



Complaints Procedure

2018/19



Introduction

General:

'The governing body is required by the Education Act 2002 to have a policy for dealing with parents' complaints.'

The school's complaints policy allows parents' complaints about school issues to be dealt with efficiently and sensitively, and at the appropriate level.

Complaints can cover a wide variety of matters that concern parents. The school expects ALL parental complaints to be taken seriously and to be dealt with comprehensively and as far as possible in confidence.

Aims

The policy aims to ensure that all complaints from parents, pupils and others are dealt with as quickly and sensitively as possible, and by the person best able to do so.

As far as possible all concerns should be dealt with as informally as possible.

A parent, pupil or other complaint should be able to expect to have a response, even if not the final response, to their complaint within 24 hours of having made the complaint.

If parent's pupils or other complaints wish to register a formal complaint they should be asked to complete the schools formal complaint form and return it to the Complaints Co-ordinator.

The procedures must be published under arrangements made by the Head and approved by the GB.

Types of Concerns and Complaints:

The majority of complaints received by the school fall into the following categories:

- **Financial and administrative** (and breach of contract in independent schools) ;
- **Academic** (course programme, unsatisfactory teaching, too much/ too little homework, progress in a particular subject etc);
- **Pastoral** (discipline/indiscipline, inappropriate sanctions, bullying, overall progress of the child, un happiness of child etc); and
- **Child Protection** (allegations against staff, handling of sensitive issues).



Policy

Responsibilities:

Governing Body: for approving the policy, procedures, and guidelines, hearing and deciding on appeals, receiving reports, and advising the Head.

The GB will monitor the level and nature of complaints and review the outcomes at termly meetings.

Chair of GB: to receive complaints at stage 3, to nominate a governor or panel to hear the appeal, and to check that the correct procedure is followed...

Nominated Governor or Chair of the Panel at Stage 3:

To ensure that:

- The parties understand the procedure;
- the issues are addressed;
- key findings of fact are established;
- Complaints are put at ease;
- The hearing is conducted as informally as possible;
- The panel is open minded and acts independently;
- No member of the panel has vested interest in the outcome, or has been involved in the issues previously;
- All parties have the chance to be heard; and
- Any written material is seen by all parties.

Clerk to the Governing Body

The Clerk must act as the reference point for the complaint at Stage 3. The Clerk must:

- Set convenient dates and times and venues for hearings;
- Collate any written material and forward it to the parties;
- Meet and welcome the parties;
- Record the proceedings; and
- Notify the parties of the decision.

Head: for the overall internal management of the procedures, for hearing complaints at the second stage (see below), ensuring that the procedures are monitored and reviewed and termly reports made to the GB.

Complaints Co-ordinator: for the efficient operation and management of the policy and procedures, for training staff on how to deal appropriately with complaints, for keeping parents, pupils and others informed of the procedures and for compiling reports for the Head as required.

Finance Manager: for administrative, environmental and financial queries and complaints.

Named Senior Member of Staff: for child protection issues.

All staff: for hearing any concerns brought to them by parents and pupils and reassuring them that they will be dealt with as soon as possible by the appropriate member of staff, and for informing the



relevant staff of the concerns. And for passing any complaints received from other people who are not parents or pupils to the Complaints Coordinator.

Formal Procedure

- Stage 1: Complaint heard by staff member (who is not subject of the complaint);
- Stage 2: Complaint heard by Head; and
- Stage 3: complaint heard by GB's complaints appeals panel.

(Some procedures may allow an additional stage if the LEA, Diocesan body or other external agency provides an independent appeal or review. If so, this should be included here.)

Guidelines:

All staff and Governors should be conversant with the procedures.

Stage 1

All staff should listen carefully and patiently to parents' and pupils' complaints, recognising that however ill-founded the complaint might be it is a matter of great concern to the parent or pupil.

If the matter is within the competence of the member of staff to resolve quickly this should be done. Otherwise the complaint should be reassured that the complaint will be passed to the relevant member of staff, and the relevant person should be informed by the member of staff as soon as possible.

The member of staff receiving the complaint should use the school's 'Complaints Form' (see Quick Guide CD PC3) to inform the relevant senior member of staff. But this does not prevent the member of staff also speaking to the senior colleague about the matter at the earliest opportunity.

If the senior member of staff considers the issue to be serious (but is not a child protection issue) he/she should inform the Coordinator (or Head) via the school's 'Complaints Form', and inform the complainant of the action taken. The Coordinator (or Head) will determine the next step(s).

If the Coordinator or a relevant senior member of staff considers that he/she can deal with the complaint, he/she should attempt to do so. If a resolution cannot be found the Coordinator should inform the complainant of their right of appeal to the Head (stage 2) or GB (stage 3), and inform the Head/ GB of the action taken.

If the complaint concerns a child protection issue or involves an allegation of abuse by a member of the school staff, the 'named person' responsible for the child protection complaint should be informed by the Coordinator.

If a serious complaint is made by a pupil, the member of staff should immediately inform the Coordinator, who will immediately inform the pupil's tutor (or Head of House/Year). It will be the responsibility of the Head of the House/Year to determine whether he/she can deal with the issue, or in consultation with the Coordinator, what the course of action should be, including referring the matter to the Head.



If a trivial/simple verbal complaint is made it might be possible in most cases, or where a member of staff is uncertain, parents should always be asked to put their complaint in writing. This is to ensure that there is no conflict in determining what the complaint consists of and the action taken by the members of the school staff.

In any cases of doubt members of staff should seek the advice of the (Coordinator/Deputy Head) who has the responsibility for mentoring colleagues.

If the appropriate member of staff can not resolve the complaint, the Coordinator must refer the matter to the Head (Stage 2).

At Stage 1 the school should aim to resolve the complaint within 24 hours of receiving it. Where this is not possible, the Coordinator will inform the parties of the action being taken, and when it is expected to resolve it.

No complaint should normally be left unresolved at this stage after THREE days of receipt of the complaint. In abnormal circumstances the matter will be referred to the Head who will determine the appropriate action, and will keep the parties informed.

Stage 2

The head will decide the outcome at this stage, but may delegate the collating of information to the Coordinator.

The Head must normally resolve the matter within THREE days of receiving notification of the complaint. In abnormal circumstances a longer time scale can be agreed, either by agreement with all parties, or by a decision of the Chair of the GB if no agreement is reached.

If the Head is unable to resolve the issue it is open to the complainant to make representations to the governing body. (Stage 3)

Stage 3

Appeals to the Governing Body

Complainants who are not satisfied by the Head's decision re the complaint can make representations to the governing body.

The complainant must be advised by the coordinator to write to the chair of the GB giving details of the complaint. The Chair will nominate a governor (or panel) to hear the appeal.

The hearing must be within 10 days of the Chair receiving notice of the complaint.

The complainant must be told of their right to be accompanied by a friend, and where relevant translations/interpreters must be arranged by the Clerk consultation with the parties.

The nominated governor/panel will make its own procedures, and will agree these with the Chair, who will report them to the next governing body meeting.

The governor/panel will ensure that the complainant is heard in private, is welcomed and as far as possible put at ease.



Careful consideration must be taken when the complainant is a pupil.

The governor/panel will hear the appeal(s), consider all the views expressed and decide the outcome.

The governor/panel can:

- Dismiss the complaint in whole or part;
- Uphold the complaint in whole or part;
- Decide on appropriate action to resolve the complaint; or
- Recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures.

The governing body's decision is binding.

Where there is provision for an extra appeal to another body in the schools policy:

In this case, if the governing body cannot resolve the matter the complainant should be informed that representations can be made to the LEA, and be informed about the action that needs to be taken.

The decision at this stage must be communicated to the parties within THREE days of the hearing.

Reporting and Recording:

In all cases it is important for staff to use the school's 'Complaints Form' so that records of the complaint and the action taken can be recorded and traced. Supporting documents should be attached to the form.

The Head and Complaints Coordinator will consider the handling of complaints from time to time, and will discuss issues with staff as necessary.

The Head will report to staff from time to time and to the GB each term on the number and type of complaints received and their outcomes.

Signed:

Date:

Chair of the GB

Written by: leadership team

Date: April 2018

Approved by:

Next review due by: