

New Horizons Seaside Primary Complaints Policy

(See Section 12 of the SEN Policy for complaints about SEN provision)

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Next Review Date:	Sept 2026
Reviewed By:	Mr Lee Murley (Headteacher / Chief Executive Officer)

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1. Who can make a complaint?

1.1 At New Horizons Seaside Primary, we strive to provide a good education for all our children. The Chief Executive Officer and academy staff work very hard to build positive relationships with all parents, carers and guardians. However, the school is obliged to have procedures in place in case there are complaints by parents, carers or guardians.

1.2 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 Policy.

New Horizons Seaside Primary takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible. We aim to be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaint. We give careful consideration to all complaints, and deal with them as swiftly as possible. We aim to resolve any complaint through dialogue and mutual understanding. In all cases, we put the interests of the child above all else. We provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed, and then resolved.

1.3 We understand, however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns more formally. The following policy sets out the procedures that New Horizons Seaside Primary follows in such cases.

2. How to raise a concern or make a complaint

2.1 If a parent or carer is concerned about anything to do with the education that we are providing at New Horizons Seaside Primary, they should, in the first instance, raise the matter informally with their child's class teacher – due to the current Covid procedures this should be in an email to office@seaside.w-sussex.sch.uk marked FAO the class teacher in the header. In our experience, most matters of concern can be resolved positively in this way. All teachers work very hard to ensure that each child is happy at school, and is making good progress; they naturally want to know if there is a problem, so that they can take action before it seriously affects the child's progress.

Class teachers will respond to all emails within 2 working days – either by email or with a telephone call.

2.2 Where parents or carers feel that a situation has not been resolved through contact with the class teacher, or that their concern is of a sufficiently serious nature, they should make an appointment to discuss it informally with the Chief Executive Officer – due to current Covid procedures this should be in an email to office@seaside.w-sussex.sch.uk marked FAO Mr Murley. The Chief Executive Officer considers any such complaint very seriously, and investigates each case thoroughly or assigns a member of SLT to investigate on his or her behalf while still taking full responsibility for any decisions taken. Most complaints are normally resolved by this stage.

Mr Murley will respond to all emails within 2 working days – either by email or with a telephone call and will investigate the concern raised within a further 2 working days after contact has been made with the complainant.

- 2.3 Should any parents have a complaint about the Chief Executive Officer, this should be put in writing and be addressed to:

Ms S. Main (Chair of the Local Governing Body)
c/o New Horizons Seaside Primary
Freshbrook Road
Lancing
West Sussex
BN15 8DL
or email secretary@nhat.co.uk
Please mark as 'Private and Confidential'.

- 2.4 Complaints about the Chair of the Local Governing Body, any individual Local Governor or the whole Local Governing Body should be addressed to:

Mr S Wood
Chair of Trustees
c/o New Horizons Seaside Primary
Freshbrook Road
Lancing
West Sussex
BN15 8DL
or email secretary@nhat.co.uk
Please mark as 'Private and Confidential'

- 2.5 In both the above cases, the complainant will receive a response from the relevant party within two working days.
- 2.6 In accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments, if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this Complaints Policy. For instance, providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations. Please contact Mrs E Christie, Trust Secretary, via email: secretary@nhat.co.uk. if you would like to request reasonable adjustments.
- 2.7 **Anonymous complaints:** We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the appropriate recipient will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

3. Time scales

- 3.1 You must raise the complaint ideally **within ten working 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.

4. Complaints received outside of term time

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

5. Scope of this Complaint Policy

- 5.1 This Complaints Policy covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by the Academy. This policy does not cover complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below:

Exceptions	Who to Contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Matters likely to require a Child Protection investigation 	<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) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). West Sussex LADO: LADO@westsussex.gov.uk Tel: 0330 222 6450</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exclusion of children from school* 	<p>Further information about raising concerns about exclusions can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions.</p> <p><i>*Complaints about the application of the Behaviour Policy can be made through this Complaints Policy.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whistleblowing (for other regulatory or financial malpractice) 	<p>We have an internal Whistleblowing Policy for all our employees.</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: www.education.gov.uk/contactus.</p> <p>Volunteer staff who have concerns about our Academy should complain through the Academy's Complaints Procedure.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff grievances 	<p>Complaints from staff will be dealt with under New Horizons Seaside Primary's internal grievance procedures.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff conduct 	<p>Complaints about staff will be dealt with under New Horizons Seaside Primary'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"> Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use New Horizons Seaside Primary premises or facilities 	<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"> National Curriculum - content 	<p>Please contact the Department for Education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus.</p>

- 5.2 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.
- 5.3 If a complainant commences legal action against the Academy 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.

6. Resolving complaints

- 6.1 At each stage of the procedure, New Horizons Seaside Primary 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 NHSP policies in light of the complaint;
 - an apology.

7. Withdrawal of a complaint

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

8. Formal Complaints Procedures

- 8.1 Only if an informal complaint (as outlined in Section 2) fails to resolve the matter should a formal complaint be made to the Local Governing Body. This complaint must be made in writing, stating the nature of the complaint, and how the school has handled it so far. The parent / carer should send this written complaint to the Chair of the Local Governing Body:

Ms S. Main
c/o New Horizons Seaside Primary
Freshbrook Road
Lancing
BN15 8DL

Please ensure the complaint is in a sealed envelope marked Private and Confidential.

Alternatively, the complaint can be emailed to secretary@nhat.co.uk

- 8.2 The Trust Secretary (E Christie) will record the date the complaint was received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within two working days.
- 8.3 The Chair of the Local Governing Body must investigate or ask another Local Governor to fully investigate all formal written complaints within fifteen working days of receipt.
- 8.4 During the investigation, the investigator will:
- if necessary, interview those involved in making the complaint, allowing them to be accompanied if

they wish;

- 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.

8.5 At the conclusion of their investigation, a report will be written and the complainant will receive a formal written response within fifteen working days of the date of receipt of the complaint.

8.6 If the Investigator is unable to meet this deadline, s/he will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.

8.7 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 New Horizons Academy Trust will take to resolve the complaint.

8.8 The Chair of the Local Governing Body will advise the complainant, in writing, of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome.

8.9 If the formal complaint raised is about the Chief Executive Officer, the complaint must be made to:

Ms S. Main (Chair of the Local Governing Body)
c/o New Horizons Seaside Primary -
Freshbrook Road
Lancing
West Sussex
BN15 8DL
or email secretary@nhat.co.uk
Please mark as 'Private and Confidential'.

8.10 If the formal complaint raised is about the Chair of the Local Governing Body or the majority of the Local Governing Body, the complaint must be made to:

Mr S. Wood -
Chair of Trustees
c/o New Horizons Seaside Primary
Freshbrook Road
Lancing
West Sussex
BN15 8DL
or email secretary@nhat.co.uk
Please mark as 'Private and Confidential'

8.11 The complaint will then be considered by one of the Trustees of the New Horizons Academy Trust who has not been involved in the complaint before. At the conclusion of their investigation, the Trustee will provide a formal written response.

8.12 The Trust Secretary (Mrs E. Christie) or Chair of Trustees (Mr S. Wood) will record the date the complaint was received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within two working days.

At the conclusion of their investigation, a report will be written and the complainant will receive a formal written response within fifteen working days of the date of receipt of the complaint.

9. The Final Panel

- 9.1 This is the last stage of the complaints process. Within ten working days of receiving the formal written response from the Chair of the Local Governing Body following the investigation, **the complainant must state in writing that they remain unsatisfied with the outcome.**

This should be addressed to:

Ms S. Main
c/o New Horizons Seaside Primary
Freshbrook Road
Lancing
BN15 8DL

Please ensure the complaint is in a sealed envelope marked Private and Confidential.

Alternatively, the complaint can be emailed to secretary@nhat.co.uk

- 9.2 The Trust Secretary will record the date of the complainant's response to the outcome of the investigation process and acknowledge receipt of this in writing (either by letter or email) within two working days.
- 9.3 Any written statements from the complainant, stating that they remain unsatisfied with the outcome of the investigation, which are received outside of ten working days, will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

9.4 **Convening and constitution of the Panel:**

The Local Governing Body will convene a Complaints Panel which will comprise of the following:

- At least three school Local Governors with no prior direct involvement of the complaint. At least one of the Panel members must be independent of the management and running of New Horizons Seaside Primary and cannot be connected to New Horizons Academy Trust.
- Prior to the meeting, they will decide amongst themselves who will act as the Chair of the Complaints Panel. If there are fewer than two Local Governors from the Local Governing Body available, the Trust Secretary will source any additional independent Governors, in order to make up the Committee.

- 9.5 The complainant will be invited to attend the meeting, as will the New Horizons Seaside Primary representative; the complainant 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 Panel meeting. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate. For instance, if a New Horizons Seaside Primary 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.*

- 9.6 Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

9.7 At least 5 working days before the meeting, the Trust Secretary 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 New Horizons Seaside Primary 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 Panel at least 5 working days before the meeting.

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

9.9 The Panel will not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included.

9.10 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.

9.11 The Panel will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The Panel can:

- uphold the complaint, in whole or in part;
- dismiss the complaint, in whole or in part.

9.12 If the complaint is upheld, in whole or in part, the Panel will:

- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
- where appropriate, action taken by the school as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld) and recommended changes New Horizons Seaside Primary's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

9.13 The Chair of the Panel will provide the complainant and New Horizons Seaside Primary with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within five working days of the Panel meeting. In addition to this action the following will also take place:

- The panel to make findings and recommendations and stipulates that a copy of those findings and recommendations is, where relevant, the person complained about
- Available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the head teacher
- Provides for a written record to be kept of all complaints
- Whether they are resolved following a formal procedure, or proceed to a panel hearing

9.14 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 New Horizons Seaside Primary.

10. Next steps

- 10.1 If the complainant believes New Horizons Seaside Primary did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published Complaints Policy or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact the Department for Education after the Chair of the Panel has provided them with the explanation for their decision and the reasons for it, in writing.
- 10.2 The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by New Horizons Seaside Primary; they will consider whether the Academy has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint.
- 10.3 The complainant can refer their complaint to the Department for Education online at: 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

11. Dealing with vexatious, persistent or unreasonable concerns or complaints

- 11.1 Please refer to the relevant policy in the 'Statutory Information' section on New Horizons Seaside Primary website: NHSP Management of Serial and Unreasonable Complaints Policy.

12. Reporting and recording complaints

- 12.1 Once a formal complaint has been received, New Horizons Seaside Primary will record all issues consistently and accurately.
- 12.2 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.
- 12.3 The Local Governing Body will monitor the level of concerns and complaints and review the outcomes on a regular basis. Where possible, the complainant will not be identified.
- 12.4 The Local Governing Body monitor the complaints procedure, in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The Chief Executive Officer logs all complaints received by the school, and records how they were resolved. Local Governors examine this log on an annual basis.

* There was 1 formal complaint raised by parents in 2024 – 2025
- 12.5 Local Governors take into account any local or national decisions that affect the complaints process, and make any modifications necessary to this policy. This policy is made available to all parents, so that they can be properly informed about the complaints process.
- 12.6 This policy will be reviewed every two years, or before if necessary.