

VIP Education

Complaints Policy

September 2025

Who can make a complaint?

This complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children that take part in activities with VIP. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint about any provision of facilities or services that we provide. Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures, we will use this complaints procedure.

The difference between a concern and a complaint

A concern may be defined as *'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'*.

A complaint may be defined as *'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'*.

It is in everyone's interest that concerns, and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. VIP takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, we will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, he/she will refer you to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important.

We understand however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, VIP will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

How to raise a concern or make a complaint

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf on a complainant, if they have appropriate consent to do so.

Concerns should be raised with any member of staff. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

Complaints against VIP staff should be made in the first instance, to Mr Peter Hogg. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Anonymous complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Director will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

Time scales

You must raise the complaint within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

Scope of this Complaints Procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of activities or services by VIP, other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures.

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority (LA) safeguarding teams or Tribunals, this may impact on our ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations.

Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, VIP wants to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- an explanation
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- an assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur
- an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made
- an undertaking to review our policies in light of the complaint
- an apology.

Withdrawal of a Complaint

If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

Stage 1

Formal complaints must be made to Mr Peter Hogg. This may be done in person, in writing (preferably on the Complaint Form), or by telephone.

He will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within **five working days**.

Within this response, he will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. Mr Hogg can consider whether a face to face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

During the investigation, he will:

- if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
- keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

At the conclusion of the investigation, there will be a formal written response within fifteen working days of the date of receipt of the complaint.

If unable to meet this deadline, the complainant will be provided with an update and revised response date.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions **VIP** will take to resolve the complaint.

The complainant will be advised of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1.

Stage 2

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 1 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 2 – a meeting with The Director or his appointed representative. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.

A request to escalate to Stage 2 must be made to the Director within **five** working days of receipt of the Stage 1 response.

The Director will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within **five** working days.

Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

The Director will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. He will aim to convene a meeting within **fifteen** working days of receipt of the Stage 2 request. If this is not possible, the Director will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates, without good reason, the Director will decide when to hold the meeting. It will then proceed in the complainant's absence on the basis of written submissions from both parties.

The complaints committee will consist of the Director and Senior Leaders plus a member of our HR team.

The committee will decide whether to deal with the complaint by inviting parties to a meeting or through written representations, but in making their decision they will be sensitive to the complainant's needs.

If the complainant is invited to attend the meeting, they may bring someone along to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. Generally, we do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the committee meeting. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate.

Note: Complaints about staff conduct will not generally be handled under this complaints procedure. Complainants will be advised that any staff conduct complaints will be considered under staff disciplinary procedures, if appropriate, but outcomes will not be shared with them.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least **two** working days before the date of the meeting. The committee will not accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

The committee will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

The committee will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The committee can:

- uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.

If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the committee will:

- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- where appropriate, recommend changes to the company's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

The Chair of the Committee will provide the complainant and **VIP** with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within **five** working days.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions [VIP](#) will take to resolve the complaint.

Complaint Form

Please complete and return to [Director / Designated Safeguarding Lead](#) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:
Young Person's name (if relevant):
Your relationship to the young person (if relevant):
Address: Postcode: Day time telephone number: Evening telephone number:

Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at VIP about it.

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

<p>Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.</p>
<p>Signature:</p>
<p>Date:</p>
<p>Official use</p>
<p>Date acknowledgement sent:</p>
<p>By who:</p>
<p>Complaint referred to:</p>
<p>Date:</p>

Roles and Responsibilities

Complainant

The complainant will receive a more effective response to the complaint if they:

- explain the complaint in full as early as possible
- co-operate in seeking a solution to the complaint
- respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint
- ask for assistance as needed
- treat all those involved in the complaint with respect
- refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality.

Investigator

The investigator's role is to establish the facts relevant to the complaint by:

- providing a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint through:
 - sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved
 - interviewing staff and children/young people and other people relevant to the complaint
 - consideration of records and other relevant information
 - analysing information
- liaising with the complainant to clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.

The investigator should:

- conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning
- keep notes of interviews or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of the meeting
- ensure that any papers produced during the investigation are kept securely pending any appeal
- be mindful of the timescales to respond
- prepare a comprehensive report for the Director that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.

The committee will then determine whether to uphold or dismiss the complaint and communicate that decision to the complainant.

- both parties are asked to provide any additional information relating to the complaint by a specified date in advance of the meeting
- the meeting is conducted in an informal manner, is not adversarial, and that, if all parties are invited to attend, everyone is treated with respect and courtesy
- complainants who may not be used to speaking at such a meeting are put at ease. This is particularly important if the complainant is a child/young person
- the remit of the committee is explained to the complainant
- written material is seen by everyone in attendance, provided it does not breach confidentiality or any individual's rights to privacy under the DPA 2018 or GDPR.
- the issues are addressed

- key findings of fact are made
- the committee is open-minded and acts independently
- the meeting is minuted
- the meeting must be independent and impartial, and should be seen to be so
- the aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant
 - We recognise that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the meeting does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations.
- many complainants will feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting
 - Parents/carers often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child.
- extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child/young person and present during all or part of the meeting
 - Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings should ensure that the child/young person does not feel intimidated.
 - The committee should respect the views of the child/young person and give them equal consideration to those of adults.
 - If the child/young person is the complainant, the committee should ask in advance if any support is needed to help them present their complaint. Where the child/young person's parent is the complainant, the committee should give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the meeting, if any, the child/young person needs to attend.
 - However, the parent should be advised that agreement might not always be possible if the parent wishes the child/young person to attend a part of the meeting that the committee considers is not in the child/young person's best interests.

the welfare of the child/young person is paramount.