

School Complaints Policy

Introduction

1.1 Our definition of a complaint is 'an expression of dissatisfaction in relation to the school (or a member of its staff) that requires a response from the school.'

1.2 Our complaints procedure is a way of ensuring that anyone with an interest in the school can raise a concern, with confidence that it will be heard and, if well-founded, addressed in an appropriate and timely fashion.

2. What we expect from you

2.1 We believe that all complainants have a right to be heard, understood and respected. But school staff and governors have the same right. We expect you to be polite and courteous. We will not tolerate aggressive, abusive or unreasonable behaviour. We will also not tolerate unreasonable demands or unreasonable persistence or vexatious complaining.

3. Our approach to answering your concern or complaint

3.1 We will consider all your concerns and complaints in an open and fair way. Most concerns can be settled quickly just by speaking to the relevant person in school, without the need to use a formal procedure.

3.2 At all times the school will respect the rights and feelings of those involved and make every effort to protect confidential information.

3.3 We will try and resolve complaints at the earliest opportunity although the timescales indicated below are illustrative and individual complaints may take longer depending on the nature and complexity of the complaint. We may also ask for advice from the local authority or diocesan authority where appropriate.

3.4 Anonymous complaints will be recorded but investigation will be at the discretion of the school depending on the nature of the complaint.

3.5 Where complaints are considered to have been made only to cause harm or offence to individuals or the school, the governing body will ensure that records are kept of the investigations that are made and what actions are taken, including the reasons for 'no action'.

4. Answering your concern or complaint

4.1 We have adopted a three stage approach to responding to complaints and consider that the majority of complaints will be resolved at either stage 1 or stage 2. The various stages are as follows:

Stage 1

If you have a concern, you can often resolve informally by talking to a teacher or the Headteacher. You should raise your concern as soon as you can; normally we would expect you to raise your issue within 10 school days of any incident. The longer you leave it the harder it might be for those involved to deal with it effectively.

We will try to let you know what we have done or are doing about your concern normally within 10 school days.

Stage 2

In most cases, we would expect that your concern is resolved informally. However, if you feel that your initial concern has not been dealt with appropriately you should put your complaint in writing to the Headteacher. You may wish to use the attached form to register your complaint (see Appendix A). We would expect you to do this within five school days of receiving an unacceptable response to your initial concern.

The Headteacher (or a designated member of the Senior Management Team) will investigate your complaint.

The Headteacher or designated member of staff will invite you to discuss your complaint at a meeting. We will aim to have a meeting with you and to explain what will happen, normally within 10 school days of receiving your letter. Following the meeting the investigation into your complaint will be completed and you will be notified of the outcome, normally within 10 working days.

If your complaint is about the Headteacher, you should put your complaint in writing to the chair of governors, addressed to the school, to ask for your complaint to be investigated. The chair of governors will either undertake the investigation or may delegate it to another governor.

Stage 3

It is rare that a complaint will progress any further, but the final stage in our complaint policy is consideration by the Complaints Committee of the governing body.

If you still feel that your complaint has not been dealt with fairly at stages 1 and 2 you should write to the chair of governors, addressed to the school, setting out your reasons for asking the governing body's complaints committee to consider your complaint. You do not have to write down details of your whole complaint again. The complaints committee will normally have a meeting with you within 15 school days of receiving your letter.

The Clerk to the Governors will formally invite to attend the complaints hearing and every attempt will be made to agree a mutually available date and time. The Clerk will send out the invite 5 working days in advance of the hearing and circulate all the evidence and documentation to all involved prior to the meeting.

Normally, in order to deal with the complaint as quickly as possible, the complaints committee will not reschedule the meeting more than once. If you ask to reschedule

the meeting more than once, the committee may think it reasonable to make a decision on the complaint in your absence to avoid unnecessary delays.

At the hearing the chair will ensure that:

- everyone is introduced;
- all relevant issues are addressed;
- the meeting is conducted with respect and courtesy;
- everyone has the opportunity to speak and ask questions without interruption;
- the meeting does not become confrontational – if there is serious risk that this may happen, or the relationship between the complainant and others involved in the complaint has broken down, the committee can agree to meet people separately;
- everyone is aware that the decision of the committee is final.

Procedurally the chair will:

- ask the complainant to explain their complaint
- ask the Headteacher or whoever is representing the school to explain findings of fact and any actions taken by the school
- ask any witnesses to speak
- invite committee members to ask questions of any person

4.2 The committee will consider their decision in private and will write to you within 10 school days of the meeting explaining the outcome of the committee's consideration.

4.3 The governing body's complaints committee is the final arbiter of complaints and there is no further appeal.

5. Special circumstances

5.1 There are circumstances where the complaints procedure will be applied differently, as indicated below:

(a). A governor or group of governors

Your concern or complaint will be referred to the chair of governors for investigation. The chair may alternatively delegate the matter to another governor for investigation. Stage 2 onwards of the complaints procedure will apply.

(b). The chair of governors or headteacher and chair of governors

The vice chair of governors will be informed and will investigate it or may delegate it to another governor. Stage 2 onwards of the complaints procedure will apply.

(c). Both the chair of governors and vice chair of governors

Your complaint will be referred to the clerk to the governing body who will inform the chair of the complaints committee. Stage 3 of the complaints procedure will then apply.

(d). The whole governing body

Your complaint will be referred to the clerk to the governing body who will inform the HeadTeacher, chair of governors, local authority and, where appropriate, the diocesan authority. The authorities will usually agree arrangements with the governing body for independent investigation of the complaint.

6. When NOT to use the school complaints procedure

6.1 If a complaint raises issues about staff capability, staff grievance, staff discipline or child protection, then action must be taken under those procedures and they should take precedence. The complaints procedure must not take the place of those other procedures. Separate procedures also exist to deal with complaints about school admissions (VA schools only) or exclusion, special educational needs provision, school organisation proposals, religious worship and the delivery of the curriculum.

7. Our commitment to you

7.1 We will take your concerns and complaints seriously and, where we have made mistakes, will try to learn from them.

7.2 The governing body has consulted with staff and pupils on this policy and will consult further if any amendments are made in the future.

School Complaint Form

Annex A

Please use the copy from our communication policy, if required