



POLICY AND PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS

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At Hawthorn Primary School, we undertake to provide a friendly and safe environment in which pupils will be helped to achieve their potential, both academically and socially.

We recognise that sometimes things can go wrong and parents and carers may need to make a complaint or raise concerns they have with the school. We will do our best to resolve the complaint as this is in the best interests of children and families to ensure positive partnerships between school and home are not compromised. Resolving a complaint requires the complainant to work with school to improve upon a situation and not to pursue in a personal or vexatious manner- if this is felt to be the case then it will not be considered as part of the complaints procedure.

We acknowledge that at times a complaint may be stressful to both child and family and we will aim to make things better for them through the most appropriate manner. A complaint made against a member of staff may also be upsetting to them especially if they have acted in good faith. School staff make many professional judgements and decisions every day and on occasions mistakes may be made. School staff have to balance the needs of all children and decisions made will have the best interests of all children at the centre. A realistic understanding of these challenges is requested of parents.

Sometimes bringing your dissatisfaction or issue to our attention may have the desired outcome and an opportunity to discuss this with a teacher may be all that is required to resolve / improve the situation. School staff have to maintain a good and purposeful relationship with the child and parent and whenever a concern or complaint is made it is hoped the resolution will be quick for all parties.

If your complaint refers to other children at school please be aware we may not disclose details nor will school inform you of all actions taken as a result. However we will aim to reassure you that appropriate action has been taken.

Wherever possible we request that parents try not to let their dissatisfaction with school be discussed with the child as this puts them in a difficult and compromising position- they need to trust and have good relationships with their school.

In resolving a complaint it might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- An apology
- An explanation
- An admission that the situation might have been handled differently or better
- An explanation of the steps that have been taken to reduce the likelihood of a repeat incident happening
- An undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint
- Agreement to monitor situation further

This policy tells you what to do if this happens if you wish to make a complaint or raise a concern.

If a complaint is to progress on to the next stage then it must be after the complainant has allowed the matter to be dealt with at the lowest possible level within the complaints procedure. Any complaint which is escalated without giving the early procedures to be used adequate opportunity will be subject to being “taken down” to the lower procedures.

The prime aim of Hawthorn Primary School’s policy is to resolve the complaint as fairly and speedily as possible. Formal complaints will be dealt with in a sensitive, impartial manner.

The following details outline the stages that can be used to resolve complaints.

In summary they are as follows: -

- Stage 1 (informal): concern heard by an appropriate staff member
- Stage 2 (formal): complaint heard by Headteacher;
- Stage 3 (formal): complaint heard by Chair of Governors
- Stage 4 (formal): complaint heard by GB’s complaints appeal panel.

Stage 1 – concern heard by staff member

Concerns can be raised with the school at any time and will often generate an immediate response, which will resolve the concern. The school requests that parents make their first contact with their child’s class teacher. On some occasions the concern raised may require investigation, or discussion with others, in which case you will receive an informal but informed response within a day or two. The vast majority of concerns will be satisfactorily dealt with in this way. However, if you are not satisfied with the result at stage 1, please write to or call the school within 10 school working days. The school will then look at your complaint at the next stage.

Stage 2 – complaint heard by Headteacher;

The Headteacher may delegate the task of collating the information to another staff member but not the decision on the action to be taken. The Headteacher will arrange for the complaint to be acknowledged within 5 school working days of receiving it and a meeting may be convened to discuss the matter further. Following the investigation the Headteacher will aim to provide a written response within 10 school working days of sending the acknowledgement. However if a complaint is more complex to review this can be extended to a maximum of 20 school working days. The school will provide you details of the new deadline and an explanation on the delay. If you are not satisfied with the result at stage 2 please write to or call the school within 10 school working days of getting our response. The school will then look at your complaint at the next stage.

Stage 3 – complaint heard by Chair of Governors

If the matter has not been resolved at Stage 2 or the complaint is about the Headteacher, then you will need to write to the Chair of Governors c/o the school.

The Chair of Governors will arrange for the complaint to be acknowledged within 5 school working days of receiving it and a meeting may be convened to discuss the matter further. Following an investigation, the Chair of Governors will aim to provide a written response within 10 school working days of sending out the acknowledgement. However if a complaint is more complex to review this can be extended to 20 school working days. The school will provide you details of the new deadline and an explanation on the delay. If you are dissatisfied with the result at stage 3, you will need to let the school know within 10 school working days of getting the response. The school will then look at your complaint at the next stage.

Stage 4 – complaint heard by Governing Bodies Complaints Appeal Panel

If the matter has still not been resolved at Stage 3, then you will need to write to the Clerk of Governors giving details of the complaint and asking that it is put before the Appeals Panel. Should the Chair have been involved at any previous stage in the process a nominated Governor, impartial to the complaint, will convene a complaints panel. The complaint will be acknowledged within 5 school working days of receiving it. The hearing will normally take place within 20 school working days of sending the Acknowledgement. The aim of the Appeal panel hearing is to impartially resolve the complaint and to achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. All parties will be notified of the Panel's decision in writing within 5 school working days after the date of the hearing. The letter will also contain what you need to do if you wish to take the matter further.

On conclusion of the governing body hearing, the Panel's decision is regarded as final and all steps within the School's complaints procedure are exhausted.

Finally, if on conclusion of this procedure you feel that the School's Governing Body has acted unreasonably you may make a complaint in writing to the Secretary of State for Education. You may contact the Department for Education by writing to:

The School Complaints Unit (SCU)
Department for Education
2nd Floor, Piccadilly Gate
Manchester
M1 2WD
or by telephoning: 0370 000 2288
Typetalk: 18001 0370 000 2288
Fax: 0161 600 1332