

St. Michael's Complaints Policy



Part One: General Principles

Aims of this Policy

This procedure aims to:

- reassure parents and others with an interest in the school that any complaint against the school will be dealt with in a fair, open and responsive way
- ensure that there are clear and realistic timescales for dealing with a complaint
- where necessary, ensure that there is a clear framework for escalating complaints

What is Covered by this Policy?

A complaint is defined as a clear statement of dissatisfaction about any specified aspect of the school's work.

This procedure deals with specified day-to-day complaints against the management and/or operation of the school.

This procedure does NOT deal with the following:

This procedure does not deal with:	Alternative procedures
Admissions to schools Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN) School re-organisation proposals Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation	Concerns should be raised direct with local authorities (LA). For school admissions, it will depend on who is the admission authority (either the school or the LA). Complaints about admission appeals for maintained schools are dealt with by the Local Government Ombudsman.
Exclusion of children from school	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/schooldisciplineexclusions/exclusions
Whistleblowing	Schools have an internal whistleblowing procedure for their employees and voluntary staff. The Department for Education is also a prescribed body for whistleblowing in education.
Staff grievances and disciplinary procedures	These matters will invoke the school's internal grievance procedures. Complainants will not be informed of the outcome of any investigation.

Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities.	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. They should be contacted direct.
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General

Complainants may be anyone e.g. parents, guardians, grandparents, neighbours of the school or anyone with an interest in the work of the school. However, it is expected that it will be mainly parents or guardians who will make use of this procedure. The term 'parent' or 'you' is therefore used throughout the procedure as a generic term but the procedure also applies in relation to any other type of complainant.

Complaints may be made by telephone, e-mail, in person or be written.

Complaints against the Headteacher are usually first dealt with by the Chair of Governors. Complaints against the Chair of Governors or any individual governor should be made by writing to the Clerk of the Governing Body.

The school and/or parent may request advice or guidance from Enfield Council's Schools and Children's Services department at any stage in the procedure. The Council is not responsible, however, for investigating the complaint or for making decisions on the outcomes.

Records of all conversations and meetings with parents to resolve complaints will be kept. To help prevent recurring complaints, copies of correspondence and notes will be kept on file, in the school's records, separately from individual pupil records.

If at any stage in the procedure it becomes apparent that for any reason the complaint falls outside of this general complaints procedure, parents will be informed.

There may be rare occasions when, despite all the stages of the procedure having been followed, a parent remains dissatisfied. If the parent seeks to re-open the same issue, the school reserves the right to inform him/her in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and the matter is closed.

We understand that people can become angry when they feel that matters about which they feel strongly are not being dealt with as they wish. If that anger escalates into aggression towards our staff, we consider that unacceptable.

Any aggression or abuse directed towards our staff will not be tolerated.

Part Two: Procedures



Stage One: Raising a Concern

If you have any concerns relating to your child, at school, you should initially discuss your concerns with the class teacher.

The vast majority of concerns can be dealt with by discussion with the class teacher. This can be arranged by appointment at a mutually convenient time.

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of your discussion, then a further appointment should be arranged with both the class teacher and the appropriate Phase Leader.

Exceptions:

Should the complaint be about any member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) then the complaint should be escalated to the Headteacher in the first instance

Should the complaint be about the Headteacher, then the complaint should be escalated to the Chair of Governors

Should the complaint be about the Chair of Governors, then the complaint should be escalated directly to the Governor Complaints Panel (GCP)

Stage Two: Escalating a Concern

If, after meeting with the teacher and Phase Leader, you are still not satisfied with the outcome, then an appointment should be made to bring the issue to one of the SLT.

If the complaint cannot be resolved at the time and you confirm, in writing, that you wish to continue with the complaint, an appointment will be made for you to discuss the matter with the Head or Deputy. This appointment will be **within 5 school days** of receipt of the request.

The parent will be informed, **within 5 school days of the discussion**, of the outcome of the investigation and what action, if any, the school proposes to take.

The parent will be advised of their right to request that a formal complaint is considered at Stage Three of this procedure if they still are dissatisfied with the response and resolution offered at Stage Two.

Stage Three: Formalising a Complaint

If you are still not satisfied with the outcome, then a written complaint should be sent to the Chair of the Governing Body. The Chair of Governors will acknowledge the written complaint **within five school days of receipt** and provide an opportunity for you to meet with them to discuss the complaint.

The Chair of the Governing Body or a designated governor will carry out an investigation and a written response will be made **within ten school days** of receipt of the complaint. If this is not possible, a letter will be sent explaining the reason for the delay and providing a revised target date.

The written response will include full reasons for the conclusions reached by the Chair of Governors and what action, if any, the school proposes to take to resolve the matter.

If you remain dissatisfied, you will be advised that, in order to progress the complaint further to Stage Four, you must notify the Chair of Governors in writing **within ten school days of receipt of the Stage Three response**, setting out what issues are outstanding and what outcome you are hoping for.

The Chair of Governors will then ensure that you are offered the opportunity of taking the complaint to the Governors' Complaints Panel at Stage Four of this procedure.

Stage Four: Referral to the Governor Complaints Panel

If you are still not satisfied with the outcome, then you are entitled to refer the matter to the Governing Body Complaints Committee (GCP). The GCP will acknowledge the complaint **within five school days**. You will be advised of your right to submit any further documents, the right to call witnesses to meet with the GCP and the right to be accompanied by a companion of your choice.

The Chair of the GCP will also send a letter to the Headteacher advising of the right to submit any further documents, the right to call witnesses to meet with the GCP and the right to be accompanied by a companion of their choice.

The GCP will investigate the complaint within **twenty school days** of receipt.

A written decision will be sent to both you and the Chair of Governors and/or Headteacher by the Chair of the GCP **within ten school days** of the GCP meeting.

The letter will explain that the decision of the GCP represents the end of the school's complaint procedure and what options remain open to you, if you remain dissatisfied.

Note: Complaints will be dismissed if, once a complaint has been made and the complaints procedure has started, the complainant goes on to publish details on social media.

Part Three

Aggressive or abusive behaviour

We understand that on very rare occasions, people can become angry when they feel that matters about which they feel strongly are not being dealt with as they wish. If that anger escalates into aggression towards our staff, we consider that unacceptable.

Any aggression or abuse directed towards our staff will not be tolerated.

Aggressive or abusive behaviour includes language (whether verbal or written) that may cause staff to feel afraid, threatened or abused and may include threats, personal verbal abuse, derogatory remarks and rudeness.

We also consider inflammatory statements, remarks of a racial or discriminatory nature and unsubstantiated allegations, to be abusive behaviour.

Should aggressive or abusive behaviour occur, the Headteacher reserves the right to ban any individual from the premises.

Unreasonable demands

A demand becomes unacceptable when it starts to (or when complying with the demand would) impact excessively on the work of our staff or when dealing with the matter takes up an excessive amount of staff time and in so doing, disadvantages other parents/children.

For example:

- Repeatedly demanding responses within an unreasonable timescale
- Demanding responses from several members of staff on the same subject
- Insisting on seeing or speaking to a particular member of staff when that is not possible
- Repeatedly changing the substance of an enquiry or complaint or raising unrelated concerns
- Repeatedly posing a question time and again, when a response has been given but the complainant does not like the answer.
- Unreasonable levels of contact

Sometimes the volume and duration of contact made to our staff, by an individual, causes problems. This can occur over a short period, for example, when a large number of calls or emails are received from the same person in one day.

We consider that the level of contact has become unacceptable when the amount of time spent talking to an individual on the telephone, or responding to, reviewing and filing emails or written correspondence, impacts on our ability to deal with the matter, or on our responsibility for carrying out tasks relating to other members of our community.

Reviewed: January 2024

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