

Back to school – prepare to make light work of managing complaints

📅 11 September 2023 👤 Victoria Hatton

It seems apt, if rather disheartening, to categorise the 2022/23 school year as “The Year of the Complaint”. Schools widely reported a surge in the number of complaints from parents with increasing complexity causing concern about the impact this then had on staff time and resources.

We certainly experienced a sharp rise in the number of schools looking for support with complaints management, including a large uptake of our [Complaints Management Support Pack](#). These observations have now been more formally recognised and confirmed by Ofsted who reported that complaints to Ofsted about schools rose by a quarter last year.

Clearly, the manner in which some parents pursue their complaints is not acceptable. However, unless the complaint itself is vexatious, a school will still need to respond to the complaint in accordance with its complaints policy.

Is there anything schools can do to take back control and avoid this trend continuing into this academic year?

In our recent webinar, ([free and available on demand](#)) we suggested starting this school year by undertaking a holistic review of all aspects of your complaints management, focusing on the elements you can control. These include:

- What your complaints policy says
- How well you and your staff are trained in communication skills, conflict resolution strategies and your complaints procedures
- Your systems for undertaking effective complaints investigations or actioning requests for information (Freedom Of Information (FOI) or Subject Access Requests (SARS))
- The knowledge and experience of your governance professional(s) and the resources available to them to support effective governor complaint panels
- How well equipped your governors are to sit on complaints panels

More detail on each of these elements is discussed in our webinar.

Whilst resolution should always be the aim, in reality it may not always be possible to satisfy a complainant through your complaints policy. However, better trained and prepared staff, governors and governance professionals, who are supported by clear and compliant policies, procedures, resources and systems, will be better equipped to avoid unnecessary escalation of complaints and to deliver on a complaints management process which fully meets the requirements of any external review, including by Ofsted.

[Access further support for managing school complaints](#) →

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Related expertise