



Complaints Procedure

This policy makes use of the procedures set out in the DfE guidance on Complaints Procedures for maintained schools, but adds further elements to turn them into a model policy for academies

Complaints Policy

General: The school is required to adopt, make available, and apply a complaints procedure.

Guidance for maintained schools suggests that there is a difference between 'concerns' which should be dealt with informally and 'complaints', which should be subject to a formal procedure.

This policy concerns complaints from **parents, pupils and others**.

At Walsall Studio School the Principal is appointed as the Complaints Co-ordinator.

The policy does not cover complaints from members of staff as these are covered by the school's grievance procedures.

Types of Concerns and Complaints

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

- **Financial and administrative**
- **Academic** (course programme, unsatisfactory teaching, too much/too little homework, progress in a particular subject etc);
- **Pastoral care** (discipline/indiscipline, inappropriate sanctions, bullying, overall progress of the child, unhappiness of the child, accommodation etc); or
- **Child protection** (allegations against staff, handling of sensitive issues).

Responsibilities:

The Governing Body is responsible for:

- Adopting the policy, procedures, and guidelines;
- Appointing where necessary an independent panel to hear complaints; when complainants are not satisfied with the school's response
- Receiving reports and findings from the panel
- Receiving reports from the Principal and advising the Principal

In association with



The Governing Body will monitor the level and nature of complaints and review the outcomes regularly.
The governing body will also monitor the school's response to complaints and any panel recommendations.

The Chair of the Governing Body is responsible for: appointing a panel of at least three people independent of the management of the school to hear complaints from complainants not satisfied with the school's response.

The Chair of the Independent Panel is responsible for ensuring 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; and
- Findings are communicated to the parent and school within three days of the hearing.

The Clerk to the Governing Body

The Clerk must act as a reference point for the complainant when the complainant has not been satisfied with the school's response.

The Clerk must:

- Set convenient dates and times and venues for the hearings;
- Collate any written material and forward it to all parties;
- Meet and welcome the parties;
- Record the proceedings; and
- Notify the parties of the decision.

The Principal is responsible for:

- the overall internal management of the procedures
- ensuring that there is both an informal and formal procedure
- ensuring that the written policy and procedures are available to parents, pupils and members of the public on request
- hearing complaints at the second stage (see below)
- ensuring that the procedures are monitored and reviewed, and regular report made to the Governing Body.

As Designated Safeguarding Lead the principal will deal with child protection issues.

The Associate Principal is responsible for:

- The efficient operation and management of the policy and procedures
- Training staff on how to deal appropriately with complaints
- Keeping parents, pupils and others informed of the procedure
- Compiling reports for the Principal as required
- Liaising with other members of the leadership team (Heads of Key Stage / Cluster Leaders) where complaints are curriculum based.

The Finance Officer is responsible for responding to administrative, environmental and financial queries and complaints.

Heads of Key Stage / Cluster Leaders will:

- deal with and where possible resolving concerns/complaints about academic matters/programmes of study/teaching methods at stage 1 of the procedures.
- deal with and where possible resolving complaints concerning overall pupil progress, discipline issues, pastoral care.

All staff will be prepared to listen to concerns brought to them by parents and pupils and reassure them that they will be dealt with as soon as possible by the appropriate member of staff, and for informing the relevant staff of concerns. And for passing any complaints received from other people who are not parents or pupils to the Principal.

Procedures:

General:

There are three possible stages. **Stage 1 Informal Resolution**

Concerns expressed by parents/carers or students to any member of staff should be dealt with by that member of staff if he/she is able to do so. If the member of staff considers the issue to be beyond his/her competence the concern should be passed to the appropriate head of key stage or cluster leader.

Concerns/complaints which come to a member of staff from other sources should be passed immediately to the Principal (as Complaints Coordinator), who will inform the complainant of the action he/she proposes to take.

Stage 2 Formal Procedure

Complaint heard by the Principal

Stage 3 Independent Panel Hearing

Complaint heard by the independent panel appointed by the Governing Body.

Detailed Guidance

All staff and governors should be conversant with the procedures.

Stage 1

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

Two Working Day Service

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 the member of staff as soon as possible. The complainant should be told that it is the school's policy to respond to the verbal complaint within 2 working days, even if the issue cannot be entirely resolved in 2 working days.

If a trivial/simple verbal concern/complaint is made it might be possible 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 and moving to Stage 2 Formal Procedure. 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.

Serious Complaint by a Pupil

If a serious complaint is made by a student, the member of staff should immediately inform the Complaints Coordinator who will discuss the issue with the relevant members of staff in order to determine what the course of action should be.

Members of staff receiving a concern/complaint must use the school's 'Complaints Form' to inform the relevant senior member of staff/Complaints Coordinator. But this does not prevent the member of staff also speaking to the relevant senior colleague about the matter at the earliest opportunity.

If the senior member of staff considers the issue to be serious, he/she should inform the Complaints Coordinator via the school's 'Complaints Form and inform the complainant of the action taken.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the informal response, he/she should be informed that they must make a formal complaint in writing to the Coordinator.

In any case of doubt members of staff should seek the advice of the Complaints Coordinator who has the responsibility of mentoring colleagues. Informal resolution should normally take no more than **three** working days. If a longer period is necessary to complete investigations the complainant should be informed, within three days, of the reasons, and the new for resolution.

Stage 2 Formal Procedure

When a written formal complaint is received the Coordinator must consult the relevant staff, make appropriate investigations, and attempt to resolve the issue within **three** working days. If a resolution cannot be found the Coordinator should inform the complainant of his/her right to appeal to an independent panel.

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

No complaint should normally be left unresolved at this stage after THREE days of receipt of the complaint. Where more time is necessary to complete the investigations the complainant will be informed and another date set.

Stage 3 Hearings by an Independent Panel

Complainants who are not satisfied by the school's decision regarding the complaint can request a hearing by a panel of three members independent of the school management.

The complainant must be advised by the Coordinator to write to the chair of the Governing Body via the Clerk giving details of the complaint. The Chair will nominate a panel.

The hearing must be within 10 days of the Chair receiving notice of the complaint.

The complainant must be told of his/her right to be accompanied by a friend, and where relevant translations/interpreters must be arranged by the Clerk in consultation with the parties.

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 put at ease.

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

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

The panel can make such findings and recommendations to the Governing Body as it wishes. It must send a report to the Governing Body

Governing Body Action

The Governing Body, after consultation with the Principal, will consider the panel's findings and recommendations and make such decision as it feels are necessary in the circumstances.

In general the Governing Body will take one of the following courses of action:

- 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 system or procedures.

The Governing Body's decision is binding.

Reporting and Recording:

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

The Clerk to the Governing Body will ensure that all correspondence, statements and records pertaining to the complaint are kept confidential and secure except where the Secretary of State or inspecting body under 162A of the 2002 Act, as amended, requests access to them.

The Complaints Coordinator will consider the handling of complaints from time to time, and will discuss issues with staff as necessary.

The Complaints Coordinator will report to staff from time to time, and to the Governing Body each term on the number and type of complaints received and their outcomes.

Panel Meeting Findings

A copy of findings and recommendations are available on the school premises from the proprietor and the Principal. They are sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and where relevant to the person complained about.

Walsall Studio School Complaint Form

Please complete and return to the School Office.

Name:

Daytime / Evening telephone numbers:

Please give details of your complaint:

What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint?
(Who did you speak 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:

Date:

Office use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By whom:

Complaint referred to:

Date: