



# COMPLAINTS POLICY.

## 1. Summary

HFL Education is committed to providing high quality service and working in an open and accountable way. This policy outlines our approach to responding to complaints about our service.

## 2. Our aims

- Complaints will be dealt with honestly, politely and in confidence.
- Complaints will be looked into thoroughly and fairly with every effort made to resolve the issue(s) raised.
- Complaints will be dealt with in a timely way. Timescales for dealing with complaints are specified in section 7 below.
- Where appropriate, updates on the progression of a complaint will be given.
- We will learn from mistakes and aim to improve our service.
- Our Complaints Policy and Procedures will be regularly reviewed.

## 3. Introduction

This policy sets out our key principles and accountabilities in relation to receiving and responding to a formal complaint from customers, members of the public and partner organisations.

In the event of a complaint about our service being directed to Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), the complaint will be acknowledged with a response to the effect that the matter has been passed to us for a response. Our timescale for responding (see section 7) will start from the date we receive the complaint.

#### 4. Scope

This policy applies exclusively to organisations or individuals who directly commission and receive services from HFL Education . It sets out the process for managing and responding to complaints about those services.

This policy does not cover:

- actions undertaken by HFL Education on behalf of Hertfordshire County Council, which are subject to Hertfordshire County Council's complaints procedures
- complaints from parents, members of the community or other third parties regarding actions or decisions taken by schools, trusts or settings, including where those actions or decisions have been informed by advice or guidance from HFL Education; responsibility for such decisions rests with the commissioning organisation, and the relevant organisation's complaints procedure applies
- complaints from governors, former governors, employees or former employees of schools, trusts or settings relating to actions taken by their employer, including where those actions have been informed by advice or guidance from HFL Education. Responsibility for such decisions rests with the commissioning organisation, and the relevant organisation's complaints procedure applies
- any complaint from a third party who does not hold a direct contractual or service relationship with HFL Education, including where that individual has had contact with, provided information to, or otherwise engaged with HFL Education as part of work commissioned by another organisation.

For clarity, participation in, or contact with, HFL Education as part of services commissioned by another organisation does not constitute receipt of services for the purposes of this policy.

#### 5. Policy

A complaint is defined as any expression of dissatisfaction about a service, product or an employee. Complaints require a formal written response and therefore differs from feedback or constructive comments that are often resolved informally. Feedback or constructive comments can be provided to the Customer Service team by emailing [info@hfleducation.org](mailto:info@hfleducation.org) or telephoning 01438 544464 (option 6). Where there is ambiguity, our team are trained to check whether the person giving the feedback wishes to make a formal complaint.

We recognise that there may be occasions when a customer is dissatisfied with the service they have received from us. In these circumstances, the person or organisation concerned will be made aware of our Complaints Policy & Procedure.

We place great emphasis on responding to and resolving any complaint thoroughly and courteously. Therefore, when a complaint has been made, the complainant can expect the issue to be fully investigated and to be informed of the outcome.

In some cases an individual may wish to complain on behalf of someone else. In these circumstances, we will need the person's agreement that the third party is authorised to act on their behalf.

Please note we do not respond to or investigate anonymous complaints unless exceptional circumstances apply, such as where the safety of a child or vulnerable adult may be compromised.

All personal information or records relating to complaints will be treated in confidence and in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018. Information will only be disclosed to those who need to know, so they can investigate and respond to the complaint.

A copy of this policy will be made available on our website and where applicable, referenced elsewhere.

Making a complaint will not compromise the provision of any future services or support.

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) will report on complaints and how they were dealt with to the Board of Directors as part of the CEO Report, which is presented at each Board meeting.

## **6. Procedure for submitting a complaint**

Any individual or organisation wishing to make a formal complaint about our service or an individual member of our staff can do so by completing the complaints form found on the HFL Education website ([www.hfleducation.org](http://www.hfleducation.org)).

Complaints may also be submitted by email to: [complaints@hfleducation.org](mailto:complaints@hfleducation.org) or by post to: Customer Service Team, HFL Education Ltd, Bank House, Ground Floor, North Wing, Primett Road, Stevenage, Hertfordshire, SG1 3EE. Alternatively, the Customer Service team can be contacted via telephone by calling 01438 544464 (option 6).

When making a complaint, it is important to set out the facts and to be specific about the desired outcome and any remedial action you think is required.

If a complaint is made via telephone, the team will complete a complaints form with you whilst on the call to ensure we have all of the appropriate details needed to investigate the complaint thoroughly.

## 7. Procedure for response

Once a formal complaint has been received, it will be assigned to a Complaints Manager. They will investigate thoroughly and as part of this process, the complainant may be contacted to discuss the issue further. As part of the investigation, the Complaints Manager may also contact anyone else who has relevant information.

We aim to resolve the complaint within 20 working days. If we are unable to resolve matters within this timescale, we will contact you to explain why and advise when you can expect a resolution.

The formal complaint response will be sent out by email or letter using the contact details provided when the complaint was submitted.

## 8. Appeals

If an individual is not satisfied with the outcome they have a right to appeal to the CEO. The CEO will review the response provided and may conduct further enquiries in order to provide a final written response. We aim to respond to appeals within 20 working days of receipt.

