
Charters School

Complaints Policy

Updated September 2011

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Approved on 03/10/2011 Minute number 062/12

Review Date October 2012

Statutory requirements applying: Statutory

Policy to be displayed on website? ✓

Approved by Curriculum committee

COMPLAINTS POLICY

General

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 and pupils are dealt with as quickly and sensitively as possible, and by the person best able to do so.

A parent 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.

Parent should be informed of the procedures for making complaints and appealing against decisions.

Types of Complaint:

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

-financial and administrative

-accommodation and facilities

-academic (course programme, unsatisfactory teaching, too much/too little homework, progress in a particular subject etc)

-pastoral and welfare (discipline/indiscipline, inappropriate sanctions, bullying, overall progress of the child, unhappiness of child etc)

-child protection (allegations against staff, handling of sensitive issues)

Responsibilities

Governing Body: for approving the policy, procedures, and guidelines, hearing and deciding on appeals, receiving reports, and advising the Headteacher. And for the general oversight of the policy and procedures.

Headteacher: for the efficient running of the policy and procedures, for training staff on how to deal appropriately with complaints, for hearing parental appeals from decisions taken by other staff, for presenting the school's case where the parent appeals to the governing body/LEA, and for reporting on complaints annually, or as required, to the governing body.

Senior Leadership Team: for staff mentoring and appropriate training of relevant staff.

Business Manager: for administrative and financial queries and complaints

Curriculum and Subject Leaders: for dealing with and where possible resolving complaints about academic matters/programmes of study/teaching methods.

Heads of Year Groups: for dealing with and where possible resolving complaints concerning overall pupil progress, discipline issues, pastoral care.

Named Senior Member of Staff: for child protection issues.

All staff: for hearing any complaints brought to them by parents and reassuring them that their complaints will be dealt with as soon as possible by the appropriate member of staff, and for informing the relevant staff of the complaint.

Guidelines

Parents Complaints

All staff should listen carefully and patiently to parents' complaints, recognising that however ill-founded the complaint might be it is a matter of great concern to the parent.

If the matter is within the competence of the member of staff to resolve quickly this should be done. Otherwise the parent should be reassured that the complaint will be passed to the relevant senior staff, and the relevant person should be informed by the member of staff as soon as possible.

The member of staff receiving the complaint should put the matter in writing to inform the relevant senior member of staff. But this does not prevent the member of staff also speaking to the senior colleague about the matter at the earliest opportunity.

If the senior member of staff considers the issue to be serious (but is not a child protection issue) he/she should inform the Headteacher, and inform the parent of the action taken. The Headteacher will determine the next step(s).

If the senior member of staff considers that he/she can deal with the complaint he/she should attempt to do so. If a resolution cannot be found the member of staff should inform the parent of their right of appeal to the Headteacher, and inform the Headteacher of the action taken.

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 complaint should be informed.

If a trivial/simple verbal complaint is made it might be possible in most cases to resolve it immediately. In more serious cases, or where a member of staff is uncertain, parents should always be asked to put their complaint in writing. This is to ensure that there is no conflict in determining what the complaint consists of and the action taken by the members of the school staff.

In any cases of doubt members of staff should seek the advice of the member of the senior leadership team who has the responsibility for mentoring colleagues.

If the appropriate member of staff cannot resolve the complaint, the matter should ultimately be referred to the Headteacher. If the Headteacher is unable to resolve the issue it is open to the parent to make representations to the governing body.

The governing body's decision is binding, but parents would still be able in appropriate cases to take a complaint to a court.

If the governing body cannot resolve the matter the parent should be informed that representations can be made to the LA, and be informed about the action that needs to be taken.

Pupil complaints

If a serious complaint is made by a pupil, the member of staff should immediately inform the pupil's tutor, who will inform the Head of Year. It will be the responsibility of the Head of Year to determine whether he/she can deal with the issue, or what the next course of action should be, including referring the matter to the Headteacher.

Reporting and Recording

In all cases of parent complaints and serious complaints by children it is important for staff to put their response in writing recording the action taken and including supporting documents.

The Senior Leadership Team will consider the handling of complaints from time to time, and will discuss issues with staff as necessary.

The Headteacher will report to staff and the appropriate governors' committee from time to time on the number and type of complaints received.

Appeals to the Governing Body

Parents who are not satisfied by the Headteacher's decision about the complaint can make representations to the governing body. They should be advised by the Headteacher to write to the Clerk in the first instance stating their complaint, and providing any supporting documents. The Clerk will set up a meeting with the governing body's 'Complaints' panel at a mutually convenient time within 10 days of the letter from the parent being received. The hearing will be as informal as possible. The parents may be accompanied by 'a friend', and where there might be language difficulties by someone able to translate appropriately.

The decision by the panel will be binding on the school.

Constitution of the Panel:

The governing body will name five members of whom three will form a quorum. The Vice Chair of the governing body will chair the panel. If the Vice Chair is not available the Chair will nominate another governor. The governing body may invite a person who is not a member of the governing body to sit on the panel.

Appeals to the Local Authority

In the event a parent wishes to appeal against the decision of the governing body, they should be advised to contact the Local Authority.

Training

The Senior Manager responsible for staff development will arrange from time to time appropriate training in interviewing skills for relevant staff.

The Headteacher will remind all staff from time to time of the procedures and records.

The Clerk will arrange training as necessary, in consultation with the Chair, for members of the governing body's Panel.

Monitoring and Review

The Headteacher is responsible for monitoring the working of the complaints procedures and for refining the application of them in the light of experience.

The Headteacher will review the system annually, and can propose changes to the governing body following consultation with the staff and governors.

The governing body is responsible for making changes to the policy and procedures.