

Ambleford School Complaints Policy

Reviewed: March 2025

Next Review: March 2026 (or sooner if required by statutory or regulatory change)

1. Introduction

Ambleford School is committed to providing the highest standards of education and care for all pupils. We value feedback from parents, guardians, and stakeholders, and we take all concerns and complaints seriously. This policy outlines the procedures for managing complaints in line with the requirements of the Department for Education (DfE) and the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI). Our approach is to resolve complaints quickly, fairly, and constructively, and to use them as opportunities for learning and continuous improvement.

2. Aims

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that complaints are handled in a fair, transparent, and unbiased manner. It provides a clear and accessible process for parents and stakeholders to raise concerns, while also setting out how the school will respond in a timely and proportionate way. In doing so, it aims to promote a culture of openness, accountability, and ongoing improvement across the school community.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all complaints raised by parents, guardians, or other stakeholders about any aspect of the school's provision. However, it does not apply to every type of concern. Matters relating to safeguarding or child protection must follow the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. Issues connected with staff grievances are dealt with under the Staff Grievance Procedure, while exclusions and behaviour-related sanctions are managed under the Behaviour Policy.

4. Complaints Procedure

The school has a three-stage complaints procedure designed to be clear, accessible, and compliant with ISI and DfE expectations.

At Stage 1, the informal resolution stage, concerns should be raised at the earliest opportunity with the relevant member of staff, such as the class teacher, pastoral lead, or another appropriate member of the team. A meeting or telephone conversation may be arranged to discuss the concern and attempt to resolve it informally. In most cases, concerns will be settled at this stage. However, if the issue remains unresolved, the complainant may proceed to Stage 2.

At Stage 2, the formal complaint stage, the complainant must submit their concerns in writing to the Headteacher. The school will acknowledge the complaint within five school days. The Headteacher, or a delegated senior leader, will conduct a thorough investigation, which may include meetings with the complainant, the pupil (where appropriate), and any relevant staff. A written response will be provided within fifteen school days of the complaint being acknowledged. This response will set out the school's findings and any proposed actions. If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome, they may request that the matter be taken forward to Stage 3.

At Stage 3, a panel hearing will be convened. To proceed, the complainant must submit a written request for a panel hearing within ten school days of receiving the Stage 2 response. The panel will consist of at least three individuals, one of whom will be independent of the school and its management. The complainant will be invited to attend the hearing and may be accompanied by a friend, relative, or representative. The school will also be represented at the hearing. Both parties will have the opportunity to present their case and to respond to questions. The panel will then reach a decision and may make recommendations. A written decision, including the findings, reasons, and any recommendations, will be provided to the complainant, the Headteacher, and, where relevant, the person complained about, within ten school days of the hearing. The decision of the panel is final.

5. Record Keeping and Confidentiality

The school will maintain a written record of all formal complaints, including those resolved at the preliminary stage, those that proceed to a panel hearing, and the outcomes. These records will be kept for at least three years. They will clearly indicate whether the complaint was resolved at Stage 1, Stage 2, or Stage 3. All correspondence, statements, and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential, except where disclosure is required by the DfE, ISI, or by law. The number of formal complaints registered in each academic year will be made available to inspectors upon request.

6. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the school's leadership team to ensure that it remains compliant with statutory and regulatory requirements. Trends and recurring issues will be analysed in order to identify areas for improvement in the school's provision and practice. The policy is published on the school website and is also available in hard copy on request from the school office.