



School Complaints Policy

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Introduction

This policy is intended to allow you to raise a concern or complaint relating to the school or the services that it provides to be raised and managed.

An anonymous concern or complaint cannot be investigated under this procedure.

A concern or complaint should be brought to the attention of the school as soon as possible to enable a proper investigation and resolution.

General principles:

- Be non-adversarial
- Be straightforward
- Provide confidentiality
- Timely

The DfE guidance explains the difference between a concern and a complaint.

A **concern** is defined as ‘an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought.’

The school will resolve concerns through day-to-day communication as far as possible.

A **complaint** is defined as ‘an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or lack of action.’

Many concerns can be resolved by simple clarification or the provision of information. The school intends to resolve issues raised informally where possible, at the earliest possible stage.

There may be occasions when complainants would like to raise their concerns formally. This policy outlines the procedure relating to handling such complaints.



School Complaints Policy

This policy complies with Section 29 of the Education Act 2002.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

The School will give guidance on how matters of concern should be raised on an informal basis. Generally, any concern or complaint will have been raised with the class teacher and then Phase Leader before a request is made to deal with it under this policy.

It is intended that concerns or complaints will usually be resolved at the informal stage. Matters should only be escalated to the formal stage if the issues are not resolved informally and all steps have been exhausted.

Where the matter is not resolved at the informal stage, the complainant may elevate it to the formal stage.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution (Investigation by a member of the Senior Leadership Team)

1. Complaints should be made in writing and addressed to the Headteacher setting out briefly the facts and stating what it is that the complainant considers should have been done or where the school has not met reasonable expectations. If a complainant is not able to make his/her complaint in writing, it may be made in person and notes will be taken.
2. An investigation will be carried out by a member of the Senior Leadership Team (The Investigator) who will offer the complainant a meeting and speak to others involved. Whenever reasonably possible, any meeting with the complainant will take place within 15 school days of the written complaint being received.
3. The investigator will put his/her findings in writing and will indicate what, if any, steps should be taken to resolve the matter. Whenever reasonably possible, this will be done within 15 school days of the meeting with the complainant and if no meeting is to take place, within 15 school days of the complaint being received.

Stage 3 – Formal Resolution (Investigation by the Chair of Governors)

1. If the complainant is not satisfied with the response of the Investigator in Stage 2, he/she may request that the complaint be considered by the Chair of Governors. The complainant should set out briefly the facts and state what it is that the complainant considers a fair and reasonable resolution.
2. The Chair of Governors will put his findings in writing to the complainant whenever reasonably possible, this will be done within 15 school days of receiving the escalated complaint.

Stage 4 – Formal Resolution (Panel Hearing)

1. If the complainant is not satisfied with the response of the Chair of Governors, he/she may request that the complaint be considered by the complaints panel of the Governing Body which will comprise at least three governors who have not previously been directly involved in the matter. That request should be made in writing, addressed to the Clerk to the Governing Body of the school, within 15 school days of the response being sent to the complainant and must set out briefly the reasons why the complainant is dissatisfied with the responses received this far. If a complainant is not able to make his/her request in writing, it may be made in person and a note will be taken.
2. The Clerk will invite the School to put in writing its response to the complainant's reasons. The school will do this within 15 school days and at the end of that period (whether or not the School has responded) the Clerk will convene a meeting of the complaints panel of the Governing Body. That meeting will be held as quickly as practicable given the need to find a date that is reasonably convenient for the complainant, the School and the members of the Panel. Whenever possible, the meeting will be held within 15 school days of the end of the school's response time. At any meeting, the complainant will be entitled to be accompanied by a friend but legal representation will not be allowed.
3. The meeting is not a court case and will be as informal as circumstances allow. The complainant will have the opportunity to put forward his/her reasons for dissatisfaction and to expand on them but may not introduce reasons that were not previously put in writing. The school will have the opportunity to put forward its position and each side, as well as the panel members, will be able to ask questions. The complainant will have the opportunity to make final comments to the panel.
4. The Panel will formulate its response as quickly as reasonably possible, aiming to do so within 15 school days of the Panel Hearing, and the Clerk to the Governors will notify all concerned.

Attendance at a Complaints Panel Hearing

The complaints panel will only proceed if the complainant attends or provides a satisfactory reason to the panel in advance confirming why they are unable to attend, in which case the hearing will be rescheduled (once only). If the complainant fails to attend on the day without compelling reasons, the complaints panel will not proceed and the complainant will lose their right to have their complaint heard. Any further attempt to re-open the matter will be considered as falling under the serial/persistent complaint section as below.

Timeliness

Complaints need to be considered and resolved as quickly and efficiently as possible. The School expects complaints to be made as soon as possible after an incident arises and in any event within 3 months and within the same academic year as the incident. After this time the governors and senior leadership team will have discretion not to investigate the complaint. It will be for the complainant to show that there is good reason for the delay. In the case of a complaint received outside of term time or 15 days prior to a holiday period, we will consider this to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

Serial or persistent complainants

If a complainant attempts to reopen an issue or a closely related issue that has already been dealt with under this complaints procedure, the Chair of the Governing Body (or the Vice-chair in the absence of the Chair) may write to the complainant to inform him/her that the procedure has been exhausted and the matter closed, and that continued correspondence is 'serial' or 'persistent' and that the school will not respond to any further correspondence on this issue or a closely related issue.

Duplicate complaints

If, after closing a complaint at the end of the complaints procedure, we receive a duplicate complaint from a spouse, a partner, a grandparent or a child not attending this school, we will remind them that we have already considered the complaint and the local process is complete.

Complaint Campaigns

If we receive what we consider to be a large volume of complaints, all based on the same subject and possibly from complainants not connected to the school, then we will treat these complaints as being part of a campaign and respond in one of the following two ways, depending upon the nature and scale of the complaint:

- Send the same response to all complainants

or

- Publish a single response on the school's website

Complaints about the Headteacher or Chair of Governors

Any complaint relating to the Headteacher must be raised in the first instance with the Chair of the Governing Body (or the Vice-chair in the absence of the Chair) who will, if an informal resolution cannot be reached, designate a Governor to investigate in the same way as in the first stage of the formal process outlined above. Any complaint relating to the Chair of Governors or any individual governor should be made in writing to the Clerk to the Governing Body.

Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints will not be considered under the Sinai School complaints procedure. However, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine if there are exceptional circumstances to warrant an investigation.

Record Keeping

A written record will be kept of all complaints and the final outcome. The Headteacher or complaints co-ordinator is responsible for these records, which will be held centrally.

Records of complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them.