

SCHOOL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Introduction

This procedure has been established in accordance with Section 39 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. The procedure sets out arrangements for the school in respect of complaints other than:-

- complaints about the curriculum of religious worship
- complaints about admissions or exclusions appeal procedures
- staff grievance procedures

for which separate complaints procedures exist.

General Principles

All complaints will be dealt with as quickly and efficiently as possible. The length of the period will vary with the gravity and complexity of the complaint and the urgency with which it needs to be settled. However, the intention is that all complaints should be settled within a period which is reasonable in all the circumstances.

All complaints, received, including those ultimately resolved at an informal stage, should be recorded by the school's nominated Complaints Officer. The outcome of the complaint shall also be recorded, together with reasons for that decision, the outcome falling into one of the following categories:

- Complaint resolved informally
- Complaint dismissed
- Complaint to be dealt with under another procedure
- Complaint upheld and the appropriate action is deemed to be one of
 - 1) counselling
 - 2) training
 - 3) general supervision
 - 4) other management action

Urgent complaints will be identified as such and given priority.

All complaints will be investigated fully, fairly and carefully and complainants will be kept informed of progress during, as well as at the end of each stage.

The main aim at all stages will be to secure that either the complaint is settled or that a decision is taken about the complaint and it can then, if required, proceed to the next stage.

The complainant may seek independent advice from the Parents/Partnership Co-ordinator. The school may seek advice from the Local Education Authority, but the Authority cannot determine the outcome of a complaint.

STAGES

The arrangements set out two levels at which a complaint could be considered. These are the informal stage and the formal complaint to the Government Body of a school. A complaint could be considered at both of these stages if necessary.

INFORMAL STAGE

Many minor complaints can be resolved quickly and informally. There are many occasions where concerns are resolved straightaway through the class teacher, head of year, or school secretary, depending upon the nature of the complaint. This is where the procedure should start and unless there are exceptional circumstances there should always be full discussion at the informal stage.

If the complaint has not been resolved at the first meeting, the parent should contact the Headteacher. The complaint may be made verbally or in writing. The school, if asked, will help anyone who would like assistance to set out their complaint, including access to translation services where necessary. An appointment is likely to be necessary, so that the Headteacher can give the matter his/her full attention. If the complaint is against the Headteacher, the Headteacher should nominate another senior person to attempt to resolve the complaint informally.

FORMAL STAGE

If the Headteacher or other senior person, cannot resolve the complaint informally, the school undertakes to deal with the complaint as follows:

- formally acknowledge the complaint within 5 school working days
- tell the complainant the name and telephone number of the person looking into the complaint. This will generally be the Complaints Officer, unless the complaint is against the Complaints Officer, in which case the Headteacher shall appoint another person to look into the complaint
- respond to it within 20 school working days or if this is not possible
- answer telling the complainant what is being done to investigate and how long it is expected to take

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, the complainant should contact the Chair of Governors. The school shall make the name and address of the Chair of Governors available to the complainant.

The Chair of Governors **will initially attempt to resolve the complaint informally** and may contact the Local Education Authority for advice. If the Chair of Governors cannot resolve the complaint informally, he/she will refer the matter to the Governors Complaints Committee who shall deal with the complaint in accordance with Appendix A.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the complaint the complainant may refer the matter to the Secretary of State if he or she believes that the Governing Body has acted unreasonably, or has failed to carry out its duties properly.