

Informal Stage

Where to complain?

Appropriate member of staff

- Parents should be given the opportunity to discuss their concerns with an appropriate member of staff, such as the class teacher.
- In many cases parents' concerns and complaints are resolved at this early part of the informal stage.
- If the concern remains unresolved the staff member should advise the parent that they may complain to the Headteacher.
- Once an incident has been reported it should not be discussed or talked about unless it is part of the investigation. Failure to adhere to this will be a breach of the Visitors Code of Conduct and may result in a warning or a ban.

1. Headteacher

The Headteacher should:

- Meet with the person making the complaint and obtain full details of the complaint.
- Discuss this with the member of staff involved separately.
- Where a complaint concerns a pupil that pupil should normally be interviewed.
- Ensure written records are kept of all meetings, telephone discussions, and any other relevant documents.
- Consider all the facts and reach a conclusion.
- Contact the person making the complaint giving a full explanation of the decision, the reasons for it and, where appropriate, what action the school proposes to take.
- If necessary, the Headteacher will involve the Chair of the Governing Body for consultation and will decide on further advice or actions.
- If not satisfactorily resolved the complaint can be passed to the Complaints Committee of the Governing Body and will begin the Formal Stage.
- The complainant should write to the Clerk to the Governing Body outlining the complaint.

A complaint against the Headteacher should be referred straight to the Chair of the Governing Body

- This would usually involve the Chair speaking with the person making the complaint and the Headteacher to ascertain whether or not the complaint can be resolved at this informal meeting.
If the matter cannot be resolved and the complaint falls within the scope of the procedure the Chair should then refer the complaint straight to the Complaints Committee.
- If the Chair has had some prior involvement in the matter which is being complained of he or she should ask the vice-chair to undertake this role instead of the Chair.

Formal Stage

The Complaints Committee of the Governing Board deals with any complaint which has reached the formal stage. The complainant should write to the Clerk to the Governing Body outlining the complaint.

- 1. Receiving the complaint**
- 2. Investigating the complaint**
- 3. Making a decision on the complaint**
- 4. Reporting the decision of the Complaints Committee to the Governing Body.**

1. Receiving the complaint

- The Complaints Committee should meet as soon as possible after the complaint is received to agree and be clear about what needs to be done and draw up a timetable for doing it.
- The Chair of the Complaints Committee should write to the person making the complaint to:

- a) explain that the committee is now dealing with the complaint
- b) set out what appears to be the nature of the complaint and to invite the complainant to send any further written information about the complaint
- c) set out the committee's timescale for dealing with the complaint
- d) invite the person making the complaint to meet the committee to give full details of their complaint, and inform them they may be accompanied by a friend or representative
- e) set a deadline of five working days for reply by the person making the complaint, and make it clear that if there is no response by this deadline the committee will proceed on the basis of the information it already has.

- If the person making the complaint accepts the invitation to meet the Committee, arrangements should be made to make this as easy as possible. The Committee may wish to consider the most appropriate time and place for the meeting to take place and whether other facilities such as providing an interpreter would be helpful.
- The committee should also write to the person(s) complained of informing him/her of the complaint and explaining that they will be given the opportunity to give their version of events.

The purpose of all the above is to find out precisely what the complaint is about and to inform the complainant of the procedure and timescale.

2. Investigating the complaint

- The Committee must meet to discuss the complaint and decide what information they need, who they may need to interview in addition to the person(s) complained of and what questions will need to be asked.
- The interviews can proceed with prepared questions followed by other questions if necessary, and the people being interviewed should be asked if they have anything to add. Answers to the questions should be carefully recorded by the Clerk at the meeting.
- The investigation is not a staff disciplinary investigation.
- Following interviews with staff it may be necessary to ask for further information from the person making the complaint.
- The complainant and the person(s) who is the subject of the complaint should be

informed if there is any delay in the investigation process.

- When the Complaints Committee is satisfied that it has all the available information it will consider the complaint and all the evidence. Governing Body members serving on the committee should all try to reach an agreed decision and should decide what should be done to resolve the complaint.
- It may be possible for the Complaints Committee to recommend changes to school policies or procedures to prevent the same problem happening again in the future.

3. Making the decision

- The Complaints Committee must make their decision on the basis of the information in their possession.
- They should produce an investigation report which documents their decision. This would need to be produced if the complainant was to refer the matter to the Secretary of State.
- This report is usually written by the Chair of the Committee.
- The investigation report will be brief and will usually keep the names of the pupil, parents and people interviewed confidential. Its purpose is to:
 - Summarise the evidence gathered
 - Give the decisions made by the Complaints Committee
 - Give any recommendations made by the Complaints Committee to prevent a similar problem happening again.
- Where conflicting versions of events have been given it should be clear from the report why one version has been preferred over the other.
- In very few cases it could happen that one of the recommendations is for the Governing Body to hold a formal disciplinary investigation to find out if staff disciplinary action is necessary. In this case the Complaints Committee should seek the advice of the School Governor Service and/or the Human Resource Service before the investigation report is issued to the Governing Body.

The decisions and recommendations of the Committee should be:

- a) Sent to the person making the complaint with the information that if the Governing Body's response has failed to satisfy the person making the complaint he or she may complain to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills on the grounds that the Governing Body has failed to discharge its statutory duties.
- b) Communicated and sent to the Headteacher.
- c) Communicated and sent to the Chair of Governing Body
- d) Sent to the person(s) complained of.

4. Reporting the decision

The meeting of the Complaints committee should be reported to the Governing Body, for information only, as with any delegated decision.

A brief report back to the Governing Body should be verbally presented as a confidential report. This should be a brief summary of the complaint, investigation and the outcome. No names should be mentioned and any recommendations from the committee should be given. Should the complaint be of a Personnel or Safeguarding nature no details will be given. All complaints will be filed as confidential.