

STRATTON EDUCATION TRUST

Resolving Complaints



Raising Concerns and Resolving Complaints

A school policy for resolving complaints:

Introduction

From time to time parents or members of the wider community we serve may have concerns about an aspect of our work. Often those concerns will resolve themselves, but on occasion the issue will need to be resolved using the procedures outlined in this policy.

The procedure is devised with the intention that it will:

- Usually be possible to resolve problems by informal means
- Be simple to use and understand
- Be non-adversarial
- Provide confidentiality
- Allow problems to be handled swiftly
- Address all the points at issue
- Inform future practice so that the problem is unlikely to recur.

As partners in your children's education the School wishes to work with you in the resolution of problems and this policy is designed to show what steps may be taken. The resolution of a concern can take the three steps which are described in detail below.

An Informal Concern relating to a school based matter

On most occasions these can be resolved immediately by speaking to your child's class teacher. It may be necessary for you to make an appointment at a time which is convenient to both of you.

Please let the teacher know the nature of your concern when making an appointment so that they may investigate further on your behalf if necessary.

The purpose of the meeting should be to establish a solution or to agree a plan of action to resolve the concern. If the meeting fails to do so then you should make an appointment to see the Head of Department or Year Leader depending on the nature of your complaint.

A further review of your complaint will be undertaken on your behalf and meet depending on the meeting arranged to suggest a workable solution. If you feel that the matter is not satisfactorily resolved, you may request a further meeting with either the Executive Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher or consider making the matter the subject of a formal complaint.

It is important that due procedure is followed with a view to seeking resolution to a concern or complaint. A failure to follow the procedure may result in the procedure being terminated by the Governing Body.

An Informal Concern Relating to an Issue or Issues that Have Occurred outside of School but Where You Consider the School to Have Full or Part Responsibility.

We seek to work closely with the members of our community and recognise that there may be occasions when issues arise outside of school that cause concern.

Most concerns can be resolved quickly by contacting member of the Trust's Senior Leadership Team.

As with school-based concerns the issue will be investigated and you will be invited to a meeting to establish a solution or agree a plan of action to resolve the matter.

If the meeting fails bring a resolution then you should make an appointment to see the Headteacher.

If you remain dissatisfied with the outcome proposed you may request a further meeting with the Headteacher or make the matter subject to a formal complaint.

It is important that this procedure is followed with a view to seeking resolution to concern complaint. A failure to follow the procedure may result in the procedure being terminated by the Governing Body

A Formal Complaint

If the concern is not resolved at the informal stage it must be put in writing and passed to the Executive Headteacher who will either investigate the matter or delegate this responsibility to a senior colleague. The complaint should include details which might assist the investigation such as names of potential witnesses, dates and times of events and copies of relevant documents. The Executive Headteacher may meet with the complainant to clarify the matter. On the conclusion of the investigation, the Executive Headteacher will write to the complainant with the outcome of the investigation. If the outcome of the investigation results in the implementation of staff disciplinary procedures, such procedures will remain strictly confidential.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the manner in which the process has been followed or if the complaint is about the Executive Headteacher then a full written complaint should be made to the Chairman of Governors at the School's address. The Chairman of Governors will write to the complainant to confirm receipt of the letter within five working days of the day on which it was received by the Chairman of Governors. He or she will then make every effort to appoint a governor to investigate the matter fully. Because of the timescales involved if no other governor is immediately available, then the Chairman of Governors will carry out the investigation. Following the completion of the investigation, the appointed governor will hand a report to the Chairman of Governors. In carrying out the investigation the Governors will collect such other evidence as is deemed necessary and may interview other witnesses. The Executive Headteacher will be provided with a copy of the complaint and any additional evidence presented by the complainant or collected by the investigating Governor.

Once there has been an opportunity for the Executive Headteacher to consider this he/she will meet separately with the Chairman to present a response. A friend or representative may accompany the Executive Headteacher at this meeting. On the conclusion of this meeting the complainant and Executive Headteacher will be informed in writing of the outcome by the Chairman of Governors. This should be within fifteen working days of his or her receipt of the complaint. The complainant will not be informed of any disciplinary or capability action which might ensue.

This will now bring the Governors' investigation to a close. Please note, the complainant is not entitled to access any details of the investigation except for any statements that may have been provided by their child.

Where a complaint is judged by the Governing Body to be vexatious, the complainant will be informed that their complaint will not be accepted and will not be investigated.

A Formal Review

When the clerk receives a formal request for the Governors to consider a complaint, the clerk will refer the matter in the first instance to the Chairman of Governors or another nominated governor. He or she will investigate, may speak to the parties involved and will prepare a written statement of findings to be submitted to the complainant. The complainant must be informed of the right to refer the matter to the Governors' complaints panel if he or she is not satisfied with the outcome.

If a hearing is requested, the clerk will write to the complainant, the Executive Headteacher and the Chairman of Governors giving details of the meeting, requesting copies of any documents to be put before the meeting and the names of any witnesses that either party may wish to attend. The parent will be informed of the right to be accompanied by a friend. The hearing should be on reasonable notice and be held as soon as practicable after receipt of the referral.

In the case of a complaint from a parent the process will be as described but in the case of a complaint from a member of the public the Governors' complaints panel will advise on whether they consider it appropriate for the complainant (and Executive Headteacher and Chairman of Governors) to attend the meeting of the panel depending on the circumstances of the complaint.

The procedure at the hearing (See *appendix A* – checklist for a panel hearing) needs to be appropriate for the circumstances and is at the discretion of the Chairman of the Governors' complaints panel but is likely to involve:

- Presentation of the complaint.
- A reply by the Executive Headteacher or Governor.
- Questioning by all parties.
- Representation about ways to resolve the complaint satisfactorily.

The panel will withdraw to consider their findings of fact on the evidence put before them and their conclusions, which may include measures to redress problems identified. The decision of Governors' Complaints Committee is binding and concludes the Stratton Education Trust Procedures. If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome, he/she should write to the Education Funding Agency (EFA) at Castle View House, East Lane, Runcorn, Cheshire, WA76 2GJ.

Time-limits

Complaints are considered, and resolved, as quickly and efficiently as possible. Stratton Education Trust sets realistic time limits for each action within each stage. However, where further investigations are necessary, new time limits may need to be set and the complainant sent details of the new deadline and an explanation for the delay.

Recording complaints

The progress of any complaint and the final outcome will be recorded by the complaints coordinator. A complaint may be made in person, by telephone, or in writing. At the end of a meeting or telephone call, the member of staff will ensure that the complainant and the school have the same understanding of what was discussed and agreed. A brief note of meetings and telephone calls will be kept and a copy of any written response added to the record.

Publicising the policy and procedure

Details of Stratton Education Trust's complaints policy and procedures can be found on the school website and is available on request and at the school Reception desk.

Monitoring and evaluation

The governing body will monitor the level and nature of complaints using the records kept by the complaints co-ordinator. Wherever possible, complaints information shared with the whole governing body will not name individuals. The school is committed to on-going improvement. Therefore as well as addressing an individual's complaints, the process of listening to and resolving complaints will contribute to school improvement. When individual complaints are heard, we will identify any underlying issues that need to be addressed. The monitoring and review of complaints by the school and the governing body helps us in evaluating our performance.

Reviewing

The governing body will review the outcomes of the monitoring exercise on a regular basis to ensure the effectiveness of the procedure and make changes where necessary.

APPENDIX A: COMPLAINTS FORM FOR PARENTS

Please complete and return to the Clerk to the Governor who will act as Complaints Co-ordinator and who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:

Pupil's name:

Your relationship to the pupil:

Address:

Postcode:

Daytime 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)?**

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.

Signature:

Date:

Official use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By whom:

Complaint referred to:

Date:

APPENDIX B: COMPLAINTS FORM FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Please complete and return to the Clerk to the Governor who will act as Complaints Co-ordinator and who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:

Address:

Postcode:

Daytime telephone number:

Evening telephone number:

What is your connection to the School?

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)?

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.

Signature:

Date:

Official use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By whom:

Complaint referred to:

Date:

APPENDIX A:

CHECKLIST FOR A PANEL HEARING WITH THE COMPLAINANT IN ATTENDANCE

The Governors' Complaints Panel needs to take the following points into account:

- The hearing is as informal as possible.
- Witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing in which they give their evidence.
- After introductions, the complainant is invited to explain their complaint, and be followed by their witnesses.
- The Executive Headteacher may question both the complainant and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The Executive Headteacher is then invited to explain the school's actions and be followed by the school's witnesses.
- The complainant may question both the Executive Headteacher and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The panel may ask questions at any point.
- The complainant is then invited to sum up their complaint.
- The Executive Headteacher is then invited to sum up the school's actions and response to the complaint.
- Both parties leave together while the panel decides on the issues.
- The Chairman explains that both parties will hear from the panel within a set time scale.

CHECKLIST FOR A PANEL HEARING WITH WRITTEN EVIDENCE ONLY

The Governors' Complaints Panel needs to take the following points into account:

- The Chairman of the Complaints Committee will give a review of the complaint received.
- Evidence provided by the complainant will be considered.
- The school's actions and response to the complaint will also be reviewed and considered.
- A conclusion and course of action will be agreed.
- Both parties will be advised in writing within a previously agreed time scale.

Approval Process

Date of approval:

Summer 2015

Governors committee & date when policy first considered:

Review date:

Summer 2017