

What happens if you're not happy with the outcome?

If a complaint has completed the local procedures and the person making the complaint remains dissatisfied, they have a right to refer their complaint to the Secretary of State for Education. However, the Secretary of State will only intervene where the governing body has acted unlawfully or unreasonably and where it is expedient or practical to do so.

The School Complaints Unit (SCU) considers complaints relating to maintained schools on behalf of the Secretary of State. The SCU will look at whether the complaints policy and other relevant statutory policies were adhered to. However, the SCU will not normally re-investigate the complaint and will not overturn the school's decision except in exceptional circumstances.

Further information can be obtained from the SCU by calling the National Helpline on 0370 0002288 or by writing to the:
Department for Education
School Complaints Unit
2nd floor, Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester, M1 2WD

The Local Authority (Essex County Council) has no powers to intervene in complaints against schools. You can complain to Ofsted if you think a school isn't run properly and needs inspecting. They won't look into problems with individual pupils, e.g. exclusions or not getting a place at the school.

**Remember: It's good to talk first –
we're here to listen!**

Elmstead Primary School



Concerns & Complaints

What to do if you're worried about your child's progress or wellbeing at school



Voicing your concern

From time to time, parents and carers may have concerns about their son or daughter's education and/or wellbeing at school. Quite often this is due to a misunderstanding about school policy or practice. Sometimes a child may be behaving unusually at home or at school and/or expressing their own concerns. Whatever the situation, we would encourage you, and/or your child, to **talk to us about it at the earliest opportunity** so that we can help sort out the problem.

If it's your child's academic progress or an issue around your child's wellbeing (for example, bullying or other anxiety), that you wish to speak to us about, please make an appointment, through the School Office, 01206 822889 or in person at the Office, to see the appropriate **teacher** in the first instance.

Dealing with your concern or complaint

Our **full complaints policy and procedure** is set out in a separate document which you can view on the School Website: <http://www.elmsteadprimary.com> or you can request a copy from the School Office.

This leaflet is a **summary** of how the procedure operates so that you have a quick overview of how we can help you.

The majority of concerns from parents, carers and others are handled under the following general procedure:

The procedure is divided into three stages:

Stage 1 aims to resolve the concern through **informal contact** at the appropriate level in school, as described above.

Stage 2 is the first **formal stage**, at which written complaints are considered by the Headteacher.

Stage 3 is the next stage once Stage 2 has been worked through. It involves the **Chair of Governors** or, if the Chair feels it would be helpful, a **complaints review panel** of governors.

Usually, concerns and complaints are resolved either at Stage 1 or Stage 2. The Chair of Governors has the discretion to offer, or agree to, a **Stage 3** complaints review panel if it's felt that this will help move things forward. Because it's a time-consuming process to set up and run, however, a review panel is **not an automatic right** for complainants.

Please note that this procedure doesn't include complaints about the **personal conduct** of members of the school staff, teaching or non-teaching, as these are handled under confidential arrangements in line with employment law. If you're concerned about the conduct of any member of staff other than the Headteacher, you should write to the Headteacher. If your concern is about the personal conduct of the Headteacher, please write to the Chair of Governors c/o the school.

Response times

We aim to acknowledge concerns and complaints within **three working days** of receipt and to respond fully, or with a holding reply, **within 10 working days**. It is not usually possible to deal with complaints during school holiday periods when the school is closed.

The aim throughout is to resolve any concerns, anxieties, misunderstandings or complaints as soon as possible in the interests of all concerned, but especially for the good of your son or daughter.