

Greenslade Primary School
Complaints Leaflet for Parents and Carers
2022 / 2023

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 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.

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 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

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

The starting point is always to speak with a member of staff. Preferably speak with the member of staff most knowledgeable of the facts of the matter. 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 with honesty and integrity, 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 when you pick your child up. 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 meeting at the earliest possible time.

There are certain specific complaints that are handled differently.

- If your child is refused **admission** to our 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 SEND 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 David Ashley, our Headteacher, or another senior teacher who handles complaints. David 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.

How to make a complaint. – A Summary

1. Talk to the staff member concerned or other appropriate staff member
2. Talk to the headteacher
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.

Suggested School Complaints Process

There are four stages available to parents seeking to address concerns or complaints relating to their child's education at the school.

1. In most cases the parent should approach the member of staff concerned, to discuss the matter informally.
2. If the parent feels that the matter is not resolved or feels unable to discuss it with the staff member, s/he should then discuss it with the headteacher or other designated senior teacher.
3. If the matter remains unresolved, or if the complaint is about the headteacher, the parent should write to the Chair of governors (or designated governor) care of the school, setting out the complaint and the attempts made to resolve it. The Chair (or designated governor) will then investigate the matter and respond to the parent in writing. In a voluntary aided school the Diocese or religious organisation may also be able to help.
4. If the parent remains dissatisfied, s/he should write to the Chair or Clerk to the governing body requesting that a panel of governors is convened to hear the complaint. The panel will make a definitive and final response on behalf of the school that is binding upon the Chair of governors and headteacher.

Should this full procedure fail to lead to a resolution of the issues in the parent's view, s/he can write to the Secretary of State for Education at the DCFS. The only situation where the DCFS is likely to become involved however is where the governing body is judged to have acted unreasonably or has failed to fulfil its statutory responsibilities. Internal school matters are not in the Secretary of State's remit.

The Local Authority has no statutory power to intervene in such issues beyond giving advice or making recommendations. There is no right of appeal to the Director of Children's Services or to Members of the Council. A final recourse for a parent might be to apply to the High Court for judicial review.

Procedural Guidelines for Each Stage

Informal Stage

1. Informal Discussion with Staff Member

The staff member will give the parent her/his undivided attention for a reasonable time in order to listen and respond to the concern. If the staff member is unable to do so immediately, s/he will offer the parent an appointment as soon as possible within 3 working days. If the staff member subsequently needs to investigate the issue before responding, s/he will inform the parent and state when a response should be available, within 3 working days. If it proves impossible to meet this deadline the staff member will contact the parent and explain the reasons for the delay and give a further time limit for their response. The staff member should consider the advisability of asking a third person to be present, and is encouraged to speak with the line manager.

2. Meeting with the Headteacher Or Other Senior Staff

Upon receiving the parent's request for a meeting, the headteacher will offer an appointment within 5 working days. If the headteacher subsequently needs to investigate the issue before responding, s/he will inform the parent and state when a response should be available, within 5 working days. If it proves impossible to meet this deadline the headteacher will contact the parent and explain the reasons for the delay and give a further time limit for their response.

The headteacher will inform the parent that should s/he remain dissatisfied, she/he have recourse to the governing body and should write to the Chair of governors within 2 weeks.

3. Referral to Chair of Governors (or designated governor)

Upon receipt of a parent's letter of complaint, the Chair of Governors will write to the parent within 3 days acknowledging the letter and stating that the matter will be investigated. The Chair will inform the parent that a full response will be made in writing within 14 days. If it proves impossible to meet this deadline the Chair will write to the parent and explain the reasons for the delay and give a further time limit for the full response.

The Chair will send a copy of the school's complaints procedures and policy to the parent with the initial acknowledgement.

Formal Stage

4. Referral to Panel Of Governors

If the parent is dissatisfied with the full response from the Chair of governors (or designated governor), or if the Chair fails to respond as outlined above, the parent may write to the Chair or Clerk of the governing body within a further 14 days, requesting that a panel of governors be convened to hear the complaint. The letter should be acknowledged within 3 days, and the panel convened to hear the complaint within a further three weeks. The Clerk should liaise with the parent to agree mutually convenient times.

Constitution of Panel

The panel will consist of three governors, none of whom has detailed knowledge of the complaint or is involved personally in any way. There should be no more than one staff member on the panel.

Panel Procedure

The hearing will be minuted by someone other than a panel member. A panel member will be appointed Chair. The parent may be accompanied by someone of their choosing. The format of the hearing should be as follows:

- Parent outlines complaint
- Headteacher and panel are given opportunity to question parent
- Headteacher outlines school's response to complaint
- Parent and panel are given opportunity to question headteacher
- Each side may ask witnesses to speak as appropriate
- Everyone except panel and clerk withdraw
- Panel considers its findings
- Panel writes to parent, Chair and headteacher setting out findings, within 2 days.
- Draft Minutes of meeting are sent to parent, headteacher, Chair of governors and panel members within 7 days.

- Anyone objecting to anything in the Minutes may write their comments to the Clerk within 7 days of receiving them, and their letter will be appended to the Minutes.

As an alternative format, more in keeping with a “committee of inquiry” approach, the panel asks the parent, the Chair and then the headteacher to attend separately from each other. This avoids the possibility of argument, may help each person to speak completely openly (and may be quicker), but has the disadvantage that each party does not know what the others have said or has had the opportunity to question them. It is up to each governing body to decide which approach to adopt.



GREENWICH COUNCIL

GOVERNOR SERVICES

GUIDANCE ON HANDLING PARENTS' CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS

The Education Act 2002 has made the requirement for schools to have a complaints policy and procedure compulsory. This document is offered as guidance to governing bodies in setting up and operating a policy

Introduction

With the increasing emphasis on schools being self-managing, autonomous organisations, it is important that there is a robust and fair complaints procedure in place. The governing body to all intents and purposes is the final recourse for parents in matters of complaints; The Local Authority's only role is to offer advice and the DCSF has an even more limited function. The governing body is the employer in Foundation and VA schools, and has employment functions delegated to it in community schools. This brings with it the responsibility to ensure that any complaints made to it, or to the Chair, are handled promptly, fairly and in a way that is perceived to be thorough and objective by parents.

Responsibility for ensuring that a policy is in place, and for monitoring its implementation, rests with the governing body.

It is recommended that schools have three documents in place in the area of complaints:

1. **A policy document.** This should be brief and set out the principles that govern the area of complaints handling.
2. **A complaints leaflet for parents.** This should again be fairly brief and explain how parents should pursue a concern or complaint. It should clearly set out the various stages that can be followed.
3. **A more detailed set of operating procedures** to which the school and governing body will work when handling complaints. These should be given to a parent once an official complaint has been made.

When developing these documents, it is important to involve others. For example, school staff should be consulted, as should parents. Governors should be fully involved in policy development as well, rather than expecting the Headteacher or senior staff to carry the responsibility on their own.

It may be useful to provide a flow chart, particularly for secondary schools, to help parents find their way through the system of departments, tutor groups and pastoral systems.

This guidance relates to general parental complaints; there are separate procedures for dealing with specific issues such as exclusion, admissions, curriculum, religious education and collective worship or Special Educational Needs issues. It has been drawn up in line with the Governors' Guide to the Law. Schools are free to use it, amend it or tailor it for use with their own logos and school details.

Although not covered by this guidance, governing bodies may also wish to consider how complaints of other types should be handled, for example:

- Member of public about the school (e.g. litter, noise, behaviour)
- Pupil about a staff member
- Staff member about a pupil
- Staff member about another staff member (grievance procedure) or governor
- External contractor or organisation about staff or pupil

Suggested School Complaints Policy Document

- The school aims to be a caring, positive and supportive place where young people can learn and receive education in an appropriate manner.
- We want to listen to parents' views about their children's education and well-being at school.
- We will try to resolve parents' concerns and complaints as informally and quickly as possible.
- We will take any complaints seriously and provide a thorough and appropriate response.
- No pupil will be penalised or intimidated as a result of her/his parent making a complaint.
- We aim to learn from any mistakes or weaknesses, in order to improve further the standards of education offered at the school.
- There is a set of clear and detailed procedures for handling complaints that is available to parents who wish to pursue a complaint beyond the initial informal stage.
- There is a parents' leaflet which is provided to all parents, outlining how they should pursue any concern or complaint that they may have.
- The school will ensure that all complaints are logged.
- The governing body as a whole will not discuss individual complaints, and any governor receiving such a complaint will direct the parent to the school's complaints leaflet and procedures.
- The governing body will monitor and review the effectiveness of the policy and procedures annually by receiving a summary report of numbers and types of formal complaints together with outcomes. Individual details will not be included.
- Complaints or appeals relating to admissions, exclusions or Special Educational Needs provision will normally be handled by separate statutory mechanisms, and we will ensure that parents are informed of how such complaints can be pursued.

