

The Brookfield School Complaints Policy and Procedure

Rationale

The Brookfield School encourages feedback from its community to help it to develop further. The intention is always to resolve concerns effectively and in a timely manner with the most appropriate members of staff being involved. Where this is not possible the Complaints Procedure is designed to provide a successful resolution for all involved. Staff should be aware that the policy does not replace the Local Authority Grievance Policy, a copy of which is available on the Herefordshire Council website.

Purpose

This policy deals with complaints which have either escalated from an initial concern which has not been effectively dealt with or from a serious complaint about our service.

Principles

This complaints procedure will:

- Encourage resolution of problems by informal means whenever possible.
- Be easily accessible and publicised.
- Be simple to understand and use.
- Be impartial.
- Be non-adversarial.
- Allow swift handling with established time-limits for action and keeping people informed of the progress.
- Ensure a full and fair investigation by an independent person where necessary.
- Respect people's desire for confidentiality.
- Address all the points at issue and provide an effective response and appropriate redress where necessary.
- Provide information to the school's leadership team so that services can be improved.

Guidelines

Investigating Complaints

The person investigating the complaint will make sure that they

- 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 unsure or further information is necessary).
- Clarify what the complainant feels would put things right;
- Interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
- Conducting the interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning;
- Retain notes of the interview.

Resolving Complaints

At each stage in the procedure the school will 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 explanation
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- an assurance that the event complained of will not recur
- an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint.

Complainants will be encouraged to state what actions they feel might resolve the problem at any stage. An admission that the school could have handled the situation better is not the same as an admission of negligence.

The procedure will identify areas of agreement between the parties. It is also of equal importance to clarify any misunderstandings that might have occurred as this can create a positive atmosphere in which to discuss any outstanding issues.

Vexatious Complaint

The effective use of this procedure should limit the number of complaints that become protracted. However, there will be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedures having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the Chair of the Board of Directors will inform the complainant in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

Anonymous Complaint

The Formal Procedure

Stage 1

Complaint heard by the relevant Line Manager.

Stage 2

Complaint heard by a member of the Senior Leadership Team and the Head Teacher informed of the outcome.

Stage 3

Complaint heard by Head Teacher and the Chair of Directors informed of the outcome;

Stage 4

Complaint heard by Chair of Directors or panel of Directors, if appropriate.

Additional Notes

If a complainant indicates that he/she would have difficulty discussing a complaint with a particular member of staff, then the complainant will be referred to another staff member.

Where the complaint concerns the Head Teacher or a Director, the complainant will be referred to the Chair of Directors.

If the member of staff directly involved feels too compromised to deal with a complaint, the complainant will be referred to another staff member. The ability to consider the complaint objectively and impartially is crucial.

Where the first approach is made to a Director, the next step would be to refer the complainant to the appropriate person and advise them about the procedure. Directors must not act unilaterally on an individual complaint outside the formal procedure, or be involved at the early stages in case they are needed to sit on a panel at a later stage of the procedure.

If after all stages of the procedure are exhausted the complainant is still dissatisfied with the outcome, they may make representations to the Regional Schools Commissioner.

Managing and Recording Complaints

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 should 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 should be kept and a copy of any written response added to the record. The Administration Manager will be responsible for the records and hold them centrally.

Directors Review

The Board

Directors will monitor the level and nature of complaints and review the outcomes on a regular basis to ensure the effectiveness of the procedure and make changes where necessary. Complaints information shared with the whole Board will not name individuals.

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, schools may identify underlying issues that need to be addressed. The monitoring and review of complaints by the school and the Board of Directors will be a useful tool in evaluating the school's performance.

SCHOOL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

GUIDANCE FOR PARENTS

Most complaints can be quickly resolved by talking to the teacher or member of staff concerned. To do this you can contact the school to arrange a time to meet with the person concerned and discuss the problem.

If you cannot resolve the matter directly with the person concerned, you should take it up with the Head Teacher. Again, you can do this by contacting the school and arranging an appointment. It would be helpful if you could put your concerns in writing and let the Head Teacher see them before you meet so that she is able to look into the matter and inform you of the situation at the meeting.

In a very small number of cases, the matter may not be resolved even with the involvement of the Head Teacher. When this happens, the complaint should be directed to the Board of Directors.

In most cases, this means putting your complaint in writing to the chair of the Board of Directors sending it to him/her through the school. The Chair of the Board of Directors will then contact you.

If the complainant does not discuss the matter with the Head Teacher, it is not normally possible to proceed further with the official complainant's procedure. In this circumstance, the complainant should put the complaint in writing, stating the reasons why the complaint has not been discussed with the Head Teacher, and send it to the Chair of the Board of Directors.

If the complaint cannot be resolved by the involvement of the Chair of the Board of Directors, the complainant can ask for the complaint to be considered by the Board of Directors own Complaints Committee. The Complainant will then be informed in writing of the outcome.

The LA does not investigate complaints directly. If a complaint is made either in writing or verbally to the Director of People's Services or to any officer of the LA, the Board of Directors of the school is made aware of the complaint and is requested to deal with it through the adopted procedure.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the process of the investigation, (not the outcome), s/he can make this known to the Director of Peoples Services. However, further action can only be taken if it can be demonstrated that the agreed procedure has not been followed, or if the Board of Directors has not correctly exercised its function.

Ultimately, the complainant can complain to the Secretary of State for Education if s/he feel the Board of Directors or the LA has not reasonably exercised its functions.

Approved by Board of Directors – 6th March 2018

Review Date: March 2019