

General Principles

We often receive compliments about our school and we are always pleased to hear from people who appreciate the hard work going on all the time. However we know that sometimes, things do go wrong. We aim to make sure that we take into account the interests of pupils, parents and school staff when we handle complaints. The school will give careful consideration to all complaints and deal with them fairly. We will provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed, and aim to resolve it through open dialogue and mutual understanding.

The underlying principle is that concerns ought to be handled without the need for formal procedures. Formal procedures need only to be started when initial attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further.

Lepton C of E J, I & N School:

- sees complaints as a positive means of promoting pupil/parent satisfaction
- use complaints as a way of identifying opportunities to do things better
- listen to pupils and parents
- seeks to resolve complaints swiftly
- regularly reviews how effective the complaints procedure is

A complaint is defined as:

“An expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet in relation to a school or teacher, which requires a response.”

Pupils, parents or carers can make a complaint to the school about most aspects of its function including:

Attitude / behaviour of staff

Teaching and learning

Application of behaviour management systems

Bullying

Provision of extra-curricular activities

You may complain yourself, or you may get someone to support you. The person you choose to support you could be a friend, a family member or some other individual or group.

The Local Authority retains responsibility for:

The National Curriculum

Collective Worship in schools

(In the case of denominational schools, concerns relating to worship and spiritual matters may be referred to the relevant Diocese or Archdiocese.)

Provision of support services e.g. SEN, education welfare, educational psychology

Complaints about these matters should be referred to the relevant officer in Children & Young People Service.

Members of the general public may make complaints to the school if the school is directly responsible for the issue being complained about e.g.

Behaviour of pupils during break-times

Disturbance to neighbours during school hours

Health and Safety issues of premises

Behaviour of staff

Schools are not responsible for the actions or behaviour of pupils outside school hours.

Polite Notice

Please note that whenever we are dealing with a complaint we will treat those making the complaint with consideration and respect and we will expect the same in return. We will not tolerate angry or threatening behaviour or verbal or physical abuse directed towards anyone on our premises.

The complaints procedure (Flow chart Appendix 2)

1. The First Stage – Dealing with Concerns and Complaints Informally

It is hoped that all concerns are resolved as early and informally as possible. If you feel it is necessary to make a complaint, the problem may be easily resolved by talking informally with your child's teacher (or head teacher).

2. The Second Stage – Complaint heard by Head Teacher

If you are not satisfied with the resolution it will become clear that your concern is a definite complaint. Contact the school, speak to the secretary and ask to arrange an appointment to meet with the Headteacher.

Or, you may want to put your complaint in writing using the complaint form in Appendix 1. In which case the Headteacher will reply with an acknowledgement letter within 3 school days.

The Headteacher will meet with the complainant to discuss their concerns and find solutions. The complainant may bring a friend, family member or advocate to the meeting and interpreting services should be made available where necessary. The Headteacher may find it useful to have another member of staff present to observe and record the meeting.

The Headteacher will make sure she:

- establishes what has happened so far and who has been involved
- clarifies the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved
- meet the complainant or contacts them if further information is required
- clarifies what the complainant feels would put things right
- interview those involved, with an open mind
- keep notes of any interviews.
- keep the chair of governors informed without giving any details at this stage

The Headteacher will make whatever enquiries she considers necessary to ascertain the facts and the legitimacy of decisions taken.

This may include

- Interviewing staff / pupils
- Reviewing minutes of meetings
- Reviewing school records

Pupils should be interviewed in the presence of another member of staff, or in the case of serious complaints (e.g. where the possibility of criminal investigation exists) in the presence of their parents.

It is important that the headteacher investigates complaints thoroughly and objectively. If she feels unable to do this (e.g. if she has been directly involved in the decision making process that led to the complaint) she should delegate responsibility for investigating the complaint to another member of the management team or the chair of governors.

The headteacher (or designated person) will keep a record of interviews, telephone conversations and other documentation.

Once all the relevant facts have been established, the headteacher should provide a written response to the complainant. This should include a full explanation of decisions

taken and the reasons for them. Where appropriate, it should include details of actions the school will take to resolve the complaint.

Timescales

Acknowledgement of a complaint made in writing - within 3 school days

Investigating a complaint - Outcome meeting - The Headteacher will arrange a meeting with you to discuss the outcome of the investigation and tell you of any decisions made within 15 school days of receiving the initial complaint. If this date cannot be met, the complainant will be contacted and given a reason for the delay and a revised target date.

3. The Third Stage –Complaint heard by Governing Body Complaints Panel

If you are not satisfied with the Headteacher's decision you should put your complaint in writing using the complaint form in Appendix 1 and send it to the chair of governors and ask for the governors' Complaints Committee to look at the complaint. Mark the envelope 'Private and confidential'.

**The Chairman of Governors,
Lepton CE (C) J, I & N School,
Station Road,
Lepton,
Huddersfield
HD8 0DE**

The Chair of Governors will decide whether to convene the Complaints committee to look into the complaint or commission the LA to start an investigation. If the complaint is about the headteacher then the Chair will pass it directly to the LA.

If the Complaints Committee is activated it will undertake an investigation.

The meeting should allow for:

- The complainant to explain their complaint and the headteacher to explain the school's response.
- Witnesses to be brought by the complainant or the headteacher.
- The headteacher and the complainant to ask questions of each other and any witnesses.
- The committee to ask questions of the complainant, headteacher and any witnesses.
- The complainant and the headteacher to summarise their position

Having considered all the evidence and questioned all parties, the Committee can:

- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part
- uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- decide on the appropriate action to resolve the complaint
- recommend changes or actions to school system and procedures to make sure that similar problems do not recur or
- request an investigation by an officer of the local authority.

A written response detailing the decisions, recommendations and the basis on which these have been made should be sent to the complainant within 15 school days.

The Complaints Committee will inform you of its decision either to:

uphold the headteacher's decision or

ask the headteacher to reconsider certain aspects of the decision or

ask the LA to investigate your complaint

If the Committee decides to ask the LA to investigate your complaint it will ask the chair of governors to contact the Head of Management in the School Effectiveness Service at Oldgate House.

If you are not satisfied with the way in which procedures have been carried out you have the right to appeal to the Secretary of State for Education or the Local Government Ombudsman

The LA will investigate your complaint and inform you of the outcome. At this point you will be informed of the appeals procedure if you are not satisfied with the decision made by the LA.

What if my complaint is about the headteacher, governing body or about an individual governor?

You should still contact the chair of governors who will investigate your concerns. If the complaint is about the chair of governors you should contact a member of the Complaints Committee. The school should be able to tell you their names. If you have a complaint about the governing body as a whole, you should contact the School Improvement Officer (Governors) at Oldgate House.

Withdrawing a Complaint

Complaints may be withdrawn in writing at any time.

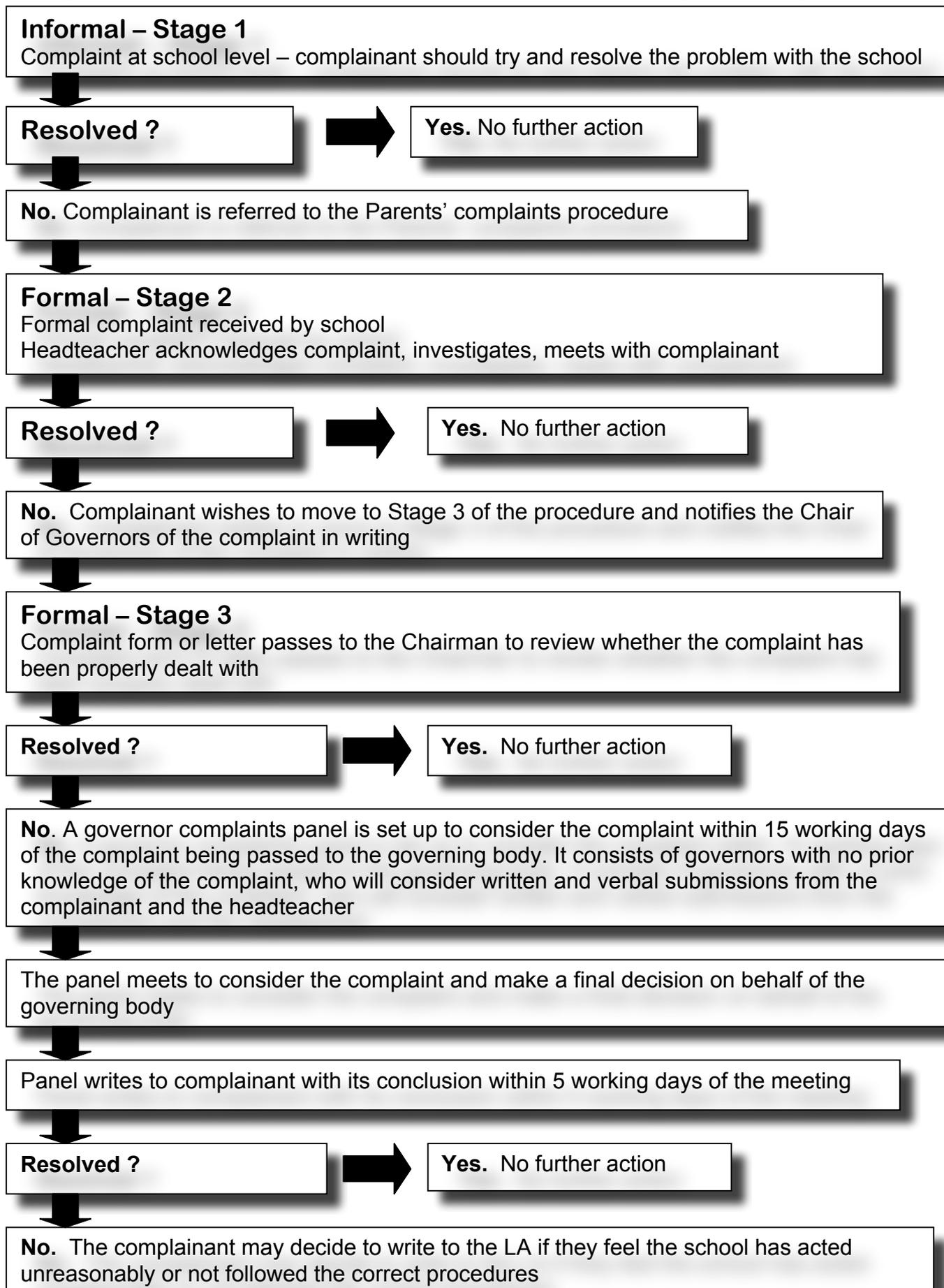
The headteacher and Chair of Governors should review the issue of concern and consider whether further investigation is required through other internal management systems.

Appendix One - complaint form

Please complete and return to the Headteacher who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:	Pupil's name:
Your relationship to the pupil:	
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?	
Signature:	
Date:	

Appendix 2
Complaints Procedure for Areas of Headteacher’s Responsibility



Appendix 3 –

Additional information

Role of Governors

The governing body should work in partnership with the staff to develop the procedure and to monitor and evaluate its implementation.

If an individual governor is approached about a complaint then the governor should direct the complainant to a member of staff or the headteacher with a view to resolving the issue informally. If this is not felt to be appropriate, the governor should refer the complainant to the procedure. The governor should not become involved in any detail of the complaint at this stage.

Resolving Complaints

At each stage in the procedure school staff 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 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 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.

It would be useful if complainants were 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 awkward or vexatious complaints

A good complaints procedure will limit the number of complaints that become protracted. But there will be occasions when a complainant becomes dissatisfied even though all stages of the procedure have been followed. If the complainant tries to re-open the same issue, again, the chair of governors can write to say that the procedure has been exhausted and the matter is now closed.

Timescales

The school will consider and resolve complaints as quickly and efficiently as possible and set realistic time limits for each action. However, where investigations are complex, new time limits can be set as long as school informs the complainant of the reason for the delay and give them new deadlines.

Advice from the LA

Sometimes a complainant contacts the LA in the first instance. We cannot investigate a complaint, we can only investigate how the school has handled the complaint. So when a parent rings up we advise them to ring school and speak with the Headteacher (if a small school) or a senior member of staff (Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher or Head of Year) in a large school.

Not acknowledging a complaint either by a phone call or a letter could exacerbate the problem. It is in the schools best interest to arrange a meeting with the complainant to discuss and resolve the complaint as soon as possible.

If you have any questions or need advice on complaints please contact:

*Senior Improvement Manager, Leadership & Management – Learning, The Deighton Centre,
Deighton Road, Huddersfield, HD2 1JP*

Tel: 01484 225185 or 860 5185

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