

Complaints Procedure

Introduction

Often parents and other members of the public would like school to know their views. Sometimes there are meetings when this is possible. On other occasions a personal comment is more appropriate. Communication, written or spoken, is valued as part of the partnership between home and school. Co-operation between parents, staff and governors leads to a shared sense of purpose and a good atmosphere within the school.

Should I tell the school of my concerns?

Yes - all members of staff want to know as soon as possible if something concerns you or your child. They can then investigate the matter and give you a response. If need be they can also take steps to remedy a situation, misunderstandings can be cleared up and an apology can be given if something is found to be wrong. Everyone benefits from the speedy resolution of difficulties and from suggestions for improvement.

What about making a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of serious dissatisfaction. This could be about an event that has happened, or failed to happen, or the way in which something was handled. If you require more information about how to state a complaint than is covered within the procedure as provided here, you can obtain it from the headteacher.

Should I complain?

Yes - if you believe that something is seriously wrong. Your view can then be considered and an investigation can establish whether there is something wrong that needs to be corrected. The school's response will be based on the governing body's agreed policy and will seek to be fair to all concerned. Writing down your complaint helps to clarify exactly what you are complaining about.

Whom do I contact?

That depends on the particular situation. Often a teacher is able to deal with the matter. More serious problems may require a senior member of staff or the headteacher to achieve a resolution. Mutual courtesy is expected and ensures that the procedure runs smoothly. In the first instance there should always be discussion in the hope of solving difficulties informally. Indeed, most problems are resolved in this way.

If you wish to make a complaint about the headteacher then you should do so to the Chair of Governors.

Certain specific complaints (e.g. about admissions to school) are dealt with separately. Staff at the school can advise you where to direct your complaint.

What if the matter is still unresolved?

If your complaint is not resolved to your satisfaction through an initial response it will be necessary to write to the school to inform us about this. In response we will investigate the matter further and may invite you to a meeting to talk about it. We may arrange for a suitable mediator to be present. After trying all other ways, you may decide to make a formal complaint to the governing body.

Who will deal with my complaint?

At first, school staff will respond, and others may help. If you proceed further with your complaint, a panel of governors (not previously involved with the case) will listen carefully to both sides before reaching a decision.

How do I make a complaint to the governing body?

You should submit a copy of your complaint in writing to the Clerk of the Governors, including a request for a hearing. You cannot introduce new or different complaints at this stage. You will receive an acknowledgement within five school days of the receipt of your complaint.

A meeting will follow, with all the relevant paperwork having been circulated in advance to everyone involved. If you wish you may bring a friend with you - this could be someone you think will be able to represent you and speak on your behalf. If the complaint is against a staff member s/he may also be accompanied by a friend or professional representative. You will be invited to speak to the panel (that will have three governors on it) and to ask and answer questions. The panel normally allows witnesses to attend part of the meeting. A governing body may decide not to consider a complaint about something that has occurred more than three months before the complaint was received.

What happens next?

You will be informed in writing of the panel's decision. This decision will usually be final. However, if you are not satisfied with this decision you can ask the County Council (by writing to the Director of Children and Young People's Services) whether your complaint is one that can be heard by them.

If you consider that the Governors have acted wrongly you may write to the County Council or, if the matter is still not resolved, to the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families.

Remember

This whole process exists so that your views, and the views of others, can be heard. You have rights. Pupils have rights. Staff and Governors have rights. The aim is that a complaint should be properly and fairly dealt with.

Communications with the school are frequent and welcome and are encouraged because services are improved by a positive response to compliments, concerns and complaints.