

Complaints Procedure

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All complaints will be dealt with as quickly as possible commensurate with achieving a fair and acceptable resolution. An initial informal discussion can often resolve an issue which might seem to be a cause for complaint.

- 1. Formal complaints should be made in writing to the Headteacher who will undertake an investigation and seek a resolution.**

The Headteacher will:

- Acknowledge receipt of complaint;
- Contact the complainant with the outcome of investigation;
- If the complaint is about the Headteacher, the complainant should, in the first instance write to the Chair of Governors.

- 2. If the person making the complaint is not satisfied they may refer the matter in writing to the Chair of Governors who will seek a resolution. If the complaint is still not resolved a governors' complaints committee will be convened.**

The Committee will:

- Issue a letter inviting the complainant to a meeting;
- Issue a letter confirming the committee's decision;
- Inform the Headteacher of the outcome.

- 3. The decision of the Governors' Committee is final.**

Guidance on Investigating Complaints

Carrying out an Investigation into a Formal Complaint

The investigation of an allegation or a complaint should always be carried out thoroughly and responsibly, irrespective of whether the complaint appears to be trivial or serious. The outcome of such an investigation will have significance not only for the complainant but also for the member of staff

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against whom the complaint has been made.

Any procedure should include provision that "An anonymous complaint will not be investigated under this procedure unless there are exceptional circumstances." These would include serious concerns such as child protection issues or bullying allegations, where the school would either involve appropriate external agencies or else conduct its own internal review to test whether there is any corroborative evidence which might trigger a formal investigation.

Where the Head Teacher or Chair of Governors receives a complaint, it should be acknowledged formally and a commitment made that the complaint will be investigated and the outcome of the investigation notified to the complainant in due course.

The member of staff against whom the complaint has been made, should be notified that a complaint has been received, provided with a copy of the complaint and be informed that an investigation will be carried out.

It is essential that there is a clear understanding of the complaint. Where necessary the nature of the complaint should be confirmed with the complainant.

Once the complaint has been confirmed the investigator should establish who they wish to interview and what documentation they will need to review.

Arrangements should be agreed so that accurate notes can be taken of all interviews and the outcome of the investigation be accurately recorded.

The complainant and the member of staff should be given the opportunity to offer documentation and to identify potential witnesses or sources of evidence.

The member of staff subject to the complaint should be advised that they may be accompanied by a friend or trade union representative when invited to be interviewed.

Where children are potential witnesses, discretion should be exercised over their involvement. Pupils should only be interviewed when the nature of the complaint is sufficiently serious to warrant it and adult witnesses are not available. Only in extreme circumstances will younger pupils be interviewed.

Any interviews should be conducted as soon as possible to ensure that recollections are as fresh as possible and to minimise the possibility that evidence will become tainted through witnesses discussing alleged incidents with other persons.

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In conducting interviews, the investigator should prepare the questions to be asked prior to the interview. These can always be supplemented during the interviews. The investigator should allow the interviewee to answer in their own way. Their responses should be listened to attentively. Any temptation to cut an interviewees short or to seek to "lead" them must be resisted. The interviewee should be given the opportunity of providing other relevant information at the end of the interview.

Interviewees should, however, be advised that their responses must be confined to the substance of the complaint. Any attempt by the interviewee to introduce information relating to other members of staff or to issues unrelated to the complaint should be resisted.

The investigator should avoid reaching conclusions or passing judgment until the investigation has been completed.

A summary of the process undertaken and the outcome of the investigation should be provided to both the complainant and the member of staff against whom the complaint has been made. Caution must be exercised in reporting back to the complainant as revealing certain details may prejudice the ability of the employee to continue in post.

Any recommendations should also be shared with all parties, unless there is good reason not to. Wherever possible, recommendations should be constructive and not punitive.

The complainant should be advised that he/she may, if they are not satisfied that the appropriate procedure has been followed, request a review of that process by the Governing Body.

All documentation relating to the complaint and its investigation and outcomes should be stored securely for a period of six years. [Where the complaint is on behalf of a child, then the school may wish to retain the documentation until 6 years after the child has attained the age of 18].