



Complaints Procedure

Introduction

We are dedicated to providing the best possible education and support for all our pupils. This means having a clear, fair, and efficient procedure for dealing with any complaints to or against the school, so that any issues that arise can be dealt with as swiftly and effectively as possible.

This procedure must be followed by parents and carers whenever an issue arises that causes them concern.

1. When an issue or concern first arises

We encourage you to approach staff with any concerns you may have. We aim to resolve all issues with open dialogue and mutual understanding.

If you have a concern that you would like to take up with the school you should first tell a member of staff either in person, over the telephone or in writing (this includes email).

1.1 Who to contact

In most cases you should talk to your child's teacher first as they will be best placed to help you either directly or by finding out which other member of staff you should be speaking to.

If your complaint is about a member of staff, you should first raise this with the headteacher either in person or in writing. A meeting can be arranged with the headteacher to discuss the issue.

If your complaint is about the headteacher, you should raise your concern in writing with the Chair of the Governing Body. The chair of governors may refer complaints that are taken straight to them back to the appropriate member of staff if they do not warrant the governing body's involvement at that point. You can get the contact details for the Chair of the Governing Body from our Bursar.

If your complaint is about a governor, you should raise your concern in writing with the Clerk to the Governing Body. You can get the contact details for the Clerk from our Bursar.

You may be asked to give a written explanation of your concern. This is so that it is easy to know what the initial problem was if your complaint is taken further or needs to be reviewed in the future. You will then be invited to an informal meeting with the member of staff most appropriate for dealing with your concern.

1.2 Informal meeting

You are welcome to bring a friend, partner or, in the case of a pupil who has raised a concern, a parent to this meeting. It may be appropriate for a pupil to attend the meeting if their parent has raised a concern, depending on the nature of the issue.

Our staff have a responsibility to make sure that you understand any actions that have been agreed in this meeting. They will write down what has been discussed, as well as any outcomes and a plan of action, if one has been agreed.

All our staff will do their best to make sure your concerns are dealt with appropriately and efficiently. If you cannot come to an agreement, or are dissatisfied with the outcome of your meeting, you can make a formal complaint in writing (this includes email) to the headteacher.



Complaints Procedure

2. Formal complaints

To make sure that complaints are processed efficiently and effectively, we deal with formal complaints in three stages:

Stage 1

If you do not feel that your concern has been dealt with as you would like, are unhappy with the outcome of your informal meeting or feel that the issue is serious enough that it warrants it, you can make a formal complaint in writing to the headteacher.

The headteacher should acknowledge your complaint in writing within five school days. They may already be aware of the situation. They will give their decision (if there is one to be made), and any action to be taken as a result of your complaint.

The headteacher may call you in for a meeting to discuss the decision, possible solutions, or to explain what has or will happen as a result of your complaint.

The headteacher will keep a record of all conversations with you and other staff, meetings and decisions made in reference to your complaint.

If the complaint is against a member of staff, the headteacher will talk to that employee. If it is an allegation of abuse, a formal investigation may be started by the school or external child welfare authorities to whom the school reports. Please refer to our **allegations of abuse against staff policy** for how this procedure works.

The headteacher will respond to you in writing, normally within five school days but this may be up to ten school days if the issue is complex. The headteacher will give their response to your concern, and any action that has or will be taken. If they have decided not to take any further action on the issue, they will explain what they have decided, how they have reached this decision, and will outline your right to take the matter further and what you need to do next.



Complaints Procedure

Stage 2

If, having spoken to the headteacher, you are dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint, you may complain to the Chair of the Governing Body. You must make your complaint in writing (this includes email), explaining your concern and the steps that have led up to you taking this course of action.

If the complaint is against a member of staff, that employee will be given the opportunity to write a response, which will be sent to the Chair of the Governing Body within five school days of the complaint being lodged with them.

The Chair of the Governing Body will respond to you in writing within ten school days. They will give you their response to your concern, and any action that has or will be taken. If they have decided not to take any further action on the issue, they will explain what they have decided, how they have reached this decision, and will outline your right of appeal and how you can start your appeal.

3. Appeals

Stage 3:

If you would like to lodge an appeal following the outcome of a formal complaint at stage 2, this will be taken to an appeals panel of the governing body. You should write to the Clerk to the Governing Body to make your appeal. You can get the contact details for the Clerk from our Bursar. The Clerk to Governors will acknowledge your appeal and make the necessary arrangements. The appeal panel will usually meet within twenty school days from the acknowledgement being sent. Where it is not possible to find a mutually convenient date within that timescale, a further timescale will be agreed with you.

The Clerk will make sure that all parties to the appeal have access to the same documentation and set out a timetable to support the collation and circulation of documents.

The appeals panel

The appeals panel will be made up of members of the governing body, excluding staff governors. No member of the governing body can sit on the appeals panel if they have had any former knowledge or involvement in the case that is being dealt with at that time. The panel will consist of three governors and a chair will be nominated from within that group. All panel members will be familiar with and have access to the complaints policy and this procedure.

The panel will give careful consideration to how you and other people involved in the complaint can be made to feel most comfortable presenting to the panel, especially in the case of a young child having to present or explain information.



Complaints Procedure

Appeals panel hearing

During the appeals hearing the panel Chair will introduce the people present. You will be asked to explain what your complaint is and then the headteacher will explain what they have done.

You will be invited to ask the headteacher questions, and the appeals panel will also ask the headteacher questions about their actions. The headteacher and panel may also ask you questions. The Clerk to Governors, or member of school staff not connected with the complaint, may be there to take notes about what is discussed.

Once the panel believes it has a clear understanding of your complaint and the headteacher's actions, you and the headteacher will be asked to leave. The panel will discuss what they have heard and will attempt to reach a decision. The panel may decide that they need more information before they can reach a decision. You will get a written decision from the panel, usually within ten school days of the appeal hearing (it may be longer if the panel has had to gather more information). The letter will give the decision of the panel together with the reasons for that decision. The letter may set out recommendations which will be made to the governing body and will set out any further rights of appeal.

The appeals panel may:

- dismiss all or part of the complaint
- uphold all or part of the complaint
- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint, or
- recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures as a preventative step against similar problems arising in the future.

The panel's decision is final. If you are unhappy with the outcome, you may put your complaint to the Secretary of State. Complaints should be sent to the School Complaints Unit, DfE, 2nd Floor, Piccadilly Gate, Manchester M1 2WD.

4. Vexatious complaints

We hope that this policy will reduce any dissatisfaction with the school. However we acknowledge that there may be rare occasions where a complainant continues to be dissatisfied with the school and the outcomes that it creates.

Where a complainant attempts to re-open an issue which has already been dealt with under the complaints procedure, the Chair of the Governing Body will contact them to inform them that the matter has already been dealt with. The Chair will explain that either that stage of the procedure has been exhausted or that the complaints procedure has been exhausted and the matter is considered closed. Where further correspondence is received on the same matter, this may be considered vexatious and the school will be under no obligation to respond to that correspondence.



Complaints Procedure

5. Monitoring complaints

The headteacher will review all complaints no matter how far they are taken or what the outcome is. The Governing Body will monitor all complaints and evaluate their significance. This is to make sure that we are able to learn from what has happened and improve what we do so that similar problems are avoided in the future.

6. Staff complaints

Staff who have a concern about a colleague or a volunteer member of staff should use our **whistleblowing policy**.

The procedure for dealing with any other staff complaints or employment grievances is set out in the school's **staff discipline, conduct and grievance policy**.



Complaints Procedure

