

Policy: Complaints

Reviewed: May 2026

Next review: May 2027

Mid-year updates:

Policy Monitoring

Libra Policies are reviewed when the need arises in line with legislation updates, guidance, and useful information we receive in order to improve and enhance our provision. Additionally, Policies are updated annually by relevant members of staff and the Senior Leadership Team.

Equality Statement

We believe that this policy is in line with the Equality Act as it is fair, it does not prioritise or disadvantage any child or member of staff, and it helps to promote equality at this school.

We all have a responsibility to ensure equality permeates into all aspects of school life and that everyone is treated equally irrespective of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. We want everyone connected with this school to feel safe, secure, valued and of equal worth. We acknowledge the findings of the Race Disparity Audit that clearly shows how people of different ethnicities are treated across the public services of health, education, employment and the criminal justice system.

We wish to work closely with the School Council and to hear their views and opinions as we acknowledge and support Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child that children should be encouraged to form and to express their views.

Introduction

All schools are required to have a complaints procedure in place and this policy has been prepared in accordance with the current DfE Best Practice Advice for School Complaints Procedures.

Libra wants to ensure that we work with anyone who is unhappy about anything to do with Libra quickly and effectively. It is important to first establish if we are dealing with a complaint or a concern to ascertain if the situation can be resolved quickly and informally without the need to invoke formal procedures.

For the purposes of this policy a concern is an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought. While a complaint is best defined as an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action. By making this distinction between a concern and a complaint and taking all informal concerns seriously we can prevent concerns developing into formal complaints.

This policy is not for complaints from staff about matters relating to their duties or employment at the school, or for staff grievances, or for complaints they may have about parents or carers. Those issues should be dealt with through the school's staffing procedures and policies. This policy is intended to be used by those persons who have a concern or complaint relating to the school, children, parents/carers or the public and no other alternative process exists for addressing that concern or complaint.

Aims and Objectives:

We aim to:

- To deal with any concern or complaint against Libra or any individual connected with it by following the correct procedures.
- To deal with all complaints thoroughly and by being open, honest and fair when dealing with the complainant.
- To differentiate between a concern and a complaint.
- To ensure that our complaints procedures are remedy focused.

Child and parent / carer concerns and complaints:

Small frustrations

We recognise that children, parents, professionals and sometimes the public will have small frustrations that come up almost daily. We feel it is important that these frustrations are acknowledged and discussed in an informal way to seek remedies for them long before they become an informal or formal complaint. To achieve this:

- The school office is available Monday to Friday for anyone to make contact if they wish to raise a frustration.
- Libra holds regular Council Meetings so that children can raise any issues, to discuss and consult over Libra policies and procedures that affect children such as this Complaints Policy which has been written after consultation through two Council meetings and to discuss any moans, groans and gripes that have arisen. Solutions to these issues are discussed as a Council and the remedies suggested are reviewed by the SMT and implemented if possible. Council meetings have minutes which are circulated within the school for all children and staff to see.
- We ensure that children can reflect with their tutor or a member of the SMT about their behaviour especially if it has impacted others or has resulted in the need for safe containment. This reflection provides the child with an opportunity to raise anything they are not happy about whilst reflecting upon their own responsibilities.
- Tutors maintain very regular contact with parents / carers, and we have two planned parent/teacher meetings per year to discuss the children's progress and any concerns that parents/carers may have.
- The SMT have very good working relationships with professionals and parents / carers due to the small nature of the school and an open-door policy for any child or parent/carer to come and discuss anything that is a frustration.

These opportunities offer an outlet for small niggles and frustrations to be resolved quickly and positively. Within the school contact telephone numbers are easily available for young people to contact Ofsted / Child Line / Right4me / NSPCC.

When children start at Libra, they are introduced to their tutor who will take them through this complaints policy in an age-appropriate way as part of their tutor induction. Parents/ carers are provided with a copy of the complaints procedures in their parent/carer handbook and the policy is on the school website.

Remedy Focused

The aim of this policy is to ensure that any frustrations, concerns and complaints are resolved effectively and efficiently by being remedy focused. To achieve this, we consider:

- The individual needs of the person involved
- The situation in terms of its' seriousness and the implication other Libra policies and procedures may have on it
- The impact a remedy might have on the organisation, it's staff and children
- The speed with which a remedy can be implemented

It is very difficult to provide within this policy a range of possible remedies as we aim to ensure that every remedy that is identified is unique to the situation, discussed with the person involved and has been considered in relation to all the above factors as we discuss the situation.

Informal frustration or concern procedures

1. Anyone with a frustration or concern can raise this how they prefer. This can be written in an email or letter, provided orally face to face or via the phone. All frustrations or concerns must be added to the relevant form to ensure that we log and proceed with managing the frustration or concern correctly. There is a child friendly version which is used for children. The member of staff receiving the frustration or concern can fill this in for the person if they prefer and should do so if they refuse but have made a verbal complaint.
2. If the person prefers to wait to discuss the matter with a member of staff of their choice this will be arranged. We will ensure that no person who is the subject of a complaint takes any part in its consideration other than, if a member of the SMT considers it appropriate, at the informal resolution stage only.

3. The member of staff receiving the information will try to resolve the problem with a mutually agreed remedy immediately if this is possible and is within their ability and authority. The member of staff should ensure they record the action taken, and check and record that the person is satisfied with the outcome. This may involve advising the complainant that they are unable to resolve the complaint within 24 hours, but actions have been taken to initiate a resolution. At this stage the informal procedures must move to formal procedures.
4. All complaints within the school must be recorded in the appropriate hardback complaints book ensuring that any occurrences which relate to equality or diversity issues (eg bullying and harassment or discrimination) must be documented clearly in the appropriate section.
5. In recording a complaint staff should ask the complainant who they would prefer to investigate their complaint. A list of suitable staff will be provided. They will be asked what the outcome is they are seeking. This may not always be possible to achieve but it helps to clarify the nature of the complaint and direct a resolution.
6. The complaint form can either be given directly to the member of staff who received the complaint, and they will ensure that it is delivered into the office, or it can be delivered to The Libra School, Edgemoor Court, South Radworthy, South Molton, Devon, EX36 3LN. Email: admin@libraschool.co.uk. Telephone: 01598 740044
7. An informal complaint becomes a formal complaint if:
 - The complaint cannot be resolved within 24 hours
 - The complaint after initial investigation is of a serious nature requiring formal investigation
 - The person requests it to be a formal complaint straight away.

Any complaint related to the Directors, Designated and or Deputy Safeguarding Persons, Principal, Head Teacher or Deputy Headteacher will be treated as a formal complaint.

Formal Complaints Process Stage 1

Once a formal complaint has been received, we will:

1. Arrange for a member of suitable staff to contact the complainant within 24 hours (to allow for a cooling off period) to record the details of the complaint and identify who the complainant would like to investigate the complaint. This cooling down period aims to filter out any complaints that stem from an angry reaction to necessary correction or behaviour management and which will become more realistic once the immediate anger is gone. However, the cooling period may be overridden should the issue need to be dealt with immediately.
2. Notify the member of staff identified to investigate and pass on all documents and information relating to the complaint.
3. The Investigating staff member should arrange to meet with the complainant within 24 hours of receiving the complaint or if over a weekend contact the complainant to set a date for a meeting.
4. The complainant should be given written feedback within 7 days of how the investigation is progressing. There is a child friendly complaint response format to use for children.
5. The investigating staff member should meet with the complainant within 14 days to explain the findings of their investigation and discuss remedies available as well as providing a final written response to the complainant within 14 working days setting out the findings of the investigation and a possible remedy or remedies.
6. The investigating staff member should ensure that the principal receives a copy of the final written response.
7. The investigating staff member should ensure the complaint is fully documented and correspondence filed with the school.
8. If during the meeting explaining the findings and remedies the complainant states, they are not happy with the outcome of the investigation the investigating staff member should explain to them how to proceed through to Stage 2 of the Formal Process and provide them with a complaint flowchart.

Formal Complaints Process Stage 2

The complainant, if not satisfied, can progress the complaint to Stage 2 of the complaint's procedure:

1. The complaint and subsequent outcomes and resolutions will be reviewed by two members of the SMT (the complainant will be given a choice) not previously involved in the complaint. They will respond in writing within 28 days, outlining their findings and recommendation to the complainant. This report should provide information about how the complainant may proceed to Stage 3 if they continue to remain unhappy with the outcome of their complaint.
2. Where it is not possible to complete the investigation within 28 working days, Stage 2 may be extended to a maximum of 65 working days. All extensions should be agreed by the Principal or Head Teacher if the complaint relates to a director. The complainant should be informed of the reasons for the delay and a date for completion in writing.

Formal Process Stage 3

If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the Stage 2 review they may follow the following Stage 3 procedures:

1. An appeal must be made in writing within 14 days of receiving the written report of the outcome of Stage 2 stating his or her reasons for this request. A child is encouraged to ask a staff member to help them write this if they wish to appeal or request an advocate.
2. The matter will be referred to the directors to review or if the complaint relates to anyone connected to the directors, an independent panel for consideration which will be convened within 30 working days of the request. The panel will consist of 3 independent persons who do not work (or have not worked for the last 3 years) for Blackford Education (Schools) Ltd, additionally, one panel member is independent of the management and running of the school.
3. The complainant is entitled to attend the meeting of the directors or panel and may be accompanied by a support person or advocate, who can be nominated to speak on the complainant's behalf. Within 14 working days of the conclusion of the review, the Directors or members of the panel must decide upon their findings and recommendations to the Principal or if the complaint relates to the Principal, who will ensure a written response detailing the findings and recommendations is supplied to the complainant within 14 working days of receiving the director's or panel's report.
4. The response should advise the complainant that they may refer the matter to Ofsted should they remain dissatisfied.
5. A copy of the findings and recommendations must be:
 - (i) provided to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about; and
 - (ii) available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and Principal.
6. A written record will be held of all complaints made, regardless of whether they are resolved following a formal procedure or proceed to a panel hearing, as well as details of the actions taken by the school as a result of any complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).
7. All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

Complaints made by members of the public

Complaints made by members of the public on their own right (e.g. neighbours of school) are managed as follows:

1. A summary of the complaint is taken either verbally or in writing from the complainant. If taken verbally a complaint form is written up by the staff member who has received the complaint.
2. The complaint is passed to the principal for investigating if the complaint relates to the school or staff
3. The complainant will be asked by the investigating staff how they would prefer the company to respond to their complaint, verbally or written response
4. The complaint should be dealt with as quickly as is possible and a remedy found to minimise any disruption to the school. Certainly, the complaint is to be investigated within 14 days.
5. A verbal or written response will be given to the complainant within 14 days
6. A record of the complaint should be kept in the appropriate complaints book in school.

Any complaints relating to the taxi services used to transport our children should be made directly to Devon Transport Team at the My Devon Customer Service Centre on [0345 155 1019](tel:03451551019). The Libra School cannot and will not take complaints about taxi use because we do not contract this service.

Monitoring and evidence

- Complaints book
- Complaint completed paperwork
- Council meeting minutes

Staff training and supervision

All staff are trained on how to manage a complaint from a child or a parent during their induction.

Responsibilities

The senior management team will:

- work in conjunction with the Directors to ensure all school staff, children and parents are aware of and comply with this policy.
- provide an environment that is safe, fun, stimulating and challenging to all children.
- promote an awareness of and respect for a diversity of cultures, values, beliefs and abilities.
- encourage parents to take an active role in policy development where appropriate.
- ensure all relevant risk assessments are in place to ensure a safe school environment.
- provide leadership and vision in respect of equality.
- provide guidance, support and training to all staff.
- consider providing remote learning to children in circumstances when in-person attendance is either not possible or contrary to government guidance in accordance with school risk assessments and safeguarding guidance. This might include occasions when:
 - we decide that it is not possible for the school to open safely, or that opening would contradict guidance from local or central government.
 - individual children, for a short period, are unable to physically attend school but are able to continue learning.
- monitor and evidence the effectiveness of this policy.

Teaching and learning support staff will:

- comply with all aspects of this policy.
- implement the school's equalities policy and schemes.
- report and deal with all incidents of discrimination.
- attend appropriate training sessions.
- report any concerns they have about any aspect of the school community.
- receive relevant training, periodically and ongoing as required, according to their role.
- have equal chances of training, career development and promotion.
- receive equal opportunities training on induction in order to improve their understanding of the Equality Act 2010 and its implications.

Children will:

- be aware of and contribute to all appropriate policies through the school council.
- work with and support the school council on all agenda items.
- strive to take pride in their work and work to the highest standard that they are capable of.
- listen carefully to all instructions given by the teacher, ask for further help if they do not understand and participate fully in all lessons.
- participate in discussions concerning progress and attainment.
- treat others, their work and equipment with respect.
- support the school Code of Conduct and guidance necessary to ensure the smooth running of the school.
- talk to others without shouting and or using physical aggression and will use language which is neither abusive nor offensive.
- hand in homework properly completed and on time.

- wear correct uniform.

Parents and Carers will be encouraged to:

- be aware of and comply with all school policies including this one.
- be encouraged to become involved in policy development by taking part in parent engagement opportunities and by maximising learning opportunities between home and school.
- Keep informed via termly newsletters of the children's curriculum.
- be encouraged to take an active role in the life of the school by attending parent-teacher consultations / Parent Open Days / fundraising and social events.
- ensure regular and punctual attendance of their child.
- notify school on the first day of child absence.
- have holidays out of term time and authorised by school.
- encourage effort and achievement.
- encourage completion of homework and return it to school on time.
- provide the right conditions for homework to take place.
- ensure correct school uniform is worn.
- support the school Code of Conduct and guidance necessary to ensure smooth running of the school.
- speak with children and staff respectfully and expect the same in return.

Linked Policies and documents:

Whistleblowing / staff handbook

Policy Location

This policy can be found:

- on SharePoint within the staff and master's folder
- on the school website www.libraschool.co.uk
- available upon request from the office: admin@libraschool.co.uk / 01598 740044

Lead Assessor: Abi Morgan



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