



Parklands High School

Complaints Procedure

LEARN RESPECT ASPIRE ACHIEVE

Last Reviewed; November 2021

Next Review; November 2022

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1. Introduction

- a. The school is dedicated to providing the best possible education and support for all its pupils. This means having a clear, fair, and efficient procedure for dealing with any complaints to or against the school, so that any issues that arise can be dealt with as swiftly and effectively as possible.
- b. The school welcomes feedback on the services it provides. Should anyone be unhappy with any aspect of the school, it is important that the school learns about this. The school recognises there is a difference between a concern and a complaint. Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage reduces the numbers that develop into formal complaints. The school aims to ensure that concerns are handled, if at all possible, without the need for formal procedures. The school's formal complaints procedure is only necessary if efforts to resolve the concern informally are unsuccessful. Where an individual may feel that an issue has not been dealt with appropriately it is important, for all involved, that there is a clear and transparent process for a complaint to be looked into and followed up.
- c. This policy outlines how complaints will be dealt with by the school in accordance with the requirements of The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 for Academies, as amended.
- d. This policy will be followed in respect of all complaints by parents/carers against the school except in the following areas (where separate policies exist):
 - i. Child protection allegations;
 - ii. Exclusions;
 - iii. School admissions;
 - iv. Appeals relating to internal assessment decisions for external qualifications;
 - v. Complaints about statements of SEN/ EHC Plans;
 - vi. Staff grievance and discipline procedures;
 - vii. National Curriculum;
 - viii. Unauthorized absence fines
 - ix. Allegations of abuse.
- e. Please note that should a complaint, informal or formal, reveal an issue for which other procedures exist (for example, child protection) then it will be dealt with under those procedures rather than as a complaint.
- f. Please note that anonymous complaints will not be examined under this or any other complaints procedure.

2. Stage one - Informal Stage

- a. Many enquiries and concerns can be dealt with satisfactorily by the curriculum leader, or head of house, or a member of the Senior Leadership Team without the need to resort to a formal procedure. The school values informal meetings and discussions and encourages parents to approach staff with any concerns they may have, and aim to resolve all issues with open dialogue and mutual understanding. If an individual has a concern that they would like to take up with the school they should initially inform a member of staff either in person, over the telephone or in writing. The individual may be invited to an informal meeting with the member of staff most appropriate for dealing with that concern or the matter may be dealt with via email or telephone.
- b. There is no suggested time-scale for resolution at this stage given the importance of dialogue through informal discussion although it would be expected that most issues would be resolved within 10 school days.
- c. Should any measures taken to resolve the issue appear unlikely to resolve matters, either party may initiate a move to the formal procedure at stage 2 onwards.

3. Stage two - Formal Stage

- a. This stage will commence when the:
 - i. Informal complaint has not been resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant, or
 - ii. Complainant has indicated they wish to go straight to the formal stage, or
 - iii. School feels that the complaint is inappropriate for an informal resolution.
- b. The Headteacher will:
 - i. Note: If the complaint is regarding the Headteacher or a governor, this will be investigated the Chair of Governors, or nominated governor if the Chair has previously been involved.
- c. Following receipt of the written complaint, formally acknowledge receipt of the complaint and ensure the complainant receives an up to date copy of the School's Complaint Policy and Procedures. It should be clarified what the complainant feels would put things right if it not clear in the correspondence. (Note: It is acceptable for someone else to write the complaint on behalf of the complainant)
- d. Seek advice, as appropriate. (Dependent on the nature of the complaint, this could include: the School's Adviser; Clerk to the Governing Body; Legal Services; Schools' HR Team; Finance Officer or Pupil Access Officer.)
- e. Inform the member of staff (or governor) if the complaint concerns them and provide them with a copy of the complaint and School's Policy and Procedures.
- f. Arrange and complete a full investigation of the complaint.
- g. Prepare a report following the investigation; consider what actions need to be taken and whether it be substantiated or unsubstantiated.
- h. Advise the complainant, in writing, of the outcome of the investigation.
- i. Should the complaint remain unresolved: If the Headteacher/Chair has undertaken the investigation, the complainant can request a review to the Complaints Review Committee. The request must be received within 20 school days of the notification and set out the grounds as to which matters remain unresolved. Note: If the Clerk to the Review Committee does not hear from the complainant within 20 school days of the notification of the outcome of the investigation, the complaint will be closed.
- j. The Headteacher/Chair of Governors should make a record in the Complaints Register* of the complaint and its outcome. This record may need to be updated by the Chair of the Review Committee in due course. The Complaints Register should be available for Ofsted Inspection purposes. * Note: This is a requirement for Academies and strongly recommended for schools.

4. Stage three - Complaints Review Committee

- a. In very exceptional circumstances where the complaint has not been resolved by the Headteacher/Chair of Governors, a meeting of the Complaints Review Committee will be arranged to review the complaint. The request must be made in writing to the Clerk of the Review Committee via the school. The request for the review must clearly set out the grounds as to which matters remain unresolved. The Clerk to the Review Committee will convene the Complaints Review Committee, comprising three people not involved in the complaint, one of whom is independent of the management and running of the school. It is not expected to take more than 20 days to convene but the Clerk to the Committee will update the complainant as appropriate. The Committee will:
 - i. Consider the written materials;
 - ii. Consider the complaint and the Headteacher's (or Chair of Governor's) action.

- iii. With the Clerk, prepare an Agenda and invite the Headteacher and/or Chair of Governors, (as appropriate) and the complainant to the meeting. Note: It is the responsibility of the Headteacher/Chair of Governors and complainant to secure their own witnesses and neither party can dictate who the other party brings.
 - iv. Seek advice and support as necessary.
- b. At the end of their review, the Complaints Review Committee will:
- i. Determine whether to dismiss or uphold the appeal in whole or part.
 - ii. Where upheld, decide on recommendations that should be reported to the Governing Body by the Chair of the Review Committee.
 - iii. Advise the Headteacher/Chair of Governors (as appropriate) and complainant of their findings.
 - iv. Advise the complainant of any further action they may wish to take if they remain dissatisfied. Following the review, the Chair of the Committee will arrange for the School's Complaints Register to be amended to include a brief summary of the complaint and the findings of the Complaints Review Committee. In addition, the Chair of the Committee will ensure that the matter in general terms and any recommendations be reported to the Governing Body.

5. Stage four – Final stage

- a. The Secretary of State has a duty to consider all complaints raised but will only intervene where the governing board has acted unlawfully or unreasonably and where it is expedient or practical to do so. In this case, the word “unreasonably” is used in a strict sense and means acting in a way that no reasonable school or governing board could act in the circumstances.
- b. If a complainant has exhausted the school's complaints procedure, they will be advised that they can submit a complaint to the ESFA using the online form found at www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus or in writing to:

Ministerial and Public Communications Division
Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

6. Withdrawal of a complaint

If the complainant wishes to withdraw their complaint at any time, they will be asked to confirm this in writing.

7. Social Media

Whilst the school accepts that complainants have a right to an opinion and make it public through the use of social media, complainants are reminded that they are not entitled to use social media to defame or harass individual staff or governors

8. Record of complaints

A written record of all complaints and documentation relating to the handling of the complaint will be kept confidentially by the school but may be inspected where appropriate by the Secretary of State or any inspection body under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008.

9. Vexatious complaints

These will be dealt with under the Co-operative Parental Interaction Policy, which is a Lancashire- wide policy, agreed by the Headteachers of LASSH. A copy of this policy is available on our school website.

Signed (Chair of Governors) Date

Signed (Headteacher) Date

