



Complaints Policy

Last review date
Reviewed by
Next review date

November 2019
Governing body
November 2022

Complaints Procedure

Handling Complaints about School

General Principles

The school's priority is to serve the needs of pupils and parents. We try to serve as efficiently and as courteously as possible but things can go wrong. We welcome complaints and comments as an opportunity to improve the quality of the services we offer. The following general principles apply:

The desirability of setting differences informally;

The need for more formal mechanisms of dealing fairly and effectively with Complaints which have proved impossible to settle informally;

Ensuring that parents, staff and governors are informed of the procedures.

All parties dealing with complaints should seek to deal with each stage within 15 days of receiving notification of the complaint or of the continuing dissatisfaction of the complainant.

Definitions

Definitions are provided in Appendix 1

Special procedures are available for complaints regarding the curriculum of a school, collective worship and for considering complaints about the way in which pupils' special needs are met.

The Education Department has a complaints policy and procedures in respect of its services. Details are available from the Civic Centre (0191 232 8520 extension 5352).

Complaints about School

Complaints about school issues should be raised, in the first instance, with the staff.

Who can complain

Anyone can complain if they receive a service, seek a service or are affected by the school.

How a complaint can be made

Complaints may be made in person, by telephone or made in writing. A person with a complaint will normally seek to contact the member of staff responsible for the relevant issue. All staff will seek to help a complainant even where the issue is not that individual's area of responsibility.

Informal Complaints

An informal complaint is an initial approach by an individual to the school expressing dissatisfaction with some aspect of the service, its action or inaction. Informal complaints, however made, are complaints that are resolved quickly and simply, usually at the point of service delivery, and do not involve detailed or lengthy investigation.

A person with a complaint will normally seek to contact the member of staff responsible for the relevant issue.

Should the complaint not be resolved, the complainant will be referred to the Headteacher or a Deputy Headteacher. The Head or Deputy will seek to deal with the issue informally.

Should an initial informal discussion not resolve the situation, and the complainant indicates their continuing dissatisfaction, then the Head teacher will convene an interview to review the issue in detail. Users who make informal complaints will be given information regarding follow up procedures, in the event that they are dissatisfied with the outcome of their initial complaint and wish to take the matter further.

Formal Complaint

A complaint becomes formal when the user remains dissatisfied after making an informal complaint or, alternatively, when, from the outset, a complaint cannot be dealt with simply and quickly and requires investigation. When a complaint becomes formal, care will be taken to:

Clarify the complaint;

Clarify the outcome sought;

Check whether the complainant needs support of any kind (for example, if they have poor sight or hearing, or language difficulty) to explain the investigation procedure.

Once a complaint has become formal

The progress of the complaint will be monitored by the Head Teacher;

A full written response will be made within 15 working days or, where this is not possible, a reply should be sent indicating - progress to date and an estimate of time to make full response; The complainant will be given the name and telephone number of the person dealing with the complaint;

The complainant will be advised how to proceed if not satisfied.

A complaint of serious maladministration should be progressed immediately as a formal complaint. The Chair of the Governing Body should be the first person to approach where the matter could involve disciplinary or legal action against the Head teacher.

Where a complaint involves an allegation of financial irregularity the City Treasurer will be advised by the Head or the Chair as appropriate.

The papers relating to the complaint is to be progressed

The Chair will ensure:

The complaint is quickly referred to the relevant Committee (or to the Headteacher if the complaint procedure at that level has not been exhausted);

The complaint is not reported to the whole Governing Body until it is resolved, and then not in detail;

All parties to the complaint are given a fair hearing;

The decision of the Committee is given in writing to the complainant;

The complainant is told of any right of appeal if the decision is given against him or her.

External Review

If the complainant remains unhappy after the matter has been considered by the Governing Body, then the complainant will be asked to contact the Head of Administration Department at the Civic Centre. (Voluntary schools may wish to have this external review carried out by the appropriate Diocesan Authority).

The Head of Administration will carry out the review of the complaint and advise all parties of the findings.

Ombudsman

Where a complainant indicates they remain dissatisfied with the result of the review carried out by the Head of the Administration Department they will be advised that they may refer the matter to a Local Councillor and/or the Commissioner for Local Administration in England (Local Government Ombudsman) and given the relevant details. The Head of the Administration (or Diocesan body) will normally do this.

Remedy

Where a complaint is found to be justified a remedy should be provided. A remedy needs to be appropriate to the complaint. In virtually all cases the remedy will be the provision of a service desired by the complainant. In other cases, a change of procedure to prevent future difficulties for the complainant, or for customers in general, may be appropriate remedy. There may be circumstances where the complainant has sustained loss or suffering. In such cases, financial compensation may be

considered, and in all such cases a report to the Governing Body will be required before payments are made.

Annual Review

Annually a brief report will be presented to the Governing Body, which will detail:

The number of complaints;

The subjects concerned;

The time taken to resolve complaints;

Changes brought about as a result of reviewing complaints.

This will normally be undertaken in Summer Term for the previous year (April /March).

APPENDIX 1 Definitions

Complaints

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, action or lack of action by the school or their staff affecting an individual or group.

A complaint is not:

A request for a service;

A request for information or explanation of school policy or practice;

A matter for which there is a right of appeal within the LEA or to an independent body or legal remedy.

It should be noted that even where an appeal procedure is in place a complaint could still arise regarding the way that procedure is operated.

Informal Complaints

An informal complaint is one which can be resolved locally and quickly, which does not require an in depth investigation, and which generally does not require to be put in writing. **Formal Complaints**

A formal complaint is one which cannot be immediately resolved to service users satisfaction, and, therefore, requires an investigation and which is generally put in writing.

Anonymous Complaints

The school does not wish to receive anonymous complaints and will not undertake to act on information received in this way.

Curriculum/Collective Worship - Special Procedures

Complaints about the curriculum of a school, collective worship or other related matters are dealt with by a special procedure in accordance with Section 23 of the Education Reform Act 1988. Special procedures are available for considering complaints about the way in which pupils' special needs are met.