



Durrington High School Parent/Carer Complaints Policy

Introduction

What is a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, whether made orally or in writing. This policy addresses general complaints. This policy is for the exclusive use of parents/carers whose children are fully on roll at Durrington High School (at the time of the complaint).

Complaints raised by third parties, for example: local residents, parents/carers of students on a managed move, from visitors to the site) will only be accepted in written format (email or letter) and will be limited to receiving a written response from a designated member of the senior leadership team. There is no escalation accepted beyond this response.

How does the Staged Approach Work?

The staged approach is designed to ensure that every effort is made to deal with complaints **informally at school level** in partnership with the complainant. The formal stages should only be triggered in **exceptional** circumstances:

- Stage 1 is the **informal stage**. In the case of a complaint by a parent, the first point of contact should be with the class teacher or form tutor and the majority of issues should be resolved at this stage. In the case of a complaint by a member of the public, the school office should be the first point of contact. A decision will then be made as to which member of staff is best placed to deal with the complaint.
- Stages 2 and 3 are **formal stages** involving senior staff and the governing body.

The policy is designed to manage all complaints but complaints vary in their nature and complexity. Therefore, the school will need to consider at which stage a complaint should be dealt with when it is initially raised and which member of staff is best placed to deal with it.

Principles and Procedures

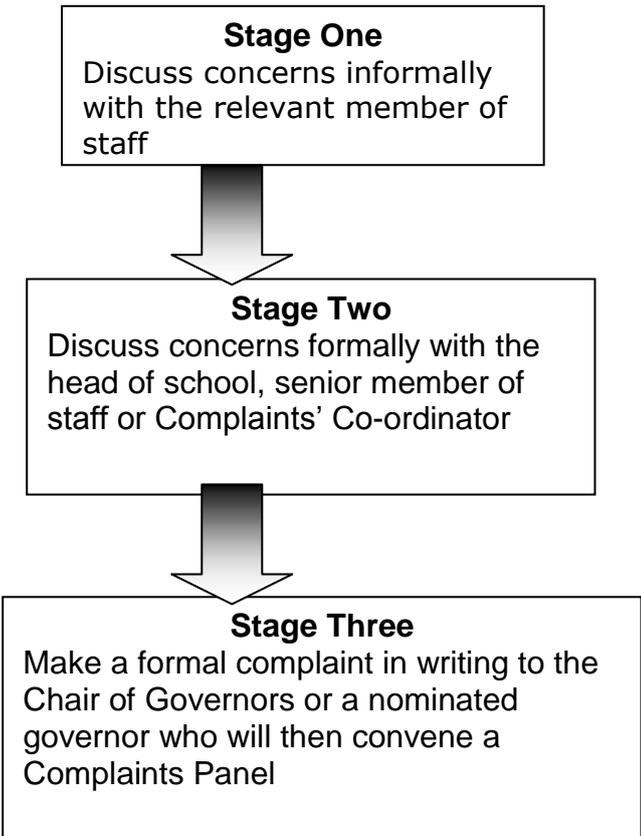
Our principal aim is to deal with complaints:

- Openly
- Fairly
- Promptly
- Without prejudice

Our procedures for dealing with complaints will:

- Be set out on the school’s website
- Be available, in hard copy, from the Executive Assistant to the Head of School.
- Be simple to understand and follow
- Be focused on outcomes
- Have established time limits for action
- Keep people informed at all stages
- Where necessary, respect people’s desire for confidentiality
- Be carefully monitored and evaluated
- Provide information to the school’s senior leadership team so that the school’s procedures can be improved

An Overview



Role of the School’s Complaint Co-ordinator

The school's Complaints Co-ordinator is Mrs L Allison, Deputy Headteacher. She is responsible for the operation and management of the school complaints procedures and will be able to provide further information on request.

Guidance on the each Stage of the Procedure

There are three stages to this procedure:

- Stage 1 is informal
- Stages 2 and 3 are formal

Any person expressing continued dissatisfaction should be advised of the next stage in the procedure.

Stage One: Discuss concerns informally with the relevant member of staff.

- Complainants are advised to speak to the teacher concerned so everyone has a clear picture of the situation from all points of view. Most problems can be resolved at this informal stage.
- If the complainant indicates that he/she would have difficulty in discussing a complaint with a particular member of staff, the complaint may be referred to another member of staff. This member of staff may not necessarily be more senior.
- The member of staff who is dealing with the complaint should ensure that the complainant is reassured that the matter will be investigated and is clear what action has been agreed. All parties should be aware of the need for confidentiality.
- A brief record of any telephone calls, meetings and agreed actions should always be kept although it is not always necessary to provide the complainant with a written record at this stage. The Complaints Co-ordinator / Line-Manager should monitor these records.
- If either the complainant or staff member feels the matter needs to be taken further, the head of school or a senior member of staff should be contacted.
- A response to any informal concerns raised at this stage will generally be responded to within 5 school days. If a longer period of time is required, this will be communicated to the complainant and a new timescale agreed.

Stage Two: Discuss concerns formally with the head of school or a senior member of staff.

- More serious concerns which remain unresolved at the end of Stage 1 should be referred to the head of school or a senior member of staff. He / she will then investigate the matter further. Any meetings that are held with the complainant in relation to the complaint should be arranged within 10 school days. However, more complex complaints may require an extension to this time limit which will be communicated to the complainant and a new timescale agreed.
- A log of all contacts relating to the complaint should be kept.
- The Head of school or Senior Leader should communicate the outcome to the complainant either verbally or in writing. Any agreed actions should be put in writing. The outcome should generally be provided to the complainant within 5 school days of the meeting. Again, where the complaint is complex and more time is required to investigate the complaint, the Head of school or Senior Leader should agree the revised timescale with the complainant.
- If, as a result of the investigation, issues arise relating to staff discipline or capability, **details should remain confidential to the head of school.** However, the complainant should be informed that the school has taken appropriate follow-up action.

Stage Three: Make a formal complaint in writing to the Chair of Governors (or a nominated governor) who will then convene a Complaints Panel.

- Governors should only proceed with this formal stage of the Complaint Procedure if they have received a complaint in writing addressed to the Chair of Governors and **all previous stages have been exhausted.**
- Acknowledgement of the written complaint should normally be sent within 5 school days.
- It is essential that this process is fair and objective. **To avoid a conflict of interest, it is vital that the full governing body does not hear the complaint at this stage.** Any governor who has been involved with the complaint at an earlier stage would be unable to give objective consideration to the issue.
- It is for the governing body to agree upon the procedures for the Complaint Panel meeting. However, the governing body will usually convene a small panel of 2 or 3 governors. The panel will usually meet within 15 school days of receiving the complaint.
- The Chair of the panel (or the clerk to governors acting on behalf of the Chair) should notify the head of school and the complainant of the proposed date of the panel meeting and invite both to attend. The complainant may bring a friend or representative. Both parties must be treated equally and any

information prepared for the panel hearing must be circulated to all parties. In all other respects, the panel will determine the procedure to be followed.

- If the complaint relates to a staff disciplinary or capability matter about which the head of school has already taken action, the governors should focus on how the original complaint was managed to avoid prejudicing any ongoing disciplinary or capability procedures.
- The head of school and complainant should be informed of the Panel's decision in writing within 10 school days from conclusion of the panel hearing.
- This is the final stage in the school's Complaints Procedure.

The remit of the Complaint Panel is to:

- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;
- uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
- recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

The Governing Body's decision is final, however, if the complainant is not happy with the way in which the complaint was processed, they can complain to the Education Funding Skills Agency who act on behalf of the Department for Education. A form may be completed and is available at

<https://www.education.gov.uk/form/school-complaints-form>

Vexatious Complaints

Very rarely, the school may take a decision to close a complaint where the parent is still dissatisfied despite the significant level of scrutiny provided by these procedures. We will do all we can to assist in the resolution of a complaint but sometimes it is simply not possible to meet all of the parent's wishes and it may be a case of "agreeing to disagree". If a parent persists in making representations to the school which are wholly or substantially similar to a complaint which has exhausted the internal procedures or where complaints or representations are made which are false or where the intention is to disrupt the smooth running of the school (in the reasonable opinion of the school), then the school reserves the right to take no further action in respect of that complaint or concern.

General and Monitoring

All complaints and correspondence/hearings under the complaints policy are treated as confidential and will only be disclosed when required to do so by law.

The governing body will review on an annual basis the operation of the complaints policy, the number of complaints received (both informal and formal) and the stage at which these complaints were resolved.

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