



Halfway Junior School

“Supporting each other to achieve success for all”

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

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Based on a Model Produced by

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School Complaints Procedure Index

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Introduction

The School Standards and Framework Act 1998, as amended by Section 29 of the Education Act 2002, places a duty on Governing Bodies of all maintained schools and maintained nursery schools in England, to have in place a procedure to deal with complaints relating to the school and to any community facilities or services that the school provides. The law also requires the procedure to be publicised.

Guidance provided by the Local Government Ombudsman states that local complaints procedures should be:

- Clear
- Simple
- Easily Accessible
- Speedy
- Well publicised
- Include a named contact
- Involve the keeping of comprehensive records and,
- Based around a staged approach which keeps the complainant well informed at each of the various stages

This guidance accords with the recommendations arising out of research undertaken by the RISE Trust (Research and Information on State Education). RISE published a Model School Complaints procedure in 1977 and the DfES (Department for Education and Skills) published a School Complaints Procedure in 2002. This guide draws together material from both models.

Complaints are not always easy to define. It is therefore important to keep in mind a distinction between concerns, problems and complaints. These can often arise from the consequences or perceived consequences of resource allocations, operational difficulties, working practices or individual actions.

Underlying Principles

Complaints should be treated seriously and courteously and given the time they require to be heard. It is important to the school that complainants have confidence in these procedures and know that their case will be investigated impartially.

Complainants should be advised at the earliest possible stage about:

- The scope, if any, for pursuing their complaint and the extent of the procedure for dealing with it
- The way in which the complaint is likely to be handled

Where there are established statutory and other procedures for dealing with a complaint, these will be followed. These guidelines therefore do not cover those matters for which such a procedure already exists such as:

- Admissions to schools
- Exclusions from school
- Special Educational Needs Provision
- School re-organisation
- Matters concerned with the school curriculum
- Serious complaints against school staff
- Child Protection issues
- Public examinations

The key to guaranteeing a successful outcome is to ensure that the correct procedure is followed from the outset. If Governors or Head Teachers are unsure of the procedure to be followed, the flow chart on Page 14 of this guide should be consulted. In addition, the Advice and Conciliation Officer may be contacted for further information and advice. It may well be the case that action taken under the complaints procedure may lead to action being initiated under other, for example, statutory procedures. In these instances, the investigations under the complaints procedure should be suspended until action under other (including appeals procedures) has been concluded. The complainant should be advised that alternative action is being taken, but will have to remain confidential until that procedure has been completed. The complainant should also be advised of any likely delay in the final resolution of the complaint that will result.

Definition of a Complaint

The Authority's definition of a complaint is 'An expression of dissatisfaction with the Council's services, with the actions of its employees, Members or policies, affecting an individual customer or group of customers. A complaint requires an immediate response and, if it is serious or cannot be dealt with immediately, need to be investigated and resolved'.

Complaints can be made about:

- Failure to provide a satisfactory service
- Failure to follow agreed policies or processes (or the lack of such processes where they could reasonably be expected to be in place)
- The conduct of an employee or agent of the Council

If a customer perceives there is a valid reason for a complaint, this must be treated accordingly and an investigation undertake.

For schools, the definition of a complaint within the terms of the procedures described here is an expression of dissatisfaction verbally or in writing by parents or carers of children who attend the school.

After initial investigation of a complaint, a decision may well be made to use the discipline, capability or other appropriate procedure against a member of staff.

Anonymous complaints will not normally be considered under the procedure set out here.

The procedure set out in the following pages outlines the stages both formal and informal through which a complaint made against the school will proceed. At all stages, the aim is resolution to the satisfaction of both parties and a mutual understanding of the problems believed to exist in order that improvements can be made where necessary.

Where agreement and resolution cannot be reached, the aim of the procedure is to ensure that all parties are treated fairly and equitably.

Conciliation or mediation between school and complainant can be considered at any time within the informal or formal stages as set out in this guide. The Advice and Conciliation Officer within the Local Authority is independent of the school and can be contacted at any stage for advice and information on 0114 2053938/2053939.

1. The First Stage

Dealing with Concerns and Complaints Informally

1.1 Guidelines

- 1.1.1 It is hoped that all complaints and concerns will be resolved as early and as informally as possible. Parents and carers need not only to be listened to but also to feel that they have been listened to. The underlying principle is that concerns ought to be handled, if at all possible, without the need for formal procedures. Nevertheless, anyone receiving a complaint should ensure that a record of the complaint and its outcome is maintained.
- 1.1.2 The vast majority of concerns and complaints can be resolved informally. There are many occasions where concerns are resolved immediately with the class teacher, school secretary or Head Teacher, depending on whom it is parents or carers first approach. Parents must feel able to raise concerns with members of staff without any formality, either in person, by telephone or in writing. It may, on occasions, be appropriate for someone to act on behalf of the parent or carer.
- 1.1.3 It may be unclear as to whether a parent or carer is asking a question or expressing an opinion, rather than making a complaint. Similarly, a parent or carer may want a preliminary discussion or be seeking clarification of an issue in order to decide whether he or she wishes to take the matter further.
- 1.1.4 The school should inform staff that they have the right to advice or representation from their trade union at any stage of the complaints procedure once it becomes clear that a complaint is being made about a member of staff.

1.2. Procedures

- 1.2.1 Parents and carers should be given an opportunity to discuss their concern with the appropriate member of staff who will clarify the nature of the concern or complaint and reassure them that the school will hear the concern or complaint and attempt to resolve it at the earliest stage. The member of staff may explain how the matter or incident arose and the issues connected with it. It may be helpful at this point for the parent or carer to identify what outcome is expected.
- 1.2.2 The member of staff will need to respond appropriately, taking into account the status and seriousness of the complaint. Hopefully, the matter can then be resolved immediately. (See notes on **'How to Listen to Complaints'**).
- 1.2.3 If the member of staff first approached cannot deal with the matter immediately, then they should make a clear note of the date, the name and contact address or telephone number given by the complainant. The Head Teacher should be informed accordingly.

- 1.2.4 All members of staff should be aware of the procedure for referring a complaint to the staff member having responsibility for the area about which a particular concern has been raised. They should also ensure that when a referral has been made, this is followed through.
- 1.2.4 Where the concern relates to the actions of the Head Teacher, the complainant should be advised to contact the Chair of the School Governing Body. In such circumstances, it is recommended that a Governors Complaints Panel comprising three members of the School's Governing Body.
- 1.2.5 The member of staff dealing with the concern or complaint should make sure that the parent or carer is clear about what action, if any, or monitoring of the issue has been agreed, putting this in writing if this appears to be the best way of advising the complainant clearly about the resolution of the matter.
- 1.2.6 In instances where no satisfactory solution has been found within 10 school working days of the complaint having been made, parents or carers should be given clear information both verbally and in writing about how to progress their complaint and about any independent advice available to them.

2. The Second Stage

Referral to the Head Teacher for Formal Investigation

2.1.1 Guidelines

- 2.1.2 At this stage, it will be apparent that a formal complaint has been registered and an appropriate response will be required. In some instances, the Head Teacher will already have been involved in looking at the matter; in others, it will be their first involvement. In all instances, it will be helpful for the Head Teacher (or other designated member of staff) to use these guidelines to ensure consistency and to ensure that regard is paid to the stages of the complaints procedure.
- 2.1.3 Head Teachers have responsibility for the day-to-day running of their school. They have responsibility for the implementation of the complaints procedure including decisions concerning their involvement at the various stages. A staged complaints procedure should ensure that more than one individual is involved in hearing and investigating the complaint.
- 2.1.4 Head Teachers should make arrangements to ensure that their involvement does not predominate at each stage of a particular complaint. Arrangements may be made for other staff to deal with parent and carer concerns at Stage 1, allowing for the Head Teacher's involvement at Stage 2, should this be necessary. At any stage, the Head Teacher may designate another member of staff to collect information and prepare a response.

2.2 Procedures

- 2.2.1 Complaints should normally be submitted in writing. In exceptional circumstances, the school may consider progressing a verbal complaint where there are believed to be sufficient grounds for doing so. The Head Teacher (or designated member of staff) will acknowledge the complaint within 3 working days of receipt.
- 2.2.2 Schools should be sensitive to the particular needs of parents or carers who may have difficulty in making a written complaint or for whom English is not their first language.
- 2.2.3 An acknowledgement should provide a brief outline of the school's complaints procedure and an expected date for the provision of a response. This will normally be within 10 school working days. If this proves to be unworkable, the complainant should be provided with an explanation for the delay and given a revised date for the provision of a response.
- 2.2.4 The Advice and Conciliation Service may become involved and enable an agreed way forward. A mediated meeting between the complainant and the school to discuss a solution may be suggested if both parties are in agreement. The aim here is to seek an early resolution to the complaint for the benefit of the child, parents or carers and the school. Prolonging a complaint longer than is necessary is of no benefit to any of the parties involved. Such involvement is not however intended to compromise the formal complaints procedure. A complainant reserves the right to invoke more formal procedures should this be thought necessary to resolve matters.
- 2.2.5 The Head Teacher should provide an opportunity for a complainant to meet with them in order to supplement any information previously provided. It should be made clear to the complainant that, if they wish, they may be accompanied at any meeting by a friend, relative or representative to speak on their behalf; and that interpreting facilities can be made available should this be necessary.
- 2.2.6 The Head Teacher will, if necessary, interview witnesses and take statements from those involved. If the complaint concerns a pupil, the pupil should also be interviewed. In some instances, another member of staff with whom the pupil feels comfortable may be asked to attend. It may be appropriate, depending on the circumstances, to invite a parent or carer to be present when the Head Teacher interviews a pupil. The Head Teacher should keep written records of all meetings, telephone conversations and other contacts made during the course of investigation of a complaint.
- 2.2.7 Once all relevant information has been gathered, the Head Teacher will then formulate a written response to the complainant. The Head Teacher may, additionally, suggest a meeting to discuss the complaint and seek a resolution. The written response should include a full explanation of the decision reached and the reasons for the decision. Where appropriate, this will include details of the action taken to resolve the complaint. If the complaint concerns a member of staff and action is to be taken against the member of staff concerned, the phrase 'Appropriate action has or will be taken' should be used.
- 2.2.8 The complainant should be advised that, should they find the Head Teacher's response inadequate and they wish to take matters further, that they should notify the Chair of the School's Governing Body within 10 school working days of receipt. The Chair should arrange for a Governors Complaints Panel to investigate the complaint and would normally chair this panel, unless an alternative chair has designated by the Governing Body.

2.2.9 Where a complaint has been made against the Head Teacher, arrangements should be made for the initial investigation to be conducted by a single Governor (usually the Chair or Vice Chair of the

Governing Body) or a suitably constituted Governing Body Complaints panel who will undertake Stage 2 of these procedures.

3. The Third Stage

Appeal to the Chair of the Governing Body or Governing Body Complaints Panel

3.1 Guidelines

3.1.1 It is anticipated that complaints will rarely reach this stage. It is, however, important that should they do so, any appeal is not only independent and impartial but that it should be seen to be so. All complaints reaching Stage 3 will have done so because the complainant has not been satisfied with the response provided by the Head Teacher (or Chair of Governors if the original complaint had been about the Head Teacher) at an earlier stage of the procedure. Therefore, governors who have had no prior knowledge of or involvement in the complaint must as far as is possible, handle any appeal.

3.1.2 As this is the last stage at which a resolution may be reached, every effort should be made to either mediate or conciliate. Parents or carers may therefore wish to seek assistance from the Advice and Conciliation Service, particularly if contact has not previously been made.

3.1.3 Appeals should normally be made in writing. In exceptional circumstances, the school may consider progressing a verbal complaint where there are believed to be sufficient grounds for doing so. The appeal should state clearly why it is felt that the complaint has not been resolved satisfactorily and, wherever possible, supported by documentary evidence or witness statements.

3.1.4 In the unlikely event of pupils needing to be interviewed, care will need to be taken to ensure that parental permission is obtained. In all instances a single governor should interview the pupil and parents or carers should be given the opportunity to attend but, if they are unable to do so, a nominated member of staff should accompany the pupil.

3.2 Procedures

3.2.1 Upon receipt of a written request by a complainant for the complaint to proceed to Stage 3, the procedures outlined below should be followed:

1. The Chair of the Governing Body should write to the complainant acknowledging receipt of the written request.
2. The acknowledgment should inform the complainant that the Chair of Governors or three members of the school's Governing Body, as appropriate, will investigate the complaint within 20 school working days of receipt of the request.

3. The acknowledgement should also explain that the complainant has the right to submit any further information or documentation relevant to the complaint. Any such documentation must, however, be received in sufficient time for this to be sent to the Chair or Panel members charged with conducting the investigation.

If a Governors Complaints Panel is conducting the investigation, the Chair of Governors should convene a panel elected from members of the school's Governing Body.

Panel members should be governors who have had no prior involvement with the complaint. Generally speaking, it is not appropriate for the Head Teacher or other staff members to have a place on the panel. Governors may wish to bear in mind the advantages of having a parent or carer (who is also a governor) on the panel. Governors should be sensitive of issues of race, gender and religious affiliation and the make-up of the panel should, if possible, reflect the three categories of LEA, Parent and Co-opted governors.

The Chair should ensure that the Panel hears the complaint within 20 school working days of receiving the request. All relevant correspondence regarding the complaint should be given to each Panel member as soon as the composition of the Panel has been determined.

The Chair should write and inform the complainant, Head Teacher, relevant witnesses and Panel members of the date, time and venue of the meeting, at least 10 school working days in advance. The details of the complaint available at that time should also be sent in writing to the Head Teacher.

Notice of the Panel meeting sent to the complainant should also inform him/her of their right to be accompanied to the meeting by a friend, advocate or interpreter. This notice should also explain how the Panel meeting will be conducted and of the complainant's right to submit further written evidence to the Panel at least 5 school working days in advance of the meeting. The Chair should also invite the Head Teacher to attend and prepare a written report for the Panel in response to the complaint.

The Head Teacher may invite members of staff who have been directly involved in matters or issues raised by the complainant to respond in writing or, at the discretion of the Panel Chair, to attend the meeting in person. All concerned, including the complainant, should receive all relevant documentation, including the Head Teacher's report, at least 5 school working days in advance of the meeting.

It is the responsibility of the panel Chair to ensure that the meeting is properly minuted.

The aim of the Panel meeting will be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. It has to be recognised, however, that whilst the intention is to ensure that any complaint, which reaches this stage, is seen to have been treated seriously, it may not be possible to make recommendations that fully satisfy the complainant.

The Panel should be sympathetic to the fact that some parents and carers will not be used to dealing with groups of people in formal situations such as this and may, therefore, feel intimidated by the setting. It is suggested therefore that the Chair ensures proceedings are as informal as the circumstances allow.

Should either party wish to produce previously undisclosed or uncirculated documentation, it is in the interests of natural justice to adjourn the meeting to allow sufficient time for each party to consider and respond to this.

At Stage 3, the complainant and the Head Teacher, together with and other staff who are involved with the complaint should be interviewed separately in order that the Panel can form a clear and independent view of the complaint. The interviews, which can be arranged to run consecutively, should allow for:

- The complainant to explain the nature of their complaint(s)
- The Head Teacher to explain the school's response to the complaint
- Panel members to have an opportunity to question both complainant and Headteacher
- All parties to have a right to call witnesses (subject to the approval of the Chair) and the Panel to the opportunity of questioning all witnesses
- Parents and carers, Head Teacher and staff to have the right of representation at the meeting if they so wish

The Chair should explain to the complainant and the Head Teacher that the Panel will consider its decision and a written response sent to both parties within 15 school working days.

The Panel will consider the complain and all the evidence presented and

- a) Reach a unanimous or at least a majority decision on the complaint;
- b) Decide upon the most appropriate course of action to be taken to resolve the complaint and,
- c) Where appropriate, suggest recommended changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not arise in future

Recommendations should be reported to the Governing Body at an appropriate time and a written statement outlining the decision of the Panel should be sent to the Head Teacher and complainant. Should any action need to be taken against a member of staff, in order to protect their rights, the phrase 'Appropriate action has or will be taken' should be used.

Governors should ensure that a copy of all correspondence and accompanying notes are kept on file. These records should be kept separately from the pupil's personal records.

4. The Fourth Stage

Referral to the Secretary of State and/or Local Government Ombudsman

4.1 The Secretary of State

If a complainant believes that the school or school's governing body has acted "unreasonably", a complaint can be taken to the Secretary of State in the Department for Education and Skills under section 496 of the Education Act 1996. It should be noted that, in this sense, the word "unreasonably" is used in a strict sense and means acting in a way that no reasonable school or authority could act in the circumstances. This should be a last resort and you should set out the steps you have taken to resolve the problem in your letter.

4.2 The Local Government Ombudsman

Complaints about the maladministration of local authority services, including the way it operated any general school complaints procedure, can be made to the Local Government Ombudsman. However, it must be emphasised that the Ombudsman does not look at internal school management matters and usually expects that thorough attention has been given to a complaint locally before investigation by the Ombudsman.

School Complaints Procedure

Flowchart Summary of Stages of Complaints Procedure

Stage One:
Informal

Expression of Concern/Complaint to member of staff

Issue resolved?

Yes

No

No further action

Stage 2:
Head Teacher/Chair of Governing Body Investigation

Verbal/written complaint made to
Head Teacher/Chair of Governing Body
(if complaint concerns Head Teacher)

Investigation conducted and result reported to complainant

Issue resolved?

Yes

No

No further action

Stage 3:
Governing Body Appeal Panel/Advice and Conciliation Service

Governing Body Complaints Panel meeting
arranged/Advice and Conciliation Service involved

Investigation by Chair of Governing Body/Governing Body
Appeal Panel. Complainant and Head Teacher invited to
attend

Issue resolved?

Yes

No

No further action

Stage 4:
Beyond the Local Authority

Referral to Secretary of State/Local Government Ombudsman

Halfway Junior School Complaints Form

Your name:

Pupil's name:

Your relationship to the pupil:

School:

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)?**

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

Halfway Junior School Complaints Form

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

Signature:

Date:

For Official use by the school

Date acknowledgement sent:

By whom:

Complaint referred to:

Date:

Halfway Junior School Complaints Form

Guidance on Listening to Complaints

As soon as you realise you are listening to a complaint, remember the following points:

- **Take responsibility**

Try not to keep transferring an angry person on from one place to another. Make sure you know the contact person for anything you cannot deal with yourself.

- **Don't be flippant**

First impressions count. You and the school may be judged on your immediate reaction.

- **Treat all complaints seriously**

However small or trivial an issue may seem to you, the complaint itself will be an important one for anyone who takes the trouble to complain.

- **Be courteous**

Be sympathetic and helpful, but do not blame other colleagues.

- **Say who you are**

If you are unknown to the complainant, introduce yourself.

- **Ask for their name and use it**

Anonymous complaints are acceptable only in exceptional circumstances.

- **Take time to figure out exactly what the problem is**

It is easy for someone to forget to tell you an important detail, particularly if they are upset or annoyed.

- **Don't take the complaint personally**

To an angry parent or carer, YOU are the school and the only one they can put their feelings to right now.

- **Stay cool and calm**

Do not argue with the complainant. Be polite and try to establish exactly what it is he or she believes the issue to be.

- **Check you are being understood**

Make certain that the parent or carer understands what you are saying. Avoid using jargon- it can cause confusion and annoyance to someone 'not in the know'.

- **Don't rush**

Take your time. Let the complainant have their say and let off steam if they need to. Listen carefully and sympathetically to their problem before replying and attempting to find a solution or suggesting the next step.

Halfway Junior School

School Complaints A Brief Guide for Parents and Carers



School Complaints

Advice to Parents/Carers about making a complaint

If you have comments or concerns please let your school know. We welcome suggestions for improving our work in schools. We understand a common fear is that the school's relationship with you and your child/children will be affected if you express dissatisfaction. We wish to assure you that by having an effective complaints procedure, we would hope to be able to minimise problems, provide the school with helpful information and to treat complaints as constructive suggestions to improve standards and prevent cause for further complaint. For schools, the definition of a complaint within the terms of the procedures referred to here is an expression of dissatisfaction by parents or carers of children who attend a Sheffield school, or from neighbours of the school or school community affected by the services the school provides.

1. What to do first

Many concerns arise from misunderstandings and are best dealt with positively in discussion with the staff at the school. This is best done by speaking with your child's class or form teacher. All staff will make every effort to resolve your concern quickly and informally. They will make sure that they understand what you feel went wrong and they will explain their own actions to you. They will ask what you would like the school to do to put things right. Of course, this does not necessarily mean that in every instance they will agree with your point of view but the response should help both you and the school to understand both viewpoints. It may also prevent a similar problem arising in the future.

2. What to do next

Should you remain dissatisfied with the teacher's initial response, you can make a complaint to the Head Teacher. This is best done in writing or by making an appointment to discuss the problem. You may find it helpful at this stage to have a copy of the full School Complaints Procedure as this explains in detail what procedures should be followed. (This is available from the School Office). The Head Teacher will ask to meet with you for a discussion of the problem and you may take a friend or someone else with you if you wish.

The Head Teacher will conduct a full investigation of your complaint and may interview members of staff or pupils involved. You will then receive a written response to your complaint. This will hopefully resolve the matter. However, should you remain dissatisfied, the Head Teacher should give you detail and of ways to take matters further.

3. If you are still unhappy

If you are still not satisfied, you may wish to contact the Chair of Governors and request that they look again at your complaint and the Head Teacher's response. The Chair of Governors will seek to clarify your concerns and undertake their own independent investigation; this may well involve speaking with members of staff and others. Once their investigation has been concluded, you will then receive a written response to your complaint. This will hopefully resolve the matter.

Should you remain dissatisfied with the response from the Chair of Governors, you can ask for your complaint to be referred to a Governing Body Complaints Review Panel. This will comprise a group of three governors from the school who, as far as is possible, have no previous knowledge of the problem and who will therefore be able to give it fresh assessment. You will be invited to attend a meeting and speak to the Panel in person. The full School Complaints procedure explains how these meetings operate.

4. Further Action

The Advice and Conciliation Service

Before any action is considered it is essential that you discuss your concerns with the Advice and Conciliation Service. The Advice and Conciliation Service is an impartial Service based within Children and Young People's Services and aims to help all sections of the Service in Sheffield become more responsive to comments, complaints, criticisms and suggestions from parents and carers, young people and other service users. The Advice and Conciliation Officer can be contacted on Sheffield 0114 2053938/2053939.

The Department for Education

Complaints about school are almost always settled within school but, complaints about maintained schools not resolved by the school can be referred to the Secretary of State for Education.

Should you believe that either the Local Authority or Governing Body has acted unreasonably you can take your complaint to the Secretary of State for Education. 'Unreasonably' for these purposes means that you believe the school has acted in such a way that no reasonable school would act. This is a high threshold to overcome.

If your complaint is about a local authority maintained school, that is, it is not an academy or Free School, and you feel your complaint has not been resolved satisfactorily by the school's governors, you can refer your complaint to the Secretary of State for Education. You must do this in writing, either by post to:

School Complaints Team
Department for Education
Castle View House
East Lane
Runcorn. WA7 2GJ

Or, by using the online School Complaints form. This can be accessed at:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/b00212240/guidance-on-making-a-complaint-about-a-school/how-to-complain-to-the-department-about-a-school>

Before submitting your complaint, please read the guidance section on making a complaint about a school. This can be accessed at:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/b00212240/guidance-on-making-a-complaint-about-a-school>

Academies

If your complaint is about an academy and you feel it has not been resolved satisfactorily by the academy's governors or trustees, you can also make your complaint to the School Complaints Team, who will refer it to the Education Funding Agency. The Education Funding Agency is the arm of the Department for Education which oversees academies. However, you must make your complaint in writing in the first instance to the Department for Education as above.

Is there a time limit for complaining?

You should complain to the school as soon as possible and certainly within three months. If you do not contact the school within that time, normally no further action will be taken in respect of your complaint. However, any exceptional reasons you may give for not meeting this time limit will always be taken into account and any decision to hear a complaint after this time will be at the discretion of the Chair of Governors.

Dealing with Unreasonably Persistent Complainants and Vexatious Complainants

The Headteacher and Governing Body are fully committed to the improvement of the school. Feedback from parents and carers is welcomed and schools will always do their utmost to resolve any that are brought to their attention as quickly as possible. The formal procedure for parents and carers should always be followed should you wish to make a complaint.

Occasionally, however, parents and carers in raising issues with staff or others do so in a way that is unacceptable. Whilst it is recognised that some complaints may well relate to what are considered serious and distressing incidents, threatening or harassing behaviour towards any members of the school community, be this staff, school governors, parents, pupils or others will not be tolerated.

The full School Complaints Procedure available from the school gives further details about how the school will always seek to work in a positive way with parents, carers and others to resolve complaints at the earliest opportunity. It also gives information about what action may be taken in respect of those complaints which appear unreasonably persistent and instances where the behaviour of the complainant gives cause for concern

Model School Complaints Form

Your name:

Pupil's name:

Your relationship to the pupil:

School:

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)?**

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

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

Signature:

Date:

For Official use by the school

Date acknowledgement sent:

By whom:

Complaint referred to:

Date:

Guidance on Making a Complaint

Try to resolve issues with the school informally at first. If matters are not resolved to your satisfaction you can make a formal complaint, however, at all times, please remember that matters can often be dealt with more easily if you bear in mind the following:

- **Speak to the right person**
Try to speak with the member of staff best able to advise you and best able to deal with your concerns. This is often your child's class teacher in the first instance. If they are unable to deal with an issue immediately they may suggest making an appointment at a more convenient time for both parties to discuss matters more thoroughly.
- **Be courteous**
Conduct yourself in a professional manner and try to discuss your concerns in a calm but firm manner. Try to understand the other's point of view and do not present yourself in an aggressive manner.
- **Say who you are**
If you are unknown to the member of staff, introduce yourself.
- **Ask for the member of staff's name and use it**
If the member of staff you first approach is unable to deal with the matter ask for the name of the member of the school's staff who will be able to assist you.
- **Take your time to explain exactly what the issues are**
It is often easy to forget to give all the details of your concern, particularly if you are upset or annoyed. You may wish to write a list of the issues you need to discuss before you approach school.
- **Stay cool and calm**
Do not argue with the member of staff who receives your complaint. Be polite and respectful. Try to be clear about exactly what it is that you believe the issue to be.
- **Check you are being understood**
Make certain that the member of staff understands what you are saying and what the issue is that has given rise to your concerns.
- **Don't rush**
Take your time. Try to explain to school what your concern is and more importantly what you would like school to do to resolve this. Try to ensure the school understand your viewpoint before demanding a solution or suggesting the next step.

Flowchart
Summary of Stages of Complaints Procedure

Stage 1:
Informal

Stage 2:
Head Teacher/Chair of Governing Body Investigation

Stage 3:
Governing Body Appeal Panel

Beyond the Local Authority

