

GREENSLADE PRIMARY SCHOOL
Complaints Leaflet for Parents and Carers
2017 / 2018

Introduction

We aim to provide your child with the best possible education and meet his or her academic, social and emotional needs as well as we can. However, in any school, parents and carers may occasionally feel concerned about something or have a complaint. If this is the case we want to hear from you at the earliest possible time. Your child will not be penalised or treated less favourably as a result of your making a complaint. This leaflet explains how you can voice a concern or complaint, and how we will respond.

It is always best to discuss your concerns and speak directly to members of school staff at the earliest possible stage, as soon as you have a concern. It is best not to talk to the parents and carers of other children involved. In our experience complaints are dealt with more quickly and more successfully if school staff are able to manage the situation directly without having to become engaged in disputes between families. The Headteacher and other staff will contact and involve other families as required but this is most effectively done through appropriate school procedures where all the information can be gathered objectively.

Please come and speak with us rather than air your complaints on social media. We have the best interests of children at the centre of everything we do and you can be assured that Mr Ashley and all other staff take your concerns and complaints very seriously. It can, however, be extremely difficult to manage situations that are in the public domain as information can become distorted and people's reputations can easily be damaged. There can be serious legal implications if damaging information is put on social media. The best way to investigate and successfully manage any concern or complaint is to speak to our staff directly as soon as you can.

What is a complaint?

It can be a concern or problem or feeling of dissatisfaction that you have about an aspect of our work.

What do I do if I have a complaint about the school?

Talk to a member of staff. Preferably speak with the member of staff most knowledgeable of the facts of the matter. This is normally the class teacher. We will talk it over with you and try to sort things out as soon as possible. Our staff will discuss your complaint with you and seek to resolve the matter.

At Greenslade the best thing to do is talk to your child's class teacher in an informal way in the playground when you pick your child up. You are very welcome to come into school if required. Most issues are dealt with quickly in this way. If you are unable to meet your child's teacher, call the office and make an appointment to do so. Alternatively our Headteacher, David Ashley, is around the school at the start and the end of the day and he will always spend time discussing issues and any causes for concern. Very often he will speak with the class teacher at the earliest possible time and possibly arrange a further meeting if required.

There are certain specific complaints that are handled differently.

- If your child is refused admission to the school you have a statutory right to appeal to an independent appeals panel. The school will be able to give you details.
- If your child has been excluded for between 5 and 15 school days, you have a right to make representation to the governing body. If your child has been permanently excluded you have the right to an independent appeal.
- If your child has Special Educational Needs (SEN) and you have a complaint about her/his SEN provision, the school will be able to give you details of the Local Authority's dispute resolution arrangements, the Parent Partnership service, and the SEN Tribunal for disputes about a Statement of Special Educational Need.

What do I do if I feel my complaint hasn't been sorted out?

You may contact the school office and ask for an appointment to see the David Ashley, our Headteacher. Mr Ashley will listen carefully and ask you any questions to help him understand the situation fully. He will probably then have to talk to other people, but will get in touch with you as soon as he is able to respond fully.

This is referred to as the *informal stage* of the complaints procedure

If I feel unhappy with what the headteacher says, what can I do then?

You may then write to the Chair of the school's governors (or designated governor), at the school address, setting out your complaint and why you are unhappy with the school's response. Please write within 14 days of receiving the Mr Ashley's response. The Chair (or designated governor) will write acknowledging your letter within a few days and may invite you for an informal meeting to discuss your complaint. If not, the Chair (or designated governor) will then write again once s/he has investigated more fully. You should receive a full response within 14 days.

This is still referred to as the *informal stage* of the complaints procedure.

What happens if I am unhappy about the Chair of Governors' response?

You are entitled to ask a panel of governors to meet to consider your complaint. If you want to do this, write to the Chair or Clerk to the governing body within 14 days of receiving the Chair's response. Say that you have a formal complaint and that you remain unhappy with the way the school and Chair of governors have responded, and that you would like a panel of governors to consider your complaint. There is no need to write all the details of the complaint in this letter but you will be required to explain clearly what you are complaining about. The Clerk will contact you about the panel and explain what will happen. You may bring someone with you if you wish.

This part of the procedure is referred to as the **formal stage** of the complaints procedure

What happens at the Panel meeting?

One of the governors will chair the meeting, and s/he will explain what will happen. You may be asked to outline your complaint. Panel members and/or the headteacher, who will also be present, may ask you questions. The headteacher will then explain how the school has responded to the complaint, and then you and the panel may ask the headteacher questions. You may also ask other people (witnesses) to speak about what happened.

After this, everyone except the panel and the person taking minutes will leave, so that the panel can consider its findings. The Chair of the panel will write to you within a few days setting out the panel's findings. They will also write to the headteacher and Chair of governors. Their findings are binding upon the school.

The panel's findings are the school's final response to you about your complaint. Schools are responsible for their own activities, and the Local Authority cannot get involved. The Local Authority cannot tell a school or governing body what to do. If you are still unhappy you could write to the Secretary of State for Education, but again there is no power to intervene unless the governing body has acted unreasonably or has failed to fulfil its statutory responsibilities.

WHAT MIGHT A COMPLAINT BE ABOUT?

- your child's academic/social progress
- bullying by other pupils
- your child's relationship with teachers or other staff
- homework, too much or too little of it
- unfair treatment of your child as you or your child perceive it
- issues on the Health and Safety of your child
- school dinners
- behaviour

- absence (authorised/unauthorised)
- missing property
- detentions and other sanctions
- Parents' Evenings
- any situation which causes you or your child concern

How to make a complaint. – A Summary

1. Talk to the staff member concerned or other appropriate staff member
2. Talk to David Ashley
3. Write to the Chair of Governors
4. Write to ask for a complaints panel

FINALLY...

Please be assured that we will take your complaint seriously and treat you fairly.