



**LIGHT YEARS SCHOOL**  
**COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

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### **Safeguarding at Light Years School**

At Light Years School, we are committed to providing an environment in which students feel safe and secure to access their education. All stakeholders are responsible for ensuring the safety and well-being of children. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and all staff are encouraged to maintain an "it could happen here" attitude. We recognise our responsibility to safeguard all who access school and promote the welfare of all our pupils by protecting them from physical, sexual and emotional abuse, neglect and bullying. Light Years School are dedicated to creating a strong safeguarding culture, and that the safety and well-being of children is the central thread that embeds itself through all aspects of the school. If a person is concerned about anything they read, witness or hear with regards to the school, they should contact the school's designated safeguarding lead immediately or Headteacher. Safeguarding, and the safety and well-being of all pupils at Light Years School is carefully considered and a central theme through all school policies.

### **Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) at Light Years School**

At Light Years School, we are passionate about providing an inclusive education to children with special educational needs. We recognise and celebrate the individuality of our pupils and use personalised approaches, allowing pupils with SEND to feel supported during the school day. We strive to provide pupils with the same opportunities and experiences that pupils would have received at a mainstream school, believing passionately that in the right environment, with the right support, pupils will flourish in education. We do this by focusing on providing a SEND friendly environment, a differentiated curriculum and a strong focus on developing pupils' personal, social and emotional development. The special educational needs and disabilities of all pupils at Light Years School is carefully considered and a central theme through all school policies. For more information, please read the school's SEND Information Report.

The **Complaints Policy & Procedure** should be read in collaboration with the following policies:

Safeguarding Policy  
Behaviour Policy  
SEND Information Report  
Independent School Standards, Part 7

### Policy Aims

- To ensure parents, stakeholders and interested parties feel able to express their concerns without fear of reprisal.
- To ensure student safety and well-being is at the centre of everything we do.
- To ensure procedures for making and investigating complaints is clear.

### Who Can Make a Complaint?

This complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children that are registered at the school. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to Light Years 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 exclusions or admissions), we will use this complaints procedure.

### 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. Light Years School takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

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

## Complaints Procedures

### Stage 1 – The Informal Stage

A concern or informal complaint can be made in person or by telephone. The concern or informal concern should be raised by the person who is concerned.

Concerns and informal complaints should be raised with either the class teacher or Headteacher. Although it is still taken very seriously by the school, a concern raised in this format forms part of an informal stage. You can expect a reply from a member of staff within 2 days of receiving your concern. It will always be our aim to resolve the issue at this stage as this is in the best interest of the child. If the concern cannot be resolved at this informal stage, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

### Stage 2 – The Formal Written Stage

Formal complaints must be made in writing to the Headteacher (unless they are about the Headteacher), via the school office. 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 3 school days. Within this time period, 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 will 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 to be 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 meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

At the conclusion of the investigation, the Headteacher will provide a formal written response within 30 school days of the date of 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 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 Light Years 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 school's governing body, a suitably skilled governor will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 2.

### **Stage 3 – The Panel Hearing**

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 2 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 3: a meeting with a panel of at least three people who have not been involved in the complaint and one of whom is independent of the running of the school, appointed by members of the governing body of the school. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure. The date of the panel meeting will be arranged to take account of the convenience of the parents or carers as well as the school and will take place within a time limit of fifteen working days. Parents or carers will be invited to bring with them another person or persons to support them at the panel hearing if they wish.

The panel will hear the complaint and carefully consider the outcome of the school's investigations and its response to these. The panel will then make findings and recommendations which will be communicated in writing, by electronic mail or otherwise, within 10 working days of the panel meeting to the Headteacher, the parents or carers and, where appropriate, the person complained about; a copy will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Headteacher, Proprietor and the any statutory body.

The committee will consider the complaint 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.

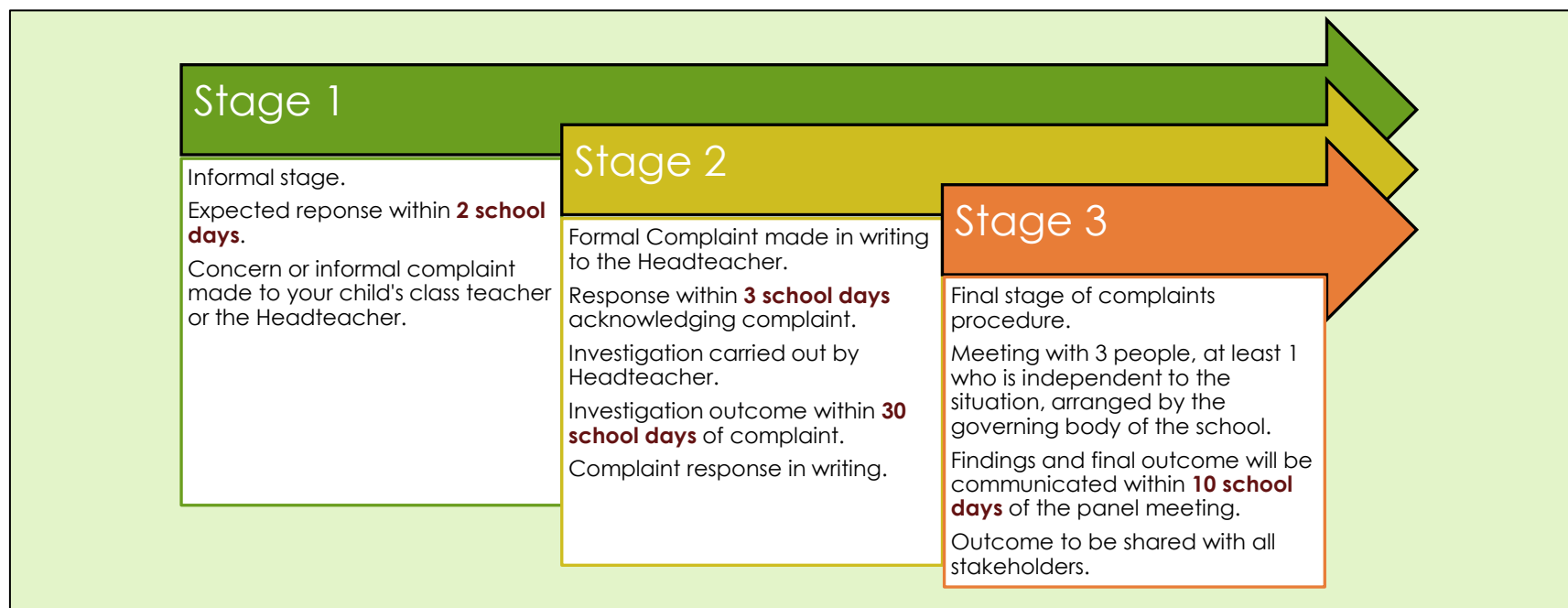
If the complainant believes the school did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact the Department for Education after they have completed Stage 2.

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by Light Years School. They will consider whether [Light Years 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 online at: [www.education.gov.uk/contactus](http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus), by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:

Department for Education  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD.

### Procedure & Timescale Flowchart



### Available Support

For ease of use, a template complaint form can be shared at the request parents and other stakeholders by the school office to assist with structuring your complaint. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office. You can also ask third party organisations like the Citizens Advice to help you. Please contact the school office should you wish to access the school's complaint form.

In accordance with 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.

### **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.

### **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.

Light Years School will make every effort to adhere to the timescales outlined in this policy. However, there may be circumstances that prevent the school from meeting the timescales. In this event, the school will notify the complainant with an explanation as to why they have been unable to meet the school's policy.

### **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.

### **Administration Protocol**

Recording procedures of all complaints indicating whether they were resolved at the preliminary stage, or whether they proceeded to a panel hearing will be kept. The number of complaints from the preceding academic year and their outcomes will be recorded on the school's website. These records and any correspondence relating to a complaint will remain confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 163 of the Education Act 2002 requests access to the records. The Board of Directors will consider any implications of the implementation of the complaints procedure annually.