

COMPLAINTS POLICY

Introduction

At Harnham Infant School we all work very hard to build positive relationships with all parents. Our aim is to deal with issues and problems before they become a 'complaint'. However there is a clear protocol to follow if necessary and the steps to follow and their outcome are outlined in this document.

1. If any parents are unhappy with the education that their child is receiving, or have any concerns relating to the school, we encourage them to talk to the child's class teacher immediately. There is no doubt that if a concern is shared with the class teacher they can either reassure worried parents or together devise steps to take to address the concern. Parents must never worry about sharing their concerns with the class teacher. They will always be taken seriously and due consideration given to a mutually agreeable resolution.

2. We promise we will always be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaint and to deal with them as swiftly as possible. Our focus will always be on the child and what is best for them.

The complaints process Stage1.

Informal expression of concern made to the school.

In the first instance, the matter should be discussed with the child's class teacher. In our experience most matters of concern can be resolved positively in this way with apologies where necessary. Members of the school's senior leadership may be involved at this stage.

Stage 2. Discussion with the year group leader.

We expect most complaints to be resolved by this stage. However if the matter has not been resolved and needs further investigation parents must make an appointment with the year group leader. The year group leader will need time to fully investigate the matter and will respond with 7 school days.

Stage 3. Head Teacher.
Complaints rarely reach this formal level but should you need to you should make a formal complaint to the Head Teacher

Complaints at this stage should be written and received within **10 school days** of the year group leader's feedback. Your letter should be addressed to the Head teacher and marked "private and confidential". The letter should say why you remain unhappy and what you wish to see happen. The head teacher will let you know when your complaint is to be considered. If a meeting with you and others involved is considered necessary you will be given adequate notice to prepare. You will be informed of the outcome of the head teachers' investigation and decision on what further action will be taken within 10 school days.

Stage 4. Governors

You may take your complaint to the school Governors **within 6 months** of the Head Teachers' response.

If the complaint is not resolved, and all previous stages have been explored, a parent may make representation to the Governors. A letter addressed to the Chair of Governors marked "private and confidential" can be left at the school office. If the Governors consider from your letter that the complaint warrants further investigation they may ask you to explain your case in person before a specially appointed panel. However, it is also possible that, following investigation, they may make a decision without needing you to appear. A decision will be provided **within 15 days** where possible.

Stage 5. Further representation.

If you remain dissatisfied you may make further representations.

You may approach the Secretary of State for Education or the *Ombudsman if you are unhappy with the process or outcome. This would normally only be appropriate if you believe that the school, the Governing body and the LEA have acted illegally or arbitrarily.

* Please note the Ombudsman does not investigate internal school management

3. If parents have a complaint about the Head Teacher, they should first make an informal approach to the Chair of the Governors (as at stage 4 above) who is obliged to investigate it. The Chair will do all they can to resolve the issue through a dialogue with the school, but if parents are unhappy with the outcome, they can make a formal complaint, as outlined above.

4. If, despite all stages of this policy being followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied they are not entitled to reopen the same issue. In such cases the Chair of Governors is able to inform them in writing that the process has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

5. If an anonymous complaint is received it will not be investigated under this procedure unless there are exceptional circumstances serious concerns such as child protection issues or bullying allegations, where the school might consider it appropriate to contact outside agencies.

6. Investigating complaints

The person investigating the complaint will:

- Establish what has happened so far and who has been involved.
- Clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved.
- Meet with the complainant or contact them if further information is required
- Clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.
- Conduct any interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning.
- Complete all necessary notes

7. Resolving complaints

At each stage in the complaint schools and complainant will want to keep in mind ways in which a complaint can be resolved. 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 admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
- Assurance that the event that was the basis of the complaint will not recur;
- Explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure it does not happen again. Details of any disciplinary procedures that have taken place as a result of the complaint will not be shared.
- An undertaking to review school policy or procedure in light of the complaint;
- An explanation that there is insufficient evidence and thus the complaint cannot be upheld;
- An explanation that, following investigation, the evidence does not substantiate the concern.

**An admission that the school could have handled things better is not the same as an admission of negligence*

8. Monitoring and review

The Governors will monitor the complaints procedure, in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The head teacher will log all stage 2 complaints received by the school, and record how they were resolved. These will be reported as part of the head teachers report to Governors.

The Governors of Harnham Infant School review this policy as necessary.