

# Journey Independent School Complaints Policy

September 2025



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## 1. Who can make a complaint?

- 1.1 This Complaints Procedure is not limited to parents or carers of students that are registered at Journey Independent School. Any person who has a **legitimate interest in the Journey Independent School provision** may make a complaint to Journey Independent 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 Journey Independent School ('JIS') will take seriously any complaint, but must prioritise provision for existing students.

## 2. The difference between a concern and a complaint

- 2.1 **A concern** may be defined as 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'.
- 2.2 **A complaint** may be defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'.
- 2.3 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. JIS takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.
- 2.4 If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, Angela Cousins, Managing director/Headteacher, will refer you to an appropriate staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, Kate Ludlam(Business Manager/HR) will refer you to another staff member who can look at your concern objectively and impartially.
- 2.5 We understand, however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns more formally. In this case, the JIS 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

- 3.1 A concern or complaint should be made, in writing. 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.
- 3.2 Concerns should initially have been raised with an appropriate member of staff; this may be the Angela Cousins (Head Teacher). If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to begin a formal process.
- 3.3 Complaints against Journey staff (except the Headteacher) should be made, in the first instance, to Angela Cousins via [angela@journeyeducationgroup.co.uk](mailto:angela@journeyeducationgroup.co.uk). Please mark as 'Private and Confidential'. Complaints that involve or are about the Headteacher should be addressed to the Business Manager/HR at [Kate@journeyeducationgroup.co.uk](mailto:Kate@journeyeducationgroup.co.uk). Please mark as 'Private and Confidential'.
- 3.4 The '**Journey Independent School Concern Form**', at Annex A, should be completed at this stage. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the JIS Office. You can also ask third party organisations, like Citizens Advice, to help you.

3.5 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. Please contact the JIS Office if you would like to request reasonable adjustments.

3.6 **Anonymous complaints:** We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Headteacher of JIS will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

#### 4. Time scales

4.1 You must raise the complaint ideally **within 10 Business days** of the incident and certainly within **three months**; 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 only if exceptional circumstances apply.

#### 5. Complaints received outside of term time

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

#### 6. Scope of this complaint's procedure

6.1 This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by Journey Independent School, other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below:

Exceptions	Who to Contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Admissions to JIS on Primary transfer</li> <li>Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs</li> <li>School re-organisation proposals for consultation</li> </ul>	Concerns about admissions to JIS on Primary transfer, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs or School re-organisation proposals for consultation should be raised with the Headteacher.

Exceptions cont.	Who to Contact cont.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Matters likely to require a Child Protection investigation</li> </ul> <p>If the matter relates to a serious safeguarding concern or an allegation of abuse, the Head of JIS must be informed directly via the JIS Head Office: JIS Hub, Oak Tree Lodge, Woodfield Park, Tickhill Rd, Doncaster, DN4 8QN. Tel: 01302 288450</p>	<p>Complaints about Child Protection matters are handled under our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.</p> <p>If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) at DMBC who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exclusion of children from Journey Independent School</li> </ul>	<p>Further information about raising concerns about exclusions can be found at: <a href="http://www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions">www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions</a>.</p> <p><i>*Complaints about the application of the Behaviour Policy can be made through the JIS's Complaints Procedure.</i></p> <p><i><span style="color: red;">&lt;Link to JIS Behaviour Policy&gt;</span></i></p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whistleblowing (for other regulatory or financial malpractice)</li> </ul>	<p>We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors. If you have a concern about regulatory or financial malpractice please contact Kate Ludlam (Business Manager &amp; Human Resources) – JIS Hub, Oak Tree Lodge, Woodfield Park, Tickhill Rd, Doncaster, DN4 8QN. Please mark as 'Private and Confidential'.</p> <p>The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters directly with their employer. Referrals can be made at: <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus">www.education.gov.uk/contactus</a>.</p> <p>Volunteer staff who have concerns about JIS should complain through JIS's Complaints Procedure.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff grievances</li> </ul>	<p>Complaints from staff will be dealt with under JIS's internal grievance procedures.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff conduct</li> </ul>	<p>Complaints about staff will be dealt with under JIS's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate.</p> <p>Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complaints about JIS members of staff.</li> </ul>	<p>Please contact the Headteacher via JIS Head Office, JIS Hub, Oak Tree Lodge, Woodfield Park, Tickhill Rd, Doncaster, DN4 8QN. Tel: 01302 288450 or email <a href="mailto:angela@journeyeducationgroup.co.uk">angela@journeyeducationgroup.co.uk</a> with details of your complaint which will be passed to the relevant line manager.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use JIS premises or facilities</li> </ul>	<p>Providers should have their own Complaints Procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them directly.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Curriculum - content</li> </ul>	<p>Please contact the Department for Education at: <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus">www.education.gov.uk/contactus</a>.</p>

6.2 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 this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations.

6.3 If a complainant commences legal action against JIS in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the Complaints Procedure in relation to their complaint until those legal proceedings have concluded.

## 7. Resolving complaints

7.1 At each stage of the procedure, JIS wants to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in 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 or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made;
- an undertaking to review JIS policies in light of the complaint;
- an apology.

## 8. Withdrawal of a complaint

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

## 9. Stage 1a - JIS

9.1 Formal complaints must be made to the **Headteacher via JIS Head Office**, JIS Hub, Oak Tree Lodge, Woodfield Park, Tickhill Rd, Doncaster, DN4 8QN. Tel: 01302 288450 or email [angela@journeyeducationgroup.co.uk](mailto:angela@journeyeducationgroup.co.uk). This should be done in writing (preferably on the 'JIS Concern Form' in Annex A) and should be sent directly to the address noted.

9.2 JIS will record the date the complaint was received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within two business days.

9.3 Within this response, the Investigator will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The Investigator 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 JIS's Senior Leadership Team but not the decision to be taken.

9.4 During the investigation, the investigator will:

- if necessary, interview those involved in making the complaint;
- if necessary, interview those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
- if necessary, interview any person who may have information useful to the investigation.

9.5 At the conclusion of their investigation, a report will be written and the *JIS management team* will provide a formal written response within **ten Business days** of the date of receipt of the complaint.

9.6 If the *JIS management team* is unable to meet this deadline, s/he will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.

9.7 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 JIS will take to resolve the complaint.

9.8 The *JIS Administrator* will advise the complainant, in writing, of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome.

9.9 If the concerns raised are about the *Headteacher* the Stage 1 complaint must be made to should be addressed to the Business Manager/HR: Kate Ludlam at Oak Tree Lodge, Woodfield Park, Tickhill Rd, Doncaster, DN4 8QN. Please mark as 'Private and Confidential'.

9.10 Stage 1 will then be considered by an Associate Director who has not been involved in the complaint before. At the conclusion of their investigation, the Associate Director will provide a formal written response.

**9.11 If a concern or a complaint is made direct to the JIS, the complainant will be asked to complete the 'JIS Concern Form' at Annex A for submission directly to JIS. A matter will only become a formal complaint requiring JIS review after all attempts to resolve the matter through other stages have been exhausted.**

## 10. Stage 1b - The Secondary / Primary Director

10.1 If the complainant feels the concern raised has been unresolved at Stage 1a by the Principal/Head of School/Associate Director and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to the **Secondary Associate Director** who will review the response to the complaint. The complaint may be delegated to another member of the senior management team for further investigation or dealt with directly by the Secondary/Primary Director for review and response. The response from the Associate Director will be sent within 7 Business days, along with details of the final Stage 2 of the complaints process, should the matter remain unresolved.

## 11. Stage 2 - The Final Panel

11.1 This is the last stage of the complaints process. Within 10 Business days of receiving the Stage 1 response, **the complainant must complete the 'JIS Complaint to Stage 2 Form' at Annex B, stating they remain unsatisfied with the outcome**. Headteacher of JIS , Oak Tree Lodge, Woodfield Park, Tickhill Rd, Doncaster, DN4 8QN. Email: [angela@journeyeducationgroup.co.uk](mailto:angela@journeyeducationgroup.co.uk) Please mark as 'Private and Confidential'.

11.2 Governor Services will record the date the Stage 2 complaint form was received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within two Business days.

11.3 Requests received outside of the 10 Business days will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

11.4 **Convening and constitution of the Panel:** Governor Services made up of voluntary governors and a parent panel will convene a Complaints Panel which will comprise of the following:

- At least three of the Governor service panel, with no prior direct involvement of the complaint. JIS Staff Governors may not be included in the Panel as they may not be seen as impartial. At least one of the Panel members must be independent of the management and running of JIS and cannot be connected to other JIS services.
- Prior to the meeting, they will decide amongst themselves who will act as the Chair of the Complaints Committee. If there are fewer than two members of the Governor panel from JIS are available, the Headteacher will source any additional independent persons through

another local provision.

11.5 The complainant will be invited to attend the meeting, as will the JIS representative; they may bring someone along to provide support, this can be a relative or friend. Generally, we do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the Committee meeting. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate. For instance, if a JIS employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by union and/or legal representation. This decision will be at the discretion of the Panel Chair.

**Note:** *Complaints about staff conduct will not generally 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.*

11.6 Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

11.7 **At least 5 business days before the meeting, the Clerk will:**

- confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible;
- confirm and notify the JIS representative of the date, time and venue of the meeting ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible;
- request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the Committee at least 5 business days before the meeting.

11.8 Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least five business days before the date of the meeting. The Committee will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

11.9 The Committee will 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.**

11.10 The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's own 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.

11.11 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.

11.12 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 JIS's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

11.13 The Chair of the Committee will provide the complainant and JIS (and person complained about if relevant) with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within five business days.

11.14 The findings and recommendations of the panel will be available for inspection on JIS premises by all parties.

11.15 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 Journey Independent School.

11.16 If the complaint is about the Headteacher:

**The complainant must complete the 'Journey Independent School Concern to Stage 1 Form', at Annex A, stating their concerns.** The form must be submitted to Kate Ludlam (Business Manager), Oak Tree Lodge, Woodfield Park, Tickhill Rd, Doncaster, DN4 8QN or [Kate@journeyeducationgroup.co.uk](mailto:Kate@journeyeducationgroup.co.uk). Please mark them as 'Private and Confidential'.

Stage 1 will be completed by the Business Manager.

If the complainant remains unsatisfied, the **'Journey Independent School Complaint to Stage 2 Form'**, at Annex B, should be completed within 10 business days and sent to Governor Services as above.

Stage 2 will be heard by a Committee of independent, volunteer Governors, who have not been involved in the complaint.

11.17 If the complaint is about:

- Any of the volunteer Governing body

**The complainant must complete the 'Journey Independent School Concern to Stage 1 Form', at Annex A, stating their concerns.** The form must be submitted to Joanne Whitehead (Finance and HR Manager), Oak Tree Lodge, Woodfield Park, Tickhill Rd, Doncaster, DN4 8QN or [finance@journeyeducationgroup.co.uk](mailto:finance@journeyeducationgroup.co.uk). Please mark them as 'Private and Confidential'.

Stage 1 will be completed by the Headteacher.

If the complainant remains unsatisfied the **'Journey Independent School Complaint to Stage 2 Form'** at Annex B should be completed within 10 business days and sent to Governor Services as above.

Stage 2 will be heard by a Committee of independent, volunteer Governors, who have not been involved in the complaint.

11.18 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 the board will take to resolve the complaint.

## 12. Next steps

12.1 If the complainant believes that Journey Independent 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.

12.2 The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by a provision; they may consider whether the provision has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint.

12.3 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

12.4 The complainant can also contact Doncaster Children's Trust Early Help if they are concerned about a child, by telephone on: 01302 734110

### 13. Dealing with vexatious, persistent or unreasonable concerns or complaints

13.1 Journey Independent School is committed to dealing with all concerns and complaints fairly and impartially. In the case of vexatious, persistent or unreasonable concerns/complaints, if the complainant remains unsatisfied after all the stages have been exhausted, the Headteacher will inform the complainant in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed. Should any individual's approach to their concern/complaint become disturbing, intimidating or harassing, legal advice may be sought. Journey Independent School have a duty of care to their staff and this will be upheld, as we do not expect our teaching or operational staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour that may be deemed abusive, threatening or offensive.

### 14. Unreasonable Complaints

14.1 We are committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with us. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

14.2 We adopt the Department for Education definition of unreasonable complainants as those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with the School, hinder our consideration of their or other people's complaints.

14.3 Unreasonable complaints are taken seriously by JIS as they put a strain on valuable resources and hinder the progress of proper investigations. The School may judge that a complaint is unreasonable by assessing a number of factors, including those that are outlined below.

14.4 A complaint may be regarded as unreasonable when the person making the complaint:

- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance;
- refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process;
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaints procedure;

- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice;
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant expects to be taken into account and commented on, or raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales;
- makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced;
- changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds;
- repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed);
- refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where our complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed;
- seeks an unrealistic outcome;
- makes excessive demands on School time by frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with.

14.5 A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if the person making the complaint does so either face-to-face, by telephone or in writing or electronically:

- maliciously;
- aggressively;
- using threats, intimidation or violence;
- using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language;
- knowing it to be false;
- using falsified information;
- publishing unacceptable information in a variety of media such as in social media websites and newspapers.

14.6 A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if it is manifestly unjustified, inappropriate, or an improper use of formal procedure.

- In assessing this, the School shall have regard to all the circumstances of the case and the nature of the complaint itself rather than the nature of the complainant. In assessing all of the circumstances of the case JIS will consider a range of factors including:
  - whether a complaint has reasonable foundation;
  - the history and context of the complaint (and any evidence where relevant);
  - whether the time and cost of investigating the complaint is proportionate to the issue(s) complained of;
  - whether an investigation of the complaint is likely to cause a disproportionate or unjustified level of disruption, irritation or distress;
  - unexplained delay in raising a complaint or issue;
  - if the purpose of the complaint is to obtain an outcome which is unavailable via the complaints procedure, such as a claim for compensation, damages or a refund of fees paid;
  - any evidence of a complaint being brought for an improper purpose.

14.7 Whenever possible, the designated person responsible will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before dismissing a complaint as unreasonable.

- 14.8 If the behaviour continues, Journey Independent School will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it.
- 14.9 For complainants who excessively contact the School causing a significant level of disruption, the School may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will be reviewed after six months.
- 14.10 In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence the School will immediately inform the police and communicate its actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from the School.
- 14.11 It is open to a complainant to request that a complaints panel be convened to determine the single issue of whether JIS's dismissal of the complainant's original complaint(s) was justified.

## 15. Reporting and recording complaints

- 15.1 The 'Journey Independent School Complaint to Stage 2 Form' at Annex B should be used for all formal complaints and, once received, JIS will record all issues, with the Headteacher/Business Manager holding responsibility for ensuring staff consistently and accurately record all formal complaints.
- 15.2 It is good practice to also record concerns dealt with at Stage 1 along with actions taken.
- 15.3 Records relating to individual complaints are confidential, except in limited circumstances to comply with specific acts or statutory law. This includes Data Protection and Freedom of Information, or where the Secretary of State or another Statutory Body conducting an inspection requests access.
- 15.4 The Journey Independent School will monitor the level of concerns and complaints and review the outcomes on a regular basis. Where possible, the complainant will not be identified.

## Annex A: Journey Independent School Concern to Stage 1 Form

Please complete and return to the Headteacher, Angela Cousins, who will acknowledge receipt. You should receive a response from the School within two business days. Many thanks for your patience and we hope your concern will be resolved to your satisfaction.

<b>Your name:</b>	
<b>Pupil's name (if relevant):</b>	
<b>Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):</b>	
<b>Address:</b>	
<b>Contact numbers, please state preferred contact time:</b>	
<b>Email address:</b>	
<b>Please give details of your concern, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the School about it.</b>	
<b>What actions do you feel might resolve the concern at this stage?</b>	
<b>Signature:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
<b>Official use</b>	
<b>Date acknowledgement sent:</b>	
<b>By who:</b>	
<b>Complaint referred to:</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	

## Annex B: Journey Independent School Complaint to Stage 2 Form

Please complete and return to Headteacher, Angela Cousins, Journey Independent School, Oak Tree Lodge, Woodfield Park, Tickhill Rd, Doncaster, DN4 8QN. This form can only be used when all informal and Stage 1 processes, involving Journey Independent School and the Secondary/Primary Associate Director, have been exhausted.

<b>Your name:</b>
<b>Pupil's name (if relevant):</b>
<b>Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):</b>
<b>Address:</b>
<b>Contact numbers, please state preferred contact time:</b>
<b>Email address:</b>
<b>Details of complaint</b>
<b>Why was the Secondary/Primary Associate Director's response not satisfactory? What further actions would the Panel need to agree in order to resolve this complaint?</b>
<b>Signature:</b>
<b>Date:</b>
<b>Official use</b>
<b>Date acknowledgement sent:</b>
<b>By who:</b>
<b>Complaint referred to:</b>
<b>Date:</b>

## Annex C: Indicative Timelines

Journey Education staff will try to resolve all concerns as soon as possible, but it must be recognised that teachers and support staff have other important demands on their time. In some complex cases, it may take longer than indicated below however, it must also be recognised that making a complaint can cause anxiety and so the investigator must keep complainants informed on any time delays. A complaint will not be upheld solely because a deadline is missed.

### Complaints NOT about the Headteacher:

<b>Stage 1a</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Deadline for action</b>
Parent/carer raises concern using form at Annex A	Complainant	If unhappy with response from JIS
Concern acknowledged	JIS	2 business days from concern received
Investigation and response	JIS/Headteacher/ Business Manager	10 business days from concern received
<b>Stage 1b</b>		
Unresolved concern referred to Secondary/Primary Associate Director	JIS/Principal and/or Complainant	Within 5 business days
Concern acknowledged	Secondary/Primary Associate Director	2 business days from receiving notice of unresolved concern
Review and response	Secondary/Primary Associate Director	7 business days from receipt of unresolved concern
<b>Stage 2</b>		
Unresolved concern referred to Independent Governors	Complainant	Within 10 business days of receiving a response
Request for final Panel stage using form at Annex B	Complainant	Within 20 business days of receiving a response
Panel to convene	Independent Governor	20 business days from request
Independent Governors Response	Independent Governor	5 business days from Panel meeting

### Complaints about the Headteacher or Business Manager:

<b>Stage 1a</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Deadline for action</b>
Parent/carer raises concern using form at Annex A	Complainant	10 business days from incident
Concern acknowledged	Business Manager/Assistant Director/ Primary/Secondary Director	2 business days from concern received
Investigation and response	Executive Principal/Assistant Director/ Primary/Secondary Director	10 business days from concern received
<b>Stage 1b</b>		
Unresolved concern referred to Secondary/Primary Director	Secondary/Primary Associate Director	Within 5 business days
Concern acknowledged	Secondary/Primary Associate Director	2 business days from receiving notice of unresolved concern
Review and response	Secondary/Primary Associate Director	7 business days from receipt of unresolved concern
<b>Stage 2</b>		
Unresolved concern referred to Federation Governance	Complainant	Within 10 business days of receiving response

Request for final Panel to be convened using form at Annex B	Complainant	Within 20 business days of receiving response
Panel to convene	Independent Governor	20 business days from request for Panel received
Final response	Independent Governor	5 business days from Panel meeting

## Annex D: Roles and Responsibilities

Journey Independent School recognises that it is important that, at all stages, staff and Governors are well trained to enable them to carry out their roles and responsibilities appropriately when dealing with any part of the Complaints Procedure. The Headteacher and Business Manager will ensure staff are familiar with the Complaints Procedure and their role in helping to deal with any concerns at an early stage successfully. The Headteacher will ensure Independent Governors or anyone delegated to deal with complaints or be part of a Panel will have appropriate training.

### Complainant

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

- explain the complaint in full as early as possible;
- co-operate with JIS 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 publicising the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality.

### 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:
  - o sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved
  - o interviewing staff and children/young people and other people relevant to the complaint
  - o consideration of records and other relevant information
  - o analysing information
- liaising with the complainant 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 brief notes of interviews or where appropriate 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 Head Teacher/Business Manager/ Associate Directors that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.

Headteacher/Business Manager/Associate Directors will then determine whether to uphold or dismiss the complaint and communicate that decision to the complainant, providing the appropriate escalation details.

### Independent Governors

Independent Governors are the contact point for the complainant at Stage 2 and the Committee should:

- ensure that all people involved in the complaints procedure are aware of their legal rights and duties, including any under legislation relating to AP 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 date, time 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, JIS and complainant submissions) and send it to the parties in advance of the meeting within an agreed timescale;
- record the proceedings;
- circulate the minutes of the meeting;
- 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 the 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, is not adversarial, and that, everyone is treated with respect and courtesy
- complainants who may not be used to speaking at such a meeting are put at ease. This is particularly important if the complainant is a child/young person
- the remit of the Committee is explained to the complainant
- 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 JIS 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 fact are made;
- 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.

### **Final Panel Members**

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 JIS 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 and inhibited in a formal 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 all or part of the meeting;

- o Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings should ensure that the child/young person does not feel intimidated.
- o The Committee should respect the views of the child/young person and give them equal consideration to those of adults.
- o If the child/young person is at the centre of the complaint, the Committee should ask in advance if any support is needed to help them present their complaint. Where the child/young person's parent is the complainant, the Committee should give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the meeting, if any, the child/young person needs to attend.
- o However, the parent should be advised that agreement might not always be possible if the parent wishes the child/young person to attend a part of the meeting that the Committee considers is not in the child/young person's best interests.
- the welfare of the child/young person is paramount.

## Annex E: Flow Chart Summary of Complaints Process

If you have a concern, raise it with an appropriate member of staff in the first instance.

If not resolved

If you are unsatisfied with the response or lack of action from staff at Journey Independent School then your concern should be lodged with the Headteacher/Business Manager.

Is the concern specifically about the Headteacher?

**Contact the Headteacher** and/or fill out the '**Journey Independent School Concern Form**' in **Annex A**. The centre should try to resolve your concerns informally and you will know the outcome within 10 business days.

**Contact the School** via JIS, Oak Tree Lodge, Woodfield Park, Tickhill Rd, Doncaster, DN4 8QN. Complete the '**JIS Concern Form**' in **Annex A**. Your concern will be referred to the CEO who should try to resolve your concerns informally and you will know the outcome within 10 business days.

If you are not satisfied with this response, your concern will be reviewed by the **Secondary/Primary Associate Director** who will review your complaint and JIS' response and respond to you within 7 business days.

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If you are still not satisfied with this response, **you should communicate this to JISs independent Governor Panel within 10 business days**. A Panel will be convened at Stage 2 of the complaints process which is the final stage of the complaints process. **Please complete the 'JIS Complaint to Stage 2 Form' at Annex B and send to Kate Ludlam -, Oak Tree Lodge, Woodfield Park, Tickhill Rd, Doncaster, DN4 8QN or email Kate@journeyeducationgroup.co.uk Please mark as 'Private and Confidential'.**

**The Independent Governors' Panel Hearing will be convened within 20 business days of receiving your notification that you remain unsatisfied. Once the hearing has been held, you will be notified of the outcome within 5 business days.**

**NOTE – At all stages, Journey Independent School will seek to resolve your complaint. In complex cases, it might take longer to investigate a problem so the timings may extend and you will be kept informed if this is the case.**

Author | Angela Cousins | Journey Independent School Managing Director

