

We trust that your child is happy at our school. On occasions, however, a problem may arise. The great majority of problems can be sorted out informally – in person, by telephone, etc. If you think that we have not taken action over a significant problem or we have made the wrong decision, you may wish to make a complaint.

The purpose of this policy is to establish a procedure for dealing with complaints relating to the school, as required by the Education Act 2011, School Complaints Procedure.

The scope of this policy and procedures is for all matters relating to the actions of staff and application of school procedures where they affect the individual pupils concerned, except matters which are subject to separate procedures (see below).

General Principles:

- An anonymous complaint will not be investigated under this procedure unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- To allow for a proper investigation, complaints should be brought to the attention of the school as soon as possible. Any matter raised more than 3 months after the event being complained of will not be considered, save in exceptional circumstances.
- Investigation of any complaint or review request will begin within 5 school days of receipt of the same, save in exceptional circumstances. The investigation will be completed as soon as reasonably practicable.

Part A Complaining about the actions of a member of staff other than the Head Teacher.

1) Informal Stage

You are normally expected to arrange to communicate directly with the member of staff concerned. This may be by letter, by telephone or in person by appointment. Many concerns can be resolved by simple clarification or the provision of information and it is anticipated that most complaints will be resolved by this informal stage. [In the case of serious concerns it may be appropriate to address them directly to the Head Teacher. An unreasonable refusal to attempt an informal resolution may result in the procedure being terminated forthwith. [Any dispute in relation to the “reasonableness” may be determined through the review process.]

2) Formal Stage

If the complaint is not resolved at the informal stage the complainant must put the complaint in writing and pass it to the Head Teacher, who will be responsible for its investigation. Alternatively, you may be referred back to the informal stage of the procedure. If the complaint is judged to be vexatious or spurious, then you will be informed that your complaint will not be accepted and will not be investigated.

You should include details which might assist the investigation, such as names of potential witnesses, dates and times of events, and copies of relevant documents. In addition, the Head Teacher may meet with you to clarify the complaint. You may be accompanied by a friend at any such meeting.

The Head Teacher will collect such other evidence as he/she deems necessary.

The investigation will begin as soon as possible and when it has been concluded, you and the member of staff concerned, will be informed in writing of the outcome. This may be to the effect that:

- There is insufficient evidence to reach a conclusion, so the complaint cannot be upheld
- The concern is not substantiated by the evidence
- The concern was substantiated in part or in full. Some details may then be given of action the school may be taking to review procedures etc... but details of the investigation or of any disciplinary procedures will not be released
- The matter has been fully investigated and that appropriate procedures are being followed, which are strictly confidential.

You will be told that consideration of your complaint by the head teacher is now concluded. If you are not satisfied with the manner in which the process has been followed, you may request that the Governing Body review the process followed by the Head Teacher in handling the complaint. Any such request must be made in writing within 2 weeks of receiving notice of the outcome from the Head Teacher, and include a statement specifying any perceived failures to follow the procedure. The procedure described in Part C will be followed.

If you consider that the decision of the Head Teacher is perverse, or that the Head Teacher has acted unreasonably in considering the complaint, then you may bring a complaint against the Head Teacher under part B of this procedure. This will provide an opportunity for the evidence to support such a complaint to be investigated.

Part B Complaining about the actions of the Head Teacher

1) Informal stage

You are usually expected to arrange to speak directly with the Head Teacher.[In the case of serious concerns it may be appropriate to raise them directly with the Chair of the Governing Body or designated governor responsible for investigating complaints.] Many concerns can be resolved by simple clarification or the provision of information. If the matter is not resolved, if both parties agree, then a third party may be invited to act as a mediator at a further meeting. A refusal, unreasonably, to attempt an informal resolution may result in the procedure being terminated forthwith.

2) Formal Stage

If the complaint is not resolved at the informal stage you must put the complaint in writing and pass it to the Chair of the Governing Body (or designated governor responsible for investigating complaints) who will determine which of the agreed procedures to invoke. If the complaint is judged to be vexatious or spurious, then you will be informed that your complaint will not be accepted and will not be investigated.

If it is determined that the complaint is "General", the Chair (or designated governor) will arrange for its investigation.

You should include details which might assist the investigation, such as names of potential witnesses, dates and times of events, copies of relevant documents etc... . In addition the complainant will be invited to meet with the Chair (or designated governor) to present oral

evidence or to clarify the complaint. You may be accompanied by a friend at any such meeting.

The Chair (or designated governor) will collect such other evidence as is deemed necessary. This may include the interviewing of witnesses and others who may provide relevant information.

The Head Teacher will be provided with a copy of the complaint and any additional evidence presented by the complainant or collected by the Chair (or designated governor). Once there has been an opportunity for the Head Teacher to consider this, he/she will be invited to meet separately with the Chair (or designated governor), in order to present written and oral evidence in response.

When the investigation has been concluded, you and the Head Teacher will be informed in writing of the outcome. You will not be informed of any disciplinary/capability action.

You will be told that consideration of your complaint by the Chair (or designated governor) is now concluded.

If you are not satisfied with the manner in which the process has been followed, or consider that the decision of the Chair (or designated governor) is perverse, or that the Chair (or designated governor) has acted unreasonably in considering the complaint, then you may request that the Governing Body review the handling of the complaint by the Chair (or designated governor). Any such request must be made in writing within 2 weeks of receiving notice of the outcome from the Chair (or designated governor), and include a statement specifying any perceived failures.

Part C Review Process

Any review of the process followed by the Head Teacher or the Chair (or designated governor) shall be conducted by a panel of 3 members of the Governing Body.

The review will normally be conducted through a consideration of written submissions, but reasonable requests to make oral representations should be considered sympathetically.

The panel will first receive written evidence from you.

The panel will then invite the Head Teacher or the Chair (or designated governor), as appropriate, to make a response to the complaint.

The panel may also have access to the records kept of the process followed.

You, and the Head Teacher or the Chair (or designated governor), as appropriate, will be informed in writing of the outcome. This may be to the effect that:

- There is insufficient evidence to reach a conclusion, so the complaint cannot be upheld
- The concern is not substantiated by the evidence
- The concern was substantiated in part or in full but that the procedural failure did not affect the outcome significantly so the matter is now closed.
- The concern was substantiated in part or in full and the Governing Body will take steps to prevent a recurrence or to rectify the situation [where this is practicable]

Notes

You are not entitled to access to any details of the investigation except for any statements that may have been provided by your child. Any information relating to the application of disciplinary procedures is strictly confidential.

If you believe that the Governing Body has acted illegally or arbitrarily in handling the complaint, then you may make representations to the Secretary of State for Education.

Policy Date: March 2022