



COMPLAINTS POLICY

Introduction

This policy, which is a requirement of the Education Act 2002, applies to any general complaint that is received by the school. It is not intended to cover aspects for which there are specific statutory requirements e.g. collective worship or complaints about the curriculum. It has been written following the guidelines published in the London Borough of Hillingdon's School Complaints Procedure Guidance, dated July 2008.

The policy may be used by anyone who has a concern or complaint. Our aim is to ensure that, where possible, concerns are dealt with informally. We believe that our school provides a good education for all our children, and that the head teacher and staff work very hard to build positive relationships with all parents/carers. However, the school is obliged to have procedures in place to deal with complaints from parents/carers. The following policy sets out the procedure that the school will follow in such cases.

General Principles

Parents/carers, and where appropriate, children, will be encouraged to express their views on a number of school matters, for example through questionnaires and surveys. These will often provide an early warning of potential difficulties or emerging issues.

This policy aims to:

- Ensure that parents/carers know the system for raising a concern or lodging a formal complaint
- Ensure that staff and governors understand the Complaints Procedure, and their role in handling complaints.
- Deal with all concerns and complaints received by the school on a fair, open and honest basis
- Resolve any complaint through dialogue and in all cases put the welfare of the child above all other issues
- Ensure that concerns and complaints are dealt with as quickly as possible, whilst providing sufficient time for any investigations to be undertaken thoroughly
- Ensure confidentiality is provided at every stage
- Ensure that every effort is made to reach a satisfactory outcome
- Use upheld complaints as feedback to improve practice

A copy of this policy is on our school website www.yeadinginfant.co.uk and paper copies are available from the school office.

Records of complaints will be kept, including notes on any meetings or telephone calls.

Informal Procedures-initial concerns

Stage 1

Most complaints begin as concerns. It is in everyone's interest that concerns are resolved at the earliest possible stage, before they become complaints. Parental concerns will usually be discussed in the first instance with the child's class teacher. Most matters of concern can be dealt with effectively in this way.

Where the first approach is made to a governor, rather than the class teacher, the next step would be for the governor to refer the parent/carer to the class teacher and advise them about the procedure. Governors must not act unilaterally on an individual complaint outside the formal procedure or be involved in the early stages in case they need to sit on the panel at a later stage of the procedure.

Stage 2- Complaint heard by the Head Teacher

Where a parent/carer feels that a concern has not been resolved following discussion with the class teacher, they should make an appointment to discuss it with the head teacher. In the absence of the head teacher, the deputy or assistant head will meet with the parent/carer. In this instance, the deputy or assistant head must make contact with the head teacher at the earliest opportunity to inform her of the outcome of the meeting. At this point the parent/carer may be dissatisfied with the way the complaint has been handled at Stage 1, as well as pursuing their initial complaint. The head teacher will consider any complaint very seriously and thoroughly investigate each case. Most complaints are normally resolved at this stage.

Should a parent/carer have a complaint about the head teacher, they should first make an informal approach to the Chair of Governors, who is obliged to investigate it. The Chair will do everything possible to resolve the issue through dialogue with the school.

Stage 3-Complaint Heard by the Governing Body

If the parent/carer remains dissatisfied following the outcome of Stage 2, they need to put the complaint in writing to the Chair of Governors, giving details of the complaint. The Chair of Governors will contact the parent/carer to arrange a meeting to discuss the matter further, to ensure that the Chair of Governors fully understands the complaint. The Chair should advise the parent/carer that he/she will need to discuss the complaint with the Head Teacher to ensure Stage 1 and Stage 2 procedures have been followed. If not, this should be arranged before taking any further steps.

If the complaint remains unresolved, the Chair of Governors, or nominated governor, will convene a Governing Body Complaints Panel. This is the last stage of the in-school complaints process, and is not convened merely to rubber-stamp previous decisions. Individual complaints would not be heard by the full Governing Body at any stage, as this could compromise the impartiality of any panel set up at this stage.

The complaint must be put in writing to the Complaints Panel. The Complaints Panel should meet formally within 15 school days of the written complaint being received. The Panel must consist of three or five governors, not involved at any previous stage of the complaint. The Panel may choose its own Chair.

The Remit of the Complaints Appeal Panel

The panel can:

- Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part
- Uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- Decide on appropriate action to resolve the complaint
- Recommend changes to the school's systems to ensure such a complaint does not arise again.

Any governor sitting on the panel needs to remember:

1. The appeal hearing is independent and impartial, and the panel should, where possible, involve a cross-section of the categories of the governors and be sensitive to the issues of race, gender and religion

2. The hearing will be held in private and its aim will always be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. However, it has to be recognised that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the hearing does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations which will satisfy the complainant that their complaint has been taken seriously.
3. An effective panel will acknowledge that many complainants feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting. Parents/carers often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child. The panel chair will ensure that the proceedings are as welcoming as possible, and not adversarial. It would be helpful to give the parent/carer the opportunity to say which parts of the hearing, if any, the child needs to attend.
4. The governors sitting on the panel must be aware of the Complaints Procedure and Policy.
5. The Chair of the Complaints Panel needs to ensure that the complainant is notified of the panel's decision, in writing, with the panel's response, within 10 school days. The letter needs to explain if there are any further rights of appeal and, if so, to whom they need to be addressed.

The Law

Section 29 of the Education Act 2002 requires all maintained school governing bodies to adopt and publicise a complaints procedure for parents. This includes complaints about any community facilities or services that the school provides. Previous legislation still applies. In particular, 1991 SEN Information Regulations require Governing bodies of schools to publicise their complaint procedures in relation to SEN and the 1996 Education Act requires the LA to establish procedures for disputes between schools and parents about SEN provision.

Monitoring and Review

The Governing Body monitor the Complaints Policy to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The head teacher logs all complaints received by the school and records how they were resolved.

Governors take into account any local or national guidance that affect the complaints process, and make any modifications necessary to this policy.

Further guidance is available in the London Borough of Hillingdon's model personnel policy for school-based staff, **School Complaints Procedure, July 2008.**

If a parent is not satisfied with the schools response, contact can be made with the Local Government Ombudsman. The LGO Advice Team can be contacted on 0300 061 0614 or 0845 602 1983 or see their website at www.lgo.org.uk/schools

Signed  Chair of Governors

Date 21/5/14

Review Date May 2020

