

PORTHCAWL COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL

COMPLAINTS POLICY

PREAMBLE

The governing body is required by the Education Act 2002 to have a policy for dealing with parents' complaints.

The school's Complaints Policy allows parents' complaints about school issues to be dealt with efficiently and sensitively and at the appropriate level.

Complaints can cover a wide variety of matters that concern parents. The school expects ALL parental complaints to be taken seriously and to be dealt with comprehensively and, as far as possible, in confidence.

POLICY

- The policy aims to ensure that all complaints from parents, pupils and others are dealt with as quickly and sensitively as possible and by the person best able to do so.
- As far as possible all concerns should be dealt with as informally as possible.
- A parent, pupil or other person(s) who expresses their complaint in writing should receive a response, even if not the final response, to their complaint within 24 hours of having made the complaint.
- If parents, pupils or other complainants wish to register a formal complaint they will be asked to place the complaint in writing and return it to the school. The task of dealing with the enquiry will be delegated to the Head of Department/Year Tutor or Senior Manager who is linked to the appropriate subject or year.

Types of Concerns and Complaints covered by this policy:

The majority of complaints received by the school fall into the following categories:-

- **financial and administrative**, e.g. payment of educational visits
- **academic**, e.g. course programme, unsatisfactory teaching, too much/too little homework, progress in a particular subject, equality of opportunity etc
- **pastoral**, e.g. discipline/indiscipline, inappropriate sanctions, bullying, overall progress of the child, unhappiness of child, etc
- **child protection**, e.g. allegations against staff, handling of sensitive issues

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PROCESSES

In the unfortunate event that a parent may feel it necessary to make a complaint about an aspect of the school then the following procedure should be used. Each of the following represents a stage in the process; progress through the stages will depend upon whether the complaint is satisfied with the response obtained.

Defining the Stages:

- Stage 1 Telephone school to outline nature of complaint (Tel. 01656 774100). The complaint will be directed to the appropriate person who will investigate the issue and telephone a reply back. The complaint is recorded in the complaints book.
- Stage 2 Written complaint to the relevant Head of Year who will investigate the issue and reply in an appropriate fashion.
- Stage 3 Written complaint to the relevant member of the school's Management Team. A written/verbal response will follow.
- Stage 4 Written complaint to the Headteacher who will respond accordingly.
- Stage 5 A written complaint to the Governing Body which will be addressed to the "Clerk to the Governing Body" and sent c/o the school. The matter may be referred to the LEA

It must be stressed that all queries or complaints must be processed using the above protocol; failure to do so may lead to a delayed response.

Responsibilities of Personnel who could be involved:

All staff: for hearing any concerns brought to them by parents and pupils and reassuring them that they will be dealt with as soon as possible by the appropriate member of staff; for informing the relevant staff of the concerns; for passing any complaints received from other people who are not parents or pupils to the Head of Department, Year Tutor and/or Senior Manager linked to the subject or year at **Stage 1**. Staff will also assist in collecting information about the complaint.

Child Protection Officer: for child protection issues – **at all stages**.

Year Tutor: for dealing with and where possible resolving complaints concerning overall pupil progress, discipline issues, pastoral care at **Stage 1** (and to assist in collecting information).

Senior Management Team: for the efficient operation and management of the policy and procedures; for training staff on how to deal appropriately with complaints; for keeping parents, pupils and others informed of the procedures; and for compiling reports for the Head as required at **Stage 1 and later**.

Deputy Headteacher: for administrative, financial, academic, pastoral and child protection complaints at **Stage 3 and later**.

Headteacher: for the overall internal management of the procedures at **Stages 1 to 4**; for hearing complaints at the fourth stage; for ensuring that the procedures are monitored and reviewed and termly reports made to the Governing Body.

Clerk to the Governing Body

The Clerk must act as the reference point for the complainant at **Stage 5**. The Clerk must:

- set convenient dates and times and venues for hearings
- collate any written material and forward it to the parties
- meet and welcome the parties
- record the proceedings
- notify the parties of the decision

Nominated Governor or Chair of the Panel at Stage 5: to ensure that:

- the parties understand the procedure
- the issues are addressed
- key findings of fact are established
- complainants are put at ease
- the hearing is conducted as informally as possible
- the panel is open-minded and acts independently
- no member of the panel has a vested interest in the outcome or has been involved in the issues previously
- all parties have the chance to be heard
- any written material is seen by all parties

Chair of the Governing Body: to receive complaints at **Stage 5**; to nominate a governor or panel to hear the appeal; and to check that the correct procedure is followed.

Governing Body: for approving the policy, procedures, and guidelines; hearing and deciding on appeals; receiving reports and advising the Headteacher. The Governing Body will monitor the level and nature of complaints and review the outcomes.

PROCEDURES

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| Stage 1 | complaint heard by staff member (who is not the subject of the complaint) |
| Stage 2 | complaint heard by Headteacher |
| Stage 3 | complaint heard by Governing Body's Complaints Appeals panel |
| Stage 4 | Local Education Authority |

Stage 1

The receptionist/office staff will record the telephone complaint in the official school complaint log book. This is held in reception A block.

In the first instance the complaint will be directed to the most relevant member of staff. It is hoped a telephone reply will be made to the complainant within a school day. However, due to teaching or other commitments this may not always be necessary.

All staff will listen carefully and patiently to the parents' and pupils' complaints. In so doing they are recognising that, however ill-founded the complaint might be, it is a matter of great concern for the complainant.

In every and any case where there is the mildest consideration of a child protection issue, the Safeguarding Officer or her deputy must be informed.

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Stage 2

It is hoped and anticipated that the majority of complaints will be resolved at Stage 1. However, if this is not the case then the complaint is then put in writing.

All learners are organised into school years 7 to 13. This being the case, in the first instance, all written complaints will be directed towards the relevant Head of Year. The Head of Year will investigate the complaint thoroughly and will reply to the complainant in the most appropriate fashion. It is acknowledged that time is important and the reply will be made as soon as the matter has been investigated. It must be appreciated that Heads of Year have teaching commitments so an investigation may take a couple of days.

Stage 3

In the unfortunate event that the complaint is not resolved satisfactorily at Stage 2, the Senior Management team is involved.

The school is organised so that each member of the Senior Management team is formally linked to a year group. The member of the Senior Management team linked to a learner's particular year group will now investigate the matter. The Senior Manager will focus upon both the nature of the complaint and the recent investigation conducted by the Head of Year (Stage 2). The Senior Manager will investigate the issue and form a judgement. A written/verbal response will be made as time allows.

Stage 4

All schools are organised hierarchically, thus failure to resolve a complaint at Stages 1 to 3 will mean the matter being referred to the Headteacher.

Upon receipt of a written complaint that has not been previously resolved the Headteacher will respond accordingly.

Stage 5

Should the matter/complaint still remain unresolved, it is referred to the Clerk of the Governing Body.

The matter will then be referred to the Governing Body's Complaints Committee.

Note:

In the case where a complaint is about a member of staff who would naturally be involved at Stages 1 to 4, a change will apply. In these circumstances the Headteacher will nominate another person to fulfil the function vacated by the person who is the subject of the complaint.

This policy will be reviewed annually.

_____ Chair of Governing Body _____ Date