

Learning together to be
the best we can be

Headteacher – Nichola Irving



Complaints Procedure Policy

Safeguarding Statement

Everyone at Horton Grange shares an objective to help keep children and young people safe by contributing to:

- providing a safe environment for children and young people to learn in school and;
- and identifying children and young people who are suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, and taking appropriate action with the aim of making sure they are kept safe both at home and in school.

Date adopted: February 2016

Review date: February 2018

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This procedure is for use for complaints against the school, a member of staff or the governing body. It has been updated using the DfE guidance 'Best Practice Advice for School Complaints Procedures January 2016'.

Rationale

It is in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. The experience of the first contact between the complainant and the school is crucial in attempting to achieve a speedy resolution. To that end, if staff are made aware of the procedures, they know what to do when they receive a complaint.

Stage One: Complaint heard by staff member/headteacher/chair of the governing body

When dealing with complaints against a member of staff, the school, or the school governing body members concerns are, if at all possible, handled without the need for formal procedures. The requirement to have a complaints procedure does not in any way undermine efforts to resolve concerns informally. In most cases the class teacher, the headteacher or the individual delivering the service in the case of extended school provision, receives the first approach. We aim to solve complaints amiably at this stage. Only if initial attempts to resolve an issue are unsuccessful should formal procedures be invoked.

The governing body have nominated the headteacher to have responsibility for the operation and management of the school's complaints procedure (complaints co-ordinator). The progress of any complaint and the final outcome should be recorded. An informal complaint can be made in person or by telephone, however a record still needs to be kept to ensure that the complaint/school have the same understanding of what was discussed and agreed. See Complaints form attached.

It should always be kept in mind the ways in which a complaint could be resolved. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is partly or wholly valid, and it may be appropriate to offer an apology; an explanation; an admission that the situation could have been handled differently; an assurance that the situation could have been handled differently; an assurance that the event complained of will not recur; an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure it will not happen again or an undertaking to review school policies in the light of the complaint.

In the first instance the complaint should be discussed between the person making the complaint and the member of staff involved. If a complainant indicates that he/she would have difficulty discussing a complaint with that particular member of staff he/she should be referred to another staff member. Where the complaint concerns the headteacher, or a governor, the complainant should be referred to the governing body.

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Similarly, if a member of staff/headteacher/governing body member feels too compromised to deal with a complaint it should be referred to another member of staff or another governing body member. The ability to consider the complaint objectively and impartially is crucial. An indication of timescale will be given, if it is found that the complaint requires further investigation.

If a complainant first approaches a governing body member, he/she should be referred to the appropriate person ie: the member of staff concerned or the chair of the governing body. Governing body **members should not act unilaterally on an individual complaint outside the formal procedure or be involved at the early stages in case they are needed to sit on a committee at a later stage of the procedure.**

It is hoped the majority of complaints can be resolved at this stage and to this end Client Relations service, within the Children's Services Directorate of the Local Authority, are available to advise parents on the complaints process and may on occasion help to facilitate contact with the school.

Stage Two: Formal Consideration of Complaint

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the way the complaint has been handled at stage one and wishes to pursue their initial complaint, the headteacher/chair of governors may delegate the task of investigating the complaint to another staff member or another governor. The headteacher/chair of governors may also, in exceptional circumstances commission an investigating officer report to be undertaken by an external consultant. The person making the complaint should be informed that an investigation is underway and that they will receive a response within 25 working days, or a letter explaining the reason for any subsequent delay.

Once the relevant facts have been established the headteacher/chair of governors should relay the decision, and the reason for the decision, in writing to the complainant.

Stage Three: Complaint Heard by the Governing Body Complaints Committee

If the complainant is still dissatisfied with the outcome he/she should write to the headteacher/chair of governors giving details of the complaint within ten school days of receipt of the decision letter. The chair or another nominated governing body member will convene a meeting if they consider it appropriate after considering the report of the investigating officer.

The committee will consist of a minimum of three governors with delegated powers. The committee will be appointed by the chair of governors with the chair of the committee being appointed when they meet. The complaints committee will take a decision as to any action to be taken in response to the complaint. For example, they may choose to:

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- convene a hearing at which the complainant will be invited to put forward their case. This should be held within 20 working days of the decision to hold a hearing;
- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;
- recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur;

In reaching a decision the committee may take the advice of such bodies as they see fit, eg: The Local Authority.

If it is decided that it is appropriate to hold a hearing, the clerk of the complaints committee will inform both parties in writing of the decision of the committee within five school days.

Serial or Persistent Complaints

Few complaints are likely to be protracted. However, there will be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedures having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the chair of the governing body is able to inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed. In making this decision the school will consider the following:

- Has the school taken every reasonable step to address the complainant's needs?
- Has the complainant been given a clear statement of the school's position and their options (if any)?
- Is the complainant contacting the school repeatedly but making substantially the same points each time?

The case is stronger if the school agrees with one or more of these statements:

The school has reason to believe the individual is contacting them with the intention of causing disruption or inconvenience.

Their letters / emails/ telephone calls are often or always abusive or aggressive.

They make insulting personal comments about or threats towards staff

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School Complaints Procedure

Complaint form

Please complete and return to Mrs Irving (complaints co-ordinator) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:

Pupil's name:

Your relationship to the pupil:

Address:

Postcode:

Day time telephone number:

Evening telephone number:

Please give details of your complaint.

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What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint. (Who did you speak to and what was the response)?