

ANNUAL REPORT

2024-2025

Education Services – Starting Well

Annual Complaints & Compliments Report



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Executive Summary

The 2024–2025 reporting period for Education Services reflects a year of steady complaint volumes, improved response times, and evolving service engagement. A total of 45 formal complaints were received, a slight decrease from 48 in 2023–2024, largely due to a change in reporting practices that excluded general enquiries and Ofsted-related matters.

SEND complaints saw a notable 34% reduction, while complaints for Education increased slightly. Volumes for Education & Schools and School Admissions remained consistent. The introduction of new case management software led to expanded categorisation of complaint themes, resulting in significant shifts—Standards of Service complaints dropped, while Lack of Communication rose.

Complaint outcomes showed an increase in Upheld cases, a decrease in Not Upheld, and a 22% decline rate, suggesting improved triage and resolution processes. Response performance also improved, with 78% of complaints meeting target response times, up from 65% the previous year.

Digital engagement continued to grow, with online submissions becoming the primary method of contact, replacing email. Telephone contact remained minimal, and no complaints were received via face-to-face or written correspondence.

Member Enquiries increased by 18%, with 45 logged enquiries compared to 39 the previous year. Since December 2024, these have been formally tracked through the Case Tracker system, enhancing oversight and accountability.

Finally, the service received a number of compliments, particularly within SEND, highlighting the positive impact of staff efforts and the value placed on personalised support for families.

This report underscores the importance of continued service improvement, responsiveness, and transparency in handling complaints and compliments across Education Services.

Complaints Received

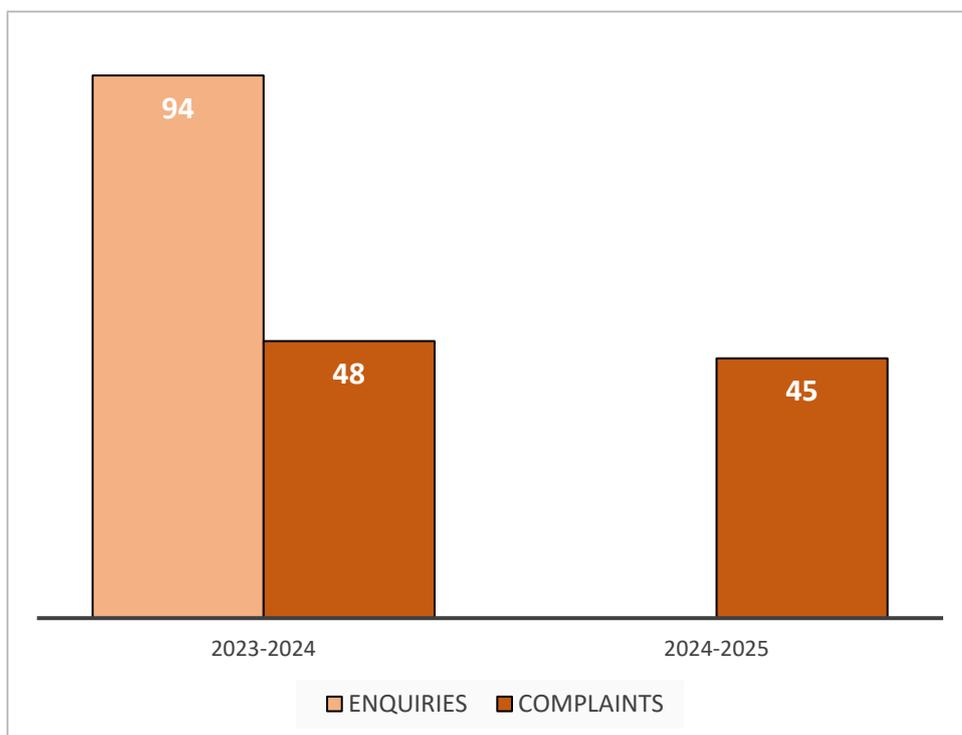
1.1 Ombudsman Referrals

During the period, no	OUTCOMES	2023	2024	2024	2025	reporting there were recorded
	In Progress					
	Maladministration (No Injustice)					
	Maladministration & Justice			1		
	No Maladministration after investigation					
	Ombudsman Discretion					
	Investigation with Local Settlement					
	Outside Jurisdiction					
	Investigation Discontinued					
	Paused					
	Premature/Informal Enquiries					
	Closed after initial enquiries – No Further Action				1	
	TOTAL		0		2	

Ombudsman outcomes in 2023–2024. In 2024–2025, two cases were concluded. One was categorised as Maladministration with Injustice, and the other was closed after Initial Enquiries – No Further Action.

These outcomes reflect the Council’s continued engagement with the Ombudsman process and our commitment to resolving complaints appropriately. While the number of cases remains low, each outcome provides valuable insight into areas for improvement and reinforces the importance of robust complaint handling and governance practices.

1.2 Volumes (2 Year Comparison)



Complaints relating to Education Services saw a slight decrease, from 48 in 2023–2024 to 45 in 2024–2025. This reduction is partly attributed to a change in reporting practices, where general enquiries—previously included—are no longer counted within formal complaint data.

Looking ahead, enquiries directed to Ofsted will be excluded from future reports to ensure consistency and clarity in how formal complaints are recorded and presented.

1.3 Complaints by Service (2 Year Comparison)

Service	2023-2024	2024-2025
SEND	72	47
Education	0	4
Education & Schools	22	22
School Admissions	0	0

The chart above illustrates that overall complaint volumes have remained broadly consistent with the previous year. However, there was a significant reduction in complaints related to SEND, which fell by 34% in 2024–2025.

In contrast, complaints for Education saw a slight increase, while volumes for Education & Schools and School Admissions remained unchanged. These trends will continue to be monitored to ensure service responsiveness and quality remain high across all areas.

1.4 Complaints by Theme (2 Year Comparison)

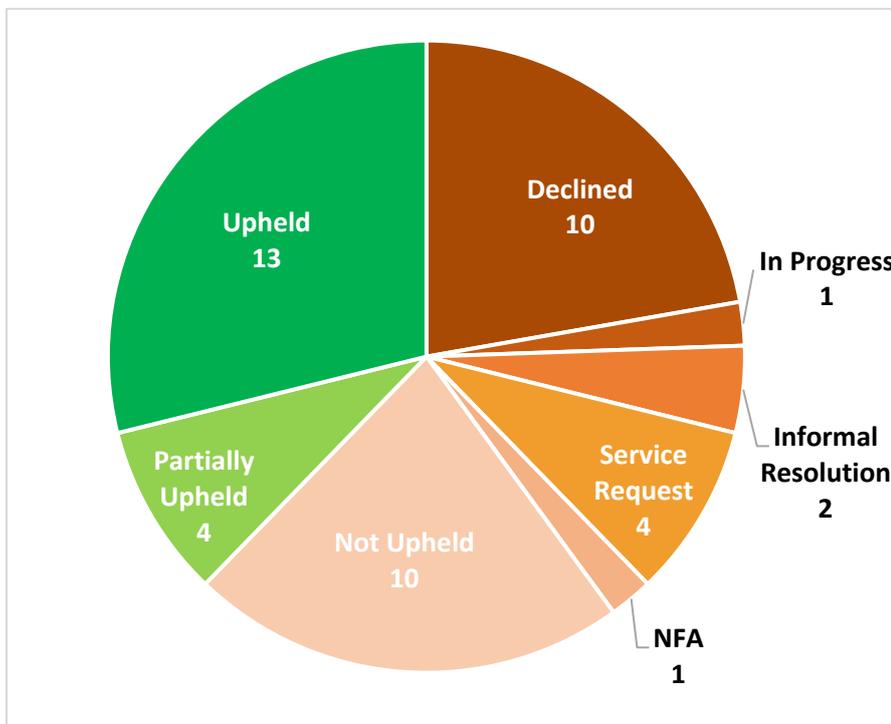
THEME	2023 2024	2024 2025
Attitude/Behaviour of Staff	5	2
Delay in Service	4	3

Dispute Decision	2	0
In Progress	0	1
Inaccurate Information	1	0
Lack of Communication	4	18
NFA	0	15

variation. These changes are likely influenced by the introduction of new case management software, which expanded the categorisation of complaint themes.

The most significant shifts were seen in Standards of Service, which decreased by 84%, and Lack of Communication, which increased by 78%. These variations will be closely monitored to assess whether they reflect genuine service trends or are a result of improved data classification.

1.5 Complaint Outcomes (2024-2025)



The chart opposite presents the outcomes of the 45 complaints received for Education Services in 2024–2025. Compared to the previous year, there was an increase in Upheld complaints, alongside a decrease in Partially Upheld complaints and a decrease in Not Upheld complaints.

This shift may reflect improved efficiency in the triage and resolution stages, enabling clearer outcomes earlier in the process. Additionally, 22% of complaints were declined, further indicating a more streamlined approach to assessing and managing incoming cases.

1.5 Complaint Response Times (2024-2025)

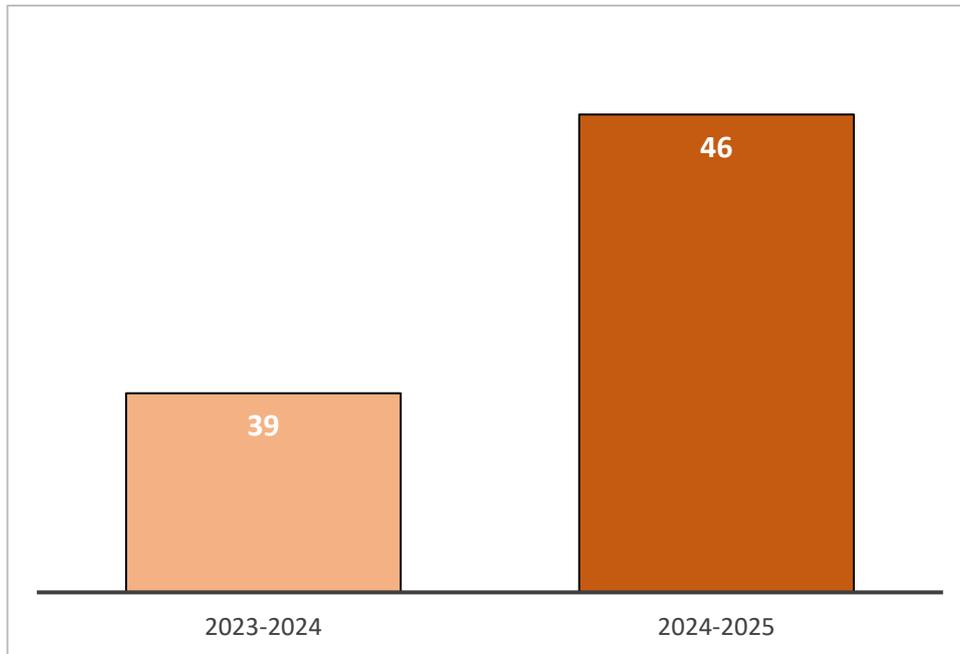
RESPONSE TIMES	2023	2024	2024	2025
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Response times for 2024–2025 showed a marked improvement compared to the previous year. The proportion of complaints responded to within target times increased from 65% to 78%, while missed targets decreased from 35% to 22%.

These improvements were achieved despite complaint volumes remaining broadly consistent year-on-year, highlighting enhanced efficiency and responsiveness across the service.

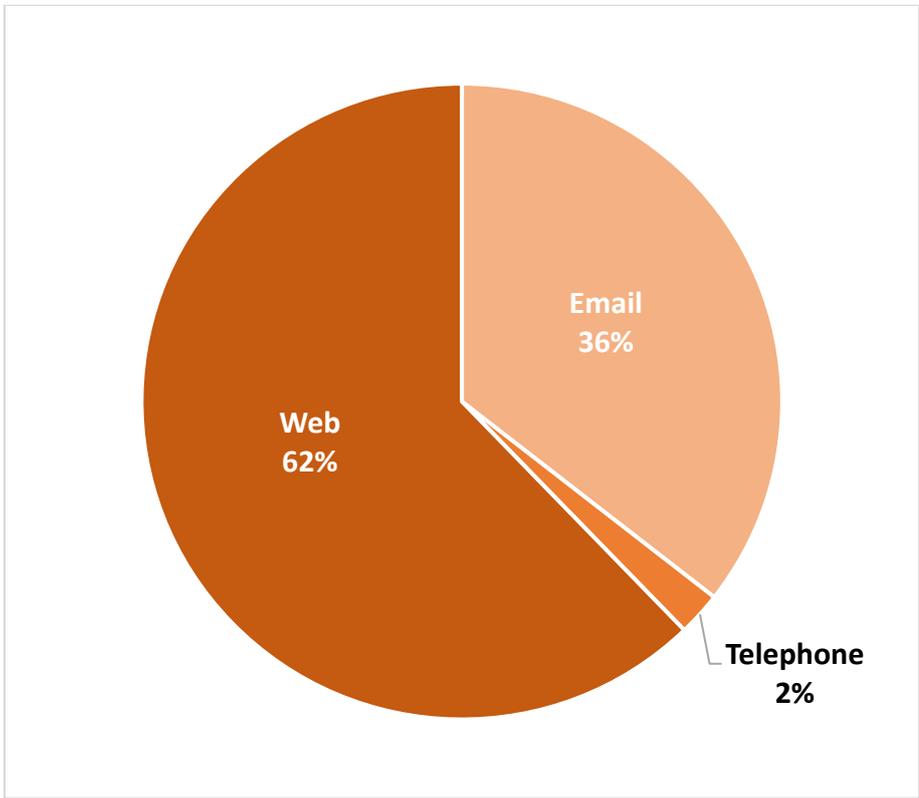
Hit	65%	78%
Miss	35%	22%

2. Members Enquiries



Enquiries from Councillors and MPs (Members) increased by 18%, rising from 39 in 2023–2024 to 45 in 2024–2025. Since December 2024, Member Enquiries have been formally logged through the Case Tracker system, supporting improved tracking and response management.

3. Method of Contact (2024-2025)



The chart opposite highlights a shift in how complaints were submitted during 2024–2025.

Online submissions became the default method, replacing email, which had been the preferred channel in the previous year.

Telephone contact remained minimal, and there were no complaints submitted via face-to-face or written correspondence throughout the year.

This change reflects a broader move towards digital engagement and streamlined reporting processes.

4. Compliments (2024-2025)

COMPLIMENTS	SERVICE	PROFESSIONAL
SEND	3	1

SEND

We would all like to thank you so much for sorting out the help for our son like you have. The relief we feel is immense and we feel so positive for our son's future with the short and long term plans set out below.

SEND

Thank u so much for changing my son's case officer. His ECHP is finally reading like it's my child again another battle off my shoulders and I really do appreciate everything you do for my children. One grateful mum thank u so much for everything!

Conclusion and Action Plan

The 2024–2025 reporting period has demonstrated continued progress in the management of complaints and compliments within Education Services. While overall complaint volumes remained stable, notable improvements were seen in response times and the quality of outcomes, reflecting enhanced triage and resolution processes.

The reduction in SEND complaints and the shift in complaint themes suggest both operational improvements and the impact of new case management tools. The increase in upheld complaints and decline in partially upheld and not upheld cases may indicate clearer decision-making and more effective early intervention.

Digital engagement continues to grow, with online submissions now the dominant method of contact. Member Enquiries have also increased, and the introduction of Case Tracker has supported better tracking and accountability.

Compliments received, particularly within SEND, highlight the positive impact of staff efforts and the value of personalised support. These insights will inform ongoing service development and reinforce the importance of maintaining high standards across all areas.

Action Plan for 2025–2026

Strengthen Early Resolution Processes

- Continue refining triage procedures to ensure timely and accurate complaint categorisation.
- Provide additional training to staff on informal resolution techniques.

Enhance Data Quality and Reporting

- Review and refine complaint theme categories to ensure consistency and clarity.
- Monitor the impact of new case management software and adjust processes as needed.

Improve Communication and Engagement

- Address the rise in complaints related to lack of communication
- Develop clearer guidance for families and stakeholders on complaint processes.

Support SEND Service Improvements

- Investigate the reasons behind the reduction in SEND complaints to identify best practices.
- Continue to prioritise personalised support and timely responses for SEND-related issues.

Expand Digital Accessibility

- Promote online complaint submission while ensuring alternative methods remain available for those who need them.
- Explore enhancements to the Case Tracker system
- Celebrate and Share Positive Feedback
- Share examples of positive outcomes across teams to encourage a culture of excellence.