Hexham First School

Complaints Procedure

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For use by parents and members of the public.

This procedure is for use for complaints against the school, a member of staff or the governing body.

There are separate arrangements, laid down by law to cover the following:
- Complaints against the curriculum, collective worship and religious education.
- Appeals against admissions.
- Appeals against exclusions.
- Appeals about assessments and statements of special educational needs.

For further guidance on any of the above please contact the Head teacher.

Stage One: Complaint Heard by Staff Member/Head teacher/ Chair of Governors.

It is in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. The experience of the first contact between the complainant and the school can be crucial in determining whether the complaint will escalate. To that end, if staff are made aware of the procedures, they know what to do when they receive a complaint.

In the first instance the complaint should be discussed between the person making the complaint and the member of staff involved. If a complainant indicates that he/she would have difficulty discussing a complaint with that particular member of staff he/she should be referred to another staff member. Where the complaint concerns the head teacher, or a governor, the complainant should be referred to the chair of governors.

Similarly, if a member of staff/head teacher/chair of governors feels too compromised to deal with a complaint it should be referred to another member of staff or another governor. The ability to consider the complaint objectively and impartially is crucial and it is also important to give an indication of timescale if it is found that the complaint requires further investigation. If a complainant first approaches a governor, he/she should be referred to the appropriate person i.e. the member of staff concerned or the chair of governors.

Governors should not act unilaterally on an individual complaint outside the formal procedure or be involved at the early stages in case they are needed to sit on a committee at a later stage of the procedure.

It is hoped the majority of complaints can be resolved at this stage and to this end it may be

useful to involve the Client Relations service, within the Children's Services Directorate of the Local Authority, who are available to advise parents on the complaints process and may on occasion help to facilitate contact with the school.

Stage Two: Formal Consideration of Complaint.
If the complainant is dissatisfied with the way the complaint has been handled at stage one and wishes to pursue their initial complaint, the head teacher/chair of governors may delegate the task of investigating the complaint to another staff member or another governor. The head teacher/chair of governors may also, in exceptional circumstances commission an investigating officer report to be undertaken by an external consultant. The person making the complaint should be informed that an investigation is underway and that they will receive a response within 25 working days, or a letter explaining the reason for any subsequent delay. Once the relevant facts have been established the head teacher/chair of governors should relay the decision, and the reason for the decision, in writing to the complainant.

Stage Three: Complaint Heard by Governing Bodies Complaints Committee

If the complainant is still dissatisfied with the outcome he/she should write to the head teacher/chair of governors giving details of the complaint within ten school days of receipt of the decision letter. The chair or another nominated governor will convene a governing body complaints committee if they consider it appropriate after considering the report of the investigating officer.

The committee will consist of a minimum of three governors with delegated powers. The committee will be appointed by the chair of governors with the chair of the committee being appointed when they meet. The complaints committee will take a decision as to any action to be taken in response to the complaint.

For example they may choose to:
• convene a hearing at which the complainant will be invited to put forward their case. This should be held within 20 working days of the decision to hold a hearing;
• dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;
• uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
• recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

In reaching a decision the committee may take the advice of such bodies as they see fit, in particular the Local Authority.

If it is decided that it is appropriate to hold a hearing, the clerk of the complaints committee will inform both parties in writing of the decision of the committee within five school days. If a complaint has been made by a number of parents and it is about whole school issues they may, at any stage of the procedure, ask the Chief Inspector of schools to investigate their complaint. The Chief Inspector may or may not require the school's complaints procedure to be exhausted before he decides whether or not to investigate.

Any complainant can also ask the Local Authority to review the procedure. The request seeking a review must be received by the LA, addressed to the Executive Director of Children's Services, within ten school days of the date of the hearing.

There is also recourse to the Secretary of State or, if the complaint is against action taken, or not taken by the Local Authority, it is possible for the complaint to be referred to the Local Government Ombudsman.

Please complete and return to the school administrator who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:

Pupil's name (if applicable):

Your relationship to the pupil (if applicable):

Address:

Postcode:

Day time telephone number:

Evening telephone number:

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)?

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