



RAVENSDALE JUNIOR SCHOOL

COMPLAINTS POLICY

2016

Dated

Review date



Ravensdale Junior School

Complaints Policy

At Ravensdale Junior School, we undertake to provide a friendly and safe environment in which pupils will be helped to achieve their potential, both academically and socially. We recognise that sometimes things can go wrong and parents, carers and members of the public may need to make a complaint or raise concerns they have with the school.

General Principles:

- this procedure is intended to allow you to raise a concern or complaint relating to the school or the services that it provides
- an anonymous concern or complaint will not be investigated under this procedure, unless there are exceptional circumstances
- to allow for a proper investigation, concerns or complaints should be brought to the attention of the school as soon as possible. In general, the school will not consider any complaint that was raised more than 12 months after the event
- all complaints should be resolved as quickly as possible
- if a complaint is not from a parent/carers of a pupil of the school (an example being a member of the public) these should be made directly to the Head teacher, preferably in writing.
- all complaints will be recorded formally by the school in a central log.

Complaints procedures should not be used for appeals and referrals that fall under other procedures and legislation and which are covered by other guidance, including:

- Admissions
- Exclusions
- Special Educational Needs
- Staff Grievances
- Child Protection
- Whistleblowing

Raising a concern or complaint Informal Stage (2-3 school days)

In the first instance speak directly with the member of staff concerned. This may be by letter, by telephone or in person by appointment. Many concerns can be resolved by at this informal stage.

In the case of serious concerns, it may be appropriate to address them directly to the Head teacher (or to the Chair of the Governing Body, if the complaint is about the Head teacher).

If you are uncertain about whom to contact, please seek advice from the school office or the Clerk to the Governing Body.

Formal Stage – there are three formal stages:

Stage 1 – Head teacher (10 days – acknowledge receipt of complaint within 3 to 5 school days)

Please include details that will help the investigation, such as names of potential witnesses, dates and times of events, and copies of relevant documents. It is important that you tell us what you would like to happen to put things right. All complaints will be acknowledged in writing within 3-5 school days, a copy of the Complaints Procedure will be included.

If your concern is not resolved at the informal stage you may put the complaint in writing or complete a complaints form and pass it to the Head teacher, (or to the Clerk to the Governing Body, for the attention of the Chair, if the complaint is about the Head teacher) who will be responsible for ensuring that your complaint is investigated appropriately. If you require support to do this you may request help from the school.

The Head teacher (or Chair) should invite you to a meeting to discuss your complaint. A friend, interpreter or advocate may accompany you if you wish, to help you in explaining your complaint.

Any complaint about the Head teacher will start at Stage 2.

It is possible that your complaint will be resolved through a meeting with the Head teacher (or Chair). If not arrangements will be made for the matter to be referred to the Chair of Governors.

Stage 2 Chair of Governors (15 school days)

The Chair of Governors may invite you to a further meeting to discuss your complaint and to seek a resolution. Again, if you accept that invitation, a friend, interpreter or advocate may accompany you to help you explain your complaint.

The Chair may also appoint a governor to be an Investigating Officer to undertake a detailed investigation of the complaint. If the complaint requires the appointment of an Investigating Officer, the timescale can be extended, and you will be informed of this.

If the Head teacher is the subject of the complaint, the complaint should go straight the Chair of Governors and miss out Stage 1.

If your complaint cannot be resolved with 15 days the Chair will inform the complainant and explain why it is taking longer. Reasons for this may be that the

complaint is complex and needs more time or someone involved is absent through sickness or holidays. The Chair of Governors should give a realistic timescale for when your complaint should be resolved. The Chair will inform you when it is expected that the investigation should be completed.

Stage 3 Complaints Panel (28 school days)

If you remain dissatisfied, you can request that the Governing Body conduct a review into the process followed by the school in dealing with your complaint.

A panel of three members of the Governing Body will form the Complaints Panel.

The panel will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented and:

- reach a unanimous, or at least a majority decision, on the complaint
- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part
- uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- decide on any appropriate action, if any, to be taken
- where appropriate, suggest changes to, or request a review of, the school's systems or procedures to ensure that the problems of a similar nature do not happen again.

When the complaint has been fully investigated and the hearing has taken place, you should be notified of the **findings** in writing by the Chair of the Panel hearing the complaint or the Governor responsible for investigation within five school days of the hearing date. You will also be informed how you can take your complaint further if still dissatisfied.

The report, with findings, should, at the same time, be published to the Chair of Governing Body who will report back to the Governing Body with a table of recommendations taken from the report.

Any complaint about the Governing Body should be delegated to a named governor (e.g. the Chair of the Governing Body), or to a complaints panel previously convened by the full Governing Body.

If your complaint cannot be dealt with within any of the proposed time scales for a legitimate reason, we will notify you in writing and keep you informed.

**RAVENSDALE JUNIOR SCHOOL
FORMAL COMPLAINTS FORM**

Please complete and return to the Headteacher who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your Name

Pupil's Name

Your relationship to the Pupil

Address

.....Postcode.....

Daytime Tel Number Evening Tel Number.....

Please give details of your complaint here

What actions, if any have you taken to try and resolve your complaint

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem?

Are you attaching any paperwork?

Signature

Date

For Office Use only

Date acknowledgement sent: By Whom:

Complaint referred to: Date:

Annex to Complaints Policy

Policy for dealing with Unreasonably Persistent Complaints, Harassment or Aggression

The Headteacher and staff deal with specific complaints as part of their day-to-day management of the school in accordance with the School's Complaints Procedure.

The majority of complaints are handled in an informal manner and are resolved quickly, sensitively and to the satisfaction of the complainant. The school is extremely committed to promoting positive relationships with all members of the school community, regardless of age, sex, religion, ability or culture and it welcomes the opportunity to address and resolve issues that may arise. However, there are rare occasions when complainants behave in an unreasonable manner when raising and/or pursuing concerns. The consequences are that the actions of the complainants begin to impact negatively on the day-to-day running of the school and directly or indirectly the overall well-being of the children or staff in the school. In these exceptional circumstances the school may take action in accordance with this policy.

1. What does the school expect of any person wishing to raise a concern?

The school expects anyone who wishes to raise concerns with the school to:

- treat all members of the school community with courtesy and respect;
- respect the needs of pupils and staff within the school;
- avoid the use of violence, or threats of violence, towards people or property;
- avoid any aggression or verbal abuse;
- recognise the time constraints under which members of staff in schools work and allow the school a reasonable time to respond to a complaint;
- recognise that resolving a specific problem can sometimes take time;
- follow the school's complaints procedure (and for staff members to follow the appropriate internal staff procedure).

2. What do we mean by 'unreasonably persistent complainants'?

For the purpose of this policy, an unreasonably persistent complainant may be anyone who engages in unreasonable behaviour when making a complaint. This will include persons who pursue complaints in an unreasonable manner.

Unreasonable behaviour may include the following (not an exhaustive list):

- actions which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious;
- prolific correspondence or excessive e-mail or telephone contact about a concern or complaint;
- uses Freedom of Information requests excessively and unreasonably;
- an insistence upon pursuing unsubstantial complaints and/or unrealistic or unreasonable outcomes;
- an insistence upon pursuing complaints in an unreasonable manner;

- an insistence on only dealing with the Headteacher on all occasions irrespective of the issue and the level of delegation in the school to deal with such matters;
- an insistence upon repeatedly pursuing a complaint when the outcome is not satisfactory to the complainant but cannot be changed, for example, if the desired outcome is beyond the remit of the school because it is unlawful.
- making what appears to be groundless complaints about staff dealing with the complaint and seeking to have them replaced.
- abusive or threatening behaviour or language towards school staff.
- failing to specify grounds of the complaint, despite offers of assistance from the school.

3. What is harassment?

We regard harassment as including the unreasonable pursuit of issues or complaints, particularly if the matter appears to be pursued in a way intended to cause personal distress, rather than to seek a resolution.

Behaviour may fall within the scope of this policy if:

- it appears to be deliberately targeted at one or more members of school staff or others, without good cause;
- the way in which a complaint or other issue is pursued (as opposed to the complaint itself) causes undue distress to school staff or others;
- it has an unjustifiably significant and disproportionate adverse effect on the school community.

4. School's responses to unreasonably persistent complaints or harassment .

This policy is intended to be used in conjunction with the school's complaints procedure. Taken together, these documents set out how we will always seek to work with parents, carers and others with a legitimate complaint to resolve a difficulty.

However, in cases of unreasonably persistent complaints or harassment, the school may take some or all of the following steps, as appropriate:

- inform the complainant informally that his/her behaviour is now considered by the school to be unreasonable or unacceptable, and request a changed approach;
- inform the complainant in writing that the school considers his/her behaviour to fall under the terms of the Unreasonably Persistent Complaints/ Harassment Policy;
- require any future meetings with a member of staff to be conducted with a second person present. In the interests of all parties, notes of these meetings may be taken;
- inform the complainant that, except in emergencies, the school will respond only to written communication and that these may be required to be

channelled through a third party chosen by the school, for example the Local Authority or County Solicitor;

- inform the complainant that, with the exception of urgent communication regarding their child in school, the school will respond to their correspondence on a 6 weekly basis only;
- take legal advice on pursuing a case under Anti-Harassment legislation.

Legitimate new complaints will always be considered in an appropriate time frame, even if the person making them is (or has been) subject to the Unreasonably Persistent Complaints/ Harassment Policy. The school nevertheless reserves the right not to respond to communications from individuals whose conduct falls within the scope of this policy.

5. Physical or verbal aggression

The governing body will not tolerate **any** form of physical or verbal aggression against members of the school community. If there is evidence of any such aggression the school may:

- ban the individual from entering the school site, with immediate effect;
- request an Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO);
- take legal advice on pursuing a case under Anti-Harassment legislation;
- call the police to remove the individual from the premises, under powers provided by the Education Act 1996.

6. Right of appeal

7.

All persons who are notified by the school that they are being dealt with under this procedure have the right of appeal. Appeals must be addressed to the Chair of Governors under confidential cover, care of the school. The Chair of Governors will consider each appeal on its merits, consulting with the Headteacher as appropriate. The outcome of the appeal should be notified to the appellant and copied to the Headteacher within 10 working days of receipt.