



# **Parklands High School**

# **Complaints Procedure**

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## Complaints Procedure

### 1. Introduction

- I. The school is dedicated to providing the best possible education and support for all its pupils. This means having a clear, fair, and efficient procedure for dealing with any complaints to or against the school, so that any issues that arise can be dealt with as swiftly and effectively as possible.
- II. The school welcomes feedback on the services it provides. Should anyone be unhappy with any aspect of the school, it is important that the school learns about this. The school recognises there is a difference between a concern and a complaint. Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage reduces the numbers that develop into formal complaints. The school aims to ensure that concerns are handled, if at all possible, without the need for formal procedures. The school's formal complaints procedure is only necessary if efforts to resolve the concern informally are unsuccessful. Where an individual may feel that an issue has not been dealt with appropriately it is important, for all involved, that there is a clear and transparent process for a complaint to be looked into and followed up.
- III. This policy outlines how complaints will be dealt with by the school in accordance with the requirements of The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 for Academies, as amended.
- IV. This policy will be followed in respect of all complaints by parents/carers against the school except in the following areas (where separate policies exist):
  - i. Child protection allegations;
  - ii. Exclusions;
  - iii. School admissions;
  - iv. Appeals relating to internal assessment decisions for external qualifications;
  - v. Complaints about statements of SEN/ EHC Plans;
  - vi. Staff grievance and discipline procedures;
  - vii. National Curriculum;
  - viii. Unauthorized absence fines
  - ix. Allegations of abuse.
- V. Please note that should a complaint, informal or formal, reveal an issue for which other procedures exist (for example, child protection) then it will be dealt with under those procedures rather than as a complaint.
- VI. Please note that anonymous complaints will not be examined under this or any other complaints procedure.

### 2. Informal Stage

- I. Many enquiries and concerns can be dealt with satisfactorily by the curriculum leader, or head of house, or a member of the Senior Leadership Team without the need to resort to a formal procedure. The school values informal meetings and discussions and encourages parents to approach staff with any concerns they may have, and aim to resolve all issues with open dialogue and mutual understanding. If an individual has a concern that they would like to take up with the school they should initially inform a member of staff either in person, over the telephone or in writing. The individual may be invited to an informal meeting with the member of staff most appropriate for dealing with that concern or the matter may be dealt with via email or telephone.
- II. There is no suggested time-scale for resolution at this stage given the importance of dialogue through informal discussion although it would be expected that most issues would be resolved within 10 school days.

- III. Should any measures taken to resolve the issue appear unlikely to resolve matters, either party may initiate a move to the formal procedure at stage 2 onwards.

### **3. Formal Stage**

- I. This stage will commence when the:
  - i. Informal complaint has not been resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant, or
  - ii. complainant has indicated they wish to go straight to the formal stage, or
  - iii. School feels that the complaint is inappropriate for an informal resolution.
- II. The Headteacher will:
  - i. Note: If the complaint is regarding the Headteacher or a governor, this will be investigated the Chair of Governors, or nominated governor if the Chair has previously been involved.
- III. Following receipt of the written complaint, formally acknowledge receipt of the complaint and ensure the complainant receives an up to date copy of the School's Complaint Policy and Procedures. It should be clarified what the complainant feels would put things right if it not clear in the correspondence. (Note: It is acceptable for someone else to write the complaint on behalf of the complainant)
- IV. Seek advice, as appropriate. (Dependent on the nature of the complaint, this could include: the School's Adviser; Clerk to the Governing Body; Legal Services; Schools' HR Team; Finance Officer or Pupil Access Officer.)
- V. Inform the member of staff (or governor) if the complaint concerns them and provide them with a copy of the complaint and School's Policy and Procedures.
- VI. Arrange and complete a full investigation of the complaint.
- VII. Prepare a report following the investigation; consider what actions need to be taken and whether it be substantiated or unsubstantiated.
- VIII. Advise the complainant, in writing, of the outcome of the investigation.
- IX. Should the complaint remain unresolved: If the Headteacher/Chair has undertaken the investigation, the complainant can request a review to the Complaints Review Committee. The request must be received within 20 school days of the notification and set out the grounds as to which matters remain unresolved. Note: If the Clerk to the Review Committee does not hear from the complainant within 20 school days of the notification of the outcome of the investigation, the complaint will be closed.
- X. The Headteacher/Chair of Governors should make a record in the Complaints Register\* of the complaint and its outcome. This record may need to be updated by the Chair of the Review Committee in due course. The Complaints Register should be available for Ofsted Inspection purposes. \* Note: This is a requirement for Academies and strongly recommended for schools.

### **4. Complaints Review Committee**

- I. In very exceptional circumstances where the complaint has not been resolved by the Headteacher/Chair of Governors, a meeting of the Complaints Review Committee will be arranged to review the complaint. The request must be made in writing to the Clerk of the Review Committee via the school. The request for the review must clearly set out the grounds as to which matters remain unresolved. The Clerk to the Review Committee will convene the Complaints Review Committee. It is not expected to take more than 20 days to convene but the Clerk to the Committee will update the complainant as appropriate. The Committee will:
  - i. Consider the written materials;
  - ii. Consider the complaint and the Headteacher's (or Chair of Governor's) action.
  - iii. With the Clerk, prepare an Agenda and invite the Headteacher and/or Chair of Governors, (as appropriate) and the complainant to the meeting. Note: It is the

responsibility of the Headteacher/Chair of Governors and complainant to secure their own witnesses and neither party can dictate who the other party brings.

- iv. Seek advice and support as necessary.
- II. At the end of their review, the Complaints Review Committee will:
  - i. Determine whether to dismiss or uphold the appeal in whole or part.
  - ii. Where upheld, decide on recommendations that should be reported to the Governing Body by the Chair of the Review Committee.
  - iii. Advise the Headteacher/Chair of Governors (as appropriate) and complainant of their findings.
  - iv. Advise the complainant of any further action they may wish to take if they remain dissatisfied. Following the review, the Chair of the Committee will arrange for the School's Complaints Register to be amended to include a brief summary of the complaint and the findings of the Complaints Review Committee. In addition, the Chair of the Committee will ensure that the matter in general terms and any recommendations be reported to the Governing Body.

This concludes the School's Complaints Procedure.

#### **5. Withdrawal of a complaint**

- I. If the complainant wishes to withdraw their complaint at any time, they will be asked to confirm this in writing.

#### **6. The role of the Local Authority**

- I. The role of the Local Authority (LA) is prescribed by legislation. In responding to complaints about schools, the LA will explain to the complainant:
- II. That schools are self-managing and are responsible for administering procedures that deal with complaints made against them.
- III. The appropriate procedures for their complaint and refer them to the Headteacher, Chair of Governors or Clerk, as appropriate.
- IV. The school may seek advice and support from the appropriate Local Authority Officer or the School's Adviser.

#### **7. Social Media**

- I. Whilst the school accepts that complainants have a right to an opinion and make it public through the use of social media, complainants are reminded that they are not entitled to use social media to defame or harass individual staff or governors

#### **8. Stage 4 - Complaint to Secretary of State**

- I. Complainants who remain unsatisfied with the outcome may refer their complaint to the Secretary of State for Education.
  - i. National Helpline: 0370 000 2288
  - ii. On line: [www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus](http://www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus)
  - iii. Or by writing to: Department for Education, School Complaints Unit 2nd. Floor Piccadilly Gate Stove Street, Manchester, M1 2WD
- II. The role of the Secretary of State is to review that the School has followed their published procedures. The Secretary of State (via the Department of Education) does not facilitate a rehearing of a complaint.

#### **9. Record of complaints**

- I. A written record of all complaints and documentation relating to the handling of the complaint will be kept confidentially by the school but may be inspected

where appropriate by the Secretary of State or any inspection body under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008.

**10. Vexatious complaints**

- I. Whilst it is hoped that this policy will reduce any dissatisfaction with the school, it is acknowledged that there may be rare occasions where a complainant continues to be dissatisfied with the school and the outcomes achieved under the complaints policy.
- II. Where a complainant attempts to re-open an issue which has already been dealt with under the complaints policy, the Chair of Governors will contact them to inform them that the matter has already been dealt with and that either that stage of the policy has been exhausted or that the complaints policy has been exhausted and the matter is considered closed. Where further correspondence is received on the same matter, or numerous complaints are received within a short period of time this may be considered vexatious and the school would contact the complainant and ask them to submit all complaints at the same time in order to prevent the matter becoming vexatious. If this request was not complied with then the school will be under no obligation to respond to that correspondence.

Signed ..... (Chair of Governors)      Date .....

Signed ..... (Headteacher)      Date .....

## Complaints Form

<b>Your name:</b>
<b>Pupil's name:</b>
<b>Your relationship to pupil:</b>
<b>Your address and postcode:</b>
<b>Your daytime telephone number:</b>
<b>Your evening telephone number:</b>
<b>Your email address:</b>
<b>Your complaint is...</b> (Include details of actions already taken by the school to try to resolve the situation)
<b>What action have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint?</b> (Who did you speak to and what was the response?)

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What would you like as an outcome from your complaint?

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Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, give details here:

Your signature..... Date .....

All functions of the complaints procedure must adhere to the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Please complete and return to the school office in a sealed envelope addressed to the Head teacher, Chair of Governors or Clerk to Governors (as appropriate).

*Office use*

Date received .....

Date acknowledgement sent .....

Responsible member of staff .....