



## Parental Complaints Procedure

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## The complaints procedure

### Scope of the complaints procedure

The Governing Body together with the Principal set the direction and tone of the school in all that they do and are committed to working with parents in the best interests of their children's education. The purpose of the Complaints Procedure is to address complaints raised by parents. The procedure covers all matters relating to the actions of staff employed in the school and the application of school procedures, where they affect individual pupils.

Where it becomes evident at an early stage that a matter should be dealt with according to other established procedures or appeals mechanisms, this complaints procedure will be set aside in favour of the agreed procedure for example under such policies as Safeguarding, Admissions, and Exclusions, Grievance, Discipline, Bullying or Capability.

The school will not deal with anonymous complaints (except for those concerning child protection/safeguarding matters), therefore these procedures do not provide for a resolution of anonymous complaints.

### Aims

In operating this complaints procedure we aim to:

- encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible;
- allow swift handling of a complaint within established time-limits for action, keeping people informed of progress;
- ensure a full and fair consideration of the complaint;
- have due regard for the rights and responsibilities of all parties involved;
- respect confidentiality;
- address all the points at issue and provide an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary; and
- provide information to the school's Senior Leadership Team and Governing Body, so that services can be improved.

The procedures are designed to be:

- easily accessible and publicised. A copy of the procedures is available on the school's website or on request from the school;
- simple to understand and use;
- impartial; and
- non-adversarial.

## What to expect under these procedures

### Your rights as a person making a complaint

In dealing with your complaint, we will ensure that you receive:

- fair treatment;
- courtesy;
- a timely response;
- accurate advice;
- respect for your privacy – complaints will be treated as confidentially as possible, allowing for the possibility that we may have to consult with other appropriate parties about your complaint; and
- reasons for our decisions.

Where the complaint is upheld we will acknowledge this and address the complaint you have raised. If, after consideration, it is judged there are no grounds for your complaint, you will be advised formally.

### **Your responsibilities as a person making a complaint**

In making your complaint, we would expect that you:

- raise issues in a timely manner;
- treat our staff with respect and courtesy;
- provide accurate and concise information in relation to the issues you raise; and
- use these procedures fully and engage in them at the appropriate levels.

### **Rights of parties involved during the consideration**

The process is non-adversarial and does not provide a role for any other statutory or non-statutory body.

### **Person making the complaint**

The complainant may be accompanied by another person where it is accepted, by the Principal and Governing Body, that this will assist the consideration and resolution of the complaint.

### **Staff**

A member of staff who is directly referred to in a complaint will be provided with a written copy of the complaint and details of any information brought by the parent before being required to respond to the matters raised.

Staff may seek advice and support from their professional body and may also be accompanied by another person.

### **Legal Representation**

Legal representation or representation by person(s) acting in a professional capacity **is not** permitted within this procedure.

This procedure does not take away from the statutory rights of any of the participants.

### **Where the person making the complaint is a Governor**

Where the person making the complaint is a member of the Governing Body, that Governor will play no part in the management or appeal of the complaint as set out in this procedure.

### **Who will deal with your complaint?**

The school aims to deal with concerns at the earliest point, in the first instance at the informal stage your complaint should be raised and dealt with by and order of the class teacher if appropriate, Key Stage Co-ordinator/Head of Phase/Head of Department/Deputy Head of School/Head of School or Principal.

If the complaint does not relate to a teacher in the school, but to a member of the non-teaching staff, it should be referred to the appropriate line manager.

If you proceed to the formal part of the process, the Principal will assume responsibility for the process, unless s/he is the subject of the complaint, in which case the Chair of the Governing Body will assume responsibility. The Chair will make a decision as to whether it is appropriate for him/her to conduct a preliminary investigation or whether it is necessary to establish a Complaints Sub-Committee to consider and resolve the matter.

## **Timescales**

Every effort should be made by all parties to resolve complaints in a timely manner. The entire procedure, should a complaint proceed right to the Appeals Stage, should be dealt with in forty working days, where possible.

## **Making a complaint**

### **Informal Stage: Step 1 – Speaking with the teacher concerned**

In the first instance a complaint should normally be raised verbally with the teacher concerned (whether that be a classroom teacher, Key Stage Co-ordinator/Head of Phase/Head of Department, Deputy Head of School/Head of School or Principal), so that s/he may have an opportunity to address the issue(s).

**Please observe the school's existing protocols for arranging and conducting such meetings and follow the school's policy with respect to access to members of teaching staff.**

This approach would not prevent you from choosing to enter the formal process at a later stage, if you believe that to be an appropriate course of action.

### **Regards non-teaching staff**

If your complaint is against a member of the non-teaching staff or if the complaint is unresolved following Step 1 you should arrange a meeting with the line manager to discuss the issue(s). In advance of this meeting you should inform the Principal in writing of the nature of your complaint so that s/he may be in a position to resolve the problem without further delay.

In some circumstances the Principal may not be able to deal effectively with your complaint immediately and s/he may require some time to consider and prepare a response. If further time is required, you will be informed of the timescale and the likely date by which a response will be issued.

Sometimes it will not be possible for you to have your complaint resolved through the informal processes proposed at Steps 1 or indeed it might be more appropriate to initiate the procedures at Step 2.

### **Formal Stage: Step 2a - Making a formal written complaint in regards a specific school it must be sent to the appropriate Headteacher**

You should write to the Headteacher and state the grounds for your complaint as concisely as possible, addressing specifically the issue(s) that are of concern to you. If your complaint is against the Headteacher you should follow step 2b.

You will then receive a written acknowledgement of your letter from the Headteacher. This will confirm that your letter has been received, and either:

- Provide a response to the issue(s) you raised, or state who is considering your complaint and indicate when you can expect a response to be issued.

### **Formal Stage: Step 2b - Making a formal written complaint to the Principal or Chair of the Governing Body**

You should write to the Principal or the Chair of the Governing Body and state the grounds for your complaint as concisely as possible, addressing specifically the issue(s) that are of concern to you. If your complaint is against the Principal you should write directly to the Chair. Details of how to contact the Governing Body will be available from the school.

You will then receive a written acknowledgement of your letter from the Principal or Chair. This will confirm that your letter has been received, and either:

- Provide a response to the issue(s) you raised, or state who is considering your complaint and indicate when you can expect a response to be issued.

### **Formal Stage: Step 3 - Initial investigation of the written complaint by the Chair and/or Complaints Sub-Committee**

If your complaint is to be dealt with by the Chair, they will make a decision as to whether it is appropriate for him/her to conduct a preliminary investigation or whether it is necessary to establish a Complaints Sub-Committee to consider and resolve the matter.

A Complaints Sub-Committee will consist of a minimum of two governors.

The sub-committee will acknowledge in writing your complaint. This will confirm that your complaint has been received, and:

- provide a response to the issue(s) you raised; or
- state that your complaint is being considered and indicate when you can expect a response to be issued.

In some cases you may be required to meet the Complaints Sub-Committee and due notification will be given of such meetings. The Complaints Sub-Committee may also talk to the parties relevant to the complaint.

You should expect a written response. This will indicate the findings of the Complaints Sub-Committee, the reasons supporting its decisions and any recommendations, if applicable. Any recommendations will be brought to the Governing Body for ratification.

### **Formal Stage: Step 4 - Appeals Sub-Committee of the Governing Body**

If you are dissatisfied with the decision of the Governing Body Complaints Sub-Committee, you may write to the Chair appealing its decision. Your written request should be as concise as possible and set out specifically the grounds for your appeal.

You will receive written acknowledgement of your letter. This will confirm that your letter has been received and provide you with the date and time of the meeting with the Appeals Sub-Committee at which you will have an opportunity to explain the grounds for your appeal. The Appeals Sub-Committee will also review all information and correspondence from the original complaint and the consideration by the Complaints Sub-Committee.

You should expect a final written response. This will indicate the findings of the Appeals Sub-Committee, the reasons supporting its decisions and any recommendations, if applicable. Any recommendations will be brought to the Governing Body for ratification.

The decision of the Appeals Sub-Committee is final. At the end of the process, the Chair will inform you, in writing, that the Complaints Procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is considered closed.

### **Record keeping**

The Principal and Chair shall maintain a record of all correspondence, conversations and meetings concerning your complaint. These records shall be held confidentially in the school and shall be kept apart from pupil records. All such records will be destroyed three years after the date of the last correspondence on the issue.

### **Malicious or vexatious complaints**

Where the Governing Body considers the actions of a parent/group of parents to constitute frivolous or vexatious behaviour, they will seek further legal advice.

### **Complaint against The Chair of the Governing Body**

You will be directed to the Ministry of Education and the UK Embassy.

## Appendix 1

### Parental complaints procedure flow chart

