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## Complaints Policy

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# Complaints Policy

## Introduction

This procedure applies to most general complaints which a school is likely to receive from parents. It is not intended to cover those aspects of school life for which there are specific statutory requirements, including complaints about the delivery of the National Curriculum and the provision of collective worship and religious education, complaints about special needs assessments, or complaints about schools admissions and exclusions. In addition, allegations of child abuse, financial improprieties or other criminal activities will be dealt with through different procedures, as will complaints about contracted staff.

## General Principles

The following principles will be observed whenever a complaint is made.

- 1. Procedures should be as speedy as possible.** Each stage of the procedure has known time limits. Where it is not possible to meet these, information about progress will be given to the complainant.
- 2. Confidentiality.** We will treat conversations and correspondence with discretion. However, from the outset all parties to a complaint need to be aware that some information may have to be shared with others involved in the operation of the complaints procedure.
- 3. Anonymous complaints.** We will usually disregard anonymous complaints unless the complainant is prepared to identify themselves.
- 4. Record keeping.** Complaints will be recorded and monitored termly by the Headteacher and reported to the Governing Body.



## **Stage 1: The First Contact: Guidelines for Dealing with Concerns and Complaints Informally**

- 1.1 The majority of concerns and complaints should be able to be resolved informally. There are many occasions where concerns are resolved straight away through the class teacher or Headteacher, depending on whom the parent first approached.
- 1.2 Parents should raise their concern with the appropriate member of staff who will clarify with the parent the nature of the concern. It can be helpful to identify at this point what outcome the parent is looking for.
- 1.3 The staff member will seek to resolve the complaint at this stage. The staff member will ensure that the parent is clear what action (if any) or monitoring of the situation has been agreed, putting this in writing where this seems the best way of making things clear. The staff member will keep a record of the complaint and the action taken. The staff member will notify the Headteacher that a complaint has been made.
- 1.4 If the member of staff first contacted cannot immediately deal with the matter, s/he will refer the complaint to the Headteacher or Deputy/Assistant Headteacher. On certain issues, the Headteacher may decide to deal with concerns directly at this stage.
- 1.6 If the concern relates to the Headteacher, the parent should contact the Chair of the Governing Body through the school office. The Chair may investigate the complaint, or may delegate this task to another Governor.

## **Stage 2: Referral to the Headteacher for Investigation**

- 2.1 If the parent is not satisfied that their complaint has been adequately dealt with, they may put their complaint in writing to the Headteacher and ask them to investigate. The Headteacher may delegate the investigation to the Deputy Headteacher.
- 2.2 If the Headteacher has been involved at Stage 1, the Stage 2 investigation will be carried out by the Chair of the Governing Body or another delegated Governor.
- 2.3 The Headteacher (or designate) will acknowledge the complaint in writing within three working days of receiving the written complaint. The acknowledgement will give a target date for providing a response to the complaint. This will normally be within 10 working days; if this proves impossible, a letter is sent explaining the reason for the delay and giving a revised target date.

- 2.4 The Headteacher (or designate) will invite the complainant to meet him/her to supplement any information provided previously. It will be made clear to the complainant that if s/he wishes, s/he may be accompanied to any meeting by a friend, relative, representative, or advocate who can speak on his or her behalf; and that interpreting facilities are available if needed.
- 2.5 If necessary, the Headteacher (or designate) will interview witnesses and take statements from those involved.
- 2.6 The Headteacher (or designate) will keep written records of meetings, telephone conversations, and other documentation.
- 2.7 Once all the relevant facts have been established, the Headteacher (or designate) will produce a written response to the complainant.
- 2.8 The written response will include an explanation of the decision and the reasons for it. Where appropriate, this will include what action the school will take to resolve the complaint.
- 2.9 The complainant will be advised in the written response that should s/he feels that their complaint has not been investigated in line with these procedures, they should write to the Chair of the Governing Body within two weeks of receiving the written response to request a review. This request for a review will need to set out the reasons for the request, clearly stating which aspects of this procedure they feel have not been followed correctly

### **Stage 3: Review by the Governing Body**

- 3.1 The Governing Body will not take any role in a complaints investigation, other than to review a case to determine whether the complaints procedure was followed correctly. The only exception will be if the complaint relates to the Governing Body or a member of the Governing Body. In these cases the Chair of the Governing Body will appoint an Investigating Officer.
- 3.2 Upon receipt of a written request by the complainant for the complaint to proceed to stage 3, the Chair of the Governing Body will write to the complainant to acknowledge receipt of the written request for review.
- 3.3 The acknowledgement will inform the complainant that the complaint will to be heard by three members of the school's Governing Body. The letter will reiterate that the role of the panel is to review whether the correct procedure has been followed by the school in addressing the original complaint and that the Panel will not review the decisions taken at Stage 1 and Stage 2, nor will the Panel hear any new evidence.
- 3.4 The Chair of the Governing Body will arrange to convene a Governors' Complaints Panel. The panel members will be governors who have had no prior involvement with the complaint. If s/he has not previously been involved, the Chair or Vice Chair of the Governing Body will generally chair the panel; however if both have been involved or are unavailable, another Governor will chair the panel.

- 3.5 The Chair of the Panel will write and inform the complainant, Headteacher and members of the Panel at least five working days in advance, of the date, time and place of the meeting. The request for review setting out why the complainant believes the complaints procedure has not been correctly followed will be enclosed with this letter. The notification to the complainant will also inform him/her of the right to be accompanied to the meeting by a friend/advocate/interpreter.
- 3.7 It is the responsibility of the Chair of the Panel to ensure that the meeting is properly minuted by the Clerk to Governors.
- 3.6 The meeting will allow for:
- the complainant to explain why they believe their complaint has not been handled in accordance with this procedure
  - the Headteacher to explain the procedure followed by the school
  - Panel members to have an opportunity to question both the complainant and the Headteacher
  - final statements by both the complainant and the Headteacher.
- 3.9 The Chair of the Panel will explain to the complainant and the Headteacher that the Panel will now consider its decision, and a written decision will be sent to both parties within 15 working days. The complainant and Headteacher will then leave.
- 3.10 The Panel will then reach a decision on whether this procedure has been correctly followed.
- 3.11 A written statement outlining the decision of the Panel will be sent to the complainant and Headteacher within 15 working days.
- 3.12 The school will ensure that a copy of all correspondence and notes are kept on file in the school's records. These records will be kept separately from a pupil's personal records.