

Complaints Policy

General Principles

- This procedure is intended to allow an individual to raise a concern or complaint relating to the school, or the services it provides.
- Under the terms of this policy, anonymous complaints will not be investigated, unless there are exceptional circumstances such as Safeguarding concerns. Such investigations will be at the discretion of the Headteacher or Chair of Governors if the complaint is about the Headteacher.
- To allow for a proper investigation, concerns or complaints should be brought to the attention of the school as soon as possible. In general, any matter raised more than 2 months after the event being complained of, will not be considered.

The Complaints Procedure will be:

- a) Easily accessible and published to all via the school website.
- b) Be simple to understand and use by a parent, member of staff or member of the wider community.
- c) Be impartial and adopt an investigatory rather than adversarial approach.
- d) Encourage resolution of problems by informal means, wherever possible and with minimal conflict.
- e) Allow for a swift response to any issue.
- f) Ensure a full and fair investigation of any issue.
- g) Respect confidentiality, wherever possible.
- h) Address all the points that arise from any investigation appropriately.
- i) Provide information for the School's Senior Management Team and Governors so that services can be improved.
- j) This procedure does not replace or alter any of the existing arrangements established within the school e.g.
 - Disciplinary Procedures
 - Dignity at Work Policy
 - Staff Grievance Policy
 - Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

School Complaints Procedure

Informal Stage

- It is normally appropriate to communicate directly with the member of staff concerned. This may be by letter, by telephone or in person, by appointment. Many concerns can be resolved by simple clarification or the provision of information and it is anticipated that most complaints will be resolved by this informal stage.
- In the case of serious concerns, it may be appropriate to address them directly to the Headteacher (or to the Chair of the Governing Body, if the complaint is about the Headteacher).
- If there is uncertainty about who to contact, advice can be sought from the Clerk to the Governing Body.

- It is nearly always appropriate that concerns are answered at an informal stage, without initiating the following procedure. However, if this isn't achieved or if the concerns are such that a formal investigation is appropriate, the school will proceed as follows:

Stage 1

- If a concern or complaint is not resolved at the informal stage, the complaint must be put in writing and sent to the Headteacher (or the Clerk to the Governing Body, for the attention of the Chair if the complaint is about the Headteacher). The Headteacher (or Chair) will be responsible for ensuring that it is investigated appropriately. A 'Formal Complaint Form' is provided to enable this (Appendix 2).
- The 'Formal Complaint Form' will assist in ensuring all the necessary information is gathered to assist in dealing with the complaints including dates / times of incidents; names of potential witnesses and the inclusion of any relevant documentation. It is very important that the Complaint Form includes a clear statement of the actions that the complainant would like the school to take to resolve their concerns. Without this information, it is much more difficult to proceed.
- Once the 'Formal Complaint Form' is complete, it should be sent, in a sealed envelope, to the Headteacher or Clerk to Governors as appropriate.
- The Headteacher (or Chair of Governors) will then arrange for your complaint to be investigated. A meeting may be organised to clarify concerns and to seek an informal resolution. Complainants may bring a friend to the meeting if they wish to help explain the nature of their concerns.
- If a complaint cannot be resolved at the meeting, arrangements will be made for the complaint to be fully investigated, using the appropriate procedure as outlined in the Report / Complaint Triage Table (Appendix 1). The school will confirm within 5 days of the school receiving a 'Formal Complaint Form', how the investigation will proceed. This notification should also include an indication of the anticipated timescale.
- Any investigation will begin as soon as possible and when it has been concluded, the complainant will be informed of its conclusion.
- If the complainant is not satisfied with the response to their complaint, they may request that the Governing Body reviews the original complaint and the school's response. Any such request must be made in writing to the Clerk to the Governing Body within 10 school days of receiving notice of the outcome. Such a request should be accompanied by a 'Complaint Review Form' (Appendix 3). Receipt of a 'Complaint Review Form' will trigger Stage 2 of the Complaints Process.

Stage 2

- Upon receipt of a 'Complaint Review Form', the Clerk to Governors will inform the Chair of Governors who will review the request received and discuss the request with the school representative (usually the Headteacher).
- The Chair of Governors will then consider the Complaint Review Request and respond to the complainant with their findings.
- If, after a review by the Chair of Governors, the complainant remains dissatisfied, a request can be made for the complaint process and procedures to be reviewed by the Governors' Complaint Review Panel. This can be actioned by completing a 'Complaint Panel Review Request Form' (Appendix 4). Receipt of this form would trigger Stage 3 in the complaint process.

Stage 3

- The 'Complaint Panel Review Form' will be considered by the relevant Governor (usually the Chair of the Complaint Review Panel). Any review request that is based solely on dissatisfaction with the outcome, rather than any identified failure to deal with a complaint according to relevant procedures and policies is unlikely to be accepted.

Appendix 1: Contact / Complaints Triage Table should be used to establish whether the necessary policies and procedures have been followed.

- Any review of the process followed by the school will be conducted by a panel of 3 members of the Governing Body. This will usually take place within 10 school days of receipt of the request.
- The review will normally be conducted through a consideration of written submissions but reasonable requests to make oral representations will be considered sympathetically.
- The panel's meeting will be minuted by the Clerk to Governors. Evidence will be received and considered from the complainant first. The panel will then invite the school representative (normally the Headteacher or Chair of Governors if appropriate) to make a response to the complainant's statement.
- The review panel will have access to the records of the processes followed. Confidentiality will be maintained in accordance with the relevant policies.
- The panel shall make findings and recommendations, and a copy of the findings and recommendations will be sent by electronic mail and / or via hard copy sent by first class post. Where relevant, the person complained about will also receive a copy of the findings and recommendations informing them whether the complaint is:
 - a) rejected
 - b) upheld
 - c) requires further investigation.

In the event that the panel decides that a complaint requires further investigation, this will be defined and reviewed by the panel at a date agreed with the school representative. This date should be set to enable any further investigation to be thorough but with the aim of reaching an outcome in a timely way, usually within 15 school days of the panel's recommendations being published.

In the event of further investigation being recommended, the panel will reconvened to consider the results of the investigation to then determine whether the complaint is:

- a) upheld
- b) rejected

Following the completion of the Complaint Review Panel process, the matter will then be closed as far as the school is concerned.

If a complainant believes the Governing Body has acted illegally or arbitrarily in handling the complaint, they can make representation to the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families or alternatively contact the Education Funding Agency:

<https://www.education.gov.uk/form/school-complaints-form>

A written record shall be kept of all complaints, and whether they are resolved at stage 1, 2 or proceed to stage 3, a panel hearing. These will be retained for a period of 6 years, in line with retention of all governor records.

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under Section 8 of the Education Act 2005 requests access to them for safeguarding purposes.

Vexatious complaints:

If all stages of the procedures have been followed and the complainant remains dissatisfied and attempts to re-open the same complaint, the Chair of Governors may write to them to inform them that the procedure has been exhausted and the matter is now closed.

The Headteacher will update all staff on the above annually via the Staff Handbook. The Head will inform all parents of the procedures via the school website.

Appendix 1

A complainant will be asked to complete a Complaint Form, to assist in the understanding and analysis of their complaint and to ensure that an accurate record is maintained.

Contact/Complaints Triage Table

Nature of Contact	Appropriate person to receive contact	Relevant Policy/Procedure
Request for published information	Data Office	FOI Act
Request for personal pupil information	Headteacher or Senior Member of Staff	Data Protection Policy
Complaint about GB Policy [content or application of]	Clerk/Chair	General Complaints Procedure
Unreasonable exercise of discretion by Headteacher	Headteacher / Chair	General Complaints Procedure
Allegation about conduct of a member of staff	Headteacher or Chair (if allegation is against Head)	School Staff Discipline Procedure (confidential to school and employee)
Allegation of verbal or physical assault by employee on pupil	Headteacher or Designated Safeguarding Lead or Chair (if allegation against Head)	Local Child Protection Procedures (confidential to school, LADO and parents of alleged victim)
Allegation about capability of a member of staff	Headteacher or Chair (if allegation against Head)	School Staff Competence Procedure (confidential to school and employee)
Conduct of another pupil (e.g. bullying)	Headteacher or Senior Member of Staff	School behaviour and discipline procedures (confidential to school and parents of alleged perpetrator)
Discipline of a pupil	Headteacher or Senior Member of Staff	School behaviour and discipline procedures (confidential to school and parents of alleged perpetrator)
Content of/failure to maintain a SEN EHCP	Headteacher/SENCO LA	LA procedures
Admissions	Chair/Clerk	Admissions Procedure Admissions Appeal Procedure
Exclusion	Chair/Clerk LA	Exclusion Appeal Procedure
Failure to provide NC Entitlement or Inappropriate curriculum	Headteacher Clerk to GB	General Complaint Procedure
Extended Services	Manager of relevant service	Procedures of Service Provider
Selection of pupil for school team/play	Headteacher / Clerk to GB	General Complaints Procedure

Appendix 2



Formal Complaints Form: Stage 1

Please complete this form and return it to the Headteacher (or Clerk to the Governing Body), who will acknowledge its receipt and inform you of the next stage in the procedure.

Your name	
Relationship with school (e.g. parent of a pupil on the school's roll)	
Pupil's name (if relevant to your complaint)	
Your address	
Daytime telephone number	
Evening telephone number	
Please give concise details of your complaint (including dates, names of witnesses etc.) to allow the matter to be fully investigated. (You may continue on separate paper or attach additional documents, if you wish.	

What action, if any, have you already taken to try to resolve your complaint? (i.e. Who have you spoken with or written to and what was the outcome?)	
What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?	
Signature	
Date	

School Use

Date form received	
Received by	
Date acknowledgement sent	
Acknowledgement sent by	
Request referred to	
Date:	

Complaint referred to	
Date	

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?	
Signature	
Date	

School Use

Date form received	
Received by	
Date acknowledgement sent	
Acknowledgement sent by	
Request referred to	
Date:	

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?	
Signature	
Date	

School Use

Date form received	
Received by	
Date acknowledgement sent	
Acknowledgement sent by	
Request referred to	
Date	