

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

Document Details	
Policy author	Trust HR Manager
Authorised By	Trust Board
Effective from	May 1st 2026
Date of Approval	25th March 2026 (pending consultation)
Date for Review	Every two years

UPDATES FOLLOWING CONSULTATION WITH STAFF BETWEEN 14 April to 30 April 2026

1	Introduction	Update to reflect Trust commitment to resolving grievances fairly and without delay
2.1	Scope of the procedure	Policies to refer to added
4.2	Raising a grievance	Added references to the use of AI and ensuring accuracy when raising grievances and
4.6	Supporting Colleagues and Sickness Absence during grievance	Guidance added
	Investigation report, communicating outcome and confidentiality	Renumbered to 4.7 to 4.9
Appendix B	Informal grievance	Definition of a general concern and an informal grievance

INDEX

1. Introduction 3
2. Scope of the procedure 3
3. The Procedure – Quick Summary for employee (Linked to full procedure sections) 4
4. The Procedure – Full version 5
5. Appeal Stage 9
6. Withdrawal or Resignation 9
7. Record Keeping 9
Appendix A – resolving grievances personally 10
Appendix B – Manager's guide to handling grievances 12
Appendix C – Investigator's guide to handling grievances/terms of reference 16
Appendix D – Grievance Form (GR1) 20

1. Introduction

The purpose of the grievance procedure is to encourage good working relations across the Trust by

- Encouraging the settlement of grievances informally
- Ensuring grievances are resolved fairly
- Ensuring grievances are resolved efficiently

This procedure sets out how grievances raised by staff in relation to their employment or working relationships will be addressed. It aims to resolve concerns as quickly as possible and at the earliest appropriate stage.

The Trust is committed to resolving grievances fairly and without unnecessary delay, recognising the impact that unresolved concerns can have on employees' wellbeing, working relationships and attendance.

2. Scope of the procedure

2.1 To whom it applies

This procedure applies to all Trust employees.

It does not cover:

- Pay grievances (Such as income tax, application of pension – as these are outside the responsibility or control of the Trust as an employer)
- Redundancy appeals (refer to the Redundancy and Restructuring Procedure)
- Whistleblowing (refer to the Whistleblowing policy)
- Serious malpractice (refer to the Whistleblowing policy)
- Complaints by job applicants or ex-employees (refer to Complaints Procedure)

3. The Procedure – Quick Summary for employee (Linked to full procedure sections)

3.1. Try to resolve things informally first

If you have a concern about your work or about someone you work with, try to sort it out informally (**see section 4.1.2**).

You can:

- speak directly to the person involved, or
- ask your line manager to help facilitate a conversation

3.2. If informal steps don't work, raise a formal grievance

If the issue is serious or informal steps haven't resolved it, you can raise a formal grievance (**see section 4.2**).

A formal grievance must:

- be put in writing, and
- be sent to the correct manager identified in **section 4.1.1**

3.3. You will receive an acknowledgement

The manager will acknowledge your grievance and advise the next steps including whether an investigator has been appointed or whether they will be conducting the investigation.

3.4. You'll be invited to a grievance meeting

A manager or appointed investigator will invite you to a meeting—normally to be held within 10 working days—to understand the grievance (**see section 4.3**).

You may be accompanied by a trade union representative or workplace colleague (**section 4.3**).

3.5. An investigation may take place

If more information is needed, the investigator will carry out an investigation (**see section 4.4**).

This may include:

- speaking to you, the person complained about, and any witnesses
- reviewing documents or evidence
- arranging follow-up meetings (**section 4.4**)

A joint meeting may also be arranged if all parties agree (**section 4.5)**

3.6. An Investigation report is prepared

The investigator will write a report with findings and recommendations (**see section 4.6**) and present this to the senior manager (4.1.1). You will receive a copy of the report.

3.7 You will be invited to a grievance hearing

The senior manager (4.1.1) will invite you to a meeting - to listen to your grievance, your desired outcomes and give you the opportunity to comment on findings.

You may be accompanied by a trade union representative or workplace colleague (**section 4.3**).

3.8 You will receive an outcome letter

Following the meeting, the senior manager (as identified in **section 4.1.1**) will issue the final outcome letter and confirm next steps along with details of your right to appeal.

4. The Procedure – Full version

4.1 Raising a grievance

It is recognised that there may be occasions when members of staff feel the necessity to express dissatisfaction with aspects of their employment or a perceived injustice.

4.1.1 If the issue cannot be resolved informally, the employee may raise a grievance either verbally or in writing. **A formal grievance must be put in writing.**

Grievances should be raised with:

- **The employee's line manager** – for informal concerns.
- **The Headteacher/Head of School** – if the grievance is about a colleague, who is not SLT.
- **The CFOO** – if the grievance is about a Member of SLT including Headteacher/Head of School/College.
- **Director of Governance and Compliance** (governance@hopelearningcommunity.org.uk) – if the grievance is about a colleague not based in a school. They will then appoint a relevant senior manager.

The person the grievance is about will be informed as soon as is appropriate.

4.1.2 Informal resolution

Employees are encouraged to resolve concerns informally wherever possible. This may involve:

- Speaking directly with the person involved, or
- Asking a manager (4.1.1) to help facilitate a conversation
- Managers should identify whether a matter is a general concern or an informal grievance (see Appendix B) and respond proportionately.

  Managers will explore early solutions and confirm outcomes in writing. If the issue cannot be resolved informally, the formal process may begin.

4.1.3 All concerns will be taken seriously

Regardless of how a concern is raised—informally or formally—it will be treated seriously, sensitively, and fairly.

Further guidance can be found in **Appendix A**

4.2 Raising a Formal Grievance

If informal steps don't resolve the issue or the matter is serious, staff may raise a grievance formally.

A formal grievance must be **put in writing** (Form GR1 may be used). and should:

- Clearly state it is a grievance
- Explain genuine concerns and key facts. Stick to the core issues.
- Include any evidence available
- State the outcome being sought

- Employees remain responsible for the accuracy of the information submitted in a grievance.
- Employees should be mindful that adding sensitive or personal data to an AI tool may breach their data protection and confidentiality obligations

The grievance should be sent to the manager indicated in 4.1.1

4.3 Acknowledgement of grievance

You will receive an acknowledgement

Once your grievance has been submitted, the manager named in section 4.1.1 will acknowledge receipt.
They will explain the next steps, including:

- whether an investigator has been appointed, or
- whether they will be conducting the investigation themselves, and
- when you can expect to hear further updates.

4.4 Formal Grievance Meeting

The manager indicated in 4.1.1, or a the person they have appointed as a grievance investigator, will invite the employee to a meeting, normally within **10 working days**.

The purpose of the meeting is to:

- understand your concerns in more detail,
- find out what outcome you are seeking
- explore possible solutions
- identify whether further investigation is required.

The employee has the right to be accompanied by:

- A trade union representative
- An official employed by a union
- A workplace colleague

4.5 Investigation stage

If a solution cannot be reached and further investigation is required. The investigator will gather information needed to reach a fair decision. This may include:

- speaking to you again if anything needs clarifying
- speaking to the person your grievance is about
- interviewing any relevant witnesses
- reviewing any documents, emails or evidence

- holding follow-up meetings if needed
- If appropriate — and only if everyone agrees — a joint meeting may be arranged to explore resolution

All parties may request to be accompanied where reasonable.

The aim of the investigation is to understand the facts fairly and thoroughly.

4.6 **Supporting Colleagues and Sickness absence during the grievance process**

The Trust recognises that involvement in a formal grievance process can be stressful. Managers must consider appropriate supportive measures on a case-by-case basis.

These may include:

- Adjustments to duties or responsibilities
- Temporary changes to reporting lines
- Altered working arrangements (e.g. different workspace, staggered hours)
- Avoidance of direct contact between parties where appropriate
- Access to wellbeing support (EAP, Mental Health First Aiders, Occupational Health)

Any measures implemented should:

- Be proportionate and reviewed regularly
- Not disadvantage any party unfairly
- Be clearly communicated and recorded

HR advice should be sought where adjustments are complex or sensitive.

Where an employee involved in a grievance process is absent due to sickness, whether this is the employee raising the grievance or the person the grievance is about, the approach will be considered on a case-by-case basis, taking into account medical advice, the ability to participate, and the nature of the grievance.

The Trust will take a balanced approach and may pause the process for a reasonable period or continue with appropriate adjustments (e.g. written or remote participation).

The Trust will aim to resolve grievances as promptly as reasonably possible, recognising that unresolved issues may impact employees' wellbeing and ability to attend work.

Any delay will be proportionate, regularly reviewed, and clearly communicated.

4.7 **Investigation report**

When the investigation is finished, the investigator will prepare a written report (see section 4.6). This report will:

- summarise the information gathered,
- explain the findings, and
- make recommendations.

The report is then shared with the senior manager responsible for making the decision (section 4.1.1). **You will receive a copy of the report before your grievance hearing.**

4.7.1 Recommendations - which may include.

- Formal apology
- Mediation
- Training or support
- Occupational Health referral
- Adjustments to working arrangements
- Redeployment
- Disciplinary action where appropriate

4.8 Communicating the outcome

4.8.1 Disciplinary hearing meeting

The senior manager (4.1.1) will invite you to a meeting where they will:

- listen to your grievance in full,
- discuss the findings of the investigation,
- hear what outcomes you are seeking, and
- give you a chance to respond to the report.

You may bring a trade union representative or workplace colleague with you (see section 4.3).

This meeting helps the senior manager make a fair and informed decision regarding the grievance and next steps

4.8.2 Outcome letter

After the hearing, the senior manager (4.1.1) will write to you with the final decision.
The outcome letter will explain:

- the decision and reasons
- any actions that will be taken
- what will happen next
- your right to appeal, including how to do so

This is the final stage of the grievance process unless you decide to appeal.

4.9 Confidentiality

The employee raising the grievance will not receive details of any actions taken against other staff.

The person the grievance is about will receive only the information relevant to them

5. Appeal Stage

5.1 If the employee disagrees with the outcome, they may wish to appeal. They must do so in writing to governance@hopelearningcommunity.org.uk within **10 working days** of receiving the outcome letter, stating their grounds for appeal.

5.2 The appeal will be heard by a panel not previously involved in the grievance. The employee will be given at least **5 working days' notice** of the Appeal Meeting in writing. Along with the written invitation the appellant will be sent a redacted version of the grievance report.

5.3 The employee may make verbal and written representations and has the right to be accompanied.

If however, the employee's chosen companion is not available, for a reason that was not reasonably unforeseeable, at the time proposed for any meeting or hearing, one alternative date will be set, normally no later than five working days from the original date.

5.4 The Appeal Panel will be provided with minutes of the formal meetings and the grievance investigation report and outcome letter.

5.5 Where the Appeal Panel deem that additional information is needed to enable them to make a decision, they may make further enquiries as necessary before making a decision. This may include talking to the grievance investigator.

5.6 The Chair of the Appeals Panel will advise the employee in writing of the outcome of the Appeal as soon as possible and in any event within 5 working days of the Appeal Hearing.

5.7 There is no further internal appeal after the Appeal Panel has reached and notified a decision.

6. Withdrawal or Resignation

6.1.1 If an employee withdraws their grievance, the reason will be recorded.

6.1.2 If raised during the notice period, it will still be handled under this procedure.

6.3 If raised after leaving employment, it will normally be handled under the Complaints Procedure

7. Record Keeping

7.1 Records will be kept securely in line with data protection requirements.

7.2 Any employee attending an informal or formal meeting will receive a copy of the minutes for meeting which they were part of.

Appendix A – resolving grievances personally

Feeling unsure about raising a concern

It's completely normal to feel uncertain or anxious about raising an issue. You may:

- Worry you've misunderstood what happened
- Not want to cause trouble
- Feel intimidated about speaking up
- Be unsure why something has made you uncomfortable

These feelings are valid — and you are not expected to deal with them alone.

Getting support

Talking to someone you trust can help you understand the situation more clearly. A supportive conversation can help you:

- clarify what happened and why it affected you
- understand whether the behaviour was appropriate
- build confidence to raise the issue
- decide what to do next

Avoid discussing the concern widely, as this may make the situation more difficult to resolve.

If the behaviour involves bullying or harassment, you must report it to your manager, or their manager if they are involved.

Wellbeing support available

We recognise that dealing with workplace concerns can be stressful. Support is available at any point:

- Speak to your line manager or contact the **Trust Mental Health & Wellbeing Lead** at *Wellbeing@hopelearningcommunity.org.uk*
- **Employee Assistance Programme (EAP):** free, confidential support available 24/7
- **Mental Health First Aiders:** trained staff who can listen and guide
- **Staff Wellbeing Champions** within your academy or service area

We encourage early conversations to ensure the right support is in place from the start.

If you feel able to speak to the other person

Many concerns can be resolved quickly if you talk directly to the person involved.
If you choose to do this:

- Stay calm and clear
- Explain which behaviour upset or concerned you
- Say that you want the behaviour to stop
- If you prefer, you can put your concerns in writing and keep a copy

Issues should be addressed as soon as possible and not left to build up.

If you are a witness

If you witnessed behaviour that concerns you:

- Use your judgement about whether you should raise it directly with the person
- If unsure, speak to your line manager first
- If appropriate, calmly explain what you saw and why it concerns you
- If you know the person affected and it feels appropriate, you may encourage them to seek support or follow this procedure

---

Keeping records

It is helpful to keep brief notes of:

- What happened and how it affected you
- Dates, times, and locations
- Names of any witnesses
- Any conversations you have about the issue
- Any written communication you send or receive

These notes can be useful if the matter cannot be resolved informally and needs to be raised formally.

Appendix B – Manager's guide to handling grievances

You are responsible for ensuring the grievance process is:

- Fair, timely and impartial
- Respectful and confidential
- Managed in line with the Grievance Procedure
- Properly recorded, with all decisions explained and evidenced

Depending on the situation (as set out in 4.1.1) you may:

- Manage the informal stage yourself, or
- Oversee the formal process, including
- conducting the investigation yourself, or
- appointing/receiving work from an independent investigator

You must also ensure that If the grievance is about you, it is immediately escalated to the next appropriate level in the hierarchy.

You must apply consistent judgement when determining whether matters should be addressed as a general concern, informal grievance, or formal grievance.

2. Informal Stage (Line Manager) What You Must Do

General concern vs informal grievance

- A general concern is a routine workplace issue, query, or low-level tension raised for discussion, clarification, or awareness. It does not involve a stated dissatisfaction requiring formal resolution.
- An informal grievance arises where an employee clearly expresses dissatisfaction about a workplace matter and indicates they are seeking a resolution, but the matter is being addressed without invoking the formal grievance procedure.

Indicators an issue has moved from a general concern to an informal grievance include:

- The employee describes the situation as unfair, inappropriate, or unacceptable
- The issue is ongoing, repeated, or unresolved after initial discussion
- The employee requests specific action or outcome
- The employee indicates it is impacting their wellbeing or ability to work

Managers should use professional judgement and seek HR advice where needed to ensure consistency.

Step 1: Acknowledge the concern promptly

- Thank the employee for coming forward
- Reassure them the concern will be treated seriously and sensitively
- Encourage open discussion and aim for early resolution

Step 2: Meet with the employee

Hold an informal meeting and take notes to:

- Understand the concern clearly
- Explore how the issue is affecting them
- Ask for factual examples, dates, and any evidence
- Discuss any steps already taken to resolve it

Step 3: Explore solutions

Reasonable informal actions may include:

- Speaking discreetly with others involved
- Facilitating a mediated conversation
- Agreeing adjustments, boundaries, or expectations
- Encouraging improved communication

Your goal: early, practical, and mutually acceptable resolution.

Step 4: Confirm the informal outcome

- Issue a brief written summary of what was discussed and agreed
- Inform the employee they may proceed to the formal stage if the issue remains unresolved

---

1. Formal Stage (Senior Manager as Defined in 4.1.1)

What You Must Do

Step 1: Receive the formal grievance

A formal grievance must be in writing and should include:

- A clear statement that it is a grievance
- Factual details (events, dates, evidence)
- The outcome the employee is seeking

If the grievance is about you, escalate immediately.

Step 2: Decide if you will be investigating the grievance or if you will appoint an investigator

You may carry out the investigation if all of the following are true:

- You were not involved in the informal stage
- You are not mentioned in the grievance and have no conflict of interest
- You are at the right level of seniority
- You can remain impartial
- You have the time and skills to investigate properly

If these conditions are met, investigating yourself may provide a quicker resolution.

You must appoint someone else if:

- You were involved informally
- The grievance is about you
- You are a witness or have a personal connection
- The matter is complex or sensitive
- You lack the time or expertise
- The person involved is at or above your level

This ensures fairness and avoids any perception of bias.

The investigator should be:

- Independent
- Impartial
- Appropriately senior
- Not previously involved

Suitable options include:

- A senior leader from another school
- A central HR/Trust manager
- A trained internal investigator
- An external investigator (for complex or high-risk cases)

Avoid appointing anyone with personal involvement or conflicting relationships.

Support the investigator to access relevant staff, documents, emails, and evidence

The investigator will provide you with a written investigation report including findings and recommendations.

Step 3: Acknowledge the concern promptly

- Thank the employee for coming forward
- Reassure them the concern will be treated seriously and sensitively
- Advise them if you are investigating or have appointed an investigator
- Advise them of next steps

Step 4: Arrange the formal grievance hearing

- Once you have received the investigators report, Invite the employee to a meeting (normally within 10 working days)
- Provide the employee with a copy of the report (but not the recommendations)
- Re-review their written grievance before the meeting

Step 5: Conduct the grievance hearing

You must:

- Explain the purpose of the meeting
- Allow the employee to explain their concerns without interruption
- Ask the employee what their desired outcome of the grievance would be
- Review the investigators report and share findings with the employee

Step 6: Decide the outcome

Using the investigation report, recommendations and information gathered from the formal meeting, decide whether the grievance is:

- Upheld
- Partly upheld
- Not upheld

Identify appropriate actions, which may include:

- Mediation
- Training or coaching
- Changes or adjustments to working arrangements
- Management action plans
- Referral to other procedures (e.g., disciplinary) where appropriate

Step 7: Communicate the outcome

Provide a written outcome letter confirming:

- The decision (upheld/partly/not upheld)
- Your reasons for the decision
- Any actions to be taken
- What will happen next
- The employee's right to appeal within 10 working days

Maintain strict confidentiality.
You must not disclose actions taken against other employees.

Key Principles for Managers

- Be neutral, fair, and consistent
- Act promptly — delays can escalate conflict
- Base decisions on facts and evidence, not assumptions
- Maintain confidentiality throughout
- Seek HR advice whenever needed
- Focus on resolution and restoring working relationships

Appendix C – Investigator's guide to handling grievances/terms of reference

Your role is to carry out a fair, thorough and impartial factfinding investigation to help the organisation reach a reasonable and evidence based outcome. An investigation is not a disciplinary process and should not make assumptions about anyone involved.

1. Purpose of an Investigation

An investigation must:

- Gather evidence from all sides
- Establish the facts
- Determine whether there is a case to answer
- Ensure the process is fair

Your role is to find out what happened, not to decide on sanctions.

2. Core Principles for Investigators

Your investigation must be:

Impartial - You must have no involvement in the issue and no conflict of interest.

Evidence-based - Your conclusions must rely on documents, witness accounts, and factual findings.

Confidential - You must treat all information sensitively and only share on a need-to-know basis.

Prompt - Investigations should be completed as quickly as reasonably possible to avoid unfairness.

2. What You Must Do as the Investigator

Step 1

- Meet with the employee who has raised the grievance
- Establish the facts relating to the allegations made in the grievance
- Identify evidence to gather (emails, documents, messages)
- List witnesses
- Create a structured plan

This ensures consistency and clear coverage of all issues.

Step 2: Gather Evidence

This may include:

- Interviewing the person the grievance is about
- Interviewing witnesses
- Reviewing documents, emails and policies

For each interview:

- Explain your role and the purpose
- Ask open, neutral questions
- Clarify dates, timelines, and sources of evidence
- Record notes accurately

Witnesses should be treated fairly and interviewed without leading questions.

Step 3: Maintain Accurate Records

You must keep:

- Notes of all interviews – copies should be sent to those who were interviewed to approve
- Copies of evidence reviewed
- A clear audit trail of investigative steps

This supports transparency and fairness.

Step 4: Analyse the Evidence

ACAS guidance emphasises that investigators must:

- Review evidence objectively
- Avoid assumptions or opinions
- Consider inconsistencies
- Check whether evidence is fact or interpretation

Your analysis should show that you have weighed all information fairly.

3. Prepare an Investigation Report

Your report must be **clear, structured and factual**. It should normally include:

a. Introduction

- Your name and role
- Date you were appointed
- Terms of reference (The matters to be investigated as set out in the written grievance)

b. Background

- Summary of the grievance raised
- Key dates
- Relevant policies

c. Methodology

- Explain how the investigation was authorised
- Who you interviewed and when
- Evidence sources reviewed/collected
- Any limitations (e.g., unavailable witnesses/evidence)
- Details of any anonymised statements and reasons why

d. Summary of Evidence

Present each allegation in turn:

- The employee's account
- The other party's account
- Witness evidence (summarised)
- Documents reviewed

Avoid opinions. Use objective language.

e. Findings of Fact

State what you found **on the balance of probabilities**, for each point.
This section should answer the questions in your terms of reference.

f. Mitigating Factors

Detail if there were any mitigating factors uncovered that are relevant to the investigation

g. Conclusions

Summarise:

- The facts established
- Issues that remain unclear
- Whether the grievance is supported by the evidence

h. Appendices

Include

- Copies of evidence
- Interview notes or signed witness statements
- Timeline
- Policies referenced

i. Final Checks Before Submitting the Report

Ensure the report is:

- Clear, factual and neutral
- Organised logically
- Free from assumptions or personal opinions
- Evidence-based and referenced
- Complete and signed/dated
- Mindful that it will be read by the employee raising the grievance and the employee the grievance is raised against.

4. Recommendations – Report for manager in 4.1.1 only

Produce a separate summary report for the manager giving recommendations as to whether the grievance should be upheld, not upheld or partially upheld and any further recommendations based on the findings, such as:

- Mediation
- Training or supervision
- Review of working practices
- Referrals to other procedures (e.g., disciplinary)

Do **not** suggest disciplinary outcomes.

The manager will use this along with the report and information from the grievance hearing as guidance for reaching an outcome.

Your Professional Responsibilities

- Treat all parties fairly
- Protect confidentiality
- Maintain professionalism throughout
- Seek HR advice when needed

Appendix D – Grievance Form (GR1)

(To be completed by aggrieved employee)

If your grievance has not been resolved, through informal means, you may move to the Formal stage by setting out your grievance in writing to your line manager or another manager/nominated Trustee.

N.B. If the grievance is against the Headteacher, this form should be sent to the CEO or Chair of Trustees via governance@hopelearningcommunity.org.uk. If the grievance is against the CEO, this form should be sent to the Chair of Trustees via governance@hopelearningcommunity.org.uk

All personal data will be collected, processed, held and retained in accordance with the data protection policy and retention schedule.

A. THE GRIEVANCE

Your name	
Your position	
Date	

B. PLEASE STATE NATURE OF THE GRIEVANCE

- be clear about what you are raising as a grievance
- provide **concise** and **factual** information about the nature of your grievance
- where possible evidence should be presented
- avoid language which may be considered insulting, abusive, emotional or provocative

C. What attempts have you made to resolve this informally and why have they been unsuccessful?

D. What resolution are you seeking?

Any resolution should be realistic and appropriate.

E. I agree that the above accurately reflects my grievance.

Signed	