

The Heights Primary School Policy for **PARENT/CARERS COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

Version 1.6

Responsible officer: Headteacher
Responsible Committee: Curriculum and Standards Committee

Date of last review: October 2020
Date of next review: March 2024



Introduction

We trust that your children will be happy and enabled to achieve well at the school. However, if you are unhappy with something that has happened at the school there are procedures in place to deal with complaints.

The following information is to help you resolve the problem. You can be assured that any complaint will be investigated, in confidence, in a fair, thorough and sensitive manner.

Stages of the Complaint Procedure

The following describes the formal procedure for dealing with complaints over matters for which the Governors/Headteacher are responsible. Each stage should be followed in order, i.e. none of the below stages should be missed out when a complaint is raised (with the exception of a complaint relating to the Headteacher where Stage 2 can be skipped).

Appendix 2 shows a flowchart of the stages.

Stage 1: The Class Teacher

All complaints will be dealt with as quickly and efficiently as possible. Most complaints can be resolved swiftly through discussion with the class teacher but if a satisfactory conclusion is not achieved, then an appointment should be made to discuss the matter with the Headteacher.

Stage 2: The Headteacher

The Headteacher will consider the complaint and respond to it. If the issue involves a serious allegation, the Headteacher may, at her discretion, deal with the matter personally, without going through the steps above. The Headteacher may also assume personal responsibility for dealing with any complaint at any time.

All complaints which reach this stage are recorded in a log kept in the office.

As clearly stated in our Whistleblowing Policy, any complaint about the Headteacher should be referred directly to the Chair of Governors.

Stage 3: Review by the Chair of Governors or Vice Chair of Governors

In the rare event that the Headteacher cannot resolve the complaint, the Headteacher will advise the Chair of Governors (CoG) or the Vice Chair of Governors (VCoG) in cases where the Chair may have a conflict of interest.

If the CoG (VCoG) is satisfied that the procedure has been applied fully and been exhausted, the CoG (VCoG) will review the complaint. In the event of the CoG (VCoG) being satisfied that all reasonable action has been taken by the school, the CoG (VCoG) will communicate this to the complainant. If the Chair of Governors (Vice Chair of Governors) does not believe that all reasonable steps have been taken by the school, he/she will make further recommendations to the school.

Stage 4: The Formal Complaints Procedure via the Governing Body

1. The Governing Body's complaints procedure does not replace the arrangements for dealing with certain types of complaint that fall outside the remit of the Governing Body's complaints procedure. A number of other procedures already exist:
 - Admissions Procedures;
 - Child Protection Procedures;
 - Staff Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures;
 - Exclusions Procedures;
 - Special Educational Needs Procedures;
 - Procedures for querying public examination results.
2. Formal procedures only need to be invoked when initial attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful and the person raising concerns remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further.
3. The complainant should set out the complaint in writing (please see Appendix 1) and send it to the Clerk of the Governing Body. The written notification should make clear the grievance and state that it is to be formally considered under these arrangements. If necessary, the school will offer the complainant the opportunity to express the complaint orally and for someone at the school to produce a written version with which the complainant can agree.
4. The Clerk will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing within 7 days and arrange for it to be investigated and considered by the complaints sub-committee of the Governing Body. The sub-committee will consist of a minimum of three members who have not previously been involved with the subject of the complaint. At least two members of the panel should be Governors. At least one of the members of the panel must be independent, i.e. not a governor or a member of the school community.
5. If an employee of the school is named in the formal complaint, the Clerk to the Governing Body will inform that employee immediately on receipt of the complaint.
6. The complainant's hearing will be conducted in private unless in very exceptional circumstances the Complaint Committee decides otherwise.
7. The complainant is offered the opportunity to make an oral presentation to the sub-committee to supplement the written complaint. He or she may be accompanied, if desired, by a friend or representative and, where necessary, an interpreter.
8. The Headteacher and the Chair of Governors should not be members of the Complaints Committee, which must be independent and seen to be impartial.

9. The Clerk will give at least seven days' written notice of the hearing to the Complaints Committee, the complainant and the Headteacher. The notice will specify the date, time and place of the hearing.
10. The aim of the hearing, which will be held in private, will be to resolve the complaint, where appropriate, and achieve reconciliation between school and the complainant. However, it is recognised that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the hearing does not find in their favour.
11. The panel hearing will be as informal as possible.
12. Order of the panel hearing
 - the chair of the panel highlights the order of the hearing
 - the complainant is invited to explain their complaint;
 - the Headteacher is invited to explain the school's actions and be followed by the school's witnesses (if any);
 - the complainant may question both the Headteacher and the witnesses after each has spoken;
 - the panel may ask questions at any point;
 - the complainant is invited to sum up their complaint;
 - the Headteacher is invited to sum up the school's actions and responses to the complaint;
 - both parties leave together while the panel decides on the issues;
 - the Chair of the panel explains that both parties will hear from the panel within a set time scale (5 working days).
13. The Clerk to the Governors will be present at all meetings of the committee to record proceedings and decisions reached. The Governors will decide whether the minutes of the meeting are to be made available or deemed to be confidential. The Clerk will not be a member of the committee.
14. The complainant will be notified in writing of the outcome of the hearing as soon as possible after the meeting.
15. The Complaint Committee may decide that an external Authority or advisor may have a role to play in offering objective and professional advice or perhaps to act in a mediating capacity (stage 4).
16. A record will be kept of all formal complaints.

Governors' Role & Protocol

Governors have a strategic role and do not involve themselves directly in management and daily operational issues. If a Governor receives a complaint from a parent, student or other stakeholder in the school, she/he will refer it immediately to the Headteacher. The Headteacher will advise any Governor who has brought a complaint to her of the outcome.

Individual complaints are not heard or discussed by the whole Governing Body at any stage, as this would compromise the impartiality of any panel set up to hear the complaint as part of the formal process or to hear a disciplinary hearing against a member of staff following a serious complaint.

Unreasonable Complainants

The Heights Primary School is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with the school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

The Heights Primary School defines unreasonable complainants as ‘those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with the school, hinder our consideration of their or other people’s complaints’.

A complaint may be regarded as unreasonable when the person making the complaint:

- Refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance.
- Refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure.
- Insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice.
- Introduces trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant expects to be taken into account and commented on, or raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales.
- Makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced.
- Changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds.
- Repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed).
- Refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school’s complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education.
- Seeks an unrealistic outcome.
- Makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with.

A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if the person making the complaint does so either face-to-face, by telephone or in writing or electronically:

- Maliciously
- Aggressively
- Using threats, intimidation or violence
- Using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language
- Knowing it to be false
- Using falsified information
- Publishing unacceptable information in a variety of media such as in social media websites and newspapers

Complainants should limit the numbers of communications with a school while a complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text) as it could delay the outcome being reached. Whenever possible, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an ‘unreasonable’ marking.

If the behaviour continues the Headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and asking them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact The Heights Primary School causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will usually be reviewed after 6 months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the concerns and actions taken will be put in writing immediately and the police informed. This may include banning an individual from The Heights Primary School.

Amendments:

<u>Version</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Updated/reviewed</u>
1.1	June 2014	First version finalised
1.2	August 2014	Updated following a governors meeting
1.3	January 2016	Reviewing
1.3	May 2016	Updated further
1.4	July 2016	Additional paragraph and complaints form
1.5	April 2018	Additional paragraph
1.6	March 2022	Updated following being used for a complaint

Appendix 1: Complaints Form

The Heights Primary School
Complaint Form



Please complete and return this form to Mrs Aileen Moore, Clerk to the Governing Body who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:

Address:

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Postcode:

Daytime telephone number:

Mobile telephone number:

If applicable, name of child(ren) at school:

Please give details of your complaint:

What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint? (Who did you speak to and what was the response?)

Your relationship to the school, eg Parent, Carer, neighbour, member of the public

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

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

Signature:

Date:

For office use only

Date of acknowledgement sent:

By whom:

Complaint referred to:

Date:

Appendix 2: Complaints Procedure Flowchart

Complaints which concern the School

Complaints which do not concern the School

