



# SCHOOL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

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## Introduction

This procedure has been established in accordance with Section 39 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. The procedure sets out arrangements for the school in respect of complaints other than staff grievance procedures, for which a separate procedure exists.

## General Principles

All complaints will be dealt with as quickly and efficiently as possible. The length of the period will vary with the gravity and complexity of the complaint and the urgency with which it needs to be settled. However, the intention is that all complaints should be settled within a period which is reasonable in all the circumstances. Maximum acceptable timescales are set out later in this document.

At all stages complaints will be dealt with in a completely confidential manner and report will be issued to agreed parties only.

All complaints received, including those ultimately resolved at an informal stage, will be recorded by the school's Head Teacher. The outcome of the complaint shall also be recorded, together with reasons for that decision, the outcome falling into one of the following categories:

- Complaint resolved informally
- Complaint dismissed
- Complaint to be dealt with under another procedure
- Complaint upheld and the appropriate action is deemed to be one of;
  1. Counselling
  2. Training
  3. General supervision

#### 4. Other management action

Urgent complaints will be identified as such and give priority.

All complaints will be investigated fully, fairly and carefully and complainants will be kept informed of progress during, as well as at the end of each stage.

The main aim at all stages will be to secure that either the complaint is settled or that a decision is taken about the complaint and it can then, if required, proceed to the next stage.

The school may seek advice from the Local Education Authority, but the Authority cannot determine the outcome of a complaint.

## Stages

The arrangements set out two levels at which a complaint could be considered. These are the informal stage and the formal complaint to the Proprietors of the school. A complaint could be considered at both of these stages if necessary.

## Informal Stage

Many minor complaints can be resolved quickly and informally. There are many occasions where concerns are resolved straightaway through the class teacher, head teacher or school secretary, depending upon the nature of the complaint. This is where the procedure should start and unless there are exceptional circumstances there should always be full discussion at the informal stage. An informal resolution should be reached within 6 weeks.

## Formal Stage

If parents are not satisfied with the response to an informal complaint, they may make a formal complaint in writing.

The school undertakes to deal with the complaint as follows:

- Formally acknowledge the complaint within 5 school working days.
- Tell the complainant the name and telephone number of the person looking into the complaint. This will generally be the headteacher, unless the complaint is against them, in which case the headteacher shall appoint another person to look into the complaint.
- Respond to it within 20 working days or if this is not possible, answer telling the complainant what is being done to investigate and how long it is expected to take.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, the complainant should contact the Directors. The school shall make the name and address of the Directors available to the complainant.

The Directors will initially attempt to resolve the complaint informally and may contact the National Education Union for advice. If the Directors cannot resolve the complaint informally, they will refer the matter to a complaints panel. The panel will be appointed by the proprietors. The panel will consist of three independent members who have held positions of responsibility and are used to analysing evidence and putting forward balanced arguments. They will be completely independent of the management and running of the school and will not have been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint.

The panel will advise the complainant of the date of the hearing, giving at least three weeks notice. The hearing will take place within six weeks of the case being referred to the panel. Complainants will be invited to attend the panel hearing and may be accompanied if they wish. The panel will advise the complainant, and all parties involved including the DFES, of its findings and recommendations, in writing by electronic mail or otherwise, within two weeks following the hearing.

Written records will be kept of **all** complaints and panel findings and recommendations, and minutes will be taken at hearings. All correspondence, statements and records of complaints will be kept in the main office at Springboard in a designated confidential file, and will be available to the head teacher and to the inspector when they inspect.