

Bledlow Ridge School



Curriculum and Religious Worship Complaints Procedure

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Introduction

The Education Act 1996 requires every local education authority (LEA) to have a formal procedure to deal with complaints about **the school curriculum** and about **religious worship in schools**.

This leaflet explains the scope of the formal complaints procedure, and how it works. It also explains what to do if you have a complaint about any other matter affecting your child at school

If your child is in a Pupil Referral Unit, then a slightly different procedure applies. A separate leaflet on this can be obtained from the Unit or from the Learning Support Team at County Hall, Aylesbury (tel. 01296 382851).

Scope

The Education Act 1996 says that only certain duties are to be covered by the formal complaints procedure. These duties are as follows.

1. Every school must teach the National Curriculum, and comply with regulations about it made by the Secretary of State for Education and Skills.
2. A Headteacher must inform the school governing body and the LA if he/she withdraws or modifies the National Curriculum for a particular pupil, and what alternative provision is being made for the pupil's education. The parent of the pupil must have a right of appeal to the governing body about the Headteacher's decision.
3. The LA must have constituted a standing advisory council for religious education (SACRE).
4. The SACRE must, on application by a Headteacher, determine whether a school may be exempted from the requirement for collective Christian worship.
5. A pupil must not be required to attend, or abstain from attending, a Sunday school or place of religious worship as a condition of attending a maintained school.
6. A pupil must be excused sex education at a maintained school at the request of his/her parent, except so far as such education forms part of the National Curriculum.

If you think the school or the local education authority has failed to carry out any of its duties in respect of these matters, or has acted or is proposing to act unreasonably in carrying them out, you may make a complaint under the procedure.

Informal Procedure

The first step is to try to settle the complaint informally. Approach the Headteacher and ask to discuss the matter. If you prefer not to do this, you may write to the chair of the school governors. The school will give you the name of the chair of governors, and you can write to him/her c/o the school.

If you are unable to settle the complaint informally, then you should follow the formal procedure.

Formal Procedure

1. You should make your complaint, in writing, to the Principal Adviser for the Area in which the school is situated. The Principal Adviser will be able to tell you how your complaint can be dealt with.
2. If your complaint concerns a matter listed on pages 1 or 2 of this booklet, the Principal Adviser will arrange for it to be considered by the school governing body. A copy of your written complaint will be forwarded to the appropriate governors. Normally complaints will be considered by a committee of the governing body consisting of at least two governors other than the Headteacher. In addition to making a written complaint, you may also make your complaint to the governors' committee in person, accompanied by a friend if you wish. You will be given at least seven days' notice of the hearing of the complaint, and a report of the hearing will be sent to you within five days of the hearing. The report will say what was decided and why, and whether any action will be taken.
3. If you are not satisfied, you may ask for your complaint to be heard by the County Council's Appeals and Complaints Committee. The Committee consists of five County Councillors. It will not include a councillor who is a governor of a school involved in the complaint.
4. Again, you may also make your complaint in person, accompanied if you wish. You should not normally need professional legal representation. After the Committee has heard the complaint you will be told what was decided and why.
5. In rare cases it may be appropriate for a complaint to be taken direct to the Appeals and Complaints Committee without going to the school governors first. This might arise if, for example, the complaint was about a decision by the County Council. The Principal Adviser will advise you whether a direct appeal to the Appeals and Complaints Committee is appropriate.
6. It should be noted that the LA has no power to inspect the provision or influence the content of religious education or worship in voluntary aided schools.
7. If you are still not satisfied, the final stage in the procedure is an appeal to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills. The Secretary of State cannot consider any complaint until it has been considered locally. If you wish to appeal to the Secretary of State, the procedure will be explained to you after the County Council's Appeals and Complaints Committee has made its decision.

Complaints Not Covered by this Procedure

Most schools have their own complaints procedures for complaints not covered by this procedure. If you have such a complaint against a school, you should ask the school for a copy of its complaints procedure.

If the school does not have a formal complaints procedure, and you wish to make a complaint:

- a) make your complaint to the appropriate member of staff in the first instance (form teacher, or head of year);
- b) if you are not satisfied, ask to discuss the matter with the Headteacher or deputy Headteacher;
- c) if you are still not satisfied, write to the Chair of Governors.