



Trustees and Governors Complaints Policy

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Version number.	Summary of change(s) since last version.
0.1	New Policy created

Gosforth Group Trustee and School Governor Complaints Policy

1. Purpose of This Policy

Within Gosforth Group, Governors and Trustees must:

- Act in line with the **Nolan Seven Principles of Public Life**
- Adopt and sign an appropriate **Code of Conduct**

From time to time, concerns may be raised about the behaviour, conduct, or actions of an individual Governor or Trustee. This policy sets out how such concerns will be managed to ensure transparency, consistency, and fair treatment for all parties involved.

Separate procedures for managing general complaints are set out in the Gosforth Group Concerns, Complaints and Resolution Policy (Parents and Carers). While the overarching principles of that policy apply, complaints relating to Governors or Trustees are managed through a distinct governance process.

2. Scope

This policy applies to complaints made about:

- A Trustee
- The Chair or Vice Chair of Trustees
- All or the majority of the Board of Trustees
- A Governor
- The Chair of a Governing Committee
- All or the majority of a Governing Committee.

This policy does not apply to:

- Complaints about staff, schools, or operational matters (covered by the Concerns, Complaints and Resolution Policy (Parents and Carers))
- Whistleblowing concerns (covered by the Whistleblowing Policy)
- Allegations of safeguarding misconduct (covered by Safeguarding and LADO procedures).

3. Principles

All complaints concerning Trustees or Governors will be handled in line with the following principles:

- **Independence:** Complaints will be investigated by individuals with no actual or perceived conflict of interest

- **Fairness:** All parties will be treated respectfully and given a fair opportunity to respond
- **Confidentiality:** Information will be shared only where necessary and in line with data protection requirements
- **Timeliness:** Complaints will be addressed promptly and without unnecessary delay
- **Transparency:** Outcomes will be communicated clearly, with reasons provided where appropriate
- **Compliance:** Processes will align with the Trust's Articles of Association, Scheme of Delegation, and Department for Education governance expectations

4. How to Make a Complaint

Complaints should be submitted via the online **Gosforth Group Trustees and Governors Complaints Form**, which can be accessed through the Trust or individual school website under the '**Contact Us**' section.

Please ensure your complaint includes the following information:

- The name(s) of the individual(s) your complaint relates to (where known)
- A clear and concise description of your concern
- The outcome you are seeking (where applicable)

Should you require any assistance, or would prefer to speak with a member of the Communications, Assurance and Engagement Team, please use the contact details below:

Email: complaints@gosforthgroup.org.uk

Telephone: 0191 429 9797 (Ext. 4034)

5. Process for Handling Complaints

5.1 Initial Review

The receiving governance lead (Chair, Vice-Chair, or Head of Governance and Compliance) will:

- Acknowledge receipt within **5 school days**
- Conduct an initial review to determine:
 - Whether the complaint falls within the scope of this policy
 - Whether formal investigation is required
 - Whether the matter should be referred to an external or independent investigator

5.2 Investigation

When determining who is appropriate to investigate a complaint, careful consideration will be given to any actual or perceived conflicts of interest.

The usual arrangements are:

- Complaints about a Trustee: normally investigated by the Chair of Trustees
- Complaints about the Chair of Trustees: normally investigated by the Vice-Chair of Trustees
- Complaints involving the Chair and Vice-Chair, or the majority (or entirety) of the Board of Trustees: referred to the Head of Governance and Compliance for independent oversight
- Complaints about the Chair of a Governing Committee, or the majority (or entirety) of a Governing Committee: normally investigated by a Trustee
- Complaints about an individual Governor: normally investigated by the Chair of the Governing Committee

If an investigation is required, an investigator will be appointed. This may be:

- A Trustee not subject to the complaint
- A Governor from another school within the Trust
- A member of the Trust's senior governance team
- An independent external investigator, where appropriate

The investigator will:

- Review relevant evidence
- Meet with the parties involved, as appropriate
- Consider the Trust's Articles of Association, Code of Conduct, and governance expectations
- Produce a written report setting out findings and recommendations

5.3 Outcome

The outcome will be communicated to the complainant in writing and may include:

- Recommendations for training or development
- A formal warning, where appropriate
- Removal from committees or roles, in line with the Code of Conduct
- Referral to the Trust Board for consideration
- Referral to external bodies (e.g. Department for Education or Charity Commission), where required
- No further action

6. Appeals

There is no automatic right of appeal for complaints concerning Trustees or Governors.

However, the Trust may consider an appeal where there is evidence that:

- New evidence has emerged that could materially affect the outcome (this may result in a reinvestigation)
- The process was not followed correctly
- There was a clear conflict of interest involving the investigator

Any appeal will be heard by Trustees or independent individuals who have had no prior involvement in the original investigation.

7. Malicious or Vexatious Complaints

Where a complaint is determined to be malicious, vexatious, or intentionally defamatory, the Trust may:

- Decline to investigate the complaint further
- Restrict future communication with the complainant in line with Trust procedures
- Take appropriate legal or safeguarding action, where necessary

8. Record Keeping

The Trust will maintain confidential records of:

- Complaints received
- Investigations undertaken
- Outcomes and actions
- Any governance decisions arising.

Records will be retained in line with statutory requirements.

9. Links to Other Policies

This policy should be read alongside:

- Gosforth Group Concerns, Complaints and Resolution Policy (Parents and Carers)
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Governance Code of Conduct
- Articles of Association
- Scheme of Delegation.

10. Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years or earlier if required by:

- Legislative changes
- DfE guidance
- Governance restructuring
- Learning from complaints.