



## Complaints Policy

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## ETHICAL LEADERSHIP

1. Thomas Tallis School Plan 2020-23 has five aims.

1	A powerful curriculum
2	The best teachers
3	Great learning and progress
4	Excellent personal development
5	A model for a better world

As part of aim 5 Thomas Tallis School has adopted the *Framework for Ethical Leadership in Education*. This means that we try to behave in a principled and correct manner in everything we do. Schools and colleges serve children and young people and help them grow into fulfilled and valued citizens. As role models for the young, how we behave as leaders is as important as what we do. We therefore behave with **selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership**. We demonstrate **trust, wisdom, kindness, justice, service, courage and optimism**.

## **1. POLICY STATEMENT**

- 1.1. It is in everyone's best interest in our school and community to communicate well with one another and to ensure that any concerns and complaints are dealt with promptly and fairly. In addition, concerns and complaints brought to the attention of the school can be an opportunity to inform, review and help improve school procedures. The school wants to listen to the views of parents and carers about their child's education and wellbeing at school and will try to resolve any concerns or complaints as informally and as quickly as possible.
- 1.2. The school takes all complaints seriously and will provide a thorough and appropriate response.
- 1.3. This policy sets out the procedures which Thomas Tallis School will follow whenever it receives a complaint for which there are not alternative statutory procedures.
- 1.4. In all cases where the complaint directly concerns the school's Headteacher, the Chair of Governors (or nominated governor) in the first instance, will investigate the complaint.
- 1.5. If and when complaints about the school are brought to the attention of the Royal Borough of Greenwich (the local authority), the complainant will be advised to contact the school and to follow the procedures set out within this policy.
- 1.6. This policy may be used by anyone who has a concern or complaint about any aspect of the school. In the main this will mean parents and carers of the school's students, but may include neighbours of the school or other members of the local community.

## **2. AIMS**

This Policy aims to:

- 2.1. Encourage the resolution of concerns and complaints by informal means wherever possible.
- 2.2. Ensure that concerns are dealt with quickly, fully and fairly and within defined time limits where possible.
- 2.3. Provide effective and appropriate responses to concerns and complaints.
- 2.4. Maintain good working relationships between the school and all those involved.
- 2.5. Ensure that all staff, governors, parents and carers at the school should be made aware of this complaints policy and which can be accessed on the school website <http://www.thomastallischool.com/policies--guidelines.html>.

## **3. PRINCIPLES**

- 3.1. It is a requirement of Section 29 of the Education Act 2002 that governing bodies of all maintained schools in England establish procedures for dealing with complaints relating to the school other than those covered by legislation and formal procedures set out elsewhere. In establishing or publicising procedures under subsection (1), the governing body shall have regard to any guidance given from time to time by the Secretary of State.
- 3.2. Ease of accessibility for users of this policy.
- 3.3. Effective communication such that the process involved in dealing with complaints is clear.
- 3.4. Appropriate confidentiality must be maintained by all involved in the process (including any school staff, administrative staff and governors).

#### **4. MONITORING AND RECORDING COMPLAINTS**

4.1. At all stages of the complaints procedure the following information should be recorded:

- Name of the complainant
- Date (and time if possible) at which the complaint was made
- Details of the nature of the complaint
- Desired outcome of the complaint
- How the complaint is being investigated (including written records of any interviews held)
- Results and conclusions of investigations
- Any actions taken
- The complainant's response
- Record of any subsequent action if required

4.2. The governing body will monitor the general nature of complaints over each academic year to inform practice and potential improvements to procedures and policies within the school.

#### **5. UPHOLDING OR NOT UPHOLDING COMPLAINTS**

At each stage of the complaints procedure the conclusion will be either:

- That the complaint is upheld (in part or in full) and where appropriate what action is to be taken or,
- That the complaint is not upheld and the reason(s) for this, where appropriate, are given

#### **6. WHAT IS NOT COVERED BY THIS COMPLAINTS POLICY**

- Complaints about the national curriculum entitlement and collective worship – these should be directed to the governing body and then to the local authority
- Pupil admissions
- Pupil exclusions
- Special Educational Needs provision or Safeguarding. Our SEND policy details the procedure for complaints from parents or carers of our SEN students.
- Issues relating to child protection
- Employee grievances, disciplinary or dismissal matters
- Criminal investigations

#### **7. COMPLAINTS PROCESS**

##### *7.1. Stage 1 (informal stage)*

In most cases, matters of concern can be dealt with informally by raising the issue with a student's form tutor. However, the staff member may feel it more appropriate to refer the complainant to a more senior or experienced member of staff who will try to resolve the concern informally. This may be any of the following:

Head of Year

Assistant Headteacher – Inclusion, Data, T&L, Behaviour and Post 16

Deputy Headteacher – Inclusion

Deputy Headteacher - Curriculum

The matter may also be referred directly to the Headteacher at any time

## 7.2. Stage 2

7.2.1. If the complainant is not satisfied by the outcome of Stage 1, the complainant may raise their complaint in writing where possible to the Headteacher at [Headteacher@thomastallis.org.uk](mailto:Headteacher@thomastallis.org.uk) using the form at the end of this policy. If a complaint concerns the Headteacher then the complainant should write in confidence to the Chair of Governors at the school by writing to Chair of Governors c/o Lucy Davies, Governor Clerk at [lucy.davies@royalgreenwich.gov.uk](mailto:lucy.davies@royalgreenwich.gov.uk). The Chair of Governors will seek to resolve the issue informally before, if necessary, moving to Stage 3.

### 7.2.2. Timescales:

- Within 5 school working days a letter of acknowledgement will be sent to the complainant confirming the school has received the complaint
- Within 15 school working days the Headteacher will respond to the issues raised.
- If it is not possible to meet these timescales, the Headteacher will contact the complainant advising of an alternative timescale. Whilst every attempt will be made to investigate the issues raised within this timescale, it is not always possible because of circumstances beyond the school's control. In these circumstances, the Headteacher will write to the complainant to advise of an amended timescale.

7.2.3. The investigating manager will then undertake the relevant investigation in order to provide the Headteacher with such information to either warrant further action or that there is no evidence to support the complaint. The investigating manager will invite the complainant to discuss their complaint as part of the investigation process. The Headteacher will write to the complainant with the outcome of the investigation.

## 7.3. Stage 3

7.3.1. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaint, the complainant may write to the chair of governors at the school.

- Within 5 school working days the chair of governors will acknowledge receipt of the complaint
- Within 10 school working days the chair of governors will arrange a panel review meeting to hear the complaint and review the investigation and outcome of the complaint. These governors shall have had no previous involvement or knowledge of the case. The Clerk to governors will contact all relevant parties with meeting arrangements.

## 7.4. Stage 4

7.4.1. If the complainant is unsatisfied at the end of Stage 3 they can contact the Department for Education at <https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school/types>

7.4.2. Ofsted will also consider complaints about schools. Ofsted will not look at complaints relating to cases with individual students. This course of action is only available if the school's complaint procedure has already been followed. <https://contact.ofsted.gov.uk/online-complaints-schools>

## **8. UNREASONABLE, SERIAL, PERSISTENT, VEXATIOUS OR MALICIOUS COMPLAINTS**

- 8.1. Thomas Tallis School is 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 the school. 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.
- 8.2. Thomas Tallis School defines serial and 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, or hinder or disrupt the normal conduct of the school'*.
- 8.3. The term 'complainant' in this policy includes those who make requests under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, and the Data Protection Act 1998. Reference to the complaints procedure relates, where relevant, to requests under those Acts.
- 8.4. 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 while still wishing their complaint to be resolved.
  - 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 the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education.
  - 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.
- 8.5. 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.
- 8.6. Complainants should limit the numbers of communications with a school while a complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text) as it could delay the outcome being reached. Whenever possible, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' judgment. If the behaviour continues the Headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that his/her behaviour is unreasonable and asking him/her to change it.
- 8.7. In a case where the school has agreed that the complainant is vexatious the governing body will have agreed that contact can be restricted. The decision to restrict communication will need to be agreed by the Headteacher and Chair of Governors with advice if necessary from the Royal Borough of Greenwich. The complainant must be notified in writing and the letter will clearly identify: the reason why the decision to apply this policy has been taken; what impact this will have on their contact with the school; the duration of the restriction; and how and to whom the complainant can appeal the decision.
- 8.8. For complainants who excessively contact Thomas Tallis School causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will usually be reviewed after 6 months. The restrictions can include all or some of the following: placing time limits on telephone calls/personal contact; limiting the number of telephone calls/personal contacts; restricting the complainant to only one form of communication and with one named member of staff; and refusing all communication regarding an identified subject.
- 8.9. The restriction would not include emergency contact regarding the complainant's child/children or information which would be essential to their child/children's learning and achievement.

School Formal Complaints Form (Stage 2)

Your name	First Name	Last Name	
Your Address			
Contact telephone numbers	Daytime	Mobile	
Contact email address			
Name of student		Year Group	
Relationship to student (if applicable)			

Details of the complaint

Action taken (including staff member who has dealt with the complaint) or solutions offered

Please say why you feel this was not a satisfactory resolution for you

What action would you like to be taken to resolve the issue?

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Official Use Only:	Signed:
Date & time received:	Print name: