



COMPLAINTS POLICY

RATIONALE

In order to be compliant with The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, governing bodies have a duty to have in place, a procedure for dealing with complaints, and that this procedure is published and available to anyone who asks for it. In addition, our school is committed to being 'open and collaborative' and, thereby, working with our community to promote transparency and confidence.

DEFINITIONS

A complaint is defined as something that is unsatisfactory or unacceptable. This policy relates to any complaints made to the school by pupils, parents, including parents of children with SEN, external agencies or individual. This policy does not replace any Local Authority policy or procedure which applies to schools with academy status. Certain forms of complaint, including child protection, staff grievance or disciplinary procedures, fall outside of this scope policy.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- ⇒ This policy seeks to set out a clear definition of a complaint; the process to be followed at defined stages; and the responsibilities involved.
- ⇒ This policy aims to encourage resolutions of problems by informal means wherever possible.
- ⇒ This policy seeks to provide a simple, impartial and swift process for dealing with complaints effectively.
- ⇒ This policy seeks to respect confidentiality and provide a fair and open complaints handling process.
- ⇒ This policy seeks to provide information for school leadership that can be used to improve communication and continue to develop our services.



POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

STAGE 1: INFORMAL CONCERNS

- At this stage, concerns raised should be passed to the appropriate person and attempts be made to resolve those concerns in an informal manner – usually during a meeting with the complainant.
- All concerns must be investigated, and a response given at the earliest opportunity, in line with our Communications Policy guidelines.
- If the complainant is unsure as to who to discuss the matter with, they should contact the school directly or the Principal for clarification.
- The matter will be looked into thoroughly and the complainant will be informed of the outcome within five working days with what action, if any, the school proposes to take.
- If the complaint is about the Principal, it should be discussed informally in the first instance.
- Complainants have the right to make their concerns formal at any stage and, if doing so, will be asked to lodge their complaint with the Chair of Governors.

STAGE 2: COMPLAINT INVESTIGATED BY THE CHAIR OF GOVERNORS

- A complaint can still be discussed informally with the Principal but, if an informal resolution is not reached, the complainant will be asked to put the complaint in writing to the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 5 working school days.
- An opportunity will be provided for the Chair of Governors to meet with both the complainant and the person against whom the complaint has been raised with 10 working school days.
- The Chair of Governors will provide a written response to both the complainant and the person against whom the complaint has been made, in addition to the Principal, within a further 10 working school days.
- Where a complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome or handling of the complaint, he/she should write to the clerk to the Governing Body (details of whom are available from the school office) within 10 working school days and forward the original complaint form. The clerk will acknowledge receipt within 5 working days.



STAGE 3: COMPLAINT HEARD BY GOVERNING BODY COMPLAINTS COMMITTEE

- Complaints should only rarely reach this level. The clerk will convene a Governing Body Complaints Committee and notify all parties (including the complainant) of the date, time and location of the meeting. At least 5 days' notice will be given to attendees. The complainant (usually a parent) can attend the complaints committee hearing should they wish to do so and can be accompanied.
- The complaint will be heard by the committee within 20 working school days of the clerk receiving the written request to progress to this stage.
- The Complaints Committee will consist of at least 3 people who are not directly involved in the complaint. One member will be independent of the management and running of the school.
- Draft minutes of the committee meeting will be distributed to the committee, complainant and the person against whom the complaint was made within 5 working school days. Responses must be made within a further 5 working school days.
- The agreed minutes will then be made available to all parties on request. The written response will provide conclusions and be clear if the complaint has been upheld, upheld in part or not upheld.

STAGE 4: COMPLAINT MADE TO THE EDUCATION AND SKILLS FUNDING AGENCY (ESFA)

will investigate complaints about:

- Undue delay or non-compliance with the school's own complaints procedure
- Allegations that the school has failed to comply with a duty imposed on it under its funding agreement with the Secretary of State
- Allegations that the school has failed to comply with any other legal obligation placed on it, except in cases where, in the view of the ESFA, there is another body better placed to deal with it.

Complaints can be made to the ESFA where parents or other complainants are not satisfied about the handling of their complaint via the school's complaints form.

STAGE 5: COMPLAINT TO SECRETARY OF STATE/LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN

Complainants have further recourse by submitting a written complaint to national bodies/officers to pursue any dissatisfaction with the handling of a complaint at a school or local government level.



MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The purpose of monitoring and evaluating is to ensure that the policy and procedures are followed and that the school reflects upon complaints in the respect of future school policy and practice. If unsure as to who should deal with concern, please seek clarification from the Principal.

All staff responding to concerns raised by members of the community should keep a record, logging the date, nature of the concern and the action taken.

The Principal should monitor the school's handling of formal complaints and keep a file, which should be available for scrutiny at any given time by the Governing Body. The Principal should report to the Governing Body the nature of concerns/complaints raised.

Any correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

The Governing Body should record complaints made to the Governing Body and the outcomes of any appeals process.

Links: School Communications Policy.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Principal

The day-to-day running of the school is the responsibility of the Principal. If concerns cannot be handled at this informal stage, it is recommended that complaints be put in writing to the Principal. The Principal should ensure all complaints are fully investigated and outcomes reported to the complainant.

Governing Body

The Governing Body should monitor the nature of complaints made by the school on an annual basis, and in the event of a complaint being made to the Governing Body, and in the event of not being able to resolve the matter informally, this body should arrange a Governing Body Complaints Committee to consider the matter at a meeting and to respond in writing to the complainant. The Governing Body will publish arrangements for hearing complaints by pupils, parents (including those from parents of pupils with SEN), external agencies, or individuals.

Staff

All staff have a responsibility to respond to informal concerns being raised and to seek to resolve the matter without it moving to the formal stage.



CHECKLIST FOR GOVERNING BODY COMPLAINTS COMMITTEE

The panel needs to take the following points into account:

- ⇒ The hearing is as informal as possible
- ⇒ Witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing in which they give their evidence
- ⇒ After introductions, the complainant is invited to explain their complaint, and be followed by their witnesses
- ⇒ The Principal may question both the complainant and the witnesses after each has spoken
- ⇒ The Principal is then invited to explain the school's actions and be followed by the school's witnesses
- ⇒ The complainant may question both the Principal and the witnesses after each has spoken
- ⇒ The panel may ask questions at any point
- ⇒ The complainant is then invited to sum up their complaint
- ⇒ The Principal is then invited to sum up the school's actions and response to the complaint
- ⇒ Both parties leave together while the panel decide on the issues
- ⇒ The Chair explains that both parties will hear from the panel within a set time scale



COMPLAINT FORM

Please complete and return to the Principal's PA, who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action can be taken:

YOUR NAME:

PUPIL'S NAME:

YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO PUPIL:

ADDRESS & POSTCODE:

TELEPHONE NUMBER:

PLEASE GIVE DETAILS OF YOUR COMPLAINT:

WHAT ACTION, IF ANY, HAVE YOU ALREADY TAKEN TO TRY AND RESOLVE YOUR COMPLAINT?

Who did you speak to and what was the response?



WHAT ACTION DO YOU FEEL MIGHT RESOLVE THE PROBLEM AT THIS STAGE?

IF YOU ARE ATTACHING PAPERWORK, PLEASE GIVE DETAILS BELOW:

SIGNATURE:

DATE:

OFFICE USE ONLY

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT SENT: _____

BY WHOM: _____

COMPLAINT REFERRED TO: _____

DATE: ____/____/____