Staff Grievance Policy

THE HORIZON SCHOOL, HARTLEPOOL

IMPROVING LIFE CHANCES

Revised	-	September 2025
Signed	-	Executive Head of School
Signed	-	Chair of governors
Next review	-	September 2026

Statement of intent

The Horizon School works to develop good professional relationships between colleagues; however, we understand that sometimes concerns, problems or complaints may arise. Through maintaining open communication, we want our employees to feel able to raise any grievances so that appropriate and effective solutions can be put in place.

This policy should be used for work-related issues such as concerns over working environments or a colleague's behaviour. Grievances relating to discrimination are also covered within this policy.

By implementing and following the procedures in this policy, the school aims to:

- Provide a platform for grievances to be processed and handled fairly and consistently.
- Constructively resolve grievances in a way that avoids damaging professional relationships.
- Enable any employee to have their grievances heard and addressed.
- Encourage a harmonious working environment.

1.1 Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Employment Act 2002
- Data Protection Act 2018
- The UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- Equality Act 2010
- ACAS 'Code of practice on disciplinary and grievance procedures'
- The School Staffing (England) Regulations 2009

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Staff Code of Conduct
- Data Protection Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

1.2 Roles and responsibilities

The grievance panel will be responsible for:

- Determining the appropriate outcome of the grievance.

The chair of management committee will be responsible for:

- When the head of school is subject of the grievance, appointing an appropriate governor who has not been involved in the grievance to oversee the procedure at the formal stage.
- Where they are the investigating officer, receiving assistance from the LA's HR department.

The clerk to governors will be responsible for:

- Forming an appeal panel, where necessary.

The head of school will be responsible for:

- The day-to-day implementation of this policy.

- Handling/considering any formal grievances provided they are not the subject of the grievance. .
- Writing and delivering grievance outcome letters if they are part of the grievance panel.

Line managers will be responsible for:

- Monitoring the working environments of colleagues to identify any conflicts.
- Promoting positive working environments.
- Provided they are not the subject of the grievance, being the first point of contact for the staff member raising the grievance.
- Working with the investigation officer and head of school to investigate any grievances within their department.

The investigation officer will be responsible for:

- Investigating the facts of a grievance, as directed by the grievance officer, and head of school where applicable
- Remaining impartial whilst conducting their investigation
- Providing evidence at grievance meetings.
- Standing as a witness during any appeal hearings.

Employees will be responsible for:

- Raising grievances without unreasonable delay.
- Submitting formal grievances in writing to the grievance officer within **four months**, using the employee grievance form.
- Ensuring any grievances that they raise are truthful and fair.

1.3 When to raise a grievance

Grievances can be raised when employees have issues with the following (this list is not exhaustive):

- Terms and conditions of their employment
- Health and safety at the school
- Work relationships
- Bullying or harassment
- Working practices
- Work environment

- Organisational changes
- Discrimination

Staff will be made aware of the difference between this policy and the Whistleblowing Policy and will ensure that they report concerns and grievances appropriately.

This policy does not apply to:

- Personal disagreements between employees that are not connected with their duties within the school.
- Complaints about dismissal or disciplinary action. If the employee is dissatisfied with any disciplinary action, they should submit an appeal under the appropriate procedure.
- Restarting grievances that have since been closed unless the facts of the matter have changed. If there has been a change in facts, this policy should be followed.
- Pay gradings – these are addressed by the Teachers' Pay Policy and Support Staff Pay Policy.
- If the employee has difficulty at any stage of the grievance procedure because of a disability or because English is not the employee's first language, this will be discussed with the employee's line manager as soon as possible.

Written grievances will be placed on the employee's personnel file along with a record of any decisions taken and any notes or other documents compiled during the grievance process.

1.4 The grievance process

The school is committed to dealing with grievances fairly and objectively. Employees will be protected from discrimination or victimisation after raising a work-related grievance. All information processed during a grievance will be kept in accordance with the Data Protection Policy and Staff Confidentiality Policy.

Employees will have the right to be accompanied at a grievance meeting. The employee's companion will be either:

- A colleague; or
- A trade union official or accredited trade union representative who has been certified as being competent to attend such meetings.

Companions will not:

- Answer questions on the employee's behalf.
- Address the hearing if the employee does not want them to.
- Pose a conflict of interest to the grievance being raised.
- Prevent the employee from explaining their case.

1.4.1 Informal Stage

In the first instance, an employee will aim to resolve their grievance informally with their line manager. If the employee's concerns relate to their line manager, they should discuss the issue with the line manager's manager.

It may be necessary for the employee who has raised a grievance to attend a meeting to discuss the concerns in more detail; however, this will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

It is anticipated that a number of grievances will be resolved at this informal stage with no need to progress matters further; however, if the matter has not been resolved at the informal stage, it may then proceed to the formal stage of the procedure.

The purpose of the informal stage is to resolve the issue in an open, honest and positive manner, to avoid formal escalation.

1.4.2 Formal Stage

If it is not possible to resolve the matter informally, employees will set out their grievance in writing to their line manager, in accordance with the employee grievance form at Appendix A. If the subject of the grievance is their line manager, the employee will submit the written grievance to an alternative, preferably senior manager, or the head of school. The employee's written grievance, will include:

- A brief description of the events that lead to the grievance, including names and dates.
- An account of how the events made the employee feel.
- What actions the employee has taken to resolve the grievance.
- What outcomes the employee is hoping for.

Line managers will give employee grievance forms to the head of school. Employees will be advised to keep a copy of their employee grievance forms . Once the head of school receives the employee grievance form they will appoint a investigation officer. This will be an independent individual with no prior knowledge of the grievance. The head of school will also appoint a grievance panel. This panel will be separate from the investigating officer and will be chaired by an independent person who has no knowledge of the matter.

The investigating officer will determine which type of investigation is required on a case-by-case basis. The investigating officer may need to conduct a fact checking investigation before resolving the grievance. Fact checking investigations will be conducted in a professional, timely and non-intrusive manner. These investigations may involve interviews with line managers and email searches.

The investigating officer will invite the employee to a formal meeting within 10 working days after the grievance has been raised. At the meeting, the employee will be given the opportunity to explain their grievance to the panel and how they think it should be resolved.

Employees will have a statutory right to be accompanied by a companion at a grievance meeting. The companion must be a work colleague, trade union official or trade union representative who has been certified as being competent to at attend such a meeting. The

employee will be required to let the investigating officer know that they wish to be accompanied to the meeting. If the chosen companion is unable to attend the scheduled meeting, a suitable alternative date will be arranged no more than 5 working days after the date originally proposed. If the employee is persistently unable or unwilling to attend the meeting without good reason, the grievance officer will make a decision based on the evidence available.

The companion may address the hearing to put and sum up the employee's case, respond on behalf of the employee to any views expressed at the meeting and confer with the employee during the hearing. The companion will not be permitted to answer questions on the employee's behalf, address the hearing if the employee does not wish it, or prevent the employer from explaining their case.

The employee will be provided with an opportunity to explain their grievance and how they think it should be resolved. A suitable member of staff will take minutes during the formal stage meeting – these minutes will be kept confidential and safe, in line with the Data Protection Policy. An electronic copy of the minutes will be shared with the employee as soon as practicably possible.

1.5 Grievance outcomes

Once all the information has been presented, the grievance hearing will be adjourned, and the grievance panel will consider what the appropriate outcome should be.

The outcomes possible following a grievance are as follows:

- The grievance is upheld in full
- The grievance is rejected in full
- The grievance is partially upheld, e.g. there is validity to some of the grievance
- Mediation

A 'partially upheld' outcome will not be used as an outcome when a decision cannot be reached. Sometimes, mediation will be used as an outcome. This will involve all parties collaborating to find an acceptable outcome.

The chair of the grievance panel will write an outcome letter within five working days of the grievance meeting and provide a copy of this to the employee. The letter will include information on:

- The chosen outcome.
- The reasons for the decision.
- Any facts that the grievance officer has ascertained in coming to their decision.
- Any recommendations or agreed actions to take.
- The employee's right to appeal the decision.

Where appropriate, the grievance panel may hold a meeting to give the employee this information in person.

If it is necessary and appropriate to take disciplinary action, the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure will be invoked.

Where a grievance is raised by an employee during a disciplinary process, the disciplinary process may be temporarily suspended to deal with the grievance. Where the grievance and disciplinary cases are related, the grievance officer may deal with both issues concurrently.

1.6 Appeals

Where employees wish to appeal the outcome of a grievance, they are entitled to do so within 10 working days of receiving the outcome letter.

To raise an appeal, employees will complete the grievance appeal form located at Appendix B and explain why they are dissatisfied with the outcome – this form will be given to the clerk to governors. The clerk to governors will:

- Acknowledge receiving the form within five working days.
- Arrange an appeal meeting within 10 working days.

The head of school (or appointed governor if the head of school is the subject of the grievance) will appoint an appeal panel comprising three people who have not previously been involved in the case or any previous stage of the grievance procedure. The appeal panel will decide which person will be the chairperson and who will take notes – this process will be formally minuted by the clerk to governors. The appeal panel will review the paperwork and interview any relevant witnesses before making their decision.

The employee will:

- Be given the opportunity to explain their case at the meeting.
- Have the right to be accompanied to the meeting.
- Not introduce new grounds for raising their concern.

When the panel has heard all the information, including the rationale for the original judgement, they will make a decision on the outcome. The outcome decision will be provided to the employee in a written letter within five working days of the appeal meeting. The panel's decision will be final.

1.7 Malicious grievances

Disciplinary action may be taken against employees making malicious grievances. Bullying, harassment or victimisation will not be tolerated.

All employees will be made aware of the school's Staff Code of Conduct and act in accordance with it. All employees will adhere to the Staff Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

1.8 Monitoring and review

The head of school and governing board will review this policy on an annual basis. The next scheduled review date for this policy is September 2026

Any changes made to this policy will be communicated to all employees immediately.

1. Appendix A: Employee grievance form

Employees who wish to raise a formal grievance are required to complete this form and submit it to their line managers. If employees wish to raise a formal grievance immediately, they should give this form to the head of school.

Please note: grievances should be raised within **four months** of the incident that led to the grievance.

This form is for formal grievances only. Please also provide a letter outlining:

- A brief description of the events that led to the grievance, including names and dates.
- An account of how the events made you feel.
- What actions you have taken to resolve the grievance.
- What outcomes you are hoping for.

Employee details			
Name			
Job title		**Form completion date**	
Grievance details			
Does your grievance relate to another member of staff?	Yes ☐	No ☐	
If the grievance relates to your line manager, give this form to the head of school.			
If the grievance related to the head of school, give this form to the **chair of governors**.			
Date of last incident relevant to grievance:			
Please provide details of the grievance:			
Please detail any individuals involved:			
Please provide details of your preferred solution:			
Are you being supported by a colleague, trade union official or trade union representative?	Yes ☐	No ☐	

If yes, please provide their name:	
Employee’s signature	

2. Appendix B: Grievance appeal form

Please submit this form to the clerk to governors within **10** working days of receiving the grievance outcome letter.

Employee details			
Name			
Job title		**Form completion date**	
Grievance appeal details			
Date of grievance meeting:			
Outcome of grievance meeting:			
Please provide details of the grievance appeal:			
Please provide details of your preferred solution:			
Are you being supported by a colleague, trade union official or trade union representative?		Yes ☐	No ☐
If yes, please provide their name:			
Employee's signature			