



Complaints Procedure

Legislation and regulations

All schools are required to have a written Complaints Procedure made available in a suitable way to all stakeholders with routines for how to address and report any complaints. Information should also be given on how the complaint will be handled by the school once registered.¹

The Swedish School in London's Complaints Procedure is available and known to all staff, students and parents with information on how to raise complaints or concerns. Students living in host families (and their parents) are also given relevant information on how to make a formal complaint and be confident that complaints should be properly dealt with.

A written record of complaints and their outcome is kept by the Head Teacher for Pre-school, Primary and Secondary School in Barnes and the Deputy Head Teacher for Sixth Form in Richmond. Details of a complaint should be kept confidential except in so far as they need to be shared with people who might contribute to their resolution.

Complaints Procedure

Complaints may be submitted by e-mail, telephone, mail or by personal appointment. Any complaints or comments about the school, or its staff, should be addressed initially with the party concerned, but students, parents or staff may contact the Head Teacher/ Deputy Head Teacher.

¹ The Swedish School Law, 4 chapter, 8 §; Department of Education (<https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school/private-schools>)



Investigate, resolve and follow up complaints

If there is something that doesn't fulfil your expectations on the school or if there is anything you are unsatisfied with we ask you to please follow the following procedure:

- 1) Contact the teacher in question or mentor of your child / pupil / student.
- 2) If the problem remains unresolved and you are still dissatisfied, please contact:
 - a) **Pre-school, Primary and Secondary School:** Head Teacher Annika Simonsson Bergqvist on email abergqvist@swedishschool.org.uk or phone +44 (0)20 8741 1751
 - b) **Sixth Form:** Deputy Head Teacher Jenny Abrahamsson on email jabrahamsson@swedishschool.org.uk or phone +44 (0)7825 331005
- 3) If your complaint concerns the Deputy Head Teacher, the complainant should be referred to the Head Teacher who should deal with the matter using the policy.
- 4) If your complaint concerns the Head Teacher, the complainant should be referred to the Chair of Governors Rickard Jönsson on email chairman@swedishschool.org.uk, who should deal with the matter using the policy.

Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels too compromised to deal with a complaint, the complainant should be referred to another staff member. The members of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the complaint objectively and impartially is crucial.

Where the first approach is made to a Governor, the next step would be to refer the complainant to the appropriate person and advise them about the procedure. The Governor must not act unilaterally on an individual complaint procedure in case they are needed to sit on a panel at a later stage of the procedure.

Timescale:

Stage One: Initial complaint to member of staff

Within one week of a registered complaint, a process to solve the problem should be well under way.

Stage Two: Complaint Heard by Head teacher / Deputy Head Teacher

At this point, the complainant may be dissatisfied with the way the complaint was handled at stage one as well as pursuing their initial complaint. The Head Teacher / Deputy Head Teacher may



delegate the task of collating the information to another staff member but not the decision on the action to be taken.

Within two working days, the Head Teacher / Deputy Head Teacher should have made the necessary decisions to solve the problem.

Stage Three: Complaint Heard by Governing Bodies or Complaints Appeal Panel

The complainant needs to write to the Chair of Governors giving details of the complaint. The Chair, or a nominated governor, will convene a GB complaints panel.

The governors' appeal hearing is the last school-based stage of the complaints process, and is not convened to merely rubber-stamp previous decisions.

Individual complaints would not be heard by the whole GB at any stage, as this could comprise the impartiality of any panel set up for a disciplinary hearing against a member of staff following a serious complaint.

The governing body may nominate a few members with delegated powers to hear complaints at that stage, and set out its terms of reference. These can include:

- 1) drawing up its procedure
- 2) hearing individual appeals
- 3) making recommendations on policy as a result of complaints

The procedure adopted by the panel for hearing appeals would normally be part of the school's complaints procedure. The panel can be drawn from the nominated members and may consist of three or five people. The panel may choose their own chair.

A panel should if necessary be summoned **within a week from stage 2**.



The Remit of the Complaints Appeal Panel

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.

There are several points which any governor sitting on a complaints panel needs to remember:

- 1) It is important that the appeal hearing is independent and impartial and that it is seen to be so. No governor may sit on the panel if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it. In deciding the make-up of the panel, governors need to try and ensure that it is a cross-section of the categories of governor and sensitive to the issues of race, gender and religious affiliation.

One member of the panel can also be independent and without any connection to the management and running of our school.

- 2) The aim of the hearing, which needs to be held in private, will always be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. However, it must be recognized the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the hearing does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations which will satisfy the complainant that his or her complaint has been taken seriously.
- 3) An effective panel will acknowledge that many complaints feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting. Parents often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child. The panel chair will ensure that the proceedings are as welcoming as possible. The layout of the room will set the tone and care is needed to ensure the setting is informal and not adversarial.
- 4) Extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child. Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings will ensure that the child does not feel intimidated. The panel needs to be aware of the views of the child and give them equal consideration to those of adults.



Where the child's parent is the complainant, it would be helpful to give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the hearing, if any, the child need to attend.

- 5) Parents are always present at a panel hearing. They may be accompanied.
- 6) The governors sitting on the panel need to be aware of the complaints procedure.
- 7) A copy of the panel's findings and recommendations should be given to the complainant, proprietors, the head teacher and, where relevant, the person complained about.
- 8) Written records should be kept for all complaints regardless the stage.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Role of the Clerk

The Department strongly recommends that any panel or group of governors considering complaints be clerked. The clerk would be the contact point for the complainant and be required to:

- set the date, time and venue of the hearing, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible;
- collate any written material and send it to the parties in advance of the hearing;
- meet and welcome the parties as they arrive at the hearing;
- record the proceedings;
- notify all parties of the panel's decision.



The Role of the Chair of the Governing Body or Nominated Governor

The nominated governor role:

- check that the correct procedure has been followed;
- if hearing is appropriate, notify the clerk to arrange the panel;
- The Role of the Chair of the Panel

The Chair of the Panel has a key role, ensuring that:

- the remit of the panel is explained to the parties and each party has the
- opportunity of putting their case without undue interruption;
- the issues are addressed;
- key findings of fact are made;
- parents and others who may not be used to speaking at such a
- hearing are put at ease;
- the hearing is conducted in an informal manner with each party
- treating the other with respect and courtesy;
- the panel is open minded and acting independently;
- no member of the panel has a vested interest in the outcome
- of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of
- the procedure;
- each side is given the opportunity to state their case and ask questions;
- written material is seen by all parties. If a new issue arises it would b
- useful to give all parties the opportunity to consider and comment on it.

Notification of the Panel's Decision

The chair of the panel needs to ensure that the complainant is notified of the panel's decision, in writing, with the panel's response; this is usually within one week of the hearing. The letter needs to explain if there are any further rights of appeal and, if so, to whom they need to be addressed.

Checklist for a Panel Hearing

The panel needs to take the following points into account:



- The hearing is as informal as possible
- Witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing in which they give their evidence.
- After introductions, the complainant is invited to explain their complaint, and be followed by their witnesses.
- The head teacher may question both the complainant and the witnesses after each spoken.
- The head teacher is then invited to explain the school's actions and be followed by the school's witnesses.
- The complainant may question both the head teacher and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The panel may ask questions at any point.
- The complainant is the invited to sum up their complaint.
- The head teacher is then invited to sum up the school's actions and response to the complaint.
- Both parties leave together while the panel decides on the issues.
- The chair explains that both parties will hear from the panel within a set time scale.

General Timescale:

It should always be an effort from the school to have any problem solved within 10 days.



Additional Guidelines

Introduction

The main purpose of a complaints procedure is to solve problems and to give parents a means to raise issues of concern and have them addressed. The requirement to have a complaints procedure need not in any way undermine efforts to resolve the concern informally.

Complaints should be treated respectfully during and after the course of any complaints investigation. All members of staff should be aware of the complaints procedure and understand:

- The importance of attempting to resolve problems before they become formal complaints
- The importance of treating complaints respectfully

Expressing Concerns

At this formal stage the school should consider the best way of dealing with the concerns raised according to the circumstances. It is preferable for all concerned that concerns are resolved now rather than later.

Formal Complaints

Action through a complaints procedure may lead to action being initiated under other procedures. This may be disciplinary or child protection procedures and consideration should be given to this possibility at the earliest stage. In these cases the publicized complaints procedure will be suspended until action under the other procedures (including appeals) has been concluded. The complainant should be advised if this is the case and also informed of the likely delay in the final resolution of their complaint.

Stage 1 – The Head teacher

It may be that the head teacher has not been aware of the concern raised prior to this point. At this stage the head teacher will, in most cases, resolve the matter to the satisfaction of all concerned without recourse to the complaints procedure.

Stage 2 – Formal Complaint to The Governing Body

Where concerns cannot be resolved by the head teacher, each school must have a procedure for accepting formal complaints. These should, in the first instance, be to the chair of the governing



body giving details of the complaint, and should be accepted in writing or verbally. Where a complaint is accepted verbally it should be reported back to the complainant to ensure that details have been collected correctly. A form is available that can be used for this purpose and it would be useful if complainants were encouraged to state what actions they feel might resolve the problem at any stage.

Details of a complaint should be kept confidential except in so far as they need to be shared with people who might contribute to their resolution.

The Role of the Chair of Governors

The Chair of Governors will need to consider whether it is appropriate for him/herself to investigate the complaint, or whether to refer it to a complaints committee of the governing body to undertake review. If the latter course of action is followed the chair will need to convene a meeting of the complaints committee.

When considering a complaint, the Chair of Governors may wish to seek technical or procedural advice from officers of the County's Education Service on the appropriate course of action to be taken.

The Chair should write to the complaint following investigation into the complaint. If it is to be referred to a complaints committee then a letter should be sent explaining what will happen next, timescales involved, and the name of the person from whom they will next hear about the progress of the investigation.

The Role of the Governing Body Complaints Committee

The procedure adopted by the committee for reviewing the complaint would normally be part of the school's formula procedure and membership should consist of three or five governors. This should be a cross-section of the different categories of governors, but the head teacher and chair of governors should not be members of this committee, which must be independent and seen to be impartial. The committee will elect their own chair.

The complainant must be given the opportunity to make representation in person. The committee should therefore meet at a time and a venue convenient to all parties.



The Role of the Clerk to the Governing Body Complaints Committee

The DfES strongly recommend that any committee reviewing a complaint should have a clerk. Their role would be to:

- set the date, time and venue
- collate any written material and send to all parties in advance
- record the proceedings
- notify all parties of decision

Outcomes

In all cases where a complaint has been investigated by the governors, the complainant will be given a written response covering:

- the complaint
- the scope of investigation
- the conclusion of the investigation
- any action which has resulted

The complainant may also be offered the opportunity to discuss the response.

The aim of the investigation or review will always be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. However, it has to be recognized the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome of the governors do not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations which will satisfy the complainant that his/her complaint has been taken seriously.

If the investigation upholds the complaint, redress should be appropriate to the complaint and may include:

- an appropriate expression of regret
- providing the solution desired by the complainant
- changing the procedures to avoid future problems



Each school will take responsibility for:

- deciding who can take remedial action
- ensuring that the remedy is carried out
- ensuring that any remedy is within the school's powers
- ensuring the approach to remedies is reasonable and consistent

Where a complaint is not upheld the complainant must be given a response and informed of any further action that might be appropriate in their situation.

Stages 3 and 4 – The role of The Swedish National Agency and Department for Education and Skills (DfES)

Parents do not have a general right of appeal should they disagree with the governors decision. They may, however, raise the matter with the County Council's Service of State if they consider the complaint wasn't investigated properly and fairly. If the governors have followed a proper procedure and considered the complaint reasonably, neither the Education Service nor the Secretary of State can reverse the decision.

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.



Appendix: Form for formal complaint

Signature:

Date:

Official use:

Date acknowledgement sent:

By who:

Complaint referred to:

Date:

Please complete and return to the head teacher 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.

What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve complaint.

(Who did you speak to and what was the response)?