

Concerns and Complaints: A Guide for Parents and Carers

This leaflet aims to answer some of the questions you may have about approaching your child's school when you feel that things are going wrong. It also tells you the process for making a complaint about something that has happened in your child's school.

Working together for equalities

This document is also available in Braille, large print, on tape and on disc and we can translate it into different languages. We can provide a member of staff to discuss the details



RNID typetalk

Introduction

Your child's school will aim to provide as many opportunities to keep you informed and involved in your child's progress as they possibly can - with regular reports, open days and visits all helping the process. Cooperation between parents, staff and governors leads to a shared sense of purpose and good atmosphere in the school.

However, sometimes parents and schools have a misunderstanding, but these can often be sorted out by speaking to the right person. Your concern can then be looked into and a response given.

Q1. What should I do first?

Be clear what you want to talk with the school about

It might help to talk this through with a friend or relative. Sometimes it's helpful to have someone who knows the system to help you. Parent Partnership can do this - telephone 01823 355578.

Remember that although you may want to change a situation, you want it to end on a positive note with no bad feelings. Because of this you should try to follow the process and not back yourself or anyone else into a corner. Talking with the school can help you to understand how they see the situation and give you the chance to say what it looks like to you.

Although some schools, particularly for younger children, can see parents who just "pop in", this is not generally possible. When you're really concerned, make an appointment so you have enough time to talk things through.

Q2. Who should I contact?

That depends on the particular situation. Often the teacher is able to deal with the matter. More serious problems will require a senior member of staff or the headteacher. Mutual courtesy is expected and ensures things go smoothly. There should always be discussion in the hope of solving difficulties informally. Most problems are solved in this way. A complaint about the headteacher goes to the Chair of Governors.

Q3. What if I am still unhappy?

Ask for an appointment with the Headteacher (or Head of Year/Deputy Head/Head of Department in a Secondary School).

It may help to give the school some times when you are free, to help them make a suitable appointment as both your time and theirs is busy and valuable. Do try to be patient, as every effort will be made to see you as soon as possible.

Before attending the meeting it would be useful for you to put your concerns down in writing. Both you and the school can then focus on finding a solution. If you need help with this you can contact the Parent Partnership Manager on 01823 355578.

When attending the appointment you may take a friend or family member with you, if you wish. Alternatively, you can contact the Parent Partnership Manager who may be able to attend the meeting with you.

Q4. What should I expect to happen as a result of the meeting?

After the meeting the Headteacher may need to undertake further investigations to inform his/her decision and help achieve resolution. He/she will write to you outlining the investigation and giving details of any action (if appropriate) to be taken.

Q5. What if I feel the head hasn't answered my question or investigated my query?

If you are still unhappy you may, if you wish, ask the governing body to hold a review. This is a formal process.

Q6. What will I need to do?

Write to the Clerk to the Governors, stating that you wish to make a formal complaint. Make it clear what it is you are complaining about and what you would like the governors to do. If it will help you, the school can give you a form that can be used for this purpose. You cannot introduce new or different complaints at this stage.

You will need to write or complete the form within 10 days of receiving the Headteacher's response.

Q7. What will happen next?

A panel of governors who haven't been involved before, will undertake a review.

You will be invited to meet with the panel within 15 school days to explain your concerns. You may bring a friend if you wish. This could be anyone you think will be able to support you.

The panel will then review and/or investigate the Headteacher's handling of/response to your complaint and decide if it was appropriate and fair.

They will write to you within 15 school days to explain their decision. This decision will usually be final.

Q8. What do I do if I'm still unhappy?

Following Royal Assent to the Education Bill on 15th November 2011, the duty to consider complaints about the curriculum has been removed from the LA. Therefore, the LA review stage of the complaints procedure has also been withdrawn in its entirety given that there is no longer any duty on us to consider complaints about curriculum (which also covered the LA involvement in complaints about religious education and worship as our remit was only in relation to the inclusion of such in the curriculum).

Current advice on the DfE website says that general complaints about schools will now be made to Secretary of State once the school complaints procedure has been carried out.

The following address will take you to the relevant page on the DfE website:

<https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school>

Remember the whole process exists so that everyone's views can be heard. The aim is that the complaint should be properly and fairly dealt with. Communications with school are welcome and the latter stages of this complaints procedure are rarely used but remain part of the process.

Helpful Websites

Somerset Parent Partnership

<http://www.somersetparentpartnership.org.uk>.

Department for Education and Skills – Parent Centre

<http://www.parentcentre.gov.uk>

Advisory Centre for Education

<http://www.ace-ed.org.uk>