



**Federation of
Westminster Special Schools
& Bi-Borough Inclusion Service**

GRIEVANCE POLICY

Agreed by Full Governing Board: February 2026

To be reviewed: February 2027

Introduction

The contents of this policy are drawn from the Westminster City Council document dated February 2024 which has been adapted to relate to the staffing arrangements at the Federation of Westminster Special Schools. It will be reviewed and updated by Governors annually or earlier if the Council updates their policy.

This policy refers to several different forms or guidance notes. These are listed at the end of this document and are available on the Federation Sharepoint drive.

Summary

The Federation recognises that a healthy working environment and good working relationships have a positive impact on employee well-being and employee engagement. There is no real substitute for good day-to-day relationships for the solution of work related problems.

The Federation believes that all employees should be treated fairly and with respect, and will not tolerate any form of discrimination, bullying, harassment or victimisation. This policy applies to Teaching Staff and all support staff.

This policy provides a framework to settle grievances and to stop any behaviour that is causing offence or distress to employees quickly, fairly, confidentially and sensitively. It also outlines ways to resolve such grievances as early as possible, recognising that this is best for everyone involved.

Principles

The Federation recognises that going through a formal procedure can be a stressful and upsetting experience for all parties involved. Everyone involved in the process is entitled to be treated with dignity and respect.

- All employees involved in the grievance process must maintain confidentiality.
- This policy covers all Westminster City Council employees at the Federation. (Any Kensington & Chelsea employees at the Bi-Borough Inclusion Service should follow the policy of that Authority)
- Employees can be accompanied by a colleague or trade union official at all stages of this process.
- Employees should raise a grievance within 3 months of the 'incident' having happened.
- Grievances submitted will be assumed to have been made in good faith. In the event of spurious or malicious complaints/allegations being made by employees, such employees may be subject to disciplinary action.

- All meetings under this policy may take place in an agile way. If a meeting is to take place virtually then please refer to Westminster City Council “Virtual Meetings” Guidance Note
- Employees are advised to speak to their line manager, Headteacher/Head of BIS, trade union representative, HR advisor or the council’s confidential Employee Assistance Programme if they need further support.

Scope

What can be raised as a formal grievance?

A formal grievance can be raised by an employee if they are concerned about the way in which they have been treated by Federation managers, or colleagues acting on their behalf, and have been unable to resolve this informally.

Grievances may be concerned with a wide range of issues, including the allocation of work, the working environment or conditions, the way in which an employee has been managed or discrimination, bullying, victimisation and harassment concerns.

The Federation will always respect an employee’s view as to whether they wish us to investigate matters which they have raised even when these matters are serious. However, it should be noted that at times the Federation will have no choice but to investigate and will manage this as sensitively as possible.

What will not be considered under this Policy?

If an employee has experienced discrimination, bullying, harassment or victimisation by members of the public or service users, the matter should be dealt with using the Federation Visitor Policy.

The following issues will not be considered under this procedure:- issues that

- Relate to a term or condition of employment or are about a term or condition of employment within the written particulars of employment (this does not affect statutory and contractual rights to raise a grievance about the application of terms and conditions)
- Relate to the grade of their post or their salary and remuneration where these have been clearly determined by the Federation and Council’s policies and guides
- Have been or are being dealt with under the Federation’s Disciplinary Code
- Are about any disciplinary action taken against an employee (this should be dealt with as an appeal under the Disciplinary Code)
- Are the subject of collective negotiation or consultation with recognised trade unions

- Are over 3 months old, (however employees may refer to earlier matters if they believe that they support the grievance)
- Are part of issues which have previously been investigated
- Are covered by statutory controls such as Income Tax, National Insurance and Pension Schemes
- Are covered by other national or local appeals procedures, such as
- Redundancy dismissals, termination of probationary period or the non renewal of fixed term contracts on their expiry

Informal Resolution

If an employee has concerns about aspects of work, they should attempt to resolve the matter informally with their line manager or their Headteacher/Head of BIS and/or through mediation. In the case of the Executive Headteacher, the line manager is the Chair of Governors. If these attempts are not successful, it may be appropriate to raise a formal grievance under this policy.

If an employee has a grievance about an issue relating to their employment they should first talk to their line manager on an informal basis. Employee and manager should discuss any concerns in confidence and, where possible, seek to resolve the matter quickly and fairly through normal management processes. The emphasis is to resolve the grievance at the earliest possible stage. If the concern relates to the employee's line manager, those concerns should be raised with the line manager's manager or Headteacher/Head of BIS.

Where the Chair of Governors becomes a member of the Governor Grievance Panel, they should stand down if they have previously been involved in the matter.

What should line - managers do when employees first raise issues of concern?

Managers must:

- Continue to treat all employees with dignity and respect and provide a working environment free from unlawful discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation
- Try and resolve problems and grievances through the normal day to day management processes or through mediation
- Make sure that if the employee is likely to experience difficulty with any aspect of this procedure on account of any disability that they have, or if they need assistance for another reason, appropriate arrangements and adjustments are made to accommodate this
- Deal with a grievance promptly, with no unreasonable delay to meetings, decisions or confirmation of the decisions.
- Act consistently

- Carry out necessary investigations to establish facts
- Ensure that where concerns are raised about another employee/manager that the person being complained about is made aware of/given a summary of these concerns and that all parties are offered an appropriate level of support.

What if the employee remains aggrieved after attempts at informal resolution or mediation?

Line Managers must:

- Make sure that where an employee wishes to make a formal grievance that this is in writing.
- Make sure they are familiar with this Policy and that all steps of the procedure, including all agreements made and notes of meetings are documented, and copies placed on the employee's file
- Advise the employee that they have the right to bring an appropriate companion to any meetings under the formal procedure. The chosen companion may be a Federation colleague or a trade union representative.
- Implement any actions/recommendations arising from the grievance and keep the employee informed of progress
- Ensure that the work environment is free from harassment, bullying, discrimination or victimisation.
- Consider disciplinary action where offensive behaviour does not stop
- Remind employees of the support available, e.g. [Employee Assistance Programme](#) . This applies equally to the employee raising the grievance/concerns and the employee that these concerns are about.
- If you require further assistance to deal with matters you should raise this within the management structure as soon as possible.

What should employees do?

Employees must

- Treat colleagues with dignity and respect and not bully, victimise, harass or discriminate against other employees
- Make every effort to resolve the problem or grievance with their manager, or through mediation, before starting the formal grievance procedure
- Submit a formal grievance in writing (using the grievance form [Grievance Form WCC.doc](#)) within 3 months of the issue or incident occurring and state their suggested remedies for resolving the situation, if they wish to raise a formal grievance
- Follow the stages of the formal procedure in sequence
- Make sure that their companion during the formal procedure does not act in a legal capacity.

What if the chosen companion is unavailable on the day scheduled for the meeting or appeal?

The employee or their companion should propose an alternative date that falls within five working days of the originally scheduled date. The new date will be considered by the manager and confirmed to the employee in writing.

Mediation


Mediation may be appropriate, depending on the nature of the grievance. Mediation will be used only where all parties involved in the grievance agree, and if either side does not wish to participate in mediation this will not be considered to be an indication of either blame or intent. It is envisaged that both parties involved in the grievance will be encouraged to consider using the mediation process as part of the informal stage of this policy.

How does Mediation work?

Mediation involves the appointment of an impartial, third-party mediator who will discuss the issues raised by an employee's grievance with all of those involved and seek to facilitate a resolution. The process is confidential and individual and joint sessions may be appropriate. Mediation allows an opportunity for both parties to explore the situation in a safe, confidential & impartial environment. Typically, mediation can last up to a day and will be attended by both parties, held in a neutral, private venue. The aim is that both parties will determine a mutually satisfactory outcome although there is no obligation to reach an agreement and the employee can revert to the formal process where no solution can be reached informally with the use of mediation. Further information on mediation can be found [here](#), or alternatively the Federation will facilitate independent mediation.

Stage 1: Formal Grievance

Employees must follow the steps below to raise a grievance formally if they are unable to resolve a problem or concern with their manager through normal management processes, or through mediation.

- Put their grievance in writing, using the Grievance Form ( [Grievance Form WCC.doc](#)) without unreasonable delay
- Set out clearly the nature of the formal grievance, what attempts have been made to resolve the matter informally, and indicate the outcome that they are seeking
- Sign and date the formal grievance and submit to their manager within 3 months of the issue or incident grievance about
- If the formal grievance is about their manager, consider whether to submit the grievance to the School Headteacher/Head of BIS

- Send a copy of the written grievance to the Federation’s HR Advisor.
- Ensure that they attend the formal grievance meeting at the specified time. If they are unable to attend because of circumstances beyond their control, employees should inform their line manager as soon as possible. If they fail to attend without explanation, or if it appears that they have not made sufficient attempts to attend, the meeting may take place in the employee’s absence

Responding to a formal grievance

Managers must take the following action in line with the target timescales below;

The manager responding to a Stage 1 formal grievance will usually be the line manager of the employee. Where this is not possible either for reasons of time delay or if the grievance is about the employee’s manager, the grievance may be heard by the line manager’s manager or other suitable manager/leader from within the Federation.

Action	When
Write to the employee to acknowledge receipt of the written grievance. Where the grievance relates to another employee of the Federation inform them that a grievance has been submitted.	Within 5 working days, of receiving the written grievance
<p>Arrange to meet the employee as soon as is reasonably practical and ideally within 15 working days of the receipt of the employee’s written grievance.</p> <p>Advise the employee in writing of the date of the formal grievance meeting and that they are entitled to bring a companion to the meeting.</p> <p>At the meeting, ask the employee to explain the nature of their grievance and confirm the remedies being sought as set out in the formal grievance. Where appropriate, the meeting may be adjourned to allow further information to be obtained to include investigation of documentation or meetings with those who are the subject of the grievance or other witnesses to the matter.</p> <p>Arrange to take notes of all meetings/interviews and give to the interviewee for any comments. These should be signed and dated.</p>	Within 15 working days of receiving the written grievance ideally. Where there is a delay then parties should be kept informed.

<p>Consider the remedies being sought and decide on appropriate action, confirming this in writing to the employee. Managers may wish to include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details of the grievances and the attempts to resolve the situation • Their conclusion/s • Recommendations, including whether the employee's suggested remedies are acceptable and any actions to be taken going forward • Timescales for implementing any recommendations <p>Where a manager considers allegations of discrimination, bullying, victimisation or harassment to be substantiated, the findings should recommend one or more of the following:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the alleged perpetrator receives a formal letter instructing them to stop the incidents or behaviour • That formal disciplinary proceedings are instigated against the alleged perpetrator under the Federation's Disciplinary Code • Write to the employee to inform them of the decision and any actions agreed • Attach the employee's written grievance as an appendix • Invite the employee to discuss this outcome informally with their line manager or Stage 1 Manager if different • Notify the employee of their right of appeal. <p>Send a copy of the letter and appendices to the HR Advisor or if it is not possible to consider the grievance and make a decision within 10 working days of the formal grievance meeting, write to the employee to keep them informed and advise when the decision will be made.</p>	<p>Within 10 working days of formal grievance meeting where no other party needs to be met with. If it is a complex investigation then the party raising the grievance and the employee who is being complained about as to the expected completion of stage 1 of the process.</p>
<p>Inform any other appropriate managers of relevant actions/recommendations</p>	<p>At the same time as the decision is sent to the individual</p>

from the written Stage 1 outcomes letter including timescales, to enable them to implement any actions/recommendations going forward. Keep the employee informed of progress through the actions/recommendations. Ensure that the employee being complained about is updated, It may not be appropriate to share the full stage 1 outcome letter depending on what is contained within it but a summary and relevant conclusion about the complaint against them should be shared in the interests of fairness.	
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What if an employee remains unhappy with the outcome of the Stage 1 procedure?

If they are dissatisfied with the outcome, the employee may make a formal appeal. This should be done within 10 working days of the written notification of the outcome of the Stage 1.

The grievance submitted or remedy sought must not be changed or added to at any stage within the Formal Grievance Procedure, although it is noted that an alternative remedy may in the end be agreeable to both parties.

Further attempts may be made to resolve the matter informally, e.g. through mediation, depending on the nature of the grievance. However, if the employee is not satisfied with the outcome, they may insist on the matter proceeding to Stage 2 grievance.

Employees have the right to appeal against the outcome of the Stage 1 procedure. This is set out below.

Stage 2 - Grievance Appeal

Employees must:

- Put their grievance in writing, headed "Formal grievance appeal" within 10 working days of receipt of the written outcome of the Stage 1 Grievance.
- Set out clearly the grounds of their appeal, why they are not happy with the outcome and/or recommendations in the Stage 1 decision
- Also include a copy of the formal grievance meeting outcome letter with the appeal
- Sign and date the appeal, and give this to the Stage 1 manager within 10 working days of receipt of the Stage 1 decision
- Send a copy of all documents to the HR Advisor

- Ensure that they attend the appeal meeting at the specified time. If they are unable to attend because of circumstances beyond their control, employees should inform the Stage 2 manager as soon as possible. If they fail to attend without explanation, or if it appears that they have not made sufficient attempts to attend, the meeting may take place in their absence.
- Be aware that the outcome of the appeal meeting will be final.
- For information on the appeals hearing process, please see the [Appeals Hearing Management Guide](#).

Manager:

The matter is passed to the Governor Grievance Panel which will be arranged for this purpose

Action	When
Write to the employee to acknowledge receipt of the written Appeal	Within 5 working days, of receiving the written Appeal.
Advise the employee in writing of the date of the appeal and that they are entitled to bring a companion to the meeting. Consider also inviting the Stage 1 manager to the appeal.	Within 10 working days of receiving the written Appeal
Review the employee's Stage 1 written grievance and the Stage 1 decision Consider the appeal grounds that the employee has put forward and assess whether or not the conclusion reached in the original formal grievance meeting was appropriate The Appeal is not a re-hearing of the original grievance, but rather a consideration of the specific areas with which the employee is dissatisfied in relation to the original grievance. Managers may therefore confine discussion to those specific areas rather than reconsider the whole matter afresh. Managers should arrange to take notes of all meetings/interviews and give to the interviewee for any comments and to be signed and dated.	Within 20 days after receiving the written Appeal
Write to the employee to confirm their decision and any recommendations, including timescales for implementing any recommendations	Within 10 working days of hearing an Appeal

<p>Where allegations of discrimination, bullying, victimisation or harassment are considered to be substantiated, the appeal decision should recommend one or more of the following:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the alleged perpetrator receives a formal letter instructing them to stop the incidents or behaviour • That formal disciplinary proceedings are instigated against the alleged perpetrator under the Federation's Disciplinary Code <p>Inform the employee that the outcome of this appeal meeting will be final</p> <p>Send a copy to the HR Advisor</p> <p>If it is not possible to consider the grievance and make a decision within 10 working days of the Appeal Hearing, write to the employee to keep them informed and advise them when the decision will be made</p>	
<p>Inform the employee's manager and other appropriate managers of relevant actions or recommendations from the written Stage 2 outcomes letter, including timescales, to enable them to implement any actions/recommendations going forward.</p> <p>Keep the employee informed of progress through the actions/recommendations</p>	<p>At the same time as the decision is sent to the individual</p>

Formal grievances raised during disciplinary proceedings

If an employee's grievance has any bearing on the disciplinary proceedings, it is expected they will raise the grievance in the course of those proceedings. (The manager receiving the grievance will refer the relevant issues to the manager considering the disciplinary.) Managers may decide both the Grievance and Disciplinary processes can run concurrently; however, the council's standard practice is that grievances raised under the Grievance Policy while an employee is subject to disciplinary proceedings will usually be heard only when the disciplinary process has been completed, and then only the remaining grievance issues will be considered.

Documents referred to in this policy are as follows;

Grievance Form

Grievance Stage 1 Acknowledgement

Grievance Stage 1 Meeting Invite

Grievance Stage 1 Outcome Letter

Grievance Stage 2 Acknowledgement

Grievance Stage 3 Appeal Invite

Grievance Stage 2 Appeal Outcome

Federation Visitor Policy

Appeals Hearing Management Guide

These can all be accessed from the Federation Staff Sharepoint folder.