

COMPLAINTS POLICY

Reviewed: Oct 2018
Next review: Autumn 2019

Introduction

The school aims to be a caring, positive and supportive place where young people can learn and receive education in an appropriate manner.

We want to listen to parents' views about their children's education and well-being at school

We will try to resolve parents' concerns and complaints as informally and quickly as possible.

We will take any complaints seriously and provide a thorough and appropriate response

No pupil will be penalised or intimidated as a result of her/his parent making a complaint.

We aim to learn from any mistakes or weaknesses, in order to improve further the standards of education offered at the school.

There is a set of clear and detailed procedures for handling complaints that is available to parents who wish to pursue a complaint beyond the initial informal stage.

The school will ensure that all complaints are logged.

The governing body as a whole will not discuss individual complaints, and any governor receiving such a complaint will direct the parent to the school's complaints procedures.

The governing body will monitor and review the effectiveness of the policy and procedures annually by receiving a summary report of numbers and types of formal complaints together with outcomes. Individual details will not be included.

Complaints or appeals relating to admissions, exclusions or Special Educational Needs provision will normally be handled by separate statutory mechanisms, and we will ensure that parents are informed of how such complaints can be pursued.

Complaints Policy for Parents

Introduction

We aim to provide your child with the best possible education and meet his or her needs as well as we can. However, in any school, parents may occasionally feel concerned about something or have a complaint. If this is the case we want to hear from you. This policy explains how you can voice a concern or complaint, and how we will respond.

What is a complaint?

It can be a concern or problem or feeling of dissatisfaction that you have about an aspect of our work.

What do I do if I have a complaint about the school?

Tell a member of staff. Preferably speak with the member of staff most knowledgeable of the facts of the matter. He or she will talk it over with you and try to sort things out. She/he will discuss your complaint with you and seek to resolve the matter. Your child will not be penalised or treated less favourably as a result of your making a complaint.

There are certain specific complaints that are handled differently.

- If your child is refused admission to the school you have a statutory right to appeal to an independent appeals panel. The school will be able to give you details.
- If your child has been excluded for between 5 and 15 school days, you have a right to make representation to the governing body. If your child has been permanently excluded you have the right to an independent appeal.
- If your child has Special Educational Needs (SEN) and you have a complaint about her/his SEN provision, the school will be able to give you details of the Local Authority's dispute resolution arrangements, the Parent Partnership service, and the SEN Tribunal for disputes about an EHCP.

What do I do if I feel my complaint hasn't been sorted out?

You may contact the school office and ask for an appointment to see the Executive Head, Head of School or other senior teacher who handles complaints. The Executive Head, Head of School will listen carefully and ask you any questions to help him/her understand the situation fully. She/he will probably then have to talk to other people, but will get in touch with you as soon as s/he is able to respond fully. This is referred to as the informal stage of the complaints procedure

If I feel unhappy with what the Executive Head or Head of Schools says, what can I do then?

You may then write to the Chair of the school's governors (or designated governor), at the school address, setting out your complaint and why you are unhappy with the school's response. Please write within 14 days of receiving the head of school's response. The Chair (or designated governor) will write acknowledging your letter within a few days and may invite you for an informal meeting to discuss your complaint. If not, the Chair (or designated governor) will then write again once s/he has investigated more fully. You should receive a full response within 14 days. This is still referred to as the informal stage of the complaints

procedure.

What happens if I am unhappy about the Chair of Governors' response?

You are entitled to ask a panel of governors to meet to consider your complaint. If you want to do this, write to the Chair or Clerk to the governing body within 14 days of receiving the Chair's response. Say that you have a formal complaint and that you remain unhappy with the way the school and Chair of Governors have responded, and that you would like a panel of governors to consider your complaint. There is no need to write all the details of the complaint in this letter but you will be required to explain clearly what you are complaining about. The Clerk will contact you about the panel and explain what will happen. You may bring someone with you if you wish. This part of the procedure is referred to as the formal stage of the complaints procedure

What happens at the Panel meeting?

One of the governors will chair the meeting, and s/he will explain what will happen. You may be asked to outline your complaint. Panel members and/or the Executive Head or Heads of School who will also be present, may ask you questions. The Executive Head or Heads of School will then explain how the school has responded to the complaint, and then you and the panel may ask the EHT or Heads of School questions. You may also ask other people (witnesses) to speak about what happened.

After this, everyone except the panel and the person taking minutes will leave, so that the panel can consider its findings. The Chair of the panel will write to you within a few days setting out the panel's findings. They will also write to the head of school and Chair of Governors. Their findings are binding upon the school.

The panel's findings are the school's final response to you about your complaint. Schools are responsible for their own activities, and the Local Authority cannot get involved. The Local Authority cannot tell a school or governing body what to do. If you are still unhappy you could write to the Secretary of State for Education, but again there is no power to intervene unless the governing body has acted unreasonably or has failed to fulfil its statutory responsibilities.

WHAT MIGHT A COMPLAINT BE ABOUT?

- your child's academic/social progress
- bullying by other pupils
- your child's relationship with teachers or other staff
- unfair treatment of your child as you or your child perceive it
- issues on the Health and Safety of your child
- absence (authorised/unauthorised)
- sanctions
- any situation which causes you or your child concern

How to Complain - A Summary

1. Talk to the staff member concerned or other appropriate staff member
2. Talk to the EHT or Head of school
3. Write to the Chair of Governors
4. Write to ask for a complaints panel

FINALLY...

Please be assured that we will take your complaint seriously and treat you fairly. If something has gone wrong we want to put it right, and if you are not happy with the result, then neither are we!

Procedural Guidelines for each stage

Informal Stage

1. Informal discussion with Staff Member

The staff member will give the parent her/his undivided attention for a reasonable time in order to listen and respond to the concern. If the staff member is unable to do so immediately, s/he will offer the parent an appointment as soon as possible within 3 working days. If the staff member subsequently needs to investigate the issue before responding, s/he will inform the parent and state when a response should be available, within 3 working days. If it proves impossible to meet this deadline the staff member will contact the parent and explain the reasons for the delay and give a further time limit for their response. The staff member should consider the advisability of asking a third person to be present, and is encouraged to speak with the line manager.

2. Meeting with the EHT , the Heads of school or other senior staff

Upon receiving the parent's request for a meeting, the head of school will offer an appointment within 5 working days. If the EHT/Head of school subsequently needs to investigate the issue before responding, s/he will inform the parent and state when a response should be available, within 5 working days. If it proves impossible to meet this deadline the head of school will contact the parent and explain the reasons for the delay and give a further time limit for their response.

The EHT/Head of school will inform the parent that should s/he remain dissatisfied, she/he have recourse to the governing body and should write to the Chair of governors within 2 weeks.

3. Referral to Chair of Governors (or designated governor)

Upon receipt of a parent's letter of complaint, the Chair of governors will write to the parent within 3 days acknowledging the letter and stating that the matter will be investigated. The Chair will inform the parent that a full response will be made in writing within 14 days. If it proves impossible to meet this deadline the Chair will write to the parent and explain the reasons for the delay and give a further time limit for the full response.

The Chair will send a copy of the school's complaints procedures and policy to the parent with the initial acknowledgement.

Formal Stage

4. Referral to Panel Of Governors

If the parent is dissatisfied with the full response from the Chair of governors (or designated governor), or if the Chair fails to respond as outlined above, the parent may write to the Chair or Clerk of the governing body within a further 14 days, requesting that a panel of governors be convened to hear the complaint. The letter should be acknowledged within 3 days, and the panel convened to hear the complaint within a further three weeks. The Clerk should liaise with the parent to agree mutually convenient times.

Constitution of Panel

The panel will consist of three governors, none of whom has detailed knowledge of the complaint or is involved personally in any way. There should be no more than one staff member on the panel

Panel Procedure

The hearing will be minuted by someone other than a panel member. A panel member will be appointed Chair. The parent may be accompanied by someone of their choosing. The format of the hearing should be as follows:

- Parent outlines complaint
- Head of school and panel are given opportunity to question parent
- Head of school outlines school's response to complaint
- Parent and panel are given opportunity to question head of school
- Each side may ask witnesses to speak as appropriate
- Everyone except panel and clerk withdraw
- Panel considers its findings
- Panel writes to parent, Chair and head of school setting out findings within 2 days.
- Draft Minutes of meeting are sent to parent, head of school, Chair of governors and panel members within 7 days.
- Anyone objecting to anything in the Minutes may write their comments to the Clerk within 7 days of receiving them, and their letter will be appended to the Minutes.