

Complaints Policy

Introduction

The school's Governors and the Headteacher are committed to providing the best educational experience they can for all pupils attending this school and building positive partnerships with all parents and carers. The school has procedures in place in case there are complaints by parents or carers. The following policy sets out the procedure that the school follows in such cases.

Rationale

When dealing with any complaint, we will:

- Be fair, open and honest
- Give it careful consideration
- Deal with it as swiftly as possible
- Aim to resolve the situation through dialogue and mutual understanding
- Provide time for discussion and resolution
- Put the interests of the child first.

The Complaints Procedures

How to share a concern

If a parent is concerned about anything to do with the education that we are providing at our school, they should, in the first instance, discuss the matter with their child's classteacher or a member of staff who works closely with their child. Most matters of concern can be dealt with in this way. All teachers work very hard to ensure that each child is happy at school and is making good progress; they always want to know about something that may affect a child's learning and take action as soon as possible.

What to do if the matter cannot be resolved through informal discussion

Where a parent feels that a situation has not been resolved through initial contact with the member of teaching staff or that their concern is of a sufficiently serious nature, they should make an appointment to discuss it with the headteacher. The headteacher considers any such complaint very seriously and investigates each case thoroughly. Almost all complaints are normally resolved at this stage.

Sharing a concern about the headteacher

Should a parent have a complaint about the headteacher, they should first make an informal approach to the chair of governors chairofgovernors@heathbrook.lambeth.sch.uk, who is obliged to investigate it. The chair will do all they can to resolve the issue through a dialogue with the school. If a parent is still unhappy with the outcome, they can make a formal complaint, as outlined below.

How to take the matter further

On the very rare occasion an informal complaint fails to reach a resolution, a formal complaint can be made to the chair of governors. This complaint must be made in writing, stating the nature of the complaint and how the school has handled it so far. The governing body will consider all written complaints within three weeks of receipt. The chair arranges for a panel of

three governors to meet to discuss the complaint and invites the complainant to attend the meeting so that they can explain their complaint in more detail. The school gives the complainant at least three days' notice of the meeting. After hearing all the evidence, the governors consider their decision and inform the parent or carer in writing. The governors do all they can at this stage to resolve the complaint to the parent or carer's satisfaction.

Who to appeal to next

If the complaint is not resolved, a parent may make representation to the local authority. Further information about this process is available from the school or from the local authority. A further meeting is chaired by an independent person, who considers all the evidence and makes a further judgement in an attempt to resolve the complaint. If the parent or carer is still not content that the complaint has been dealt with properly, then they are entitled to appeal to the Secretary of State for Education.

Monitoring and review

The governors monitor the complaints procedure in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The headteacher logs all complaints received by the school and records how they were resolved. Governors take into account any local or national decisions that affect the complaints process and make any modifications necessary to this policy. This policy is made available to all parents and carers so that they can be properly informed about the complaints process.

Policy Adopted by Governors: November 2017

Policy Last Reviewed: November 2017

Policy Due for Review: November 2018

The Scope of our Complaints Procedures

Our complaints procedure covers all complaints about any provision of facilities or services provided by Heathbrook Primary School with the **exceptions** listed below, for which there are separate (statutory) procedures.

Exceptions	Who to contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admissions to schools • Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN) • School re-organisation proposals • Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation 	<p>Concerns should be raised direct with local authorities (LA). For school admissions, it will depend on who is the admission authority (either the school or the LA). Complaints about admission appeals for maintained schools are dealt with by the Local Government Ombudsman.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclusion of children from school 	<p>Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whistleblowing 	<p>Schools have an internal whistleblowing procedure for their employees and voluntary staff. Other concerns can be raised direct with Ofsted by telephone on: 0300 123 3155, via email at: whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk or by writing to: WBHL, Ofsted Piccadilly Gate Store Street Manchester M1 2WD. The Department for Education is also a prescribed body for whistleblowing in education.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff grievances and disciplinary procedures 	<p>These matters will invoke the school's internal grievance procedures. Complainants will not be informed of the outcome of any investigation.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities. 	<p>Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. They should be contacted direct.</p>

Unreasonable Complainants

Heathbrook Primary School is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially and to providing a high quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with the school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

The Department for Education guidance 'Best Practice Advice for School Complaints 2016' defines unreasonable complainants as *'those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with the school, hinder our consideration of their or other people's complaints'*.

A complaint may be regarded as unreasonable when the person making the complaint:-

- 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 while still wishing their complaint to be resolved;
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaints procedure;
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice;
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant expects to be taken into account and commented on, or raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales;
- makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced;
- 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 fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education;
- seeks an unrealistic outcome;
- makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with.

A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if the person making the complaint does so face-to-face, by telephone, in writing or electronically:-

- maliciously;
- aggressively;
- using threats, intimidation or violence;
- using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language;
- knowing it to be false;
- using falsified information;
- publishing unacceptable information in a variety of media such as in social media websites and newspapers.

Complainants should limit the numbers of communications with a school while a complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text) as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the headteacher or chair of governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking.

If the behaviour continues the headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and asking them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact Heathbrook Primary 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 usually be reviewed after 6 months. In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the concerns and actions taken will be put in writing immediately and the police informed. This may include banning an individual from the premises.

Complaints Procedure Formal Record Form

This section to be completed by the complainant

Name:

Relationship with School (eg parent of a pupil):

Address:

Daytime Telephone number:

Evening Telephone Number:

Summary of complaint

Please set out the details of your complaint (providing as much detail as possible, particularly dates, times, locations and the identities of those involved). You may attach additional sheets if required but please be as concise as possible.

Individuals involved

Please provide the names, job title and contact details of any people involved in your complaint, including witnesses.

Have you tried to resolve the complaint informally?

If yes please provide a brief summary of the outcome and why you feel that your complaint has not been resolved satisfactorily. If no, please provide a brief summary why you have not tried to resolve the complaint informally.

Please provide a brief summary of the resolution you are seeking

Signature:

Date:

For completion by the headteacher or governor investigating the complaint

Name of investigating Headteacher / Governor:

Date of meeting with the complainant:

Conclusions reached/decisions made/actions agreed following the meeting:

Date complainant notified of the outcome: