

Hartismere School



Complaints Procedure

(Policy)

Policy No.11

GENERAL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE FOR PARENTS AND OTHERS

INFORMATION TO PARENTS AND OTHER COMPLAINANTS

Introduction

Hartismere School has adopted a set procedure that has been drawn up by the Governing Body for dealing with general complaints made by parents or others about the conduct of the school or the actions of a member of its staff.

All complaints are covered by this procedure, with the exception of matters which relate to the following, as these are covered elsewhere:

- Admission decisions
- Statutory assessments of special educational needs
- Matters likely to require a child protection investigation
- Exclusion of children from school
- Whistle-blowing
- Staff grievances
- Staff conduct complaints
- Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities
- Complaints about the curriculum
- Collective worship
- Withdrawal from the curriculum
- School re-organisation proposals

What to do if you have a complaint

Informal stage

Most complaints regarding a child's welfare or education in school can normally be resolved speedily and informally by discussing the matter with your child's Class Teacher, Form Tutor or Head of Year - whoever is most appropriate. Parents should contact the school and request a meeting with the most appropriate person to resolve the complaint. A complaint must be raised within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply. That person will call you back to arrange a mutually convenient appointment within three school days of receiving your request, where this is reasonably practicable. Please note that this 'three school day'

time limit applies to working days only and does not include weekends, bank holidays or school holidays.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the appropriate person investigating the complaint will provide an informal response within ten school days of the date of receipt of the complaint.

If you are unhappy with the response, or if you have a complaint that concerns a member of staff, school procedures or the school premises, please contact the Headteachers via the school office. A member of the office staff will contact you within three school days to arrange a mutually convenient appointment with one of the Headteachers.

The Headteachers will investigate your complaint and either discuss the matter with you or provide you with a response in writing within fifteen school days.

Sometimes matters can arise of a more general concern. These should first be discussed with one of the Headteachers and then, if necessary, with the Chair of Governors. He or she can, if it is thought to be appropriate, have the matter placed on the agenda of a Governing Body meeting. The Chair can be contacted through the school office.

Every effort will be made by the Headteacher to resolve the matter at this stage.

If your complaint remains unresolved or concerns a Headteacher

Formal stage

If you are not satisfied with the Headteachers response and you wish to pursue it further, or if your complaint is about the Headteacher, please submit the details of your complaint in writing to the Chair of Governors c/o the school. The name of the Chair of Governors is available from the school office and on the school website.

Once the investigation has been completed, the Chair of Governors will provide you with a detailed response in writing within fifteen school days and also, where appropriate, offer you the opportunity to meet and discuss the situation if this will help to bring the matter to a satisfactory conclusion.

Every effort will be made by the Chair of Governors to resolve the matter at this stage.

If your complaint concerns the Chair of Governors, an individual governor, or the entire Governing Body, please submit details of this, in writing, to the clerk of the Governing Body, c/o the School.

If you are still dissatisfied

If you remain dissatisfied at this point, you can ask for your complaint to be formally considered by the Hearings Committee of the Governing Body. The Committee will meet within fifteen school days of the request being made.

This Committee consists of three Governors who have not been directly involved in the handling of the complaint thus far. They will listen to your complaint and consider all evidence available, impartially. One panel member will be independent of the management and running of the school. The parent / carer can attend and be accompanied at the hearing if they wish. A copy of the committee's finding and recommendations will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about, within five school days of the hearing.

If you are still dissatisfied

If you remain dissatisfied, you are able to complain to the Department for Education. The appropriate contact details are provided in the following link:

[https://form.education.gov.uk/service/Contact the Department for Education](https://form.education.gov.uk/service/Contact%20the%20Department%20for%20Education)

The Department for Education will not re-investigate the complaint, but will determine whether the school has adhered to this complaints procedure and whether this procedure (and any other relevant statutory policies) adhere to legislation or statutory guidance.

Responding to complaints

This procedure has been adopted in order to ensure that all complaints and concerns that are drawn to the attention of the school can be dealt with promptly, thoroughly and efficiently. Most complaints can be resolved satisfactorily by informal discussion with the appropriate member of staff, but there are occasions when more formal arrangements are necessary. Complainants will be kept informed of progress at each stage of the procedure and the main aim throughout the process will be to resolve the matter as speedily as possible.

Correspondence, statements and records relating to complaints will remain confidential, except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 162A of the 2002 Act requests access to them.

Records will include information as to whether a complaint was resolved following the informal or formal procedure, or whether it proceeded to a panel hearing, as well as action taken by the school as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether it was upheld).

Records of complaints will be stored securely and disposed of in accordance with data retention guidelines found at <https://irms.org.uk/page/SchoolsToolkit> . Further information on how the school processes and stores personal information can be located within the school's Privacy Notice, available on the school website.

The Governing Body hopes that if parents do have any concerns or complaints they will discuss them in the first instance with the appropriate teacher, senior member of staff or with the Headteachers so that efforts can be made to resolve the matter as quickly and as informally as possible. The school reserves the right to identify malicious complaints and to respond in reasonable fashion to such, treating these as complaints designed to provoke, aggravate or upset without reasonable cause. If a complainant raises again, an issue which has already been taken through this complaints procedure, the school reserves the right to inform the complainant that the matter is now closed. If this same complaint is raised again on a further occasion, the school reserves the right not to respond.

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Guidance Notes

1. Definition of a complaint to be considered under the General Complaints Procedure.

The General Complaints Procedure is intended to cover complaints from parents and others concerning the conduct of the school or the actions of any member of staff in relation to any matter of reasonable concern.

2 Aims of the procedure:

The general aims of the General Complaints Procedure are to ensure: that most complaints are resolved as swiftly and readily and as close to the source of the problem as possible; that there is a defined procedure for dealing with complaints remaining unresolved; that lessons learned from the investigation of complaints can be used for institutional improvement.

3 Main Features of the Procedure

- 3.1 The formal procedure should not normally be activated unless and until the Headteachers and appropriate members of staff have been given the opportunity to resolve the complaint informally, as part of their day-to-day management of the school.
- 3.2 The complainant must put the complaint in writing before the formal investigation proceeds.
- 3.3 Once the formal process has been initiated, every effort should be made to ensure that the complaint is dealt with promptly, effectively, objectively and professionally.
- 3.4 Complainants should be kept informed at each stage of the procedure
- 3.5 The aim at every stage should be to ensure that the complaint is settled or that a decision is taken promptly to proceed to the next stage.
- 3.6 Full written records should be kept at every stage for the guidance of those who might need to consider the complaint at a subsequent stage.
- 3.7 Staff must be advised before any interviews are carried out as part of the formal investigation that they have the right, if they so wish, to be accompanied by a friend or trade union representative

4. The Process in Operation

- 4.1 All formal complaints must be referred in the first instance to the Head Teachers for investigation unless they concern one of the Headteachers directly, in which case they must be referred to the Chair of Governors.
- 4.2 When a school governor receives a complaint, he or she must inform the Chair of the Governing Body who in turn will inform the Headteachers.
- 4.3 If the complaint cannot be investigated objectively by the Headteacher, or the complainant is dissatisfied with the Headteachers response, the Chair of the Governing Body will seek resolution.
- 4.4 When the investigation has been completed, the Chair of Governors will provide the complainant with a written response. An offer will also be made to meet with the complainant where it is felt that this might assist in bringing the matter to a satisfactory conclusion.
- 4.5 Governors who are members of the Hearings Committee of the Governing Body need to be cautious about their involvement in complaints in order to demonstrate their impartiality should there be a subsequent hearing. Other governors too need to distance themselves from complaints in case they result ultimately in disciplinary or grievance proceedings.
- 4.6 Complainants who remain dissatisfied following a formal investigation of their complaint by the Chair of Governors can, if they wish, put their complaint to the Hearings Committee of the Governing Body.
- 4.7 The Committee's decision will normally be regarded as final and at that stage the complainant will be advised of any further recourse available (such as the Secretary of State for Education and Employment) should he or she be dissatisfied with the outcome.
- 4.8 Information is available for parents and others that explain both the procedure and the arrangements for a hearing before a committee of the Governing Body.

5. General Complaints or Concerns

- 5.1 There may be more general matters causing a degree of unease in the community which might best be handled through discussion at a Governing Body meeting. Such matters should be put on an agenda, with the consent of the Chair of the Governing Body, and not raised under Any Other Business. Governors will need to exercise some caution in dealing with such matters (for the reasons described in 4.5 above).

General Complaints Procedure – Flowchart

