



Highlands School

Complaints Policy

Date of Last Review	January 2019
Next Review Due	January 2021
Governors Committee	School Priorities

COMPLAINTS POLICY

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2. Introduction

Highlands is a large and complex organisation. We have a large number of teachers and other adults on our staff and a very large number of young people being educated here. We strive constantly to fulfil our Mission and Beliefs statement and to do our best for all the young people in our care and for the adults on our staff.

In the course of every day there are thousands of interactions between staff and students and between students. We try always to communicate effectively and implement all processes and procedures fairly – but, as with any human organisation, sometimes things go wrong, communication fails or we make a mistake. In these circumstances we are very willing to listen to criticism and challenge and hope to respond in a positive spirit in order to bring about improvement or redress.

The aims of our complaints procedure are:

- To enable complainants to express their dissatisfaction
- To ensure that anyone making a complaint about the school is dealt with sympathetically and courteously
- To take complaints seriously and investigate them fairly and thoroughly
- To ensure that where errors or faults on our part are demonstrated, they are remedied as far as is possible, to the satisfaction of the complainant
- To learn from complaints in order to make improvements to our practice and procedure

3. What Can You Do?

Think clearly about the complaint you wish to make and what you want to achieve. If your complaint concerns an incident, please be ready to tell the school where, when and how you think it happened and who was involved.

Your complaint might be about a difference of opinion, a matter of school policy or practice or a matter that needs clarifying. The outcome you wish may be an apology, an explanation or a review of practice or policy in the school.

4. How Do I Complain?

The school staff with designated responsibilities, the Headteacher and the Governing Body are variously responsible for handling complaints about the school.

In the first instance, you must take your complaint straight to the school. Complaints can pass through several stages, described as follows. If you are unsure who is the most appropriate person to take your complaint to, contact the school and ask – giving an indication of the nature of your complaint.

5. Informal Stage

In the first instance, contact the school and find out who would be the most appropriate person to talk to.

Arrange to speak to that person, either on the phone or by making an appointment to speak to them in person, by e-mail or write to them at the school.

Their response will be by phone, e-mail or in writing within 10 working days

Most complaints are resolved satisfactorily at this stage and are brought to a close. If you are not satisfied, however, or if your complaint concerns a member of staff, your complaint moves as described below.

6. Formal Stage 1

Write or e-mail to the Headteacher, at the school describing your complaint and the reason you remain dissatisfied with the school's response. It would be most helpful if you could state what you wish to achieve – an apology, an explanation, a change to school practice etc. Please do not forget to give your full name and address, your child's name, year and form group.

The Headteacher will ensure the matter is investigated and you will be informed in writing of the outcome and any action to be taken. Please note that it can take some time for a school investigation. Teachers spend most of their time teaching and the Headteacher has many planned commitments. It can take time, therefore, to discuss matters with all those who may be involved. The school will respond to you within 10 working days. Please ensure that any issues that you wish to complain about are included in your complaint. The school will respond once to your complaint and will try to deal with all the issues you raise.

If your complaint is about the conduct of a member of staff, the Headteacher will ensure that it is investigated and, if appropriate, dealt with under the school's Disciplinary Procedure. Where that occurs, you will be informed that your complaint is being dealt with in this way but you will not be informed of the outcome other than any change in policy or procedures that are deemed appropriate by the Headteacher.

If your complaint is about the conduct of the Headteacher, you should write directly to the Chair of Governors.

If your complaint is about the conduct of a school governor or the Chair of Governors you should write to the Clerk of the governing body.

If you remain dissatisfied with the way in which your complaint has been treated, you can ask for it to be considered by the Complaints Panel of the school's Governing Body. (This panel cannot hear any case related to the conduct of a member of staff dealt with under the school's disciplinary procedures). This moves the complaint to stage 2.

7. Formal Stage 2

At this stage, the Complaints Panel will meet to consider the process to date and the outstanding concerns and dissatisfactions.

- The governors will ask you and the Head to submit a written statement.
- A date and time will be set for the panel to meet. You will be invited to attend so that you may present your views in person. If you wish, you may bring a friend or representative who can speak for you. A time limit of 15 minutes will be set for you to present your complaint if you decide to attend in person and a limit of 15 minutes will be allowed for the Headteacher to present his/her response if he/she attends in person. In exceptional circumstances the chair of the panel has discretion to extend these time limits

The Panel will consider the views of both sides. They will come to a conclusion or a decision. THEIR DECISION IS FINAL WITH NO FURTHER RIGHT OF APPEAL. This will be communicated in writing to both parties.

If you still feel that your complaint has not been appropriately addressed, you may refer your complaint to:

The Local Government Ombudsman, (<http://www.lgo.org.uk/>) for issues relating to Special Educational Needs provision at the school or:

The Secretary of State for Education, (<http://www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus>) for all other issues

PLEASE NOTE, THERE IS NO RIGHT OF APPEAL TO ENFIELD LOCAL AUTHORITY

8. The Complaints File

The Headteacher keeps this. The file records complaints made by parents and complaints made by members of staff about parents. Each entry should record:-

- The name of the person making the complaint
- The date of the complaint
- The nature of the complaint and the name of all those involved
- If the complaint was resolved and how.
- If it was not resolved, to whom it was referred and why.
- The report of the incident will have attached any supporting witness statements or other evidence

The Headteacher will review the complaints file on a regular basis. The record of complaints made against staff and against parents will be regularly reported to the School Priorities Committee of the Governing Body.

9. Complaints against Parents

Highlands School will operate the complaints procedure against the school and its staff alongside a procedure that allows staff to register complaints against parental behaviour.

As with the parents' complaints procedure it is assumed that procedures to protect staff against inappropriate parental behaviour should be systematic and transparent. The school will, as with parental complaints, aim to deal with most complaints before they reach the formal stages of the procedure.

Staff Complaints Procedure

When a member of staff feels that they have been subjected to inappropriate behaviour or language from a parent they should report this in writing to the Deputy Head (Pastoral), with a copy to their immediate line manager. Such incident reports will be recorded in the complaints file.

Stage One

Following discussion between the member of staff and their line manager, an appropriate course of action will be decided on and contact with the parent will be made. In most cases the matter will be satisfactorily resolved at this stage and no further action need be taken.

Stage Two

If the matter is considered to be too serious to be dealt with under Stage One then the Headteacher (or in his absence the Deputy Head), will decide on a further appropriate response. If more formal action is required, the Headteacher will consult with the Chair of the School Priorities Committee of Governors and the Chair of Governors.