POLICY

Document Title	**Compliments and Complaints Policy**
Version	**Version 1.5**
Equality Impact Assessment Status	**Complete (see pages 8 and 9)**
Approved by	**Board of the Corporation**
Date approved	**Executive Team : 7th January 2026** **Endorsed by the Curriculum, Quality, & Inclusion Committee : 3rd February 2026** **Approved by the Corporation Board : 24th March 2026**
Effective date	**25th March 2026**
Date of next review	**March 2028**
Lead responsibility	**Deputy Principal**

1. Purpose

1.1. At Derwentside College, we are committed to providing a positive and inclusive learning environment. We value feedback from our learners, staff, and other stakeholders as it helps us to enhance our services and address concerns promptly.

1.2. The purpose of this policy is to establish a systematic approach for handling compliments and complaints, ensuring fairness, transparency, and continuous improvement within the College.

2. Definitions & Scope

2.1. The following definitions apply in relation to compliments and complaints:

- **Compliment:** A positive expression of satisfaction or praise regarding a service, employee or experience;
- **Complaint:** An expression of dissatisfaction with a service, employee, action, or decision made by the College.

2.2. This policy details the College's methods for receiving, investigating, and responding to compliments and complaints. Those submitting compliments or complaints may be learners, prospective learners, parents, employers, stakeholders, or any other interested party.

2.3. Complaints from staff should be directed to the Director of Human Resources. Compliments regarding staff from other staff members can be dealt with, within the scope of this policy or in the usual way via feedback to the Line Manager or to a member of the Executive Team.

2.4. This policy does not cover any issues or complaints relating to safeguarding. Any complaints or concerns relating to safeguarding will be dealt with via the College's Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk Policy.

3. Policy Principles

3.1. Our approach to handling compliments and complaints is guided by the following principles:

- **Fairness:** All feedback will be treated impartially, and individuals involved will be given an opportunity to present their perspective;

- **Confidentiality:** Information related to compliments and complaints will be handled with discretion, respecting the privacy of all parties involved;

- **Transparency:** The process of addressing feedback will be communicated clearly, and outcomes will be shared appropriately;

- **Continuous Improvement:** Feedback will be used to identify areas for enhancement and drive positive changes within the College.

4. Process for Handling Compliments and Complaints

4.1. Compliments:

- The College welcomes positive feedback on the service it provides across any of its areas of operation. A wide range of opportunities to voice positive feedback are available including: during delivery of provision, via learner voice activity, via social media, verbally, and/or in writing.
- Compliments may be received by any member of staff, in any form, and should be forwarded to the relevant member of the Executive Team or Line Manager to be recorded in the Compliments Log. A Compliments Form is also available for use (see Appendix A).
- The College will use the information from compliments to support quality improvement.

4.2. Complaints:

4.2.1. Informal Stage

- The College expects most complaints to be dealt with informally. When a complaint is first received by the College, this will be dealt with by the relevant manager. It is expected that a thorough investigation will be conducted with a response provided to the complainant within 10 working days of receipt. Should this not satisfy the complainant, then it would be escalated to a formal complaint.

4.2.2. Formal Stage

- Complaints that cannot be resolved informally should be submitted using the College's Formal Complaints Form (see Appendix B), or in any other written format, and be addressed to the Head of Governance.
- The Head of Governance will allocate an investigating manager from the Senior Leadership Team.
- It is expected that a thorough investigation will be conducted with a response provided to the complainant within 14 working days of receipt. Should this not satisfy the complainant, then it can be escalated to an appeal.
- If the complaint concerns the Principal and Chief Executive or any member of the Board, complaints should be addressed to the Head of Governance.

4.2.3. Appeal

- Complaints that cannot be resolved through the formal stage can be escalated to the Appeal Stage. An appeal should be submitted in writing to the Principal and Chief Executive within 14 working days of receipt of the formal investigation response. The Principal and Chief Executive will then identify an impartial member of the Executive Team to lead the investigation for the appeal and provide the final response.
- It is expected that a thorough investigation will be conducted with a response provided to the complainant within 14 working days of receipt.

4.2.4. Escalation

- Following the process of appeal, if the complainant remains unsatisfied with the College's response, they have the right to direct their complaint to an external body. Complainants should contact our regulatory body via the DfE's customer

help portal (https://customerhelpportal.education.gov.uk). You must contact the DfE within 12-months of the issue happening. ,

4.3. *Reporting*

- All formal complaints will be logged by the Head of Governance in the College's complaints log and will be reported to the Corporation Board on an annual basis.

5. Managing Serial and Unreasonable Complaints

5.1. The College does not expect its staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from behaviour that is abusive, offensive, or threatening.

5.2. We define unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the College. In such cases, the Principal and Chief Executive (or the Chair or Head of Governance) will determine if the complaint should be considered 'unreasonable' and be categorised as such. This includes if the complainant:

- refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process;
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints policy;
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints policy or with good practice;
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be considered;
- raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales;
- makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues and/or seek to have the staff replaced and/or disciplined;
- changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds;
- repeatedly makes the same complaint despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed;
- refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into the complaint, where the College's complaints policy has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education;
- makes excessive demands by frequent, lengthy, and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint either in person, in writing, by email or by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with;
- uses threats to intimidate or abusive, offensive, or discriminatory language or violence;
- publishes information that the College deems to be unacceptable on social media or other public forums.

5.3. If such unreasonable behaviour is evident, the Principal and Chief Executive (or the Chair or Head of Governance) will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the College will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing, which may include barring an individual from the College premises. The College reserves the right to pursue other legal remedies where it considers this to be necessary in relation to the unreasonable behaviour and/or conduct of a complainant.

6. Equality & Diversity

6.1. The College has paid due regard to equality considerations during the preparation and implementation of this Policy.

6.2. These considerations included the potential for any differential negative effect on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race (including ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality), religion or belief (including lack of belief), sex, sexual orientation, marriage or civil partnership.

6.3. The College's judgement is that there is no such negative effect on any of the above grounds and, consequently, no potential breach of the Equality Act 2010.

6.4. The operation of this Policy will be monitored by the Director of HR in order to establish that no unlawful discrimination is taking place and to identify opportunities for the College to enhance equality of opportunity and fair treatment.

6.5. If reasonable adjustments are required, we will endeavour to ensure our complaints procedure is fully accessible to all.

7. Review

7.1. This document will be reviewed by March 2028.

7.2. The Deputy Principal will undertake this review, taking into account the effectiveness of the policy, legislative changes and developments in good practice.

7.3. The outcome of the review will be reported to the Executive Team.

Category [select ONE only]	☐Programmes/courses ☐Partnerships ☐Finance ☒Quality ☐Governance ☐Health and safety ☐Facilities ☐Computer Services ☐MIS ☐Admissions ☐Teaching and learning ☐Personnel
Audience [select ALL that apply]	☒ Employees ☒Learners ☒ Partners ☒ Suppliers

Appendix A - Derwentside College Compliments Form

To be completed by the student or member of the public who would like to submit a compliment

Completed by:		Date of Compliment:	

Contact Details:	

Details of Compliment: (include dates and locations, or attach letter/email as appropriate)

Signed:		**Date:**	

To be completed by the Executive Assistant

Date Compliment received and logged:		**Date details of Compliment passed onto the relevant Manager:**	

Appendix B - Derwentside College Complaints Form

To be completed by complainant, or staff member receiving complaint

Completed by:		Date of complaint:	
Name of complainant:		Name of learner: (if different to complainant)	
Address:		Telephone number:	
		Email:	
Details of complaint:			

To be completed by the Head of Governance

Date acknowledged:		Investigating manager:	
Date investigation report received		Date response sent:	
Complaint upheld?	Yes/No		
Summary of actions taken as a result:			

To be completed by the Head of Governance

Date complaint logged:		Date response logged	

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

This form must be completed when drafting a new policy/procedure or amending an existing policy/procedure. It should be completed at the earliest opportunity so any issues can be resolved/mitigated in advance.

POLICY / PROCEDURE DETAILS	
Name of policy / procedure:	Compliments and Complaints Policy
Manager responsible:	Deputy Principal
Others involved in this EIA:	Executive Team

ASSESSMENT			
What evidence have you used? (This could be internal data, surveys, complaints/grievances or other external quantitative or qualitative research)	At the 2024 policy review point, the Deputy Principal researched similar policies in other organisations within the education sector to ensure that the content is appropriate and relevant. They also examined compliments and complaints received since this policy was last approved and developed new content within it to address issues that have arisen. In December 2025 the policy was reviewed to ensure it remains accurate and fit for purpose.		
Who have you engaged / consulted with? (This could be individuals, groups, networks or organisations)	Senior Leadership Team / DfE (ESFA local team) – 2024 policy review Executive Team and Head of Governance – December 2025		
For each protected characteristic, does the evidence show that the policy/procedure…	does not inadvertently disadvantage or discriminate against staff, learners or service users?	actively explores opportunity and fosters good relations between people of different protected groups and backgrounds?	Where 'no' is checked, or concerns have been identified detail them here:
Age (including older and younger people)	Yes ☒ No ☐	Yes ☒ No ☐	
Disability (including those with physical disabilities, unseen disabilities and mental health issues)	Yes ☒ No ☐	Yes ☒ No ☐	
Sex (both men and women)	Yes ☒ No ☐	Yes ☒ No ☐	
Gender reassignment or Gender identity (including trans staff and students who have transitioned, are considering transitioning or are in the process of transitioning from one gender to another, and also non-binary staff and students who do not identify with, or reject gender labels)	Yes ☒ No ☐	Yes ☒ No ☐	
Marriage and Civil Partnership	Yes ☒ No ☐	Yes ☒ No ☐	

Pregnancy / Maternity (including breastfeeding mothers)	Yes ☒ No ☐	Yes ☒ No ☐	
Race and Ethnicity (including nationality, colour, native language, culture and geographic origin)	Yes ☒ No ☐	Yes ☒ No ☐	
Religion and belief (including those with no religion or belief)	Yes ☒ No ☐	Yes ☒ No ☐	
Sexual orientation (including, but not limited to, gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer and straight staff and learners)	Yes ☒ No ☐	Yes ☒ No ☐	
Intersectionality (although not a protected characteristic itself it's important to consider how characteristics intersect)	Yes ☒ No ☐	Yes ☒ No ☐	

ACTION PLANNING

Issue Identified	Planned or completed remedial action	Person responsible and timeframe

MONITORING AND REVIEW

How will the impact of your policy and procedure be monitored and reviewed once agreed?

The policy will be reviewed according to the defined timetable outlined within it.

AUTHORISATION

	Signature	Date
Manager responsible:	Deputy Principal	15th December 2025
EIA Panel:		
EIA Committee's Comments if applicable:		