



Complaints Policy

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Complaints

A complaint is defined as a dissatisfaction about practice, the standard of a service, the actions or lack of action taken by the school that can be towards an individual or a group.

Children and young people, or their parent(s) and carer(s) may find dissatisfaction and not always express this as a complaint however the same process and procedure must be followed.

Children and young people expressing concerns over practice that indicates harm or potential to cause harm must follow the safeguarding procedures and any other relevant policies.

A formal complaint is typically but not exclusive made where all other reasonable methods to resolve the dissatisfaction/complaint have been tried and failed.

Children and young people and their parent(s) and carer(s) will be informed about the complaints procedure in a various ways including through the children's guide to the school that will be provided to children during their admission to the school. The procedure will be explained during initial key working session in the school and subsequently when necessary, during further key work sessions.

Children and young people will be provided with opportunities to raise worries, concerns or dissatisfaction during consultations with the staff team and during monthly visits from independent visitors.

The complaints procedure must be explained to the complainant including the different stages of complaint and available options to making complaints to the Children Commissioner, Ofsted or the placing authority

Our principles for managing complaints

- Encourage feedback, criticism and highlighting any potential areas of improvements
- Acknowledgement when there has been a shortfall
- Being open, transparent, and accountable
- Acting fairly and proportionately
- Putting things right
- Seeking continuous improvement for the service and care for children and young people

Who can make a complaint

The following persons have a right to make a complaint using this procedure:

- A child or young person
- A parent of a child
- A person acting on behalf of a child
- A neighbour living in the locality
- Someone that supports the child in another setting (e.g., Education setting, social club)
- A health and social care professional
- Another significant person connected with the school or connected to the child or young person

Informing children and young people about the complaints policy and procedure.

Complaints procedures are routinely discussed with children and young people in key-worker sessions and house meetings.

The young person's guide will provide information to children about the complaint procedures and the process around investigating complaints made.

The child or young person's parents, family, significant others and placing authority will be given a copy of the complaints procedure where appropriate. This must contain contact details for the manager and responsible individual

If they request it or it is appropriate, they will be given information on advocacy or support networks which may be able to help them use the procedures effectively.

Advocacy

Children and young people will be offered the opportunity to have representation by an advocate. This will be offered to all children and young people and recommended where there is a complaint raised.

Complaint outcomes	
Upheld	There is evidence to support the complaint
Partially upheld	There is evidence to support aspects of the complaint
Not upheld	There is no evidence to support the complaint

Making a complaint about the service we provide

Informal concerns

Timescale: 7 days

Any informal concerns about a school or the quality of education should be resolved at the school by the Deputy or Assistant Headteacher, who must ensure that:

- The person making the concern known is thanked for sharing their views
- Agree the points that needs to be answered
- Advised on the outcome of the concerns
- Record the concerns in the school's complaints log
- Normally we expect informal concerns to be resolved within 7 days

Where the concern relates to confidential matters, we may not always be able to provide full details of the outcome.

The Deputy or Assistant Headteacher investigating the informal concern should ensure that the person making the concern is advised of how to escalate the concern if unresolved to a formal complaint.

Formal complaint – Stage 1

Timescale: 14 days

If the person is dissatisfied with the response at the informal stage they can ask for this to be investigated by the Headteacher or another member of SLT who is not connected with the initial informal complaint.

The person making the complaint will be encouraged to complete this in writing however if this is not possible this can be completed on behalf of the complainant and noted this was recorded on their behalf.

The person receiving the complaint will acknowledge the formal complaint and advise the person this will be investigated. The acknowledgement letter must state the timelines for resolution that is expected within 14 days.

The complaints procedure must be explained to the complainant including the different stages of complaint and available options for escalation.

Where the complaint may require further investigation and further time is required, this should be communicated verbally and in writing to the person making the complaint

Once the investigation has been concluded the investigating officer will respond to the person who has made the complaint outlining the findings and if any actions are to be taken. The letter should contain the details of how to raise a stage 2/3 appeal if they are dissatisfied with the outcome and the person who should be contacted.

Appeals complaint – Stage 2

Timescale: 28 days

If the person making the complaint is dissatisfied with the outcome of the stage 1 complaint, the complaint should be escalated to the Board of Governors for review.

The person making the complaint should detail why they are dissatisfied with the resolution of the complaint at stage 1 and provide any additional relevant information or evidence. Timelines for resolution at this stage are expected within 28 days.

The Clerk to the Governors will acknowledge the stage 2 complaint and the Chair of Governors will be the allocated appeals officer. This is the last stage of the school's complaints process.

The Chair of Governors will discuss the complaint details with the person making the complaint to confirm the specifics of the complaint

The complaint will be investigated and a final written response within 28 working days detailing the findings and outcome of their investigation

Head Office review – Stage 3

Timescale: to be agreed by the Director of Education

Where the person is dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaint at stage 2, the outcome letter for stage 3 will detail how Head Office will undertake a review of the complaint.

Recording of complaints made by adults

At all stages of the complaint process, we will ensure that we keep records of communication with the person making the complaint and details of our investigation.

The school will ensure that records relating to the complaint are kept in the complaints file and are available for independent scrutiny.

The school will ensure that complaints are part of the quality of education review in the school, and we reflect and learn from complaints made about our school.

Children and young people making a complaint about the education we provide

The school will take all reasonable steps to ensure that children and young people feel comfortable with making comments or complaints.

Children and young people should be consistently supported to have their views wishes and feelings known in the school with a welcomed approach to any recommendations about any improvements within the school and any recommendations in their planning or decision making.

The school will support children and young peoples to have their voice heard and encourage children and young people to raise complaints and concerns as required.

When children and young people choose to make a complaint, the person receiving the complaint should ensure that if possible other resolutions available have been attempted, rather than resorting to making a complaint.

If a complaint is made around the Headteacher or another person of management, it should be passed to the Director of Education.

Complaints should preferably be placed in writing using a letter or using a supplied complaints form through the website, other methods can be used including verbal discussion which can be recorded by the staff member supporting the young person.

Children and young people should be given any assistance they require or request, including being introduced to advocacy services.

All complaints must have the chorology log completed to indicate the steps taken during the investigation, the outcome and any further action required

Informal concerns

Timescale: Generally, 7 days unless a more detailed investigation is required

We recognise that many matters of concern can be dealt with in the school e.g. issues about day-to-day education and support, meals, and can be resolved up as they occur.

It is important that whilst these are managed in the school, we are providing feedback to the children and young people ensuring they know that they can escalate the matter to a formal complaint.

Children and young people may prefer to speak to us about informal concerns however it is important that informal concerns are still recorded in the school so that we can identify any patterns and trends regarding our practice, conduct and the quality of education we provide.

Formal complaint (Stage 1)

Timescale: 14 days from receipt of the formal complaint

All formal complaints will be resolved within 14 days if this is reasonably practicable. Where the complaint may take longer to investigate the persons making the complaint will be informed in writing

- Date of complaint
- Name of person making the complaint
- Summary of complaint
- Timescales for resolution/outcome
- The right to have their complaint investigated at stage 2 if they are dissatisfied with the outcome

When the complaint has been fully investigated the following process should be completed by the Headteacher who will usually be the investigating officer (stage 1).

- Share the findings with the complainant
- This should be followed up in writing with an outcome letter detailing the next stage of the complaints process if they are dissatisfied with the outcome.

The Headteacher should follow up with the complainant within 7 days to ensure they are satisfied with the outcome. This should be recorded and compiled with the complaint outcome pack. The manager must ensure that all complaint information must be kept confidential.

Appeals process (Stage 2)

Timescale: 28 days from date of the initial complaint

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the complaint resolution at stage 1, Then a stage 2 enquiry can be initiated. The Headteacher must notify the Clerk to the Governors of the complaint escalating to a stage 2 complaint.

The Chair of Governors will be appointed as appeals officer, and will acknowledge the stage 2 complaint with a written letter.

The letter will detail:

- Date of complaint
- Name of person making the complaint
- Summary of complaint & reasons for complaint escalation
- Details of next stage in the complaint process
- Timescales for resolution/outcome
- The right to have their complaint investigated at stage 3 if they are dissatisfied with the outcome

The Chair of Governors (stage 2) will review the information supporting the outcome from the stage 1 complaint and any other information required. They must meet with the person making the complaint and detail the outcome of the investigation and explain the next stage.

The Chair of Governors must ensure the person is satisfied with the outcome of the appeal within 7 days. This should be recorded and compiled with the complaint information pack.

Head Office review (Stage 3)

Timescale: to be agreed by the Director of Education

The person making the complaint has the right if dissatisfied with the outcome of the stage 2 complaint to request that the complaint is reviewed by Head Office.

Records

Throughout the stages of any complaint all investigations completed will be documented and copies held in the school.

The manager investigating must review and evaluate all complaints as part of the quality-of-education review to evaluate the effective management and resolution of complaints made and managed by the school.

If a complaint is raised which identifies safeguarding concerns, then this will be managed via the safeguarding procedure.

The complaint cannot be investigated by a staff member or manager who is the subject of the complaint.

Complaints about staff conduct should also be addressed through Head Office disciplinary procedures

Representation

Children and young people will be encouraged and supported to have their opinion and make suggestions about improving their education and support. The role of staff is to listen and support children and young people make decisions about their education and advocate on their behalf should they want to make a complaint.

If decisions are made that children and young people show concerns around or do not agree with, staff should do what they can to ensure that a reasonable explanation is provided, and that children and young people are given the opportunity to discuss their concerns, and this is recorded.

Children and young people are to have the opportunity to express their concerns or worries and staff must listen to these. This includes decisions about normal activities such as lessons and activities. Children and young people should be given the opportunity discuss how decisions are made about their education on a regular basis, and to make suggestions for change.

At all times, we will work in a way to prevents concerns arising, escalating, or becoming complaints, however, should children and young people and their parent(s) and carer(s) continue to be dissatisfied, they should be given the opportunity to make an Informal or Formal Complaint.

All complaints must be managed in a sensitive, caring approach. The outcome, the findings or any review of practice as a result from any complaints should provide opportunities to develop the service in the best interest of children and young people.