



Sir William Burrough School

Complaints Policy

Aims

The School's complaints procedure:

- Underpins the school's aims and objectives by giving due consideration to the complaints of parents.
- Ensures that all complaints are considered fully, fairly, confidentially, promptly, thoroughly and, in the first instance, on an informal basis.
- Ensures that there is an effective partnership between school, staff, governors and parents.
- In the absence of a resolution to the satisfaction of the complainant, provides guidance which will enable the complainant, the Headteacher or the Governing Body to consider how, if at all, the matter should be taken further.
- Ensures that all members of the school community can have their points of view heard.

Responsibilities

- The Headteacher is responsible for investigating complaints not resolved by the class/form teacher and, if appropriate, referring complaints to other members of staff to deal with.
- The Governing Body may be called upon to consider, resolve and or adjudicate if complaints are referred to them by the Headteacher or by a complainant who is not satisfied with the result of the informal procedure.
- If the complaint is not resolved at school level the interested parties have recourse to the DfE or to legal processes.

Definition of a complaint

- A complaint is an expression of significant dissatisfaction, written or oral, by a person or persons with a legitimate interest in the school about any aspect of their child's education. This includes the practices or policies of the school, the conduct, action or omissions of members of staff employed at the school or about the quality of teaching.
- For a complaint to merit serious consideration it should meet at least one of the following criteria:
 - It is made by the person(s) directly affected by the matter of the complaint.
 - It relates to recent events.
 - The events in question can be dated.
 - There is independent corroboration of the allegations.
- It is important to bear in mind that not all expressions of concerns constitute a complaint. Discretion needs to be applied in determining whether action over and above the normal day-to-day discussions on parental concerns is needed.

The Informal Stage

- Problems and expressions of concern should be dealt with as far as is possible, at the point of first contact. This is usually the class teacher. If it cannot be resolved at this level then the teacher should refer the matter upwards.
- Every endeavour will be made by Sir William Burrough staff and Headteacher to deal with complaints informally to bring about a mutually acceptable resolution. However if attempts to resolve the issue informally are not achieved it may not seem appropriate for complainants to keep being asked to return for further informal discussion.

Complaints made to the Governing Body

In the event of a complaint being received directly by the Governing Body from a parent or other stakeholder in the school, governors should have regard to the following:

- Any complaint to the Governing Body or one of its members should be passed to the Headteacher for investigation. The Headteacher if (s)he has not already done so should follow the informal procedure outlined above to attempt to resolve the matter and report the outcome to the complainant and details of action taken to the Chair of Governors.
- If the Chair of the Governing Body is satisfied that the informal procedures have been exhausted and the complaint is still not resolved, (s)he may, after further discussions with the Headteacher, decide to initiate the formal procedure.
- In the event of the complaint being about the Headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body will inform the Headteacher of the complaint and then attempt, through an informal approach at first, to resolve the matter.
- The complainant will be advised of the Chair's conclusions.

The Formal Procedure

- If informal attempts to settle the complaint have failed to satisfy the complainant, (s)he should set out the complaint fully in writing and submit this to the Chair of the Governing Body. Where this is not possible because of literacy or second language considerations, the complaint should be made orally and, where necessary, arrangements for interpretation should be made.
- Receipt of the complaint will be acknowledged in writing by the Chair of the Governing Body, the Vice Chair if the Chair is not available, or the Clerk. A copy of this complaints procedure will be enclosed with the acknowledgement.
- The Governing Body will arrange for the complaint to be heard by a panel of at least 3 members who have not had involvement with the matter at an earlier stage. The panel will include representatives of the Governing body and one member who is independent of the management and running of the school.
- The panel will be provided with copies of the complaint and all other relevant documentation.
- At least five working days notice of the hearing by the panel will be given to all concerned.

- All parties involved in the dispute may be accompanied, if desired, by a friend, representative or interpreter and may call witnesses.
- The Headteacher (or the Chair of Governors if the complaint is against the Headteacher) will explain what has already been done to attempt to resolve the complaint and the outcome of any investigation, then the complainant will present his or her case and call any witnesses. The panel and Headteacher will have an opportunity to question the complainant and witnesses. The Headteacher will have the opportunity to respond to the complainant and call witnesses if appropriate.
- The panel and the complainant will have the opportunity to question the Headteacher and the witnesses.
- The Headteacher, followed by the complainant, will summarise their positions.
- All but the members of the panel will withdraw while a panel decision is reached.
- When the evidence has been fully considered and a decision made, the panel will notify in writing the complainant and the Headteacher of the outcome, giving an explanation of the conclusion, the reason for it, and any action taken, including details of any request made of those complained against to take particular actions in respect of the complaint. This will be done as quickly as possible but within a maximum of five working days.
- The Governing Body should be informed at their next meeting that a complaint has been received and dealt with. Details should not be divulged to the full Governing Body, nor to any other party not directly involved, as to do so would violate confidentiality.

Appeal

- Any appeal brought against the decision must be based on reasonable grounds, that is to say, not frivolous. The grounds of appeal may relate either to the findings itself or to procedural irregularities which may have affected the outcome. The decision on whether the grounds are sufficient will not be made by the Sub-Committee which originally heard the complaint.
- If the complainant is still not satisfied by the outcome of the Governing Body Appeal Panel investigation, they can write to the Education Funding Agency (the EFA) via the school complaints form, which can be found online.

Signed by: _____
Chair of Governors

Reviewed annually