



ADVICE TO PARENTS & CARERS

A guide to sharing compliments, raising concerns and making complaints

Introduction

Often parents, carers and other members of the public would like school to know their views. Sometimes there are meetings when this is possible. On other occasions a personal comment is more appropriate. Communication, written or spoken, is valued as part of the partnership between home and school. Co-operation between parents & carers, staff and governors leads to a shared sense of purpose and a good atmosphere in the school. This leaflet aims to answer some of your questions about this.

Should I pay a compliment?

Yes – school staff are always pleased to learn that things have gone well and that their hard work is appreciated. The school can use compliments to make improvements throughout the whole school, as they highlight things that are working well, which the school can then build on.

Should I tell the school my concerns?

Yes – all members of staff want to know as soon as possible if something concerns you or your child. They can investigate and give you a response. If need be they can also take steps to remedy a situation. Misunderstandings can be cleared up. An apology can be given if something is found to be wrong. Everyone benefits from a speedy resolution of difficulties and from suggestions for improvement.

Should I complain?

Yes, if you believe something is seriously wrong. Your view can then be considered and an investigation can establish whether there is something wrong which needs to be corrected. The school has a policy for dealing with complaints which is available on the school website and a hard copy is kept in the reception area at school.

Who should I contact?

That depends on the particular situation. Often the class teacher is able to deal with the matter, and you should consider them as your first option. More serious problems may require the headteacher's input. Mutual courtesy is expected and ensures things go smoothly. There should always be discussion in the hope of solving difficulties informally. Most problems are solved in this way.

A complaint about the head teacher goes to the chair of governors. Certain specific complaints (e.g. complaints about admissions to school) are dealt with separately by the local authority. Staff or governors can advise where to direct your complaint. The link governors for parent feedback are Natasha Geldard and Sarah Sutton, but all governors are happy to be approached in the playground or outside of school. There is also a regular agenda item at every full governors' meeting where parents' and carers' feedback is discussed, and resolutions put in place. Details and photos of the school staff and governors are on the board in the reception area. David Lamboll is the Chair of

Governors and can be contacted on 01626 777570.

I feel uncomfortable about sharing my concerns face to face – how else can I raise any issues?

Not everyone feels comfortable speaking to the school about difficult issues but it is important that all concerns or complaints are raised and addressed as quickly as possible. It is better for all involved and can often avoid the issue growing. If you feel uncomfortable about speaking to the school there are plenty of other ways to raise any problems. Writing an email or note to the school may make it easier to set out the issues clearly. There is also the parent suggestion box. Alternatively you could ask a friend or advocate to bring concerns or complaints to the attention of the school.

What if the matter is still unresolved?

It is important to follow up any concerns you have raised if you still feel that there is an issue, despite various communications with the school. Otherwise staff may assume that the problem is resolved. Dealing with problems or difficulties before they escalate is in everybody's best interest. If you feel a problem has not been adequately resolved, despite repeated attempts, it may be necessary to write to the school to inform them about this. In response the school will investigate the matter and may invite you to a meeting to talk about it. After trying all other ways you may decide to make a formal complaint to the governing body.

Who will deal with my complaint?

The Headteacher will respond in the first instance. If this still does not resolve the issue to your satisfaction, you can raise your complaint with a panel of governors who will listen carefully before reaching a decision.

How do I make a complaint to the governing body?

You submit a written request to the Chair of governors for your complaint to be considered by a complaints panel. The Chair of governors should acknowledge receipt of this letter within 5 school days if possible but no more than ten at most by writing to you. This letter will inform you that your complaint will be heard by a complaints committee within 15 school days. A meeting will follow with all the relevant paperwork having been circulated in advance to everyone involved. You may bring a friend if you wish - this could be anyone you think will be able to represent you. The headteacher may also be accompanied by a friend or professional representative. You will be invited to speak to the panel (which will have three governors on it) and to ask and answer questions. The governing body may decide not to consider a complaint about something which has occurred more than three months previously. You will be informed in writing of the panel's decision. This decision will usually be final. If you are not happy with this decision you can ask the County Council whether your complaint is one which can be heard by them. If you are still unhappy, the final resort is the Secretary of State for Education

Remember

This whole process exists so that your views and the views of others can be heard. You have rights, pupils have rights, staff and governors have rights. The aim is that any complaint should be properly and fairly dealt with. Communications with the school are frequent and are welcome. The later stages

of the complaints procedure are used rarely but remain part of the process. Services are improved by a positive response to compliments, concerns and complaints