



Alver Valley  
Federation of Schools

## Complaints Procedure

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## Framework of principles

Our complaints procedure aims to:

- encourage resolution of problems by **informal** means wherever possible;
- be easily **accessible** and **publicised**;
- be **simple** to understand and use;
- 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**;
- address all the points at issue and provide an **effective** response and **appropriate** redress, where necessary;
- provide **information** to the school's senior management team so that services can be improved.

## Investigating complaints

The role of the person investigating the complaint is to ensure that they:

- establish **what** has happened so far, and **who** has been involved;
- clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved;
- meet with the complainant or contact them (if unsure or further information is necessary);
- clarify what the complainant feels would put things right;
- interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
- conduct the interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning;
- keep notes of the interview or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of the meeting.

## Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure we want to keep in mind ways in which a complaint can be resolved. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- an apology;
- an explanation;
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
- an assurance that the event complained of will not recur;
- an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again;
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint.

## The stages of the complaint

### In the first instance – informal stage

If you have a concern or a complaint, we would like you to tell us about it. Whatever it is you want to discuss, the matter will always be kept confidential and our support

and respect for you and your child will not be affected in any way. It's always best to talk about your concerns as soon as you can, as it is much easier to deal with something that happened recently, than an incident that happened some time ago. Also if you are able to tell us about a concern early on, we may be able to avoid it becoming a serious issue.

We would always hope that any issues can be dealt with informally through discussion with the relevant teacher, the Head of Schools or the Executive Headteacher, however in the unfortunate situation that the complaint cannot be resolved in this way, then the following steps in procedure will apply. This all sounds very formal and we are required by law to have a procedure in place; however, we will do everything that we can to resolve any issues as quickly and informally as we can.

The formal procedures will need to be invoked when initial attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further.

### **First - formal stage: What to do if the matter is not resolved through informal discussions**

It is in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. The experience of the first contact between the complainant and the school can be crucial in determining whether the complaint will escalate. To that end, if staff are made aware of the procedures, they will know what to do when they receive a complaint.

Please put your concern in writing, including as many details as you can, you may use the attached complaints form for this purpose.

- Address your letter to the Executive Headteacher.
- The Executive Headteacher or Head of Schools will contact you to arrange a meeting within 5 working days.
- After the meeting the Executive Headteacher or Head of Schools will investigate the complaint and seek advice where appropriate. They will then respond in writing within 15 working days of your meeting.
- If the complaint relates to the Executive Headteacher, please refer to Stage Three.

### **Second formal stage: How to take the matter further**

If you do not feel that the issue has been resolved, or the complaint relates to the Executive Headteacher, please write to the Chair of Governors. Please do not write to or approach governors individually, as this may make it difficult to set up a panel of governors if required at a later stage.

Please outline the details of your complaint and explain the reason for pursuing it beyond the Executive Headteacher's response, enclosing any relevant paperwork. The Chair of Governors will contact you to arrange a meeting within 5 school days, and will explain what he/she is able to do.

After the meeting, the Chair of Governors will respond in writing within 20 school days.

### **Third formal stage: Governors Complaints Committee**

If you still do not feel that the issue has been resolved, then you can write to the Clerk of the Governing Body and ask for the matter to be addressed by the Governors Complaints Committee.

Please describe the issues in detail and say why you are dissatisfied with the outcomes of the previous stages.

The Complaints Committee will consist of three Governors who have had no prior involvement in the matter in question. They will be given any relevant documents relating to the complaint. Please do not write to the Governors individually as this may affect our ability to set up a panel of Governors with no prior knowledge or involvement in the issue.

The Clerk of the Governing Body will contact you to arrange a meeting within five working days, and will explain what the Committee is able to do (either a reconsideration or a review). You will also be informed that you have the right to attend the meeting, and to be accompanied by a friend, legal representative or interpreter. The Executive Headteacher will also be invited to attend the meeting.

Whilst discussions at the meeting will be in accordance with an agenda, and be documented by the Clerk to the Governors, the meeting itself will be as informal as possible, with the main aim being to resolve the problem raised and to achieve reconciliation between you and the school.

You will receive a written decision on the complaint within two school days of the meeting of the Complaints Committee.

Complaints about school problems are almost always settled within schools. For general complaints, this is the final stage of the school's complaints procedure. Should you feel that the Executive Headteacher's and governors' actions have been unreasonable, or the correct process has not been adhered to, then you should seek advice from the LEA's Complaints Adviser.

### **Further recourse**

Most complaints are resolved by this process. Should your complaint not be resolved, your further options are as follows:

You can complain to the Secretary of State at the Department for Education:

The Secretary of State  
Department for Education  
Sanctuary Buildings  
Great Smith Street  
London  
SW1P 3BT  
Website: [www.education.gov.uk](http://www.education.gov.uk)  
Telephone: 0370 000 2288

In the case of complaints about **Special Educational Needs provision**, you may complain further to the Local Authority. This should be done by writing to the Children's Services Complaints Manager.

**Complaints Form**

When we receive a complaint, we aim to acknowledge its receipt within five working days and send a full or interim response within 20 working days.

**Name of parent/carer:****Pupil's name:****Address:****Telephone (day):****Telephone (evening):****What is your concern and how has it affected you?****Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please list this below:****Have you discussed this matter with a member of staff before filling in this form? If so, who did you speak to and what was the response?****What would you like to happen as a result of making this complaint?**

<b>Signed/Dated:</b>	
<b>Official use only:</b> Initial response and acknowledgement: By whom: Date:	Action taken:
<b>Data Protection Act 1988</b> – We will only process your personal data to respond to your complaint. In general, this data will be used for administrative and statistical purposes	