

Introduction

The Education Act 2002 states that Governing bodies must have in place and publicise a procedure to deal with all complaints relating to their school. As part of our commitment to providing an excellent education at King Richard School we would want any concerns to be addressed promptly and effectively. This procedure aims to make sure that this happens.

We recognise that there is a difference between a concern and a formal complaint and this procedure enables concerns to be dealt with informally without making formal procedures necessary. Raising a concern informally does not mean that the issue will be treated any less seriously. However there will be times when complainants wish to have matters dealt with more formally and the ways in which this can be done are set out below.

We also recognise that whilst the vast majority of complaints will arise from parents and families there may be other stakeholders who will wish to use this procedure to raise a concern with the school.

Stages of the Complaints Procedure

Stage 1 (informal): concern heard by an appropriate staff member

If you have a concern, please contact the school reception and ask to discuss your concern with an appropriate member of staff; this might be the Key Stage Manager, Head of House or Head of Department or a member of the Leadership Team, for example. If you are unsure who the appropriate member of staff is, please outline your concern with the school's receptionist who will forward your concern to the correct person. Concerns can be raised over the phone or by e-mail but are often best dealt with face to face. Please remember that staff members, especially teachers, will have fixed commitments and so any meetings will need an appointment made in advance.

Stage 2 (formal): complaint heard by the Headteacher

If you do not believe that your concern has been treated seriously or resolved satisfactorily, then the next step would be to make your complaint formal and take it to the Headteacher. If you wish to do this you must do so in writing (a letter or e-mail are acceptable or a form is available in reception if you prefer) setting out as clearly as you can:

- the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved;
- what has happened so far and who has been involved;
- what you believe would put things right.

The school will acknowledge your complaint within five working days and respond fully within ten working days. These timescales may need to be adjusted if the complaint requires particular investigation, but in such a situation we would keep you informed of the new timescales that we were working to.

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| Responsibility: | Headteacher |
| Review Period: | Bi-annually |
| Approval Date: | June 2016 |
| Review Date: | June 2018 |

Please note, if the Headteacher has already been involved in your complaint, the matter may be delegated to another senior member of staff for investigation and follow up.

Stage 3 (formal): complaint heard by the Chair of Governors

If you are not satisfied by the response of the Headteacher, then please write to the Chair of Governors to request that the complaint is considered further. Again, please try to be specific about why you are still dissatisfied and what your desired outcomes are.

The Chair of Governors will acknowledge your complaint within five working days and will respond thoroughly within fifteen working days unless the nature of the investigations means a longer time period is required.

Stage 4 (formal): complaint heard by the Governing Body's Complaints Appeal Panel

Should it be the case that the complaint has not been resolved to your satisfaction, it is possible for you to ask that the issue is heard by an appeal panel of Governors. If you wish for this to happen, you should write to the clerk to the Governors giving details of the complaint and request that it is heard by an appeal panel.

Three governors, who have not previously been involved in the process, will hear the complaint within twenty working days of your request being received by the clerk and will consider the information provided in reaching a decision.

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 decision of the appeal panel will be in writing and will be final and the matter will be closed. If you remain dissatisfied at this point, you would have to take the matter up with sources external to the school, for example, the Secretary of State for Education, who can be contacted at: The Secretary of State for Education, Department for Education, Castle View House, East Lane, Runcorn, Cheshire, WA7 2GJ, or the schools' complaints unit at the DfE if you think the school has acted unlawfully. Further information can be obtained from the SCU by calling the National Helpline on 0370 000 2288 or going online at: www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus or by writing to: Department for Education School Complaints Unit 2nd Floor, Piccadilly Gate Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD.

How your complaint will be dealt with:

Irrespective of the stage within the procedure, your complaint will be fully and fairly investigated. This will involve hearing from all parties involved and may mean that we have to come back to you to clarify the issues you have raised. In complex complaints, it may be necessary to establish that we have properly understood the points being made before moving forward.

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At any stage of the process, complainants are entitled to be accompanied to meetings. Complainants can be represented by others, but, wherever possible, those investigating the complaint will want to hear from the complainants themselves.

Once the information has been collected, a judgement can be made about whether the complaint is upheld in part or in full. There will be times when the evidence does not support the complaint and in these situations we will explain to you why not. Where there is evidence to support the complaint, we will write to you within the agreed timescales, offering one or more of the following outcomes:

- an acknowledgement that the complaint has been upheld fully or partially;
- an undertaking to review school procedures;
- an explanation of the steps that have/may be taken to ensure that the issue will not happen again;
- an explanation;
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently;
- an apology.

The letter we write to you will explain the options available to you should you wish to take the matter further.

Note that complaints regarding Portsmouth City Council services including school admissions and children's social care should be directed to the Council's Corporate Complaints Service. For advice, go to www.portsmouth.gov.uk or contact cityhelpdesk@portsmouthcc.gov.uk.

Monitoring and Review

The Governing Body will monitor the complaints that the school has received and, where appropriate, scrutinise these to see if there is anything that can be learned about school processes and systems. The procedure in general will be reviewed at least every two years.

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