



Complaints policy

Introduction

This policy aims to ensure that all complaints from parents are dealt with as quickly and sensitively as possible and by the person best able to do so. It is recognised that most complaints can be, and should, dealt with as informally as possible.

Types concerns and complaints

The majority of complaints likely to be received by a school fall into the following categories:

- Financial and administrative;
- Academic (curriculum, unsatisfactory teaching, homework, progress in a particular subject etc);
- Pastoral (discipline, sanctions, bullying, general unhappiness etc).

Informal resolution

Most trivial/simple complaints will be dealt resolved immediately. Such resolution will often be by a discussion and explanation.

More serious complaints may also be dealt with informally by a meeting, discussion, explanation and resolution.

The person dealing with complaints should meet the complainant, consider the complaint and make such investigations as are appropriate, and respond to the complaint, ideally within 5 working days.

If a complaint is received directly by the Head, or the Chair of Governors, they may at their discretion refer it another person to investigate and resolve as they think fit.

If the complaint cannot be resolved satisfactorily, a complaint will be resolved under the formal procedure.

All complaints resolved informally will be recorded and the record kept by the Head.

Formal Procedure Stage 1.

If a complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head, using the complaint form in Appendix A. However, failure to complete such a form will not be good reason not to investigate a complaint, provided that sufficient information is available.

The Head should, unless there are exceptional circumstances, meet parents within 5 working days, and if possible reach a satisfactory conclusion. It may be necessary for the Head to carry out further investigations.

Once the Head is satisfied that all relevant facts have been established, so far as is practicable, a decision will be made and parents informed of this decision in writing, with reasons being given.

The Head will keep appropriate records.

If the parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 2 of the formal procedure.

Formal Procedure Stage 2 panel hearing

Parents who are not satisfied with the Head's decision will be entitled to have their concerns resolved by a formal Governors' Complaints Panel to be convened by the Clerk to the Governors. Parents who wish to proceed to this stage must notify the Clerk to the Governors in writing of their intention to do so.

The Panel will meet to discuss the complaint with the parents at a suitable time for all concerned within 10 working days of the Clerk receiving notice of the complaint unless there are exceptional circumstances. Such a meeting will be held in private, though the Panel will be at liberty to ask for the attendance of the Head and any other person it thinks fit in order to collate necessary information, and the parents and the Head will be permitted to call such witnesses as they think appropriate.

The Complaints Panel will consist of two governors of the school and one person independent of the school. The Panel members will be appointed by the Clerk to the Governors, who will ensure that none of the members will have been involved in any stage of the procedures to date.

The Clerk will collate any paperwork (including any material from any previous stage of the procedure) and ensure that it is available for the Panel and the parents before the meeting.

Parents will be entitled to be accompanied by one other person, though legal representation will not normally be considered appropriate. The procedure before the Panel is designed to ensure a fair hearing, and will normally follow the procedure set down in Appendix B, though it will be for the Panel to decide how the meeting will be conducted.

Where possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation. Where investigation is needed, the Panel will decide how it is to be carried out, including whether another meeting with the parents is appropriate.

Once all the necessary material is available, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations. It will write to the parents indicating its decision and the reasons for it. The decision of the Panel will be final. The decision will be sent to the Head, the Governors and any other interested party.

A record of the complaint will be retained securely by the Head for the duration of the time any relevant pupil remains at the school.

Appendix A

Complaints Form

Please complete and return to the Head Teacher or the Clerk to the Governors who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:

Pupil's name:

Your relationship to the pupil:

Address:

Postcode:

Day time telephone number:

Evening 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 actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.

Signature:

Date:

Official use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By who:

Complaint referred to:

Date:

Appendix B

Checklist for a Panel Hearing

The panel needs to take the following points into account:

- The hearing is as informal as possible.
- Any 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 any witnesses they wish to call.
- The Head Teacher may question both the complainant and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The Head Teacher is then invited to explain the school's actions and be followed by any witnesses the school wishes to call.
- The complainant may question both the Head Teacher 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 Head Teacher is then invited to sum up the school's actions and response to the complaint.
- Both parties leave together while the panel decides on the issues.
- The chair explains that both parties will hear from the panel within a set time scale.