

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Last update: December 2011

The aim of this procedure is to deal with complaints speedily and efficiently. Complainants will be kept informed of the progress of their complaint. At the end of the process, the aim is to ensure that if the complaint is not upheld, the complainant understands and accepts the school's actions and related procedures. If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, one or more of the following will be offered:

- an apology;
- an explanation;
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
- an assurance that the event complained of will not recur;
- an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again;
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint.

It should be noted that an acceptance that the school could have handled the situation better is not the same as an admission of negligence.

In many cases, taking initial concerns seriously and dealing with them in a speedy and sensitive way will avoid issues becoming formal complaints. Before invoking the procedure described below, it is hoped that parents will discuss the matter informally with the relevant teachers and/or the Headteacher in order to resolve the dispute.

At each stage, the person investigating the complaint will:

- establish what has happened so far, and who has been involved;
- clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved;
- meet with the complainant or contact them (if unsure or further information is necessary);
- clarify what the complainant feels would put things right;
- interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
- conduct the interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning;
- keep notes of the interview.

Stage 1

If a parent, guardian or child wishes to make a formal complaint, they should contact the school in writing. The letter should make clear that a formal complaint is being made and describe the nature of the complaint as clearly as possible.

The member of staff receiving the complaint will inform the Headteacher that the complaint has been received. The Headteacher will then decide which member of staff will deal with the complaint at this stage. In some cases, the Headteacher will deal with the complaint at this stage, effectively moving the complaint to Stage 2 as described below. The Headteacher will ensure that a letter is sent to the complainant within 2 school days acknowledging receipt of the complaint, confirming the name of the member of staff dealing with the complaint and outlining the next steps to be taken.

The member of staff dealing with the complaint will respond to the complainant in writing within 10 school days of receiving the written complaint. The response will include the decision reached, the reason for the decision and any action taken or proposed.

If the Headteacher is the subject of the complaint, then the parent or guardian should write directly to the Chair of Governors and the procedure will start at Stage 2 as described below with the Chair of Governors taking the place of the Headteacher.

Stage 2

If the complainant is unhappy with the outcome at Stage 1, the complaint may be made to the Headteacher. The Headteacher will inform the Chair of Governors that the complaint has been made. The complainant will be given the opportunity to discuss the matter with the Headteacher in order to bring the matter to a satisfactory conclusion. If such a meeting takes place, the complainant may be

accompanied by a friend or representative. The opportunity for such a discussion will be made within 10 school days of the Headteacher receiving the complaint. A written response following the discussions at this stage will be provided to the complainant within 10 days of the complaint being received by the Headteacher or within 5 school days of a meeting involving the Headteacher and the complainant.

Stage 3

If the complainant remains dissatisfied, the complaint will be formally considered by the Complaints Committee of the Governing Body. The complainant should write to the Clerk to the Governors in order to request such consideration. The hearing will include at least two governors other than the Headteacher. The complainant and the Headteacher will have the opportunity to express their positions at the hearing of the Complaints Committee. If the complainant does not wish to attend the meeting, information supporting the complaint may be submitted in advance of the meeting to the Complaints Committee. Such information must be submitted to the Clerk to the Governors at least two days before the meeting is scheduled to take place. The meeting of the Complaints Committee will take place within 10 days of the complaint being received by the Clerk to Governors.

The normal order of proceedings for the Complaints Committee will be as follows:

- The chair of the committee will welcome the complainant and any accompanying friend or relative. The chair will then introduce those present.
- The complainant will be given the opportunity to restate the nature of the complaint;
- The complainant may be asked questions by the committee and by the Headteacher;
- The Headteacher may be asked to make a statement to the committee regarding the complaint and may be asked questions by the committee or by the complainant;
- The Headteacher, complainant and any friend or representative will be asked to leave the meeting

The committee will consider the complaint and any other relevant information. They shall only reach a decision after the Headteacher, complainant and any friend or representative have withdrawn from the meeting. The committee shall decide:

- to reject the complaint
- to uphold the complaint
- to investigate the complaint further

The Clerk to the Governors will inform the complainant and the Headteacher in writing within 5 school days:

- a) the decision of the committee and the reasons for the decision. If the committee decides that the complaint falls outside the scope of the Complaints Procedure, the complainant will be advised of any further recourse that is available;
- b) of any action taken or proposed if the complaint is upheld. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the action taken or proposed, the matter may be pursued further with the Headteacher or the Complaints Committee as appropriate.

Stage 4

If the complainant is dissatisfied by the outcome of Stage 3, the complaint may be taken to the Young People's Learning Agency.

Complaints about Academies should be made in writing to:

Academies Central Unit (Academy Complaints)
Young People's Learning Agency,
Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry
CV1 2WT

or by e-mail to:

academyquestions@ypla.gov.uk.

Associated procedure: Curriculum Complaints Procedure

Bibliography:

School Complaints Procedure, DfES ref LEA/0180/2003

Hampshire County Council School Complaints Procedure

Approved by full Governors: 8 December 2004

Update for discussion by Management committee: 8 February 2012

For approval by full Governing Body: 7 March 2012