



Complaints Policy Information for Parents

Policy Purpose

This policy exists to make clear the school's procedure for the handling of parental concerns and complaints relating to the school or any services that the school provides. This procedure aims to reassure parents and others with an interest in the school that

- any concern or complaint will be dealt with in a fair, open and responsive way, with the aim of achieving a speedy and satisfactory resolution; and
- the school recognises that a willingness to listen and to respond positively can lead to improvements in school practices and provision for pupils.

Raising Concerns

A concern is defined as an expression of worry or unhappiness regarding an incident, event or other matter in school. Parents are encouraged to raise concerns regarding their children and matters arising in school with individual members of staff, particularly the child's class teacher, in the first instance. In most cases, the class teacher or the individual delivering the service (in the case of extended school provision) should be able to offer to address the concern and help resolve the matter. Staff should attempt to respond to a concern within five working days. Where parents feel that the concern has not been addressed within an agreed period of time, they should seek a further meeting with the member of staff. Failing this, parents are asked to contact the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher of the school to discuss the matter.

Complaints

Where parents feel that, despite informal discussions with a member of staff, an issue has not been considered or resolved, they are encouraged to express their concerns in a more formal way. This may be done by telephone, in-person or in writing. This may simply be a more formal expression of concern or a complaint which is defined as a clear statement of dissatisfaction about any specified aspect of the school's work.

All written complaints should be addressed to the Headteacher even if the complaint regards the conduct or behaviour of the Headteacher. In this case, a written copy may also be sent to the Chair of Governors.

Stage 1 (Staff Member)

On receipt of a complaint, the member of staff or Headteacher will arrange to discuss the issue with the parent or complainant as soon as possible, usually within five working days. This will be with the aim of resolving the issue and addressing any concerns as soon as possible. Following the discussion, both the member of staff and parent should agree the outcome of the discussion and what action, if any, the school proposes to take. If no resolution can be agreed, the parent may wish to refer the matter to the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher.

Stage 2 (Headteacher)

Where a parent feels that a complaint has not been adequately addressed by a member of staff, either the parent or member of staff may refer the incident to the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher. The Headteacher will respond to the complaint within five working days and offer to meet with parents at a mutually-convenient time. That discussion will aim to explore the issues leading to the formal complaint and attempt to resolve the matter.

This may involve a meeting with the member of staff concerned and an exploration of written accounts of the incident or issues leading up to the complaint. All parties will be encouraged to approach these discussions with integrity and honesty and with the aim of accepting mutual responsibility for events and improving practice. A response at Stage 2 will normally be followed up in writing.

In cases where the complaint concerns the behaviour or conduct of the Headteacher, parents should still make a complaint in writing to the Headteacher before contacting the Chair of Governors and the Headteacher should be given an opportunity to resolve the complaint in an appropriate way. A copy of the letter may be also sent to the Chair of Governors.

Where parents feel that a complaint has not been resolved by the Headteacher within a given timeframe, they may wish to refer the matter to the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors should only be involved in cases where discussions with or a complaint in writing to the Headteacher has not resulted in a resolution within an agreed time frame. The school hopes that through a good relationship with parents and the opportunities on offer to discuss issues with staff, all issues can be resolved at Stages 1 and 2.

Stage 3 (Chair of Governors)

Where a parent feels that a complaint has not been adequately addressed by the Headteacher, either the parent or Headteacher may refer the matter to the Chair of Governors. This should be in writing and addressed to the Chair of Governors at the school address. It should be marked 'Urgent and Confidential'. The school will forward any correspondence marked in this way within two working days.

The Chair of Governors will respond to the formal complaint within five working days and offer to resolve the issue with parents at a mutually-convenient time with the aim of resolving the matter. That discussion will aim to explore the issues leading to the formal complaint and attempt to resolve the matter. This may involve a meeting with the Headteacher and an exploration of written accounts of the incident or issues leading up to the complaint, including the Headteachers' response and any actions taken by the school. All parties will be encouraged to approach these discussions with integrity and honesty and with the aim of accepting mutual responsibility for events and improving practice.

Where the Chair of Governors receives a complaint from a parent who has not expressed their complaint in writing to the Headteacher, the Chair of Governors will respond to the complaint within five working days and encourage the parents and the Headteacher to resolve the matter at Stage 2. Where parents still feel that the matter has not been resolved within a reasonable timeframe, they may contact the Chair of Governors in writing or by telephone to pursue the matter at Stage 3.

Stage 4 (Governors' Complaints Panel)

Where parents feel that a complaint has not been adequately addressed by the Headteacher and Chair of Governors, they may refer the matter to the Governors' Complaints Panel (GCP). It is a statutory requirement that all governing bodies form a Complaints Panel to hear serious complaints at this stage. Stages 1, 2 and 3 must have been exhausted in order for a Complaints Panel to be convened. No member of the panel should have prior knowledge of the complaint. It is not considered appropriate for the Headteacher to be a member of the GCP as he/she may be called upon to give evidence.

The complaint must be heard by the Governors' Complaints Panel within twenty working days of receiving the complaint.

Closing the Complaint

Where parents and the school feel happy with the discussions and actions that have taken place, the complaint may be closed at any stage. There will be occasions when, despite discussion and action at all stages of the procedure, the complainant remains dissatisfied. The Chair of Governors may inform the complainant that the matter is closed and that no further consideration will be given to the matter. If still dissatisfied, the complainant may then take up the matter with the Local Authority or the Secretary of State for Children, Families and Schools (Stage 5).