

Complaints Procedure Summary

How you can complain

We care about what you think

At school we make many decisions every day. We try hard to do best for all our pupils. Your views help us plan for the future. We like to know when things are going well. We also want parents to tell us about their worries, concerns or complaints as soon as possible. It is much easier for us to sort out a recent problem than something that happened some time ago.

If you are unhappy with the way your child is being treated, or any of our actions or lack of action, please feel able to tell us your concern. We know it can be difficult to question what a school is doing, but if you do not tell us what is worrying you, we cannot explain our actions or put things right. Our support and respect for you and your child will not lessen in any way.

Our promise to you

We will deal with your concern or complaint honestly, politely and in confidence.

It will be looked into thoroughly, fairly and as quickly as possible.

We will keep you up to date with what we are doing.

We will apologise if we have made a mistake.

We will tell you what we are going to do to put things right.

What to do first

If you have a concern about anything we do you can tell us in person, by telephone, or in writing. If any of these are difficult for you, a friend or adviser can speak to us on your behalf. Most concerns or complaints will be sorted out quickly either by putting things right or by explaining the school's actions to you.

Try to go to the member of staff involved or your child's class teacher who will either deal with your issue or pass you on to someone who is more able to help.

Please remember the beginning or end of the school day can be a very busy time. If you talk to a teacher at these times, for practical reasons, it may not be possible to sort things out there and then. Be ready for the teacher to say she or he will see you or ring you as soon as possible. This is because we want to give your worries the attention they deserve. You should not be asked to wait more than a week and often she or he will discuss things with you much sooner. We hope this will be enough to put things right.

Sometimes the teacher will send you a brief note after the phone call or meeting with details of what we are doing about your concern. All staff will make every effort to resolve your problem promptly at this informal stage.

Making a complaint

If you have already told us about a concern but are not satisfied with how we have responded, you may wish to make a complaint.

We have a complaints procedure to make sure we respond to complaints in the best possible way. Our aim is to resolve complaints as quickly and as effectively as possible.

The complaints procedure will tell you exactly what will happen and how long it should all take. If you want to look at it before speaking to us a copy is available on the schools website alternatively please contact the School Office who will be happy to give you a paper copy.

The procedure has three stages. We have time limits in our complaints procedure to make sure that complaints are dealt with as quickly as possible.

At **Stage 1**, we would like you to put your complaint in writing to the Headteacher. You should make clear you wish the matter to be dealt with as a complaint.

If your concern involves the Headteacher, you may wish to put your complaint to the Chair of Governors.

We hope very much that your complaint will be resolved at Stage 1. At the end of Stage 1 if you are still not satisfied, you can complain formally to the Chair of Governors. Please try to do this not more than 10 school days after getting a written response to your complaint. If we have not heard from you by then, we will assume that you do not want to take things any further.

At **Stage 2** the Chair of Governors will fully investigate if necessary and arrange to discuss your complaint with you, and then send you a letter with an explanation or the actions the school will take to put things right.

Generally complaints are sorted out at Stage 1 or Stage 2, but occasionally parents still feel dissatisfied and if so have a right to explain their case to a panel of three governors.

If you are not happy with the Chair of Governors' response to your complaint, please let us know not more than 10 school days after getting a written response to your complaint. If we have not heard from you by then, we will assume that you do not want to take things any further.

At **Stage 3** you will be invited to the governors' appeal hearing, which will be normally be organised not more than 15 days after receipt of your complaint and at a time which is suitable for you, the Headteacher and the panel of governors. You will be invited to speak to the panel and can be accompanied by a friend or representative. After the meeting you will be advised of the outcome in writing within 10 school days.

Normally, the decision of the governors is the last step in the procedure.

We keep copies of all correspondence about concerns and complaints. These will be treated with the utmost confidence. You and your child have a legal right to have a copy of your child's school records.

All complaints are reported to the school's governing body to enable the school to learn from them. Generally names will not be given.

Other complaints

There is a specific procedure for complaints about the school curriculum and matters relating to it, including the provision of information and charges. In general

these are dealt with in a similar way to other complaints. However, there are some specific differences –

- You may complain either to the LA or the Governing Body in the first instance.
- The complaint will be investigated by whichever of these is responsible for the matter complained about.
- The Governing body will inform both the complainant and the LA of the outcome of its investigation.
- There is a right of appeal to the LA, and then to the Secretary of State.

If you are in doubt whether your complaint comes into this category, or would like a copy of the full procedure for complaints relating to the school curriculum, please call the School Support Helpdesk, telephone 0118 974 6134.

In general, internal school matters are the responsibility of the school governing body. However, you may have a complaint which relates to something which is the Local Authority's responsibility. Arrangements for complaining to the Council are summarised in a separate leaflet (see below).

The LA will provide advice to parents and schools on best practice procedures for dealing with complaints. The LEA will, where appropriate, check to make sure that the complaint has been reasonably dealt with. Where required, LA officers may play a role in helping schools to investigate and resolve particular complaints.

School Admissions and Exclusions

Separate complaint and appeal procedures exist for these matters, and appropriate information is available on request from the school.

Special Needs

There is a separate appeal procedure for these matters, and appropriate information is available on request from the school.

Complaints Against School Staff

If your complaint amounts to or includes an allegation against a member of staff, this may need to be considered under the school's disciplinary procedure for employees, rather than the complaint procedure. You will be advised if these procedures are to be used in dealing with your complaint.

A Complaint About the Local Authority

Procedures for complaining about the Local Authority are set out in a separate leaflet about the Council's complaints procedure. A copy of this leaflet is available from the school, libraries and Council offices. Complaints should be made in the first instance to the head of service or section concerned. If you are still not satisfied you may complain to the Director of Children's Services.

Other contact details:

School office Tel. 0118 9791676
Chair of Governors;
governors@hawthorns.wokingham.sch.uk

Clerk to the Governors Tel. 0118 9791676

