

THE HEATHLAND SCHOOL

WHOLE SCHOOL POLICY FOR COMPLAINTS

INTRODUCTION

In accordance with Section 29 of the Education Act 2002, all local authority (LA) maintained schools must have and make available a procedure to deal with all complaints relating to their school and to any community facilities or services that the school provides.

We recognise the need to be clear about the difference between a concern and a complaint. A 'concern' may be defined as '*an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought*'. For example issues related to: the setting of homework, marking and setting arrangements. This list is not exhaustive. A complaint may be generally defined as '*an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action*'.

The complaints policy should not be used for the following reasons, for which there are separate (statutory) procedures:

- Admissions
- Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs
- Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation
- Exclusion of children from school
- Staff grievances and disciplinary procedures
- Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises

We aim to ensure that concerns are handled, if at all possible, without the need for formal procedures.

1. DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS – INITIAL CONCERNS

Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage reduces the numbers that develop into formal complaints. Our formal complaints procedure is only necessary if efforts to resolve the concern informally are unsuccessful.

It should be noted that many teachers have full teaching commitments during a school day often followed by extra-curricular clubs or meetings. Hence we will always aim to make an initial response to a concern within 3 working days and where necessary provide a fuller response within 10 working days, where possible.

2. DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS – FORMAL PROCEDURES

Our formal procedures are 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.

The Headmaster has overall responsibility for the operation and management of the school complaints procedure. The Headmaster may nominate a senior member of staff to deal with the complaint in the first instance.

Framework of Principles

To be effective our Complaints Procedure will:

- encourage resolution of problems by **informal** means wherever possible;
- be easily **accessible** and **publicised**;
- be **simple** to understand and use;
- allow **swift** handling with established **time-limits** for action and keeping people informed of the progress;
- respect people's desire for **confidentiality**;

3. TIME-LIMITS

Complaints are considered, and resolved, as quickly and efficiently as possible. We set realistic time limits for each action within each stage. However, where further investigations are necessary, new time limits may be set and the complainant informed of the new deadline and an explanation for the delay.

4. BARRING FROM THE SCHOOL PREMISES

Although fulfilling a public function, schools are private places. The public has no automatic right of entry. Schools will therefore act to ensure they remain a safe place for pupils, staff and other members of their community.

If a parent's behaviour is a cause for concern, a school can ask him/her to leave school premises. In serious cases, the headmaster or the local authority can notify them in writing that their implied licence to be on school premises has been temporarily revoked subject to any representations that the parent may wish to make. Schools should always give the parent the opportunity to formally express their views on the decision to bar in writing.

The decision to bar will then be reviewed, taking into account any representations made by the parent, and either confirmed or lifted. If the decision is confirmed the parent should be notified in writing, explaining how long the bar will be in place.

Anyone wishing to complain about being barred can do so, by letter or email, to the Headmaster or Chair of Governors' – Best Practice Advice for School Complaints Procedures 2016 (Department for Education)

5. VEXATIOUS COMPLAINTS

If, despite following appropriate procedures the complainant remains dissatisfied, or tries to reopen the same issue, the Headmaster or Chair of the Governing Body will inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

THE FORMAL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

The Stages of Complaints

Our formal complaints procedure has well-defined stages. At each stage we clarify exactly who will be involved and what will happen. There may, on occasion, be the need for some flexibility; for example, the possibility of further meetings between the complainant and the member of staff directly involved and further investigations may be required by the Headmaster after a meeting with the complainant.

Our school-based stages are followed:

- Stage one: complaint dealt initially by the Head of Year for pastoral issues and the Head of Department for curriculum issues.
- Stage two: complaint heard by Headmaster and / or a member of the Senior Management Team (SMT). Where a complaint is heard by another member of the SMT and not resolved it will then be passed to the Headmaster.
- Stage three: complaint received (in writing) by the Chair of the Governing Body or a Governors Appeal panel.

MANAGING AND RECORDING COMPLAINTS

RECORDING COMPLAINTS

The progress of any complaint and the final outcome will be recorded by a member of staff dealing with the complaint. A complaint may be made in person, by telephone, or in writing. (See Appendix A) At the end of a meeting or telephone call, the member of staff will ensure that the complainant and the school have the same understanding of what was discussed and agreed.

THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL COMPLAINTS UNIT – DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION

If a complaint has completed the local procedures and the complainant remains dissatisfied, they have the right to refer their complaint to the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State has a duty to consider all complaints raised but will only intervene where the Governing Body has acted unlawfully or unreasonably and where it is expedient or practical to do so.

The SCU will not overturn a school's decision about a complaint except in exceptional circumstances where it is clear the school has acted unlawfully or unreasonably. If the SCU finds that the school has not handled a complaint in accordance with its procedure, they may request that the complaint is looked at again.

REVIEW AND EVALUATION

The policy will be reviewed and evaluated annually by the Headmaster and will be discussed at a meeting of the Governors' Pupils' Committee.

COMPLAINT FORM

Please complete and return to:

The Headmaster, The Heathland School, Wellington Road South, Hounslow, Middlesex, TW4 5JD

Your name:
Pupil's name:
Your relationship to the pupil:
Address: Postcode: Day time telephone number: Evening telephone number:
Please give details of your complaint.(Continue on separate sheet if required)
What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint. (Who did you speak to and what was the response)?

What further 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 who:

Complaint referred to:

Date: