

Complaints Policy

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| Agreed by Governors: | September 2017 |
| Review Date: | September 2019 |

Rationale

'The governing body is required by the Education Act 2002 to have a policy for dealing with parents' complaints.

The school's complaints policy allows parents' complaints about school issues to be dealt with efficiently and sensitively, and at the appropriate level.

Complaints can cover a wide variety of matters that concern parents. The school expects all parental complaints to be taken seriously and to be dealt with comprehensively and as far as possible in confidence.

Aims

The policy aims to ensure that all complaints from parents, pupils and others are dealt with as quickly and sensitively as possible, and by the person best able to do so.

As far as possible, all concerns should be dealt with as informally as possible.

A parent, pupil or other complainant should be able to expect to have a response, even if not the final response, to their complaint within 24 hours of having made the complaint.

Types of Concern and Complaints

The majority of complaints received by schools fall into the following categories:

- financial and administrative
- academic (course program, unsatisfactory teaching, too much/too little homework, progress in a particular subject etc.)
- pastoral (discipline/indiscipline, inappropriate sanctions, bullying, overall progress of the child, unhappiness of child etc.)
- child protection (allegations against staff, handling of sensitive issues)
- Internal assessment

Informal Complaints

All staff should listen carefully and patiently to parent and student complaints.

If the matter is within the competence of the member of staff to resolve quickly this should be done. Otherwise, the complainant should be reassured that the complaint will be passed to the relevant member of staff, and the relevant person should be informed, by e mail, by the member of staff as soon as possible. This does not prevent the member of staff also speaking to the colleague about the matter at the earliest opportunity.

If the member of staff considers the issue to be serious (but is not a child protection issue) they should inform a senior member of staff by email. This does not prevent the member of staff also speaking to the colleague about the matter at the earliest opportunity.

If the complaint concerns a child protection issue or involves an allegation of abuse by a member of the school staff the named person responsible for child protection should be informed by completing the child protection referral form.

The senior member of staff receiving a serious complaint by a student or parent should ensure that the complaint is dealt with within 3 working days, that the complainant has a response and that the nature of the complaint and the outcome are reported to the complaints co-ordinator.

If parents, students or other complainants wish to register a formal complaint they should be asked to complete the school's Formal Complaint Form and return it to the complaints co-ordinator.

Formal Procedure

- Stage 1 complaint heard by staff member (who is not subject of the complaint)
- Stage 2 complaint heard by Headteacher/Senior Leader
- Stage 3 complaint heard by GB's complaints appeals panel

Guidelines

Stage 1

On receipt of a formal complaint providing that the complaint is not a child protection issue the complaints co-ordinator will decide on the appropriate member of staff to deal with the complaint. In most cases this is likely to be a middle leader.

If the complaint concerns a child protection issue or involves an allegation of abuse by a member of staff the 'named person responsible for child protection should be informed.

On receipt of the complaint the member of staff should contact the complainant to glean extra information and then investigate the complaint. The complaint should be dealt with within three working days and a meeting arranged with the complainant.

There will be two possible outcomes from the meeting. The complainant will agree that the matter has been resolved or the complainant will decide that their complaint has not been resolved.

The member of staff dealing with the complaint will inform the complaints co-ordinator of the outcomes of the meeting.

Stage 2

If a resolution cannot be found the complaints co-ordinator should inform the complainant of their right of appeal to the Headteacher and inform the Headteacher of the action taken.

On receipt of the appeal the Headteacher will decide which member of the senior leadership team will deal with the appeal.

The member of the senior leadership team receiving the appeal should contact the complainant and the member of staff who dealt with the complaint and seek to resolve the matter.

The headteacher must normally resolve the matter within three days of receiving notification of the complaint. In abnormal circumstances a longer time scale can be agreed, either by agreement with all parties, or by a decision of the Chair of the GB if no agreement is reached.

There will be two possible outcomes; the complainant will agree that the matter has been resolved or the complainant will decide that their complaint has not been resolved.

The senior member of staff dealing with the complaint will inform the complaint co-ordinator of the outcome of the meeting.

If the headteacher is unable to resolve the issue it is open to the complainant to make representations to the governing body. (Stage 3)

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Stage 3

Complainants who are not satisfied by the Headteacher's decision regarding the complaint can make representations to the governing body.

The complainant may write to the chair of the governing body (via the complaints coordinator) giving details of the complaint. The Chair will nominate a governor (or panel) to hear the appeal.

The hearing should be arranged within 10 school days of the chair receiving notice of the complaint.

The complainant must be told of their right to be accompanied by a friend, and where relevant translations/interpreters must be arranged by the clerk.

The nominated governor/panel will make its own procedures, and will agree these with the chair, who will report them to the next governing body meeting.

The governor/panel will ensure that the complainant is heard in private, is welcomed, and as far as possible is put at ease.

Careful consideration must be taken when the complainant is a student.

The governor/panel will hear the appeal(s), consider all the views expressed and decide the outcome.

The governor/panel can:

- dismiss the complaint in whole or part
- uphold the complaint in whole or part
- decide on appropriate action to resolve the complaint
- recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures

Responsibilities

All staff and governors should be aware of the procedures.

Governing Body: for approving the policy, procedures, and guidelines, hearing and deciding on appeals, receiving reports, and advising the headteacher. The governing body will monitor the level and nature of complaints.

Chair of the GB: to receive complaints at Stage 3, to nominate a governor or panel to hear the appeal, and to check that the correct procedure is followed.

Nominated Governor or Chair of the Panel at Stage 3

To ensure that:

- the parties understand the procedure
- the issues are addressed
- key findings of fact are established
- complainants are put at ease
- the hearing is conducted as informally as possible
- the panel is open-minded and acts independently
- no member of the panel has a vested interest in the outcome, or has been involved in the issues previously
- all parties have the chance to be heard
- any written material is seen by all parties

Clerk to the Governing Body

The clerk must act as the reference point for the complainant at stage 3. The clerk must:

- set convenient dates and times and venues for hearings
- collate any written material and forward it to the parties
- meet and welcome the parties
- record the proceedings
- notify the parties of the decision

Headteachers and Associate Headteachers: for the overall internal management of the procedures, for hearing complaints at the second stage (see below), ensuring that the procedures are monitored and reviewed and termly reports made to the GB.

Complaints Co-ordinator (Director of operations): for the efficient operation and management of the policy and procedures, for keeping parents, pupils and others informed of the procedures, and for compiling reports for the Headteacher as required.

Finance Manager: for financial queries.

Faculty Leaders: for dealing with and where possible resolving complaints about academic matters/programmes of study/teaching methods at stage 1 of the procedures. (Where the Faculty Leader is the subject of the complaint the complaint would be dealt with by the relevant associate headteacher)

Lead Pastoral Manager: for dealing with and where possible resolving complaints concerning overall pupil progress, discipline issues, pastoral care. Where the Lead Pastoral Manager is the subject of the complaint the complaint would be dealt with by the relevant Associate Headteacher)

Data, Examination and Assessment Manager: for dealing with complaint about procedures in the producing of internally assessed marks for submission to examination boards and awarding bodies.

All Staff: for hearing any concerns brought to them by parents and pupils and reassuring them that they will be dealt with as soon as possible by the appropriate member of staff, and for informing the relevant staff of the concerns. And for passing any complaints received from other people who are not parents or pupils to the complaints co-ordinator.

Reporting and Recording

In all formal cases it is important for staff to use the school's 'Complaints Form' so that records of the complaint and the action taken can be recorded and traced. Supporting documents should be attached to the form.

The Headteacher and the complaints co-ordinator will consider the handling of complaints from time to time, and will discuss issues with staff as necessary.

Appendix 1

Information for candidates on appeals or complaints relating to internal assessment.

If at any stage during your examination course you have concerns about assessing your internally marked work for public examinations (eg coursework/portfolio projects)

You should:

Firstly raise the matter with the relevant Faculty Leader. Faculty Leaders head the following subjects/curriculum areas.

- Mathematics
- English
- Science
- Humanities including Modern Foreign Languages:
- Computing and Business
- Expressive Arts and Technology
- Physical Education
- Additional Educational Needs

If you are still unhappy with the procedures used you should make a formal complaint in writing to the exam manager at least 2 weeks before the final external examination in that subject.

If the exam coordinator is unable to resolve the issue she will arrange an appeal with the headteacher and an associate member of SLT.

You will be allowed to bring your parents/carers or a friend to the appeal.

You will be given access to the following:

- Marks awarded by the centre for an internal assessment
- All comments recorded by the centre relating to their internally assessed work
- Any correspondence between the centre and the awarding body relating to their internally assessed work
- Information, if available at the time of the appeal, as to whether their work was sampled by the awarding body
- The moderated mark given to the work by the awarding body, if known



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**South Shields School
COMPLAINTS FORM**

Name: _____ **Address:** _____

Telephone Number: _____

Student Name _____ **Relationship to student** _____

Brief summary of your complaint:

Office Use

Form Received By: _____

Date: _____

Action Taken by: _____

Action Taken: _____

Date of Action Taken: _____