

Introduction

If you have a complaint, it is the responsibility of the school, and not the Local Authority, to investigate most complaints.

Communication, written or spoken, is valued as part of the partnership between home and school. Co-operation between parents, staff and governors leads to a shared sense of purpose and a good atmosphere in the school. This leaflet will explain the procedure that you should follow if you have a concern or a complaint.

Dealing with concerns/complaints informally

If you have a concern or complaint you should make contact with the appropriate member of staff. This may be the class teacher or the Headteacher if he is immediately involved.

They can then investigate your complaint/concern and give you a response, making clear any action or monitoring of a situation that may be necessary. At this stage,

Misunderstandings can usually be cleared up. An apology can be given if something is found to be wrong. Everyone benefits from the speedy resolution of difficulties and from suggestions for improvement.

If no satisfactory solution to the complaint has been agreed you should be informed of your option to take the matter further.

What do I do next?

If you want to take the matter further, you should put your complaint, in writing, to the Headteacher. If your complaint is about the Headteacher, you should put your complaint, in writing, to the Chair of Governors.

Your complaint should be dealt with in an agreed timescale as part of the school's Complaints Procedure. An investigation into your complaint should be carried out by the appropriate person (the Headteacher or the Chair of Governors).

Depending on the reason for the complaint, statements from witnesses may be required.

When all the relevant facts have been established, you should receive a detailed written response.

If I am unhappy with the response, what do I do?

You should be advised that if you wish to take the matter further you should notify the Chair of the Governing Body, in writing, to this effect.

A further investigation of your complaint should be carried out:

- by the Chair of Governors if s/he has not had any previous involvement ; or
- by the Governing Body's Complaints Panel.

If the matter is dealt with at this stage by the Chair of Governors, and you are unhappy with the outcome, you should be advised of your right to take the matter further to the Governing Body's Complaints Panel.

The Complaints Panel should carry out a detailed investigation into the complaint.

It is very important that you do not discuss the complaint with any other governor as this might prejudice the outcome of the investigation

A meeting should be arranged, and everyone involved should receive copies of all available documentation about the complaint. You should be invited to attend the Panel meeting to put your case (you may bring a friend or someone to represent you). The Headteacher should also be invited to put the case for the school (the Headteacher will be able to bring a friend or professional representative). You and the Headteacher will be invited to speak to the Panel (which will have three governors on it) and to ask and answer questions. The Panel normally allows witnesses to attend part of the meeting.

The Governing Body may decide not to consider a complaint about something that occurred more than two months previously.

What happens next?

You should be informed in writing of the Panel's decision. There is usually no appeal mechanism to the Governing Body. If you are not happy with this decision you can ask the Group Director, Schools and Children's Services whether your complaint is one which can be heard by them. The Local Authority cannot investigate a complaint; it can only investigate the process followed by the governing body.

If you are still unhappy, the final resort is the Secretary of State for Education and Employment.

Remember.....

This whole process exists so that your views, and the views of others, can be heard. You have rights. Pupils have rights. Staff and governors have rights. The aim is that the complaint should be properly and fairly dealt with. Communications with schools are frequent and are welcome. The later stages of the Complaints Procedure are used rarely but remain part of the process. Services are improved by a positive response to compliments, concerns and complaints.

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Advice for Parents

A procedure if you need to make a complaint