

Pol6– Complaints Procedure Policy



Definitions

A complaint can be defined as a clear statement of dissatisfaction about any aspect of a school's work. Complaints may be written, made by telephone or in person. Complainants received from parents/guardians will make use of the following procedure.

Stage 1 – Informal Stage

Parents may raise concerns with school staff without any formality. At this stage it may be unclear whether the parent is making a complaint, seeking information or has misunderstood the situation. If the concern is not resolved immediately and a complaint is identified then the following procedure will be instigated;

- (i) Parents are given the opportunity to discuss their complaint with the appropriate member of staff.
- (ii) The member of staff endeavours to resolve the complaint straightaway. The parent is made aware what action (if any) the school proposes to take.
- (iii) If the informal process has been exhausted and no satisfactory solution has been found **within 10 school days** complainants are asked by the member of staff dealing with the complaint whether they wish their complaint to be considered formally (i.e. Stage 2 and onwards).

Stage 2 – Referral to the Headteacher for investigation – Formal Stage

- (i) The parent is invited to put their complaint in writing with the offer of assistance by school staff if this is necessary.
- (ii) The Headteacher acknowledges the letter **within 5 school days** and provides an opportunity to meet the parent to discuss the complaint.
- (iii) The Headteacher investigates the complaint and a written response should be made **within 10 school days** of receipt of the complaint. If this is not possible a letter is sent explaining the reason for the delay and providing a revised target date. The written response should include what action (if any) the school proposes to take to resolve the complaint, or, if the decision goes against the complainant, a full explanation as to why.

N.B. At any point between the beginning of Stage 1 and Stage 2 (iii) the Headteacher may choose to intervene or respond to a request for a meeting in order to resolve the complaint quickly. If the complaint is not resolved the parent is given the opportunity to take it further, i.e. Stage 3.

Stage 3 – Review by the Committee

It is important that this review is not only independent and impartial but that it is seen to be so. The panel will consist of three members appointed by the proprietor who have not been directly involved with the matters detailed in the complaint. At least one member will be independent of the running of the school.

- (i) A written acknowledgement of the complaint should be sent by the General Secretary to the Committee or President of the Committee **within 5 school days**.

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- (ii) The letter informs the complainant that the Complaints Panel will hear their complaint **within 20 school days** of receiving the complaint. It will also inform the complainant of his/her right to submit any further documents relevant to the complaint.
- (iii) The Chair should invite the school to prepare a written report for the panel in response to the complaint.
- (iv) All relevant correspondence, including additional material from the complainant and a written report from the school, should be given to each panel member as soon as possible and, in any event, at least **5 school days** prior to the meeting.
- (v) The Chair will inform the complainant, the school and members of the panel at least **5 school days** in advance of the date, time and venue for the meeting. The notification letter to parents should inform them of their right to be accompanied by a friend/advocate/interpreter.
- (vi) Witnesses may be called to the meeting by either party.
- (vii) The meeting will be held and a written decision will be sent to both the complainant and the school **within 15 school days** of the hearing.
- (viii) The panel has the authority to make findings and recommendations and give copies of all findings and recommendations to appropriate individuals including the person complained about. A copy will be made available for the complainant.
- (ix) Written records are kept of all complaints and at what stage they were resolved.
- (x) All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under Section 109 of the 2008 Act requires access to them.
- (xi) They are available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the headteacher.

The Final Decision

The written statement sent to the complainant at Stage 3 will include an explanation that the decision of the CCP is final. The school will take action and remedy matters as a result of these complaints when it has been decided by the CCP.

It should be noted that complaints can be taken to the Secretary of State for Education and Employment under Section 496 of the Education Act 1996, on the grounds that a Committee is acting or proposing to act unreasonably, or under Section 497 of the same Act, on the grounds that the Committee has failed to discharge its duties under the Act. The Secretary of State may contact the Committee for more information in order to consider the complaint.

Points to Note

- (i) Complainants should be fully informed about the next stage of the procedure if they are likely to be dissatisfied by the outcome of previous stages.
- (ii) At any stage in the procedure it may become apparent that the complaint falls outside the general complaints procedure. Complainants need to be informed if this happens, especially if the general complaints procedure is abandoned or postponed until the special procedure is completed.