

Richard Avenue Primary School
COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE FOR PARENTS

Date policy reviewed: Autumn Annual September 2020

Introduction

Most parents have positive relations with schools but on occasions things may go wrong. The guidance in this document aims to make sure that the interests of pupils, parents and school staff are taken into account when dealing with complaints.

Whether you are a parent or a member of the public the place to start is the school. It is much better if matters can be sorted out within school even if this might feel awkward in the beginning. There is usually more than one side to any dispute or misunderstanding and it is important that all the facts are known so that the best solution can be found.

In the majority of cases, head teachers and/or school governors are responsible for investigating complaints about their services or staff. Initial complaints regarding schools should be directed to the head teacher. If the complaint is about the head teacher or you have not received a satisfactory response from the head teacher, the chair of governors should be contacted.

If you contact Inspire Governance Services without first having gone through the above procedures, you will be referred back to the school in the first instance and follow its procedures.

Section 39 of the School Standards & Framework Act 1998, states that the Governing Body of a maintained school shall establish procedures for dealing with all complaints relating to the school, other than those to be dealt with in accordance with any other statutory provision.

The guidance in this document does not cover concerns about the following, for which there are separate arrangements laid down by law:

- The school curriculum, collective worship and religious education and the provision of information required by law
- Appeals about admissions
- Appeals about exclusions
- Appeals about assessments and statements of special educational needs

Information about the above procedures is available from Inspire Governance Services by contacting: Inspire Governance Services, Inspire Multi Academy Trust, Archer Road, Farringdon, Sunderland, SR3 3DJ.

Stage 1 – Initial Contact with the School

Many concerns will be dealt with informally when you make them known to the school. The first point of contact should be your child's class teacher. If the concern is in relation to the head teacher, this will be looked into by the chair of governors and go the stage 3 of the process.

The school may request that you make an appointment, as this will ensure they can listen to your concerns fully and allocate an appropriate amount of time.

Occasionally these discussions do not always resolve the concern, and if you are still dissatisfied your concern will become a formal complaint.

Stage 2 – Formal Consideration of your Complaint

You will be asked to confirm the complaint in writing to the head teacher (or chair of governors if the complaint is about the head teacher) and it will be acknowledged in writing.

As part of the school's consideration of your complaint, you may be invited to a meeting to discuss the complaint and raise any further details. If you wish, you can ask someone to accompany you to help you explain the reasons for your complaint.

The head teacher or chair of governors will, where necessary, talk to witnesses and take statements from others involved.

If the complaint centres on a pupil the school will talk to the pupil concerned and, where appropriate, others present at the time of the incident in question. The school will normally talk to pupils with a parent or carer present.

If the complaint is against a member of staff, it will be dealt with under the school's internal confidential procedures.

The head teacher/chair of governors will keep written/typed, signed and dated records of all meetings and telephone conversations, and other related documentation.

Once the school has established all the relevant facts, they will send you a written response to your complaint. This will give a full explanation of the head teacher's/chair of governor's decision and the reasons for it. If follow-up action is needed, the school will indicate what they are proposing to do.

Stage 3 – Consideration by the Governing Body

If your concern has already been through Stages 1 and 2 and you are not happy with the outcome, the next step is to make a formal complaint to the Governing Body. You should contact the school's chair of governors by letter enclosing a copy of the written complaint originally submitted, indicating which matters remain unresolved. No new complaint may be included. Letters should be sent to Chair of Governors, Richard Avenue School, c/o Inspire Governance Service, Inspire Multi Academy Trust, Archer Road, Farringdon, Sunderland, SR3 3DJ.

The Chair of Governors has discretion to agree to a complaint review panel if he/she feels it would be helpful in resolving the complaint.

The aim of a complaints review panel is to resolve the complaint and to achieve reconciliation between the school and the parent(s). However, it may sometimes only be possible to establish facts and make recommendations, which will reassure you that your complaint has been taken seriously.

The format of such a meeting would be for you to attend to present your case and allow the governing body to take evidence. A separate meeting will then take place to allow the school staff to do the same.

Should the governing body agree to hold a complaint review meeting, you will be informed of the date, time and place of the meeting by letter. The letter will also explain what will happen at the meeting and inform you that you are entitled to be accompanied to the meeting. With agreement of the chair of the panel, the Headteacher may invite members of staff directly involved in matters raised by you to attend their meeting.

As a general rule, no evidence or witnesses previously undisclosed should be introduced into the meetings by any of the participants.

The clerk will send you and the head teacher a written statement outlining the decision of the panel within two weeks.

Stage 4 – Complaint to the Secretary of State

If you wish to pursue the complaint, you have recourse to the Secretary of State, it is possible for that complaint may to be referred to the Local Government Ombudsman.

We would advise that, unless the school and/or Governing Body is shown to have behaved unreasonably or not to have followed their own procedures, there is likely to be little further action that can be taken. This is because governing bodies are empowered to deal with many issues without reference to the Secretary of State.