
The Hayfield School Policy Statement: Complaints
Reviewed: March 2010

The Educational Reform Act of 1988 included a 'formal' Complaints Procedure with regard to:-

- The provision by a school of the National Curriculum and the whole curriculum including R.E and Worship.
- Exemption (disapplication) for a student from certain areas of the National Curriculum at certain times.
- Operation of Charging policies.
- Provision of information upon pupils and aspects of the Data Protection Act.

A 'complaint' has stature if it can be shown that the School Governors, or Headteacher have acted illegally, or unreasonably with regard to their powers and duties in respect of the 1988 Education Act and the role of Head and Governors in a Foundation school.

It is clearly expected in the Act that the vast majority of complaints will be dealt with satisfactorily in discussion between a parent and the school staff. Only if such an informal procedure has failed to effect a satisfactory resolution should the formal complaints procedure be invoked - or if the complaint is of a serious and urgent nature. This procedure does not cover complaints against an individual teacher for which separate procedures exist to protect teachers against unwarranted libel, or slander.

We state this 'formal' procedure, as we are legally obliged to do so. However on a day-to-day basis we seek to handle queries, suggestions and complaints in a positive, helpful, reactive way.

The formal complaints procedure is:-

1. Complaints should be put in writing to the relevant member of staff (or the Headteacher), who has a duty to respond in a reasonable time. Please note that a direct meeting with the Headteacher is often not the most productive or feasible approach to a problem.
2. If unresolved the school will arrange a meeting between the complainant, the Headteacher and the Chair or Vice Chair of Governors or Chair of appropriate Governors committee.
3. If still unresolved the complainant has the right to ask the Governing Body to hear the complaint, within a period of three weeks.
4. The Governors Complaints Committee will consider any written report by the Headteacher of a previous informal meeting, and any written submission by the complainant together with oral statement of the Headteacher and the complainant, who may be accompanied by a 'friend'.
5. The decision of the Governors will be conveyed to the complainant in writing, including any action proposed for the Headteacher, or the complainant
6. If still unresolved the complaint can next be heard by an independent panel.
7. If still unresolved the complainant may if he, or she, so wishes refer the complaint to the Secretary of State Children, Families and Schools.

Given the complexity and time-consuming nature of the above everyone hopes that complaints can be resolved informally with goodwill, common-sense, and an interest in the well-being of the child and other children.

If you have a concern:

LEVEL 1

- Minor problems are normally dealt with by Group Tutors who seek to respond quickly to phone calls and letters from parents.
- If a problem is related to a teaching subject the concern should be addressed to the relevant Head of Department.
- All problems, which have been raised, are noted and discussed by relevant and appropriate staff. If required, the matter may be taken to the relevant Line Manager.
- Assistant Heads and the Headteacher should receive copies of all letters in response to any significant complaint in order to monitor these and intervene if felt appropriate.
- Staff are asked to share any complaint made direct to them with their Line Manager, who may respond on their behalf - this is to avoid 75 staff acting as channels of communication with consequent confusion.

LEVEL 2

- The Head, Deputy Head, or any of the Assistant Heads, can be contacted direct by a parent if he or she feels a problem is not being satisfactorily resolved, or is of a *serious* nature. Note that in such cases Level 1 procedures should have been followed in the first instance. Clearly, if the issue is of a sensitive (i.e. safety, medical, well-being) nature, complainants are welcome to direct a concern directly to Level 2. If, after this stage, a parent is still unhappy they can contact the Chair of Governors, who may involve other Governors in seeking to solve the problem with the Head. This is normally a rare event, as it must imply a breakdown of relationships, or some major conflict of principle.
- We are of course all keen to solve problems. Occasionally they are not easy to solve as they involve complex relationships between pupils, other pupils, parents and staff and may need time, patience, and 'persistence'. At times there is no perfect solution, as we simply have to 'agree to disagree'. Sometimes our view of acting reasonably and that of a parent may differ. However, this is rare and we have very few serious complaints. We take our role very seriously and will always act in order to achieve our goal of high-achieving, well-rounded global citizens with a clear sense of morality.

Pupils with a problem or concern can of course discuss this with their Group Tutor, Year Tutor or subject teacher who will seek to help and advise.