at least every six months. In addition, they will review that decision on receipt of a request to do so from the person so categorised, provided such a request has not been received in the preceding six months
- d. If the person categorised as habitual or vexatious is not satisfied with the decision reached he may request that the decision is reviewed by the Trustees, which will appoint an appeal panel of 3 to review the decision (panel as for Review Hearing) Such a request for a review may only be received once in any six month period.



- Notice of that decision will be given, as far as is practical, within 15 working days of receipt of the request
- e. The panel on review may either withdraw the categorisation of a person as habitual or vexatious or amend the strategy being applied to that person
 - f. If considered appropriate to withdraw the status of habitual or vexatious complainant, normal contact with the complainant and application of the school's complaints procedure will be resumed. Notice of that decision will be given
 - g. Copies of all decisions relating to the categorisation of a person as a habitual or vexatious complainant will be sent to the clerk who will hold and maintain a central register of such decisions.

6). Monitoring Arrangements

Anonymised information will be presented annually to the Trustees with details of complainants who are categorised as habitual and/or vexatious

7). General

- a. Nothing in this policy affects an individual's statutory rights.
- b. If Trustees are approached by individuals identified as habitual/vexatious complainants they may if they so wish ask officers to write to those individuals on their behalf, to explain that the Trustees will not be able to deal with the particular issue whilst they continue to be a vexatious/habitual complainant

