



WALTON PRIORY MIDDLE SCHOOL

Complaints Procedures Guidelines for Schools

These guidelines should be read in conjunction with the LEA's leaflet for parents "Your School - Compliments, Comments and Concerns".

Introduction

The main purpose of a complaints procedure is to solve problems and to give parents a means to raise issues of concern and have them addressed. Complainants should be treated respectfully during and after the course of any complaints investigation.

All members of staff should be aware of the complaints procedure and understand:

-) The importance of attempting to resolve problems before they become formal complaints.
-) The importance of treating complaints respectfully.

Expressing Concerns

At this informal stage the school should consider the best way of dealing with the concerns raised according to the circumstances. It is preferable for all concerned that concerns are resolved now rather than later.

Formal Complaints

Stage 1 - The Headteacher

It may be that the headteacher has not been aware of the concern raised prior to this point. At this stage the Headteacher should consider whether the complainant can be satisfied without recourse to the governing body.

The response to the parent should be as described in the paragraph "outcomes" below.

Action through a complaints procedure may lead to action being initiated under other procedures. This may be disciplinary or child protection procedures and consideration should be given to this possibility at the earliest stage. In these cases

the investigations under the complaints procedure will be suspended until action under the other procedures (including appeals) has been concluded. The complainant should be advised if this is the case and also informed of the likely delay in the final resolution of their complaint.

Stage 2 - formal Complaint to the Governing Body

Where complaints cannot be resolved informally each school should have a procedure for accepting complaints made to the Chair of the Governing Body. Complaints should be accepted in writing or verbally. Where a complaint is accepted verbally it should be reported back to the complainant to ensure that details have been collected correctly. an example of a form that could be used for this purpose is shown in appendix 1.

The school should record when the complaint is received. A complaint should then be acknowledged in writing by, or on behalf of, the Chair of the Governing Body. The acknowledgement should include an explanation of what will happen next, time scales involved and the name of the person from whom they will next hear about the progress of the investigation.

Details of a complaint should be kept confidential except in so far as they need to be shared with people who might contribute to their resolution.

The Role of the Chair of Governors

The Chair of Governors will need to consider whether the investigation can be completed by the Headteacher (who will already have been involved), the Chair him/herself, or whether to refer the complaint to a Complaints Committee of the Governing Body. If the latter course of action is followed the chair shall present a full report to the Committee and, if necessary, external advice may be sought from the District Education Officer.

It would be appropriate for this committee to be made up of three Governors. The membership should not include the Headteacher and, according to the matter complained about, it may not be appropriate for certain categories of Governor to be included.

The Committee should meet at a time convenient to the members of the Committee, the Chair (who will present the report), the parent (in order that they may make representations in person) and any witnesses.

Outcomes

In all cases where a complaint has been investigated the complainant will be given a written response covering:

-) the complaint;
-) the scope of the investigation;
-) the conclusion of the investigation;
-) any action which has resulted.

The Committee may wish to offer the complainant the opportunity to discuss the response.

If the investigation upholds the complaint, redress should be appropriate to the complaint and may include:

-) An appropriate expression of regret.
-) Providing the solution desired by the complaint.
-) Changing the procedures to avoid future problems.

Each school will take responsibility for:

-) Deciding who can take remedial action.
-) Ensuring that the remedy is carried out.
-) Ensuring that any remedy is within the school's powers.
-) Ensuring the approach to remedies is reasonable and consistent.

Where a complaint is not upheld the complainant must be given a response and informed of any further action that might be appropriate in their situation.

Stages 3 and 4 - The role of the LEA

Parents do not have a general right of appeal should they disagree with the Governors' decision. They may, however, raise the matter with the Local Education Authority or Secretary of State if they consider the complaint wasn't investigated properly and fairly. If the Governors have followed a proper procedure and considered the complaint reasonably, neither the Local Education Authority nor the Secretary of State can reverse their decision.

