



School Complaints: Information for Parents and Carers

Why do we need a procedure?

Most concerns raised by parents and carers about school matters are handled quickly by school staff without the need for formal procedures. However, not all concerns can be resolved in this way and, under section 29 of the Education Act 2002, Governing Bodies of all maintained schools must have in place a procedure to deal with complaints relating to the school, and any community facilities or services that the school provides. It is an important legal principle that the particular procedure used, and the resolution of each complaint, are the responsibility of each individual Governing Body and not the Local Authority. The Governing Body must, however, have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State for Education.

The school's complaint procedure, is summarised in this leaflet and is available in full on the school website (www.warblingtonschool.co.uk). It is important to note that not all complaints fall within the remit of the Governing Body's complaints procedure, and that matters of staff grievance or discipline are dealt with under separate arrangements.

What to do if you have a complaint

It is in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. The experience of the first contact between the complainant and the school can be crucial in determining whether the complaint will become more serious. To that end, any member of the school staff should be able to deal with a complaint at the first stage.

If you have a concern that you would like to take up with the school you should initially inform a member of staff either in person, over the telephone or in writing. You may wish to approach your child's form tutor first as they will be best placed to help you directly or by letting you know which other member of staff you should be speaking to.

Initial Informal Meeting: Complaint heard by staff member

When a concern has been received, you may receive a telephone call from the member of staff or head of year to discuss your concerns, or you may be invited to attend a meeting with a member of staff.

All staff will do their best to ensure your concerns are dealt with appropriately and efficiently, but if an agreement cannot be reached, or if you are dissatisfied with the outcome, you can make a formal complaint to the headteacher.

Stage 1: Complaint heard by Headteacher

It is preferable for you to make your formal complaint in writing. If further investigation is required, the headteacher will acknowledge receipt of your complaint and will advise you that a full response will be provided within 20 school days.

The headteacher may invite you to attend a meeting to discuss your complaint and possible solutions, or to explain what has happened or will happen as a result of your complaint. You will also be advised of your right to take the matter further if you are not satisfied with the headteacher's response.

Stage 2: Complaint heard by the Chair of Governors

If, having spoken to the headteacher, you are dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint, you should write to the chair of governors within 10 school days, explaining your concern and the steps that have resulted in you taking this course of action.

For matters that are the headteacher's responsibility, the chair of governors is empowered only to look at whether the headteacher's decision or action was reasonable in the light of the information available at the time.

If the chair of governors has decided not to take any further action, they will explain what they have decided and how they reached the decision. You will also be advised of your right to take the matter further if you are not satisfied with the chair of governor's response.

Stage 3: Complaint heard by Governing Body's Complaint Panel

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint, you should write to the clerk to governors within 10 school days of the outcome of stage 2, explaining your concern and the steps that have resulted in you taking this course of action.

The complaints panel will usually be convened within 20 school days of receiving the request for your complaint to be heard by the governing body's complaints panel.

The Panel can:

- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part
- uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

The Panel's decision. The Chair of the Panel should ensure that the complainant and the Headteacher are notified of the Panel's decision.

Any further appeal should be addressed to the Secretary of State for Education. The Local Authority has no role in reviewing any school's complaints procedures or in investigating individual complaints.

School Complaints Procedure: Flowchart

