

Horton Mill Community Primary School



Complaints Procedure

General Complaints Procedures

Rationale

Occasionally, parents may wish to raise concerns or make a particular complaint about the school. It is good practice to have clearly set out procedures, which are available to parents, to inform them how their concerns can be dealt with.

These procedures do not cover those aspects of school life for which there are specific statutory requirements, for example, school admission procedures, issues around collective worship and religious education or special needs assessments. There are also specific procedures for dealing with complaints about child abuse, financial improprieties or other criminal activities. Parents should ask the Headteacher or the local Education Authority for information about any of these specific procedures.

Background

This procedure is based on the General Complaints Procedures advocated by the Local Education Authority.

The Headteacher is responsible for the operation and management of the School Complaints Procedure, and will ensure that all staff are aware of the procedures so that they know what to do if they receive a complaint, and that information about how to progress a complaint is made easily available.

Horton Mill School believes in a partnership between home and school which will enhance good relationships. We would hope that parents who have concerns would feel able to talk with either their child's class teacher or the Headteacher to resolve their anxieties as amicably as possible.

The purpose of these formal procedures is to outline the stages which may be followed if parents feel that their concerns have developed into grounds for a complaint.

There are three stages to the procedures.

Stage 1: The first contact.

Parents must feel able to raise concerns with any member of staff without any formality, either in person, by telephone or in writing. The vast majority of concerns can be resolved informally through the class teacher. A parent may want to have a preliminary discussion about an issue to help decide whether he or she wishes to take the matter further.

- 1.1 Parents have the opportunity to discuss their concerns with an appropriate member of staff who will reassure the parent that the school wants to hear about their concerns. The member of staff may

explain to the parent how the situation happened and will try to identify with the parent the sort of outcome that the parent is looking for.

- 1.2 If the member of staff cannot immediately deal with the matter, s/he should make a clear note of the date, name, contact address or phone number.
- 1.3 The member of staff dealing with the concern should make sure that the parent is clear what action (if any) or monitoring of the situation has been agreed, putting this in writing only if this seems to be the best way of making things clear.
- 1.4 If the member of staff initially approached feels unable to deal with the concern, s/he should refer it immediately to the Deputy Head or Headteacher.

Stage 2: Referral to the Headteacher.

The Headteacher has responsibility for the day-to-day running of the school and has, therefore, the responsibility for the implementation of the complaints procedure, including the decision about their own involvement at various stages.

- 2.1 The Headteacher (or designate) should give an opportunity for the parent to meet with her within 3 working days to supplement any information previously provided. The parent may be accompanied by a friend, relative or representative who can speak on his/her behalf.
- 2.2 Once all the relevant facts have been established, the Headteacher (or designate) will meet with the parent to discuss and resolve the matter directly.

Stage 3: Review by the Governing Body

In the unlikely event that the matter has not been resolved at this point, the parent will be asked to complete a complaint form and submit it to the Chair of Governors within 5 working days. At this stage the Chair may take advice from the Local Authority.

- 3.1 On receipt of the complaint form the Chair of Governors will discuss the matter with the complainant within 5 working days. If this does not resolve the matter the Chair will arrange a formal hearing by a panel of 3 members of the Governing Body.

- 3.2 The Chair/Vice-Chair will ensure that the complaint is heard by the Panel within 20 working days of receiving the complaint form. All relevant correspondence regarding the complaint should be given to each Panel member as soon as the composition of the Panel is confirmed.
- 3.3 The Chair/Vice-Chair will inform the parent, the Headteacher and any relevant witnesses of the date, time and place of the meeting at least 5 working days in advance of the meeting. The letter will also inform the parent of their right to be accompanied by a friend/representative or advocate. The letter will also explain the format of the meeting and of the parent's right to submit further written evidence to the Panel.
- 3.4 The Chair/Vice-Chair will invite the Headteacher to attend the Panel meeting and to prepare a written report for the Panel in response to the complaint. The Head may also invite members of staff directly involved to respond in writing or in person to the complaint. All relevant documents must be received by all concerned at least 5 working days prior to the meeting.
- 3.5 The involvement of staff other than the Head is at the discretion of the Chair/Vice-Chair.
- 3.6 It is the responsibility of the Chair of the Panel to ensure that the meeting is properly minuted.
- 3.7 The aim of the meeting is to resolve the complaint and to achieve a reconciliation between the parent and the school. It must be recognised, however, that sometimes it may only be possible to establish facts and make recommendations which will satisfy the parent that their complaint has at least been taken seriously.
- 3.8 The Chair of the Panel should ensure that the proceedings are as un-intimidating as possible as many parents would be quite unused to dealing with groups of people in formal situations.
- 3.9 The meeting should allow:
 - the parent to explain their complaint and the Headteacher to explain the school's response
 - the Headteacher to question the parent about the complaint and the parent to question the Headteacher and/or other members of staff about the school's response
 - Panel members to have an opportunity to question both parties
 - either party to call witnesses (subject to the approval of the Chair) and all parties to have the right to question all the witnesses final

statements by the parent and the Headteacher

If either party wishes to introduce previously undisclosed evidence or witnesses, it is in the interests of natural justice to adjourn the meeting so that the other side has time to consider and respond to the new evidence.

- 3.10 The Chair of the Panel will explain to the parent and the Headteacher that the Panel will now consider its decision, and a written decision will be sent to both parties within 15 working days. The parent, the Headteacher and any witnesses will then leave the meeting.
- 3.11 The Panel will then consider the complaint and all the evidence presented in order to reach a unanimous, or at least a majority, decision on the complaint and decide upon the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint. If it is appropriate, the Panel may suggest changes to the school's system or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not happen again.
- 3.12 A written statement outlining the decision of the Panel will be sent to the parent and the Headteacher.
- 3.13 The school must ensure that a copy of all correspondence and notes are kept on file in the school's records. These records must be kept separate from the children's records.
- 3.14 The complainant should be notified of their right to appeal to the Secretary of State for Education, or the Local Government Ombudsman if they remain dissatisfied with the complaints process

This Policy and procedure was agreed by the Governing Body.

Stages for Handling Complaints

Stage 1: Informal

- **Expression of concern to a member of staff.**
- **Satisfactory outcome reached?**

Yes – no further action taken. No – proceed to Stage 2.

Stage 2: Headteacher's investigation

- **Parent makes a complaint to the Headteacher.**
- **Investigation conducted and reported to the parent.**
- **Satisfactory outcome reached?**

Yes – no further action taken. No – proceed to Stage 3.

Stage 3: Governors' review

- **Parent submits a complaint form to the Chair of Governors.**
- **Panel meeting of the Governors which the parent and the Headteacher are invited to attend.**
- **Parents and Headteacher advised of Governors' decision, and of their right to appeal to the Secretary of State or the Ombudsman.**

A full copy of the General Complaints Procedure is available in school