



Complaints & Resolutions Policy November 2024

DocuSigned by:
Nick Jones
CD33532930D6410...

14/11/2024

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Introduction

Our Board of Trustees has adopted this procedure to deal with concerns or complaints from members of the school community or general public.

Aims and Objectives

Our school aims to be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaint and to resolve it through open dialogue and mutual understanding.

Careful consideration will be given to all concerns and complaints and we will deal with them as swiftly as possible. We will provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed.

In all cases we will put the interests of the child above all other issues.

Our procedure is underpinned by the following **framework of principles**:

- To encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible
- To be easily accessible and publicised
- To be simple to use and understand
- To be impartial
- To be non-adversarial
- To allow swift handling with established time-limits for action and keeping people informed of the progress
- To ensure a full and fair investigation by an independent person where necessary
- To respect people's desire for confidentiality, wherever possible (some information sharing may be necessary to carry out a thorough investigation)
- To address all points of issue, providing an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary
- To provide information to the school's senior management team so that services can be improved.

Areas not covered by this procedure

This procedure does not apply to issues concerning admissions, exclusion appeals, decisions about your child's special educational needs or grievances by school staff. These are the subject of separate complaints procedures. Copies of these procedures can be obtained from the school.

In addition, Ofsted has the power to investigate certain (qualifying) complaints about maintained schools, including those from parents. A qualifying complaint is one that affects the whole school, not an individual. More information can be obtained from the school or Ofsted.

All other complaints are handled by the school according to the arrangements set out below.

Stage 1 – Initial concerns

If you have any concerns about the school, or the education we are providing at any time, please discuss the matter with the class teacher, Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher at the earliest opportunity. Complainants should not approach individual Trustees to raise concerns or complaints, even informally. The Trustees have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at Stage 3 of the procedure.

It is **not** appropriate to publicise any concerns you may have on social networking sites. Please speak, or write, to someone at the school at your earliest convenience, rather than using any other means.

The school considers any concerns very seriously and most problems can be resolved following discussion and a shared understanding of the issues. All members of staff work very hard to ensure that each child is happy at school and is making good progress and they always want to know if there is a problem so they can help to resolve it.

N.B. Appointments to see the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher must be made through the school office.

Your complaint will be taken seriously and you will be treated respectfully if you approach the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher. However, if you do not feel comfortable raising the issue with the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher, please contact the Chair of the Board of Trustees, via the school office.

Stage 2 – Formal procedure

Most concerns are resolved at Stage 1, however if you remain dissatisfied and wish to take the matter further, where the complaint relates to a pupil at the school, you will be asked to complete a complaint form (Appendix One). Where the complaint relates to another matter the complaint should be in the form of a letter and the procedure should follow that of the complaint form as set out below.

Time scales

You must raise the complaint within 28 days of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within 28 days of the last of these incidents. This is to ensure that evidence is not lost and that recollections are reasonably clear. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

Anonymous complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Headteacher or Chair of Trustees, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

Policy for Dealing with Complaints Campaigns

The school is committed to giving careful consideration to all concerns raised and complaints received. If the school receives a large volume of complaints all based on the same subject or from complainants unconnected to the school it may have become the focus of a complaints campaign. If the Headteacher and Chair of Trustees conclude that this is the case a template response to the complaints will be sent.

Complaint Form

The aim of the form is to ensure each party has a clear and common understanding of the complaint and includes a section on what actions might resolve the problem at this stage. It can be used by anyone making a complaint about the operation of the school which is not covered by an alternative procedure.

We are happy to provide the assistance of someone unconnected with the complaint, if you would like support in completing the form.

The form (see Appendix One) should be returned to the Headteacher (marked Private and Confidential), via the school office *unless*:

- The complaint is about the Headteacher. In this case it should be returned to the Chair of the Trustee Board at the school address (marked Private and Confidential, 'FOR IMMEDIATE ATTENTION')
- The complaint is about the Chair of the Board, an individual Trustee or the whole Trust Board. In this case it should be addressed to the Clerk to the Trust Board at the school address (marked Private and Confidential, 'FOR IMMEDIATE ATTENTION')

You will receive an acknowledgement of the receipt of your complaint form within 5 school days.

Investigation

An investigation will be carried out into the complaint and the way it has been handled by the school. This will include a review of any relevant documentation and information and seeking the views of relevant people, where necessary. The person undertaking the investigation will normally write to you with the outcome of this process within 15 school days of receiving the complaint. Concerns or complaints raised outside of term time will be considered to have been raised on the first school day after the holiday period.

If, at any time, it becomes apparent that the complaint is a disciplinary or capability issue, the matter will be dealt with by following the appropriate procedure rather than the complaints procedure. You will be notified if this is the case with your complaint, however, you are not entitled to know which procedure, or the final outcome, because of the right to confidentiality of the member of staff involved.

If, following the outcome of the investigation, you feel your concern has not been resolved, you may choose to refer your complaint to Stage 3 of the procedure. This must be done in writing to the school within 15 school days of the completion of Stage 2.

Stage 3 – Panel hearing

At this stage the complaint will be considered by a panel, who will meet to consider the complaint and make a final decision about it on behalf of the Board of Trustees.

Panel members will have no detailed prior knowledge of the complaint, or connection with the complainant. The meeting will normally take place within 15 school days of your request.

You will have the opportunity to submit written evidence on the complaint prior to the meeting of the panel and also to attend, accompanied by a friend/partner if you wish, to put your case. The Headteacher will be given the same opportunities. Appendix Two outlines the process that will be followed at a panel hearing.

Outcome of the Panel Hearing

The panel will write to you with its conclusion within 5 school days of the meeting, and its decision is final.

If you are still not satisfied, you may wish to put your complaint to the Secretary of State for Education, who can review whether the school has acted reasonably and followed the correct procedures. The address is Department for Education, School Complaints Unit, Ministerial and Public Communications Division, 2nd Floor, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD.

If the school is an academy or free school and you are still not satisfied, you may also contact the Education Funding Agency via its Schools' Complaints Form.

https://form.education.gov.uk/fillform.php?self=1&form_id=cCCNJ1xSfBE&type=form&ShowMsg=1&form_name=Contact+the+Department+for+Education&noRegister=false&ret=%2Fmodule%2Fservices&noLoginPrompt=1

Serial or Persistent Complaints

The school is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with our school. Unfortunately, in a small minority of cases, people pursue their complaints in a way which is unacceptable, or which can impede the investigation of their complaint. This can have significant resource issues for the school.

These actions can occur either while the complaint is being investigated, or once the school has concluded the complaint investigation.

The school defines unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders our consideration of complaints, such as if the complainant:

- 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 co-operate with the complaints investigation process
- 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 complaints procedure
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information and insists on it being taken into account and commented on
- makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues
- 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 adhered to
- seeks an unrealistic outcome
- makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is already being dealt with
- uses threats to intimidate
- uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence
- knowingly provides falsified information
- publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums

Whenever possible, the Headteacher or Chair of Trustees will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before considering behaviour to be unreasonable.

If the behaviour continues, the Headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact the 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 be reviewed after six months.

In such cases, the school will follow any advice from the Department for Education and the Local Government Ombudsman.

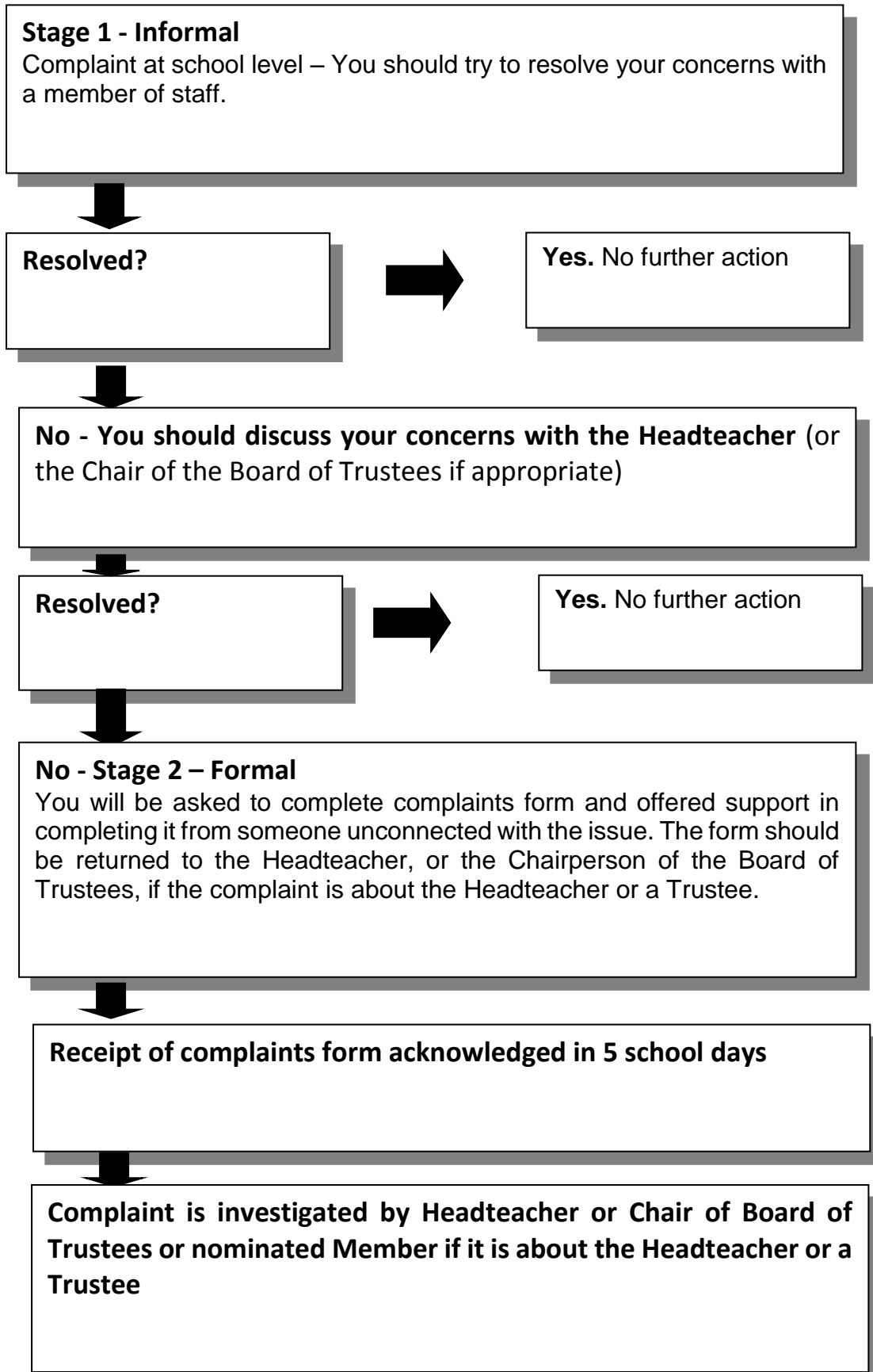
In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from the school.

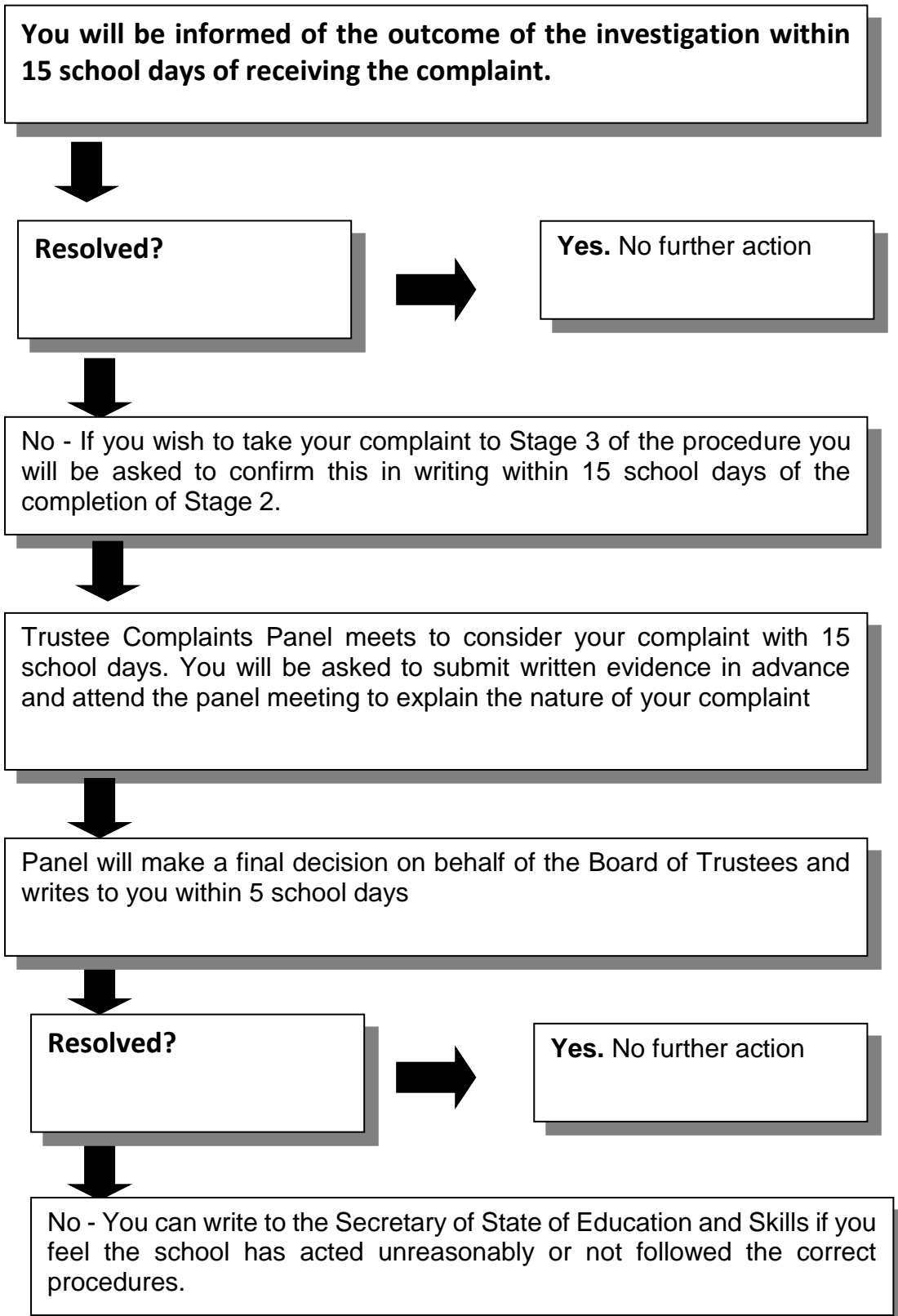
Monitoring and Review

The Board of Trustees monitors the complaints procedure, in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The headteacher logs all formal complaints received by the school and records how they were resolved. Trustees examine this log on an annual basis and consider the need for any changes to the procedure.

Flowchart Summary*

* Please refer to the procedure for more detailed information.





Appendix One - Complaint Form

Please complete and return to the school office, addressed to the appropriate recipient in line with the Complaint Form section of this policy above. The receipt of the form will then be acknowledged and you will receive an explanation of what action will be taken.

Your name:

Pupil's name:

Your relationship to the pupil:

Address:

Postcode:

Day time telephone number:

Evening telephone number:

Please give concise details of your complaint, including dates, names of witnesses etc, to allow the matter to be fully investigated

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

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

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

Signature:

DocuSigned by:
Nick Jones
Date: 10033532930D6410...

14/11/2024

Official use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By whom:

Complaint referred to:

Date:

Appendix Two - At the panel hearing

- After introductions, the complainant will be invited to explain their complaint and will then be followed by their witnesses (if any).
- The Headteacher/Chairperson of Trustees may question both the complainant and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The Headteacher/Chairperson of Trustees is then invited to explain the school's actions and will be followed by the school's witnesses (if any).
- The complainant may question both the Headteacher/Chairperson of Trustees and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The panel may ask questions at any point.
- The complainant is then invited to sum up their complaint.
- The Headteacher/Chairperson of Trustees is then invited to sum up the school's actions and response to the complaint.
- The Chairperson of the panel explains that both parties will hear from the panel within 5 school days.
- Both parties leave together while the panel decides on the issues.
- The Clerk remains to support the panel.