



Complaints policy

1 Introduction

We strive to provide a good education for all our children. The headteacher and staff work very hard to build positive relationships with all parents. However, the school is obliged to have procedures in place in case there are complaints by parents or guardians. The following policy sets out the procedures that the school follows in such cases.

- If any parents are unhappy with the education that their child is receiving, or have any concerns relating to the school, we encourage them to talk to the child's class teacher immediately.
- We deal with all complaints in accordance with procedures laid down by the LA. If the school itself cannot resolve a complaint, those concerned can refer the matter to the LA.
- All parents have the right, as a last resort, to appeal to the Secretary of State for Education, if they still feel that their complaint has not been properly addressed.

2 Aims and objectives

Our school aims to be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaint. We give careful consideration to all complaints, and deal with them as swiftly as possible. We aim to resolve any complaint through dialogue and mutual understanding. In all cases, we put the interests of the child above all else. We provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed, and then resolved.

3 The complaints process

- If a parent is concerned about anything to do with the education that we are providing at our school, they should, in the first instance, discuss the matter with their child's class teacher/year leader. In our experience, most matters of concern can be resolved positively in this way. All teachers work very hard to ensure that each child is happy at school, and is making good progress; they naturally want to know if there is a problem, so that they can take action before it seriously affects the child's progress.
- Where parents feel that a situation has not been resolved through contact with the class teacher, or that their concern is of a sufficiently serious nature, they should make an appointment to discuss it with the Assistant / Deputy Headteacher. The Assistant / Deputy Headteacher considers any such complaint very seriously, and investigates each case thoroughly. Most complaints are normally resolved by this stage.
- Should parents still feel the complaint has not been resolved sufficiently, the complaint will be referred to the Headteacher. The Headteacher will meet with the parent and discuss the situation and carry out a further investigation. The Headteacher will do all s/he can to resolve the issue, but if parents are unhappy with the outcome, they can make a formal complaint, as outlined below.
- Should any parents have a complaint about the headteacher, they should first make an informal approach to one of the members of the governing body, who is obliged to investigate it. The governor in question will do all s/he can to resolve the issue through a

dialogue with the school, but if parents are unhappy with the outcome, they can make a formal complaint, as outlined below.

Formal complaints

- Only if an informal complaint fails to resolve the matter should a formal complaint be made to the governing body. This complaint must be made in writing, stating the nature of the complaint, and how the school has handled it so far. The parent should send this written complaint to the chair of governors.
- The governing body must consider all written complaints within three weeks of receipt. It will arrange a meeting to discuss the complaint, and will invite the person making it to attend the meeting, so that s/he can explain the complaint in more detail. The school gives the complainant at least three days' notice of the meeting.
- After hearing all the evidence, the governors will consider their decision and inform the parent about it in writing. The governors do all they can at this stage to resolve the complaint to the parent's satisfaction.
- Governors will respond in writing within 15 working days of the meeting and provide advice on pursuing further stages, should parents remain dissatisfied with the outcome.
- If the complaint is not resolved, a parent may make representation to the LA. Further information about this process is available from the school or from the LA. A further meeting is chaired by an independent person, who considers all the evidence and makes a further judgement in an attempt to resolve the complaint.
- If any parent is still not content that the complaint has been dealt with properly, then s/he is entitled to appeal to the Secretary of State for Education.

4 Monitoring and review

- The governors monitor the complaints procedure, in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The headteacher logs all complaints received by the school, and records how they were resolved. Governors examine this log on an annual basis.
- Governors take into account any local or national decisions that affect the complaints process, and make any modifications necessary to this policy. This policy is made available to all parents, so that they can be properly informed about the complaints process.
- This policy will be reviewed every two years, or before if necessary.



Policy for dealing with persistent or vexatious complaints / harassment

INTRODUCTION

The headteacher and SLT deal with specific complaints as part of their day-to-day management of the school, in accordance with the School's **Complaints Policy**.

The majority of complaints are handled in an informal manner and are resolved quickly, sensitively and to the satisfaction of the complainant. However, there are occasions when complainants behave in an unreasonable manner when raising and/or pursuing concerns.

The consequences are that the actions of the complainants begin to impact negatively on the day-to-day running of the school and directly or indirectly affect the overall well-being of the children or staff in the school. In these exceptional circumstances, the school may take action in accordance with this policy.

1. AIMS OF POLICY

1.1 The aims of this policy are to:

- a. Uphold the standards of courtesy and reasonableness that should characterise all communication between the school and persons who wish to express a concern or pursue a complaint;
- b. Support the well-being of children, staff and everyone else who has legitimate interest in the work of the school, including governors and parents;
- c. Deal fairly, honestly, openly and transparently with those who make persistent or vexatious complaints and those who harass members of staff in school while ensuring that other stakeholders suffer no detriment.

2. PARENTS' EXPECTATIONS OF THE SCHOOL

2.1 Parents/carers/members of the public who raise either informal concerns or formal complaints with the school can expect the school to:

- a. Ensure that the Complaints policy and this policy are available with the other policies on the website.
- b. Respond within a reasonable time;
- c. Be available for consultation within reasonable time limits bearing in mind the needs of the pupils within the school and the nature of the complaint;
- d. Respond with courtesy and respect;
- e. Attempt to resolve problems using reasonable means in line with the school's complaints policy, other policies and practice

3. THE SCHOOL'S EXPECTATIONS OF PARENTS/CARERS/MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

3.1 The school can expect parents/carers/members of the public who wish to raise concerns with the school to:

- a. Treat all school staff with courtesy and respect;
- b. Respect the needs and well-being of pupils and staff in the school;
- c. Avoid any use, or threatened use, of violence to people or property;
- d. Avoid any aggression, verbal abuse or other intimidating behaviour;

- e. Ensure that written communications state the facts surrounding the concern without using threatening or unpleasant language.
- f. Recognise the time constraints under which members of staff in schools work and allow the school a reasonable time to respond;
- g. Recognise that resolving a specific problem can sometimes take some time;
- h. In the case of a complaint follow the School's Complaints Policy.

4. WHO IS A PERSISTENT COMPLAINANT?

4.1 For the purpose of this policy, a persistent complainant is a parent/carer or member of the public who complains about issues, either formally or informally, or frequently raises issues that the complainant considers to be within the remit of the school, and whose behaviour is unreasonable. Such behaviour may be characterised by:

- a. Actions which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious;
- b. Prolific correspondence or excessive e-mail or telephone contact about a concern or complaint;
- c. Uses Freedom of Information requests excessively and unreasonably
- d. An insistence upon pursuing unsubstantial complaints and/or unrealistic or unreasonable outcomes;
- e. An insistence upon pursuing complaints in an unreasonable manner;
- f. An insistence on only dealing with the headteacher on all occasions irrespective of the issue and the level of delegation in the school to deal with such matters;
- g. An insistence upon repeatedly pursuing a complaint when the outcome is not satisfactory to the complainant but cannot be changed, for example, if the desired outcome is beyond the remit of the school because it is unlawful.

4.2 For the purpose of this policy, harassment is the unreasonable pursuit of such actions as in (a) to (g) above in such a way that they:

- a. Appear to be targeted over a significant period of time on one or more members of school staff and/or
- b. Cause on-going distress to individual member(s) of school staff and/or
- c. Have a significant adverse effect on the whole/parts of the school community and/or
- d. Are pursued in a manner which can be perceived as intimidating and oppressive by the recipient. This could include situations where persistent demands and criticisms, whilst not particularly taxing or serious when viewed in isolation, have a cumulative effect over time of undermining confidence, well-being and health.

5. THE SCHOOL'S ACTIONS IN CASES OF PERSISTENT OR VEXATIOUS COMPLAINTS OR HARASSMENT

5.1 In the first instance the school will communicate either in writing or verbally (confirmed with a letter) to inform the complainant that his / her behaviour is considered to be becoming unreasonable / unacceptable and, if it is not modified, action may be taken in accordance with this policy.

5.2 If the behaviour is not modified the school will take some or all of the following actions as necessary, having regard to the nature of the complainant's behaviour and the effect of this on the school community:

- a. Inform the complainant in writing that his/her behaviour is now considered by the school to be unreasonable/unacceptable and, therefore, to fall under the terms of this policy;

- b.** Inform the complainant that all meetings with a member of staff will be conducted with a second person present and that notes of meetings may be taken in the interests of all parties;
- c.** Inform the complainant that, except in emergencies, all routine communication with the complainant to the school should be by letter only;
- d.** In the case of physical, or verbal aggression or other forms of intimidating behaviour, take appropriate advice and consider warning the complainant about being banned from the school site; or proceed straight to a temporary ban;
- e.** Consider taking appropriate advice on pursuing a case under Anti-Harassment legislation;
- f.** Consider taking advice from the HR / Legal Services about putting in place a specific procedure for dealing with complaints from the complainant, i.e. the complainant will not be able to deal directly with the headteacher but only with a third person, to be identified by the governing body of the school, who will investigate, determine whether or not the concern /complaint is reasonable or vexatious and then advise the headteacher accordingly.

5.3 In the event of extreme situations or events, the school may take the decision to move
Implementing one of the above steps immediately. In this situation the complainant will be informed in writing.

5.4 The Head and SLT will keep the Chair of governors informed at all times.

5.5 Legitimate new complaints will still be considered, even if the person making them is, or has been, subject to the Policy for Dealing with Persistent or Vexatious Complaints and/or Harassment. However, the school will be advised by the HR / Legal Services the school subscribes to.

5.6 If a complainant's persistent complaining/harassing behaviour is modified and is then resumed at a later date within a reasonable period of time, the school may resume the process identified above at an appropriate level. In these circumstances, advice may be sought from the HR/Legal Services the school subscribes to.