

Buckinghamshire County Council

School Complaints and Resolutions Procedure

Introduction

Our governing body has adopted this procedure to deal with concerns or complaints from members of the school community or general public.

Aims and Objectives

Our school aims to be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaint and to resolve it through open dialogue and mutual understanding.

Careful consideration will be given to all concerns and complaints and we will deal with them as swiftly as possible. We will provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed.

In all cases we will put the interests of the child above all other issues.

Our procedure is underpinned by the following **framework of principles**: -

- encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible
- be easily accessible and publicised
- be simple to use and understand
- be impartial
- be non-adversarial
- allow swift handling with established time-limits for action and keeping people informed of the progress
- ensure a full and fair investigation by an independent person where necessary
- respect people's desire for confidentiality, wherever possible (some information sharing may be necessary to carry out a thorough investigation)
- address all points of issue, providing an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary
- provide information to the school's senior management team so that services can be improved.

Areas not covered by this procedure

This procedure does not apply to issues concerning the curriculum, collective worship, admissions, exclusion appeals, decisions about your child's special educational needs or grievances by school staff. These are the subject of separate complaints procedures. Copies of these procedures can be obtained from the school.

In addition, Ofsted has the power to investigate certain (qualifying) complaints about maintained schools, including those from parents. A qualifying complaint is one that affects the whole school, not an individual. More information can be obtained from the school or Ofsted.

All other complaints are handled by the school according to the arrangements set out below.

Stage 1 – initial concerns

If you have any concerns about the school, or the education we are providing at any time, please discuss the matter with your child's class teacher at the earliest opportunity. Please do not publicise any concerns you have on social networking sites, but speak to someone at the school as soon as possible.

The school considers any concerns very seriously and most problems can be resolved following discussion and a shared understanding of the issues. All members of staff work very hard to ensure that each child is happy at school and is making good progress and they always want to know if there is a problem so they can help to resolve it.

Most concerns can be resolved at this level, however, if after speaking to your child's class teacher, you are still concerned, please discuss the matter with the Headteacher.

Stage 2 – formal procedure

Most concerns are resolved at Stage 1, however if you remain dissatisfied and wish to take the matter further you will be asked to complete a complaint form (Annex 1).

Complaint Form

The aim of the form is to ensure each party has a clear and common understanding of the complaint and includes a section on what actions might resolve the problem at this stage. It can be used by anyone making a complaint about the operation of the school which is not covered by an alternative procedure.

We are happy to provide the assistance of someone unconnected with the complaint, if you would like support in completing the form.

The form (see Appendix One) should be returned to the Headteacher, unless the complaint concerns the Headteacher or a governor, in which case it should be returned to the Chairman of the governing body at the school address, marking the envelope 'FOR IMMEDIATE ATTENTION'.

You will receive an acknowledgement of the receipt of your complaint form within 5 working days.

Investigation

An investigation will be carried out into the complaint and the way it has been handled by the school. This will include a review of any relevant documentation and information and seeking the views of relevant people, where necessary. The person undertaking the investigation will normally write to you with the outcome of this process within 15 working days of receiving the complaint.

If, at any time, it becomes apparent that the complaint is a disciplinary or capability issue, the matter will be dealt with by following the appropriate procedure rather than the complaints procedure. You will be notified if this is the case with your complaint; however, you are not entitled to know which procedure, or the final outcome, because of the right to confidentiality of the member of staff involved.

If, following the outcome of the investigation, you feel your concern has not been resolved, you may choose to refer your complaint to Stage 3 of the procedure. This must be done in writing to the school within 15 working days of the completion of Stage 2.

Stage 3

At this stage the complaint will be considered by a panel of 3 governors, who will meet to consider the complaint and make a final decision about it on behalf of the governing body.

The panel will consist of governors who have no detailed prior knowledge of the complaint, or connection with the complainant. The meeting will normally take place within 15 working days of your request.

You will have the opportunity to submit written evidence on the complaint prior to the meeting of the panel and also to attend, accompanied by a friend/partner if you wish, to put your case. The Headteacher will be given the same opportunities. Appendix 2 outlines the process that will be followed at a panel hearing.

Outcome of the Panel Hearing

The panel will write to you with its conclusion within 5 working days of the meeting, and its decision is final.

If you are still not satisfied, you may wish to put your complaint to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills, who can review whether the school has acted reasonably and followed the correct procedures. The address is Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London, SW1 3BT.

Note: If, for any reason, the adopted procedure cannot be followed, the governing body, in consultation with the Local Authority, will put in place an alternative fair process.

Unreasonably persistent complainants and unreasonable complainant behaviour

Unfortunately, in a minority of cases, people pursue their complaints in a way which can either impede the investigation of their complaint or can have significant resource issues for the school.

These actions can occur either while the complaint is being investigated, or once the school has concluded the complaint investigation.

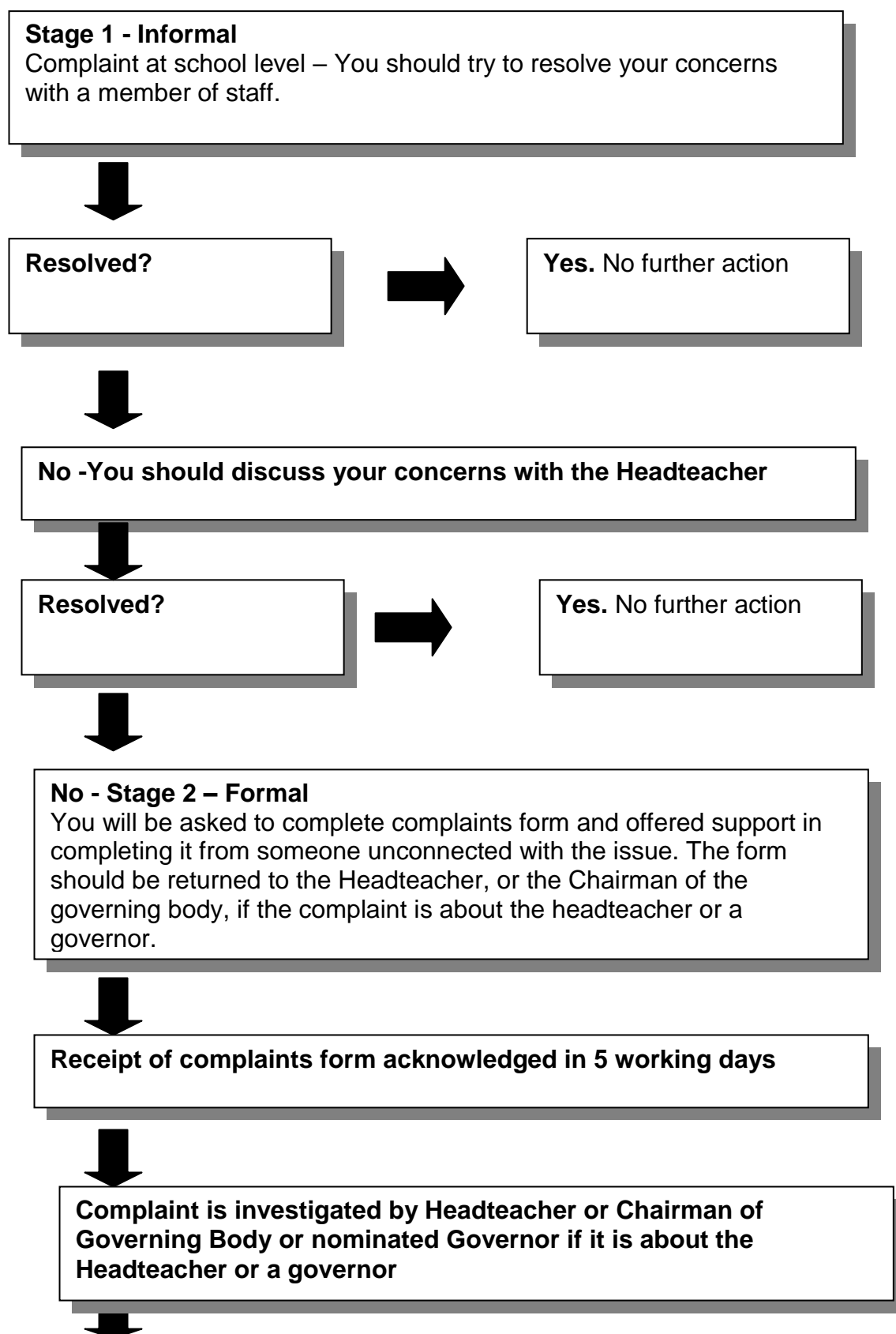
In such cases, the school will observe the Local Government Ombudsman's Guidance Note on 'unreasonably persistent complainants' and 'unreasonable complainant behaviour.'

Monitoring and Review

The governing body monitors the complaints procedure, in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The Headteacher logs all formal complaints received by the school and records how they were resolved. Governors examine this log on an annual basis and consider the need for any changes to the procedure.

Flowchart Summary*

* Please refer to the procedure for more detailed information.





You will be informed of the outcome of the investigation within 15 working days of receiving the complaint.



Resolved?



Yes. No further action



No - If you wish to take your complaint to Stage 3 of the procedure you will be asked to confirm this in writing within 15 work days of the completion of Stage 2.



Governor Complaints Panel meets to consider your complaint with 15 working days. You will be asked to submit written evidence in advance and attend the panel meeting to explain the nature of your complaint



Panel will make a final decision on behalf of the Governing Body and writes to you within 5 working days



Resolved?



Yes. No further action



No - You can write to the Secretary of State of Education and Skills if you feel the school has acted unreasonably or not followed the correct procedures.

Appendix One - Complaint form

Please complete and return to Mrs Bennett School secretary and complaints co-ordinator, who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:

Pupil's name:

Your relationship to the pupil:

Address:

Postcode:

Day time telephone number:

Evening telephone number:

Please give concise details of your complaint, including dates, names of witnesses etc, to allow the matter to be fully investigated

What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint.

(Who did you speak to/write to and what was the response)?

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.

Signature:

Date:

Official use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By whom:

Complaint referred to:

Date:

Appendix Two - At the panel hearing

- After introductions, the complainant will be invited to explain their complaint, and be followed by their witnesses (if any).
- The Headteacher/Chairman of Governors may question both the complainant and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The Headteacher/Chairman of Governors is then invited to explain the school's actions and be followed by the school's witnesses (if any).
- The complainant may question both the Headteacher/Chairman of Governors and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The panel may ask questions at any point.
- The complainant is then invited to sum up their complaint.
- The Headteacher/Chairman of Governors is then invited to sum up the school's actions and response to the complaint.
- The Chairman of the panel explains that both parties will hear from the panel within five working days.
- Both parties leave together while the panel decides on the issues.
- The clerk remains to support the panel.