

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS ON THE SCHOOL BASED COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

What to do if you have a concern or complaint about a School

At Rothesay Nursery School, we like to be told about how we are doing, whether well or badly. If you have a concern or complaint we always try to deal with it helpfully and reasonably. If we need to, we try to put things right as quickly as possible. If you have a concern or complaint you need to take it up with the school itself. The Council would not usually get involved in a complaint about a school unless the school had completed its own procedures first.

This complaints procedure is for general complaints. The school must follow other procedures for complaints or appeals about the curriculum; special educational needs provision, exclusions and admissions. Staff disciplinary action, child protection issues or criminal investigation will also need to be handled differently. We shall tell you which is the right process when you discuss your concern with us.

The complaints procedure has four stages. You will be told what to do at each stage if you wish to take your complaint further.

Stage 1 of the process is informal:

STAGE 1

If you have a concern about the school, try to talk to someone at the school, preferably the person who is most closely involved. If you get in touch with one of the governors first of all they can only give you general advice. They may need to ask you to take up your concerns with the member of staff best able to help you, or with the Headteacher.

Your concern can usually be settled quickly and without fuss by contacting the right person in the school. This could be your child's teacher, another member of staff or the Headteacher.

If your concern cannot be sorted out in this way or you are not happy with the way it has been dealt with you should take it to stage 2:

STAGE 2

You should complain to the Headteacher who will investigate your complaint. You would normally do this in writing. If your complaint is about the Headteacher you can complain directly to the chair of governors (see Stage 3).

The school will let you know that it has received your complaint and a meeting held within 5 school days. You will be given the results of the Headteacher's investigation in writing within 15 school days.

If your complaint has still not been resolved to your satisfaction you may take it to stage 3:

STAGE 3

You can complain in writing to the chair of governors for the school. You should make it clear why you are complaining, who you have already spoken to and what you want to happen as a result of your complaint.

The chair of governors will let you know that he or she has received your complaint within 7 school days and will then investigate it.

You will be told about the outcome of the chair of governors' investigation in writing within 20 school days.

If you are still not satisfied after receiving the chair of governor's report, you can ask to have your complaint referred to a complaints committee of the governing body at stage 4.

STAGE 4

You can write to the clerk to the governors care of the school. You should say exactly why you are unhappy with the chair of governor's findings and ask that a complaints committee be set up to look at the complaint.

The committee will meet within 10 school days after the clerk to the governors receives your letter. You will be told in advance about the process and what will happen at the meeting of the committee. You can attend and bring a relative or friend to support you if you want to. You will be told in writing about the committee's findings within 5 school days from the date of the meeting.

What you can do if you are still not satisfied with the governing body's decision

You may believe that your complaint was not handled fairly according to the school's own complaints procedure. In this case, you can ask the Council to investigate.

You can write to the Children & Learning Department at this address.

2nd Floor, Town Hall Extension
Upper George Street
Luton, LU1 2BQ

You should explain your complaint and say why you think the school did not follow its complaints procedure properly. Wherever possible you should give evidence for why you think this.

The Department will acknowledge your letter within 3 working days and let you know the name of the officer who will investigate the complaint. However, the Council cannot do anything until the school itself has finished considering your complaint.

The investigating officer will investigate whether the school had dealt with the complaint properly according to its own procedures but will **not** investigate your original complaint all over again. The Council cannot make the school come to a different judgement on your case if the governing body has considered your complaint in a reasonable way.

The investigating officer will tell you the outcome of the investigation in writing. If the conclusion is that the school did not follow its procedures properly, the matter will be referred back to the chair of the governing body. The governing body should then re-investigate the complaint.

If you believe that the Council has acted unreasonably you may appeal to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills:

The Secretary of State for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London, SW1P 3BT

The Secretary of State could step in if a governing body or a Council had not carried out its legal duty or had acted unreasonably. The Secretary of State would not do anything until the school and the Council had finished looking into the complaint.

If you feel that there has been a fault in the way your complaint has been dealt with, you can take this to the Local Government Ombudsman:

The Local Government Ombudsman
21 Queen Anne's Gate
London, SW1H 9BU

The Ombudsman will only investigate where there has been a fault in the way the process was handled by the school or Council. He can investigate complaints about how something has been done. This could be giving the wrong information, not dealing with letters or taking too long to do something. He cannot question what has been done just because someone does not agree with the result. The Ombudsman cannot investigate how schools and colleges are run. The Ombudsman could not do anything until the school and the Council have finished looking into your complaint.

SCHOOL BASED COMPLAINTS – PROCEDURAL FLOWCHART

You have a concern or complaint

What you should do	What will happen
Stage 1: Discuss your concerns with the class teacher or other relevant member of staff (which may be the Headteacher). This will usually resolve the issue.	The member of staff concerned will deal with your issues or make sure you have the information you need if you feel you want to take the matter further.

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If you are not satisfied with the response

Stage 2: Complain to the Headteacher, either verbally or in writing.	Your complaint will be acknowledged and a meeting held within 5 school days with a full written response within 15 school days.
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If you are not satisfied with the headteacher's response or if the complaint is about the headteacher

Stage 3: Complain to the chair of governors in writing.	Your complaint will be acknowledged within 7 school days with a full response within 20 school days
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If the complaint is not resolved

Stage 4: Write to the clerk of the governing body requesting that your complaint be heard by a complaints committee of governors	The complaints committee will meet within 10 school days from receipt of your letter. The committee's decision is final and you will be told of its findings within 5 school days of the hearing.
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If you are not satisfied that your complaint has been properly dealt with

Write to the Council Children & Learning Department complaints officer, giving evidence that the school did not follow its complaints procedure	The complaints officer will acknowledge your letter within 3 working days and tell you what will be done. The department can only investigate inappropriate procedure, not re-visit the complaint itself. A response will be made within 10 working days.
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If you are not satisfied with the response

Write to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills, or the Local Government Ombudsman.	The Secretary of State may intervene if a governing body or a Council has not carried out a statutory duty or has acted unreasonably. The Ombudsman only investigates issues of maladministration.
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