



APPENDIX 2

Starting Well - Education Services

Annual Report 2023–24 Complaints and Compliments

**Prepared for: Trevor Cook,
Assistant Director for Education, Starting Well**

**Prepared by: Johannah Philp,
Complaints, Compliance & Information Team Lead**

Education Services Annual Complaints & Compliments Report 2023-24

	<u>Contents</u>	<u>Pages</u>
	Executive Summary	3
1	Ombudsman Referrals	4
2	Total Number of Complaints	4
2.1	- Service Areas	4-5
2.2	- Themes	5-6
2.3	- Outcomes	6-7
2.4	- Response Times	8
3	Members Correspondence	8-9
4	Method of contact	9
5	Compliments	10
6	Conclusion	11

Executive Summary

At the London Borough of Havering our Education Service is focused on improving outcomes for children and young people by supporting education providers to be as effective and efficient as they can be in their day-to-day work.

The Havering Education service works with schools, academies, colleges and early years providers to provide critical statutory and traded education services. With a long-established history, we have developed and maintained strong partnerships and relationships with key stakeholders in these institutions ensuring high-quality day-to-day support.

As well as providing support for education settings, the service also has statutory responsibilities for ensuring high-quality provision for children from early years to reception, and throughout all their schooling to age 18, and up to 25 years for those young people with special educational needs (SEND) as well as the statutory responsibility for the placement of those children and young people, via the statutory admissions process and early education entitlement placement processes.

The service also provides support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities across education and social care. It is responsible for implementing the legislation under the Children and Families Act 2014, working together to bring about coordinated support for children, young people and their families. Collectively they are responsible for the Education Health and Care assessment and planning process, support from advisory teachers and educational psychologists in schools and the children's social care statutory processes around Children in need, Child protection and looked after Children.

The number of Corporate complaints increased significantly in 2023-24 period by 116%. The majority of these complaints were about the SEND service (35). Of those 35 complaints, many of them were about delays with Educational Health Care Plans and Home to School Transport Consultation.

Overall response times for both corporate complaints and enquires have dropped slightly with 78% in 2023-24 being responded to within timescale, compared to 81% in 2022-23, again this is likely to be due to the number being received in 2022-23 increasing by 23% overall.

Our action plan for 2024–25 is focused on continuing to further improve response times, across complaints. We are also focused on improving the member enquiry response times.

The introduction of the case management system, Casetracker will assist with improving recording and response times of complaints and enquiries. This launched in April 2024.

1. Ombudsman referrals

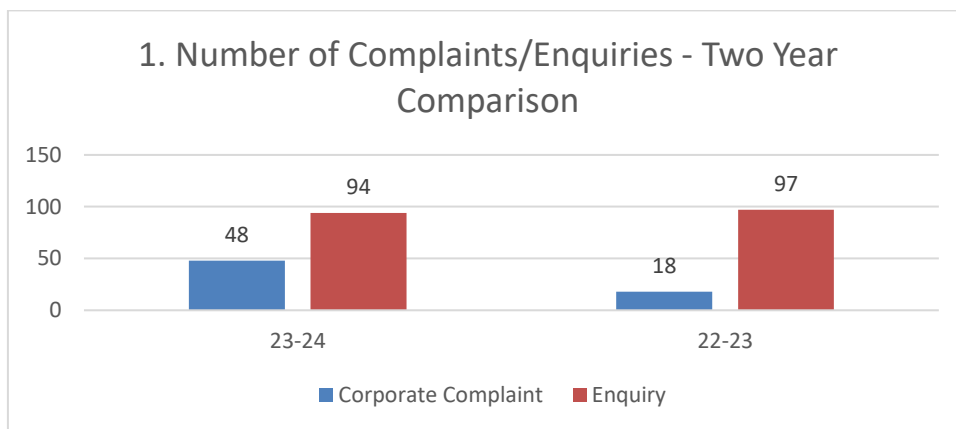
Encouragingly there have been no Ombudsman enquiries for 2023-24.

2. Total number of complaints

The total number of Corporate Complaints has increased by 116% from 18 in 2022-23 to 48 in 2023-24, which are reported within the Corporate Complaints reports.

Enquiries have reduced slightly by 3% to 94 in 2023-24 from 97 in 2022-23.

Enquiries are complaints received by the authority that relate to schools, academies or colleges that may need to be taken through their own complaints procedure.



2.1 Service Areas

Chart 2 shows the breakdown of enquiries received in 2023-24. As expected, the highest number (79) are those for Education & Schools, 61 of those enquiries were received via OFSTED. We have seen a small decrease in the number of SEND enquiries being received.

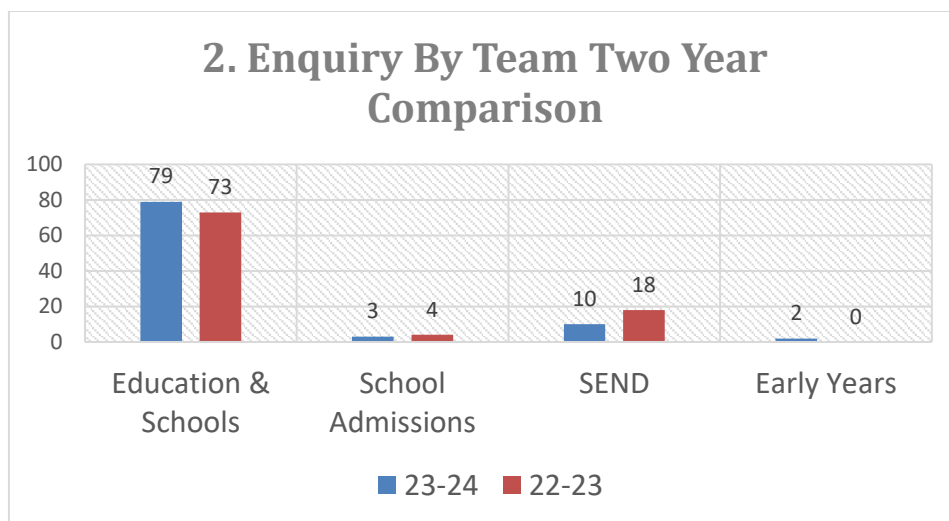
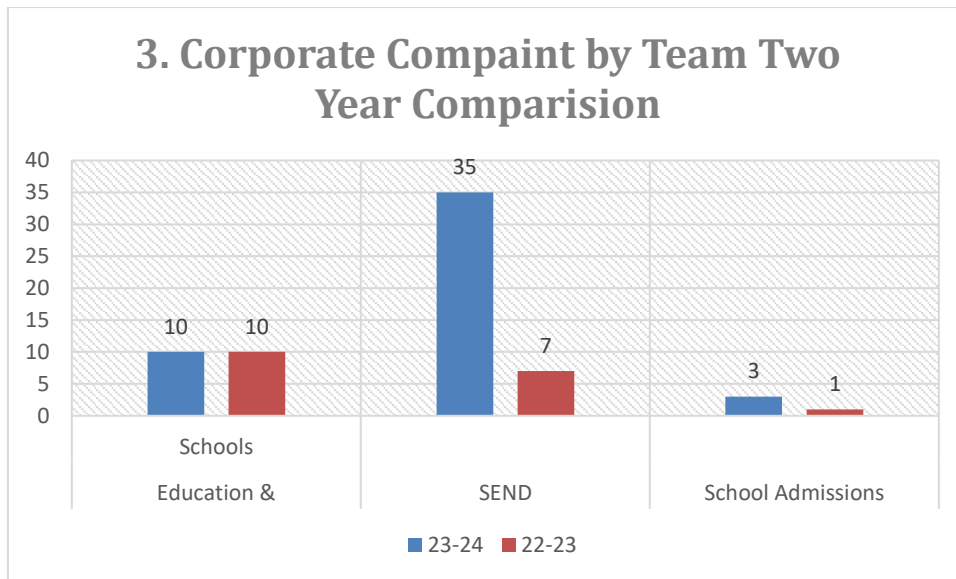


Chart 3 shows the breakdown of Corporate complaints received. Across the teams, 2023-24 saw an increase in the number of corporate complaints received with the highest rise being for SEND, many of these are concerning Educational Health Care Plans.



2.2 Themes

Chart 4 shows a breakdown of themes for enquiries received and relates to those complaints relating to schools, academy or college issues. The main reason by far is safeguarding/welfare concerns which make up 65% of all enquiries received, 92% of which were received from Ofsted. There has also been an increase in the number of enquiries received in relation to lack of communication in 2023-24, these generally relate to delays in communication being made available, inaccurate information, or unclear communication.

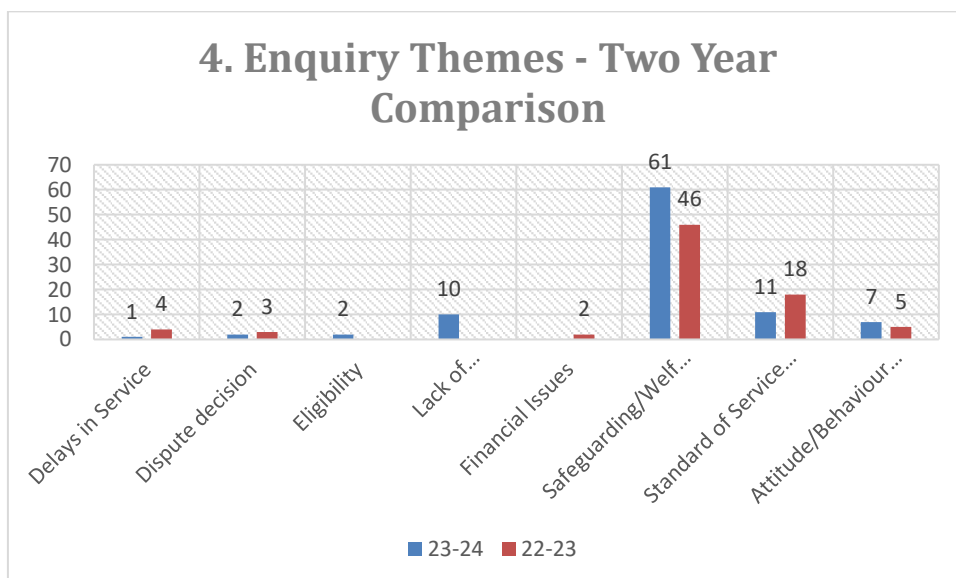
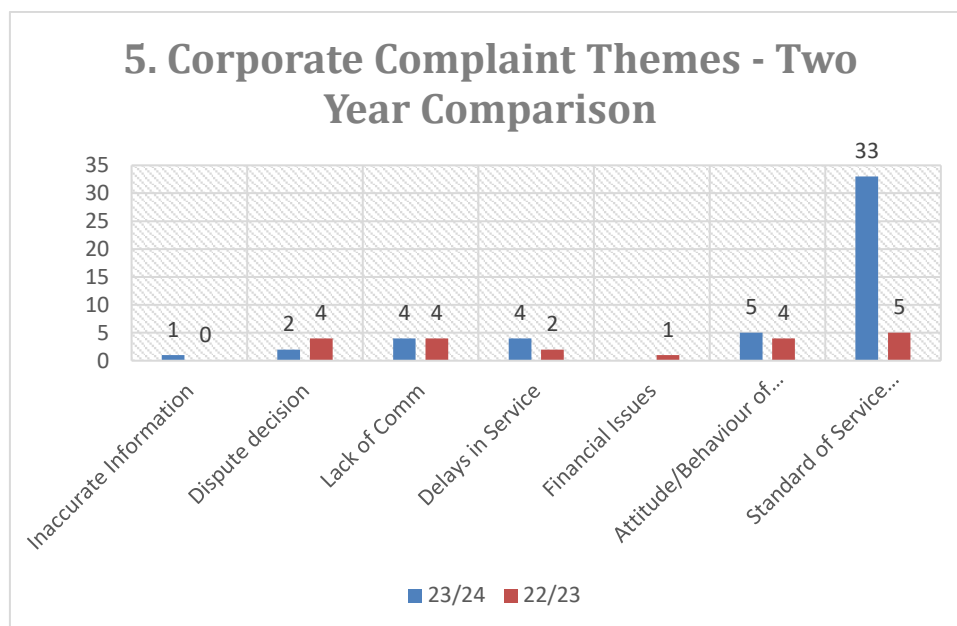


Chart 5 shows the breakdown of Corporate Complaints themes. There has been a significant increase over the past year in the number of complaints relating to standard of service not met. The majority of these have been made against the SEND Service.

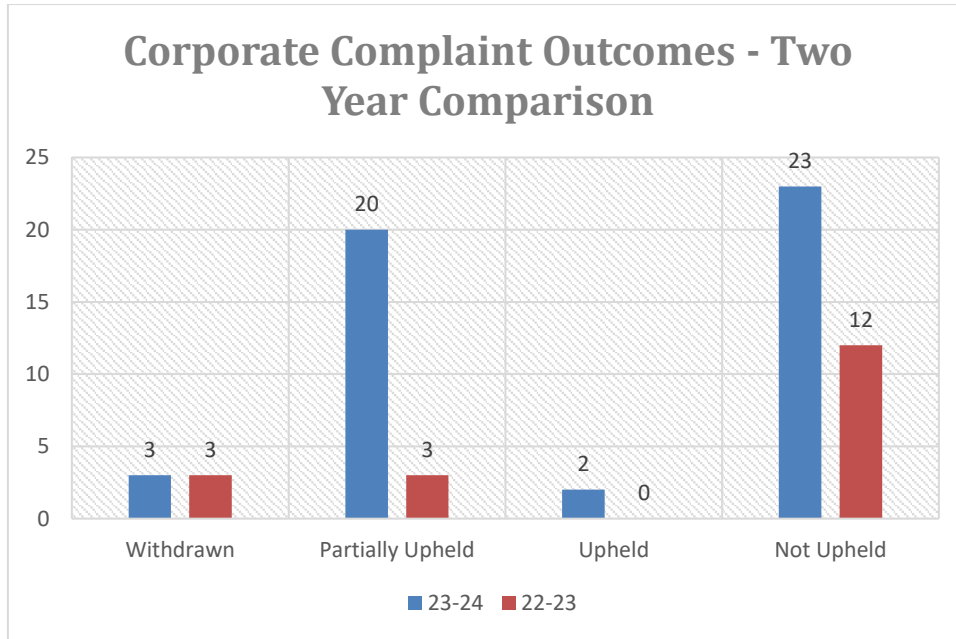
13 of those complaints relate to delays in Educational Health Care planning and 9 were about the recent Home to School Transport consultation where it became apparent that the consultation papers had not been shared with out-of-borough schools. This was initially thought to have been rectified with the consultation period extended, however, a further extension is now taking place.



2.3 Outcomes

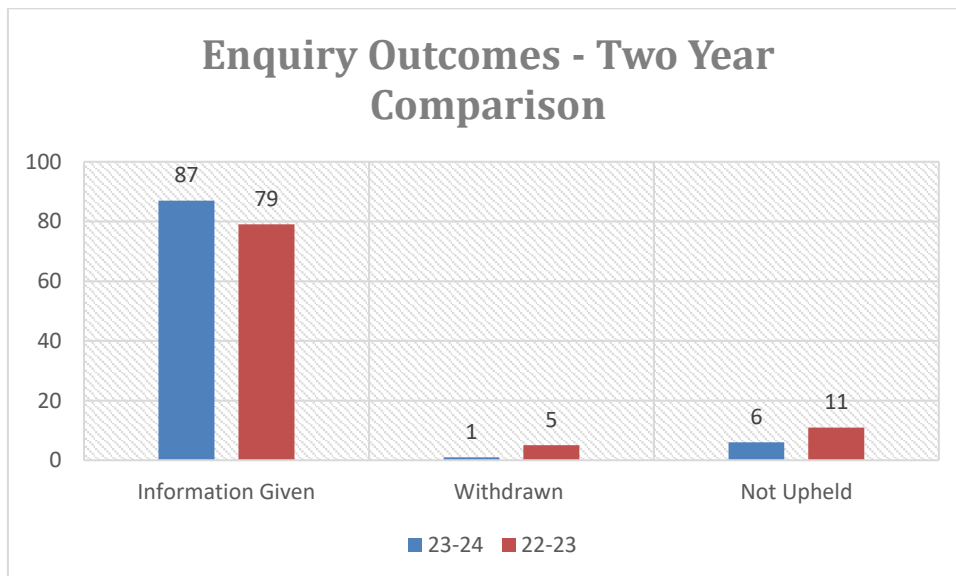
Corporate Complaint Outcomes

Of the Corporate Complaints received in 2023-24, 23 were not upheld and explanations were given, 20 were partially upheld, most of which were in relation to standard of service not met in the SEN team. Two complaints were upheld, these were also complaints made against the SEN Team. For partially upheld and upheld complaints apologies were made, and information given. Three complaints were withdrawn. Upheld complaints are always reviewed in order to feed into learning for the service and to identify areas for improvement.



Enquiry Outcomes

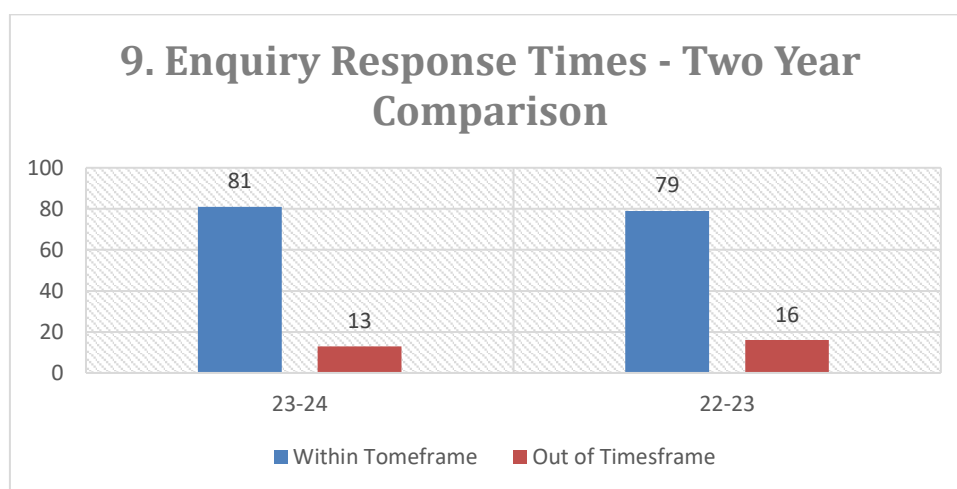
Enquiry outcomes are shown below with 87 being ‘information given’ to advise complainants of the correct process. There was a 58% increase in the number of Ofsted enquiries received in 2023-24. 70% of the enquiries received from Ofsted were mainly concerning safeguarding, these enquiries are routinely sent on for the attention of the Assistant Director for Education Services, and some may result in follow-up enquiries with the school or academy. One enquiry was withdrawn and six were not upheld.



2.4 Response times

There has been a slight reduction in the number of corporate complaints being responded to within timeframe down to 65% during 2023-24, compared to 77% in 2022-23. This is due to the higher volume of enquiries that were received throughout the year and the capacity issues within the SEND service, which we are being monitored with some additional growth posts in 2024-2025.

Of the 94 enquiries received during 2023-24 92 (88%) were responded to within timeframe, an improvement on the 80% in 2022-23 which is very encouraging given the capacity challenges.

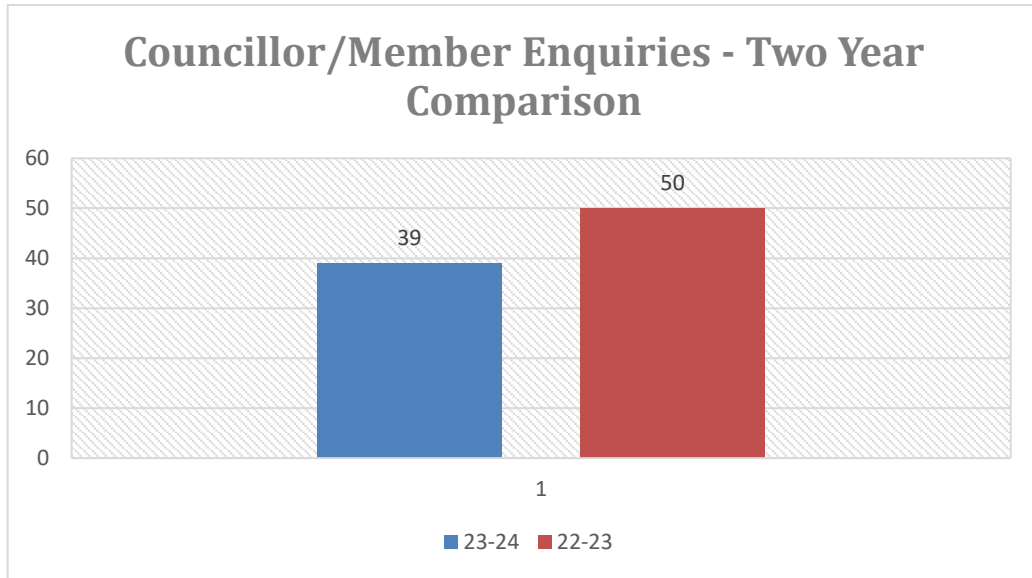


2. Members' Correspondence

Councillor and Member enquiries reduced by 22% to 39 in 2023-24 compared to 50 in 2022-23, with 90% being responded to within the timescale. It should be noted that it is likely that there may have been many more enquiries than the numbers being reported here, due to them being sent directly to officers within the service. Officers and members are reminded to ensure that SCCI is aware of such enquiries so that we can report on them more accurately.

It is evident that some members sometimes become involved in 'Business as Usual' Communication, with good intentions, however this occasionally escalates into complaints. To address this, we are planning a session with members to clarify the correct process for their involvement. We believe that this proactive approach will help streamline our communication and prevent any misunderstandings and reduce complaints.

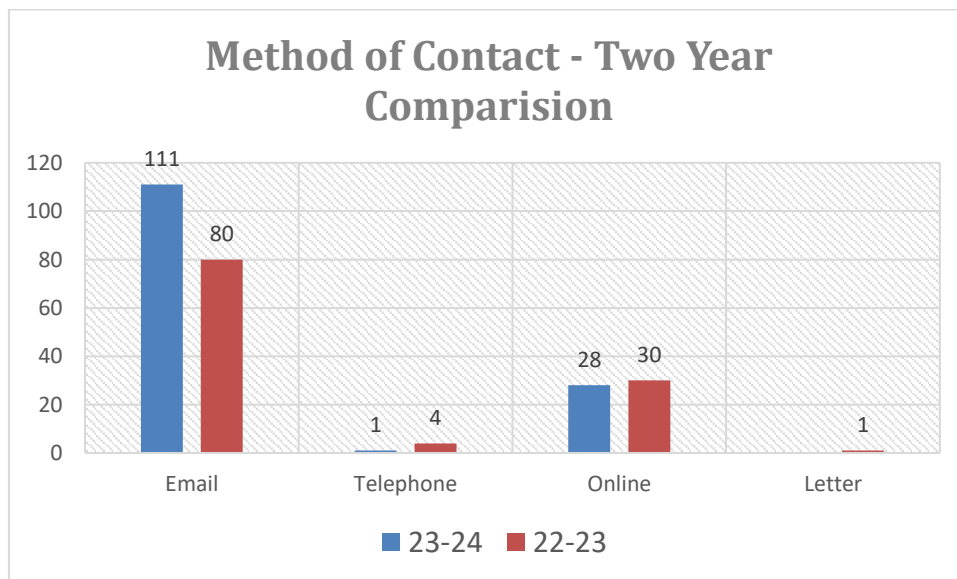
The newly formed Insight, Information and Investigations Team have a new complaints and information case management system in place which allows the tracking, reporting and monitoring of complaints to become much more effective. With this in mind, the decision has been taken to move members enquiries onto this system. The build will begin shortly and over the next few months, it is hoped that all member enquiries will be logged in this way.



3. Method of Contact


Email continues to be the preferred method of contact for Corporate Complaints and Enquiries in 2023-24 at 80%. Despite numbers still being relatively low, we have seen those coming through online consistent with 2022-23.

Havering has procured a new complaints and information case management system from ROL Solutions, Casetracker. We will be aiming to significantly increase the number of enquiries being submitted via the online form in 2024-25.




5. Compliments


The number of compliments received for Education in 2023-24 has stayed consistent with those received in 2022-23 (13), however, the low numbers reported here are likely to be a result of compliments not being shared with SCCI by the officers within the service. Officers are reminded to share all compliments so that we are able to reflect the good work being undertaken accurately.



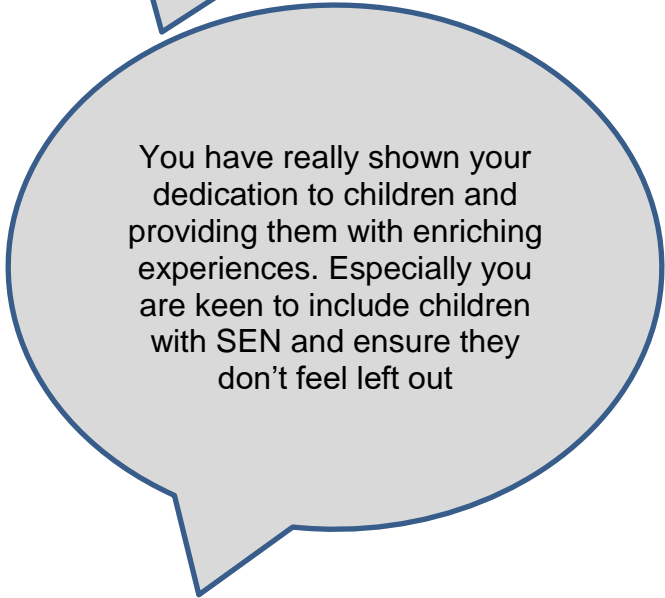
You deserve an award for everything you do for all SEN children in this borough with little help from government



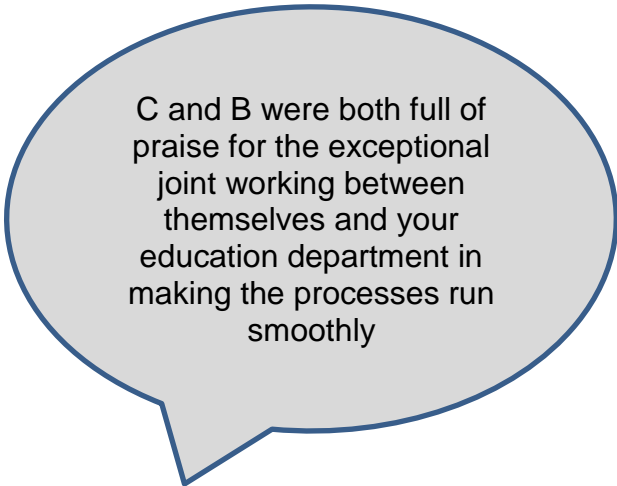
I would just like to show my appreciation and thank you for everything your team do. Once again thank you so much for all the help and support you offer the children.




We are eager to continue our close working relationship with Havering Council, championing educational excellence



You have really shown your dedication to children and providing them with enriching experiences. Especially you are keen to include children with SEN and ensure they don't feel left out



C and B were both full of praise for the exceptional joint working between themselves and your education department in making the processes run smoothly



I am so pleased with everything and all your hard work .

6. Conclusion

Education Services complaints are being dealt with effectively through the Corporate Complaints process and we are seeing improvements in the processes, including improved recorded with the detail and breakdown of information available.

The information collated for complaints that relate to schools, academies, and colleges are recorded as enquiries within this report. Although this is only a snapshot of complaints, it does provide information on particular themes arising. In 2023-24 these themes were predominantly around safeguarding and welfare concerns.

Further work is required to improve the timescales of responses and to ensure compliments are recorded consistently

As Education also receives some Corporate Complaints, this report has been included as an additional appendix as part of the Children's Services Statutory Complaints Annual Report.