

Slough and Eton Church of England Business and Enterprise College



A Member of Slough and East Berkshire C of E
Multi Academy Trust

Complaints Policy for Students

Owner:	Mr Peter Collins
Ratified by Governing Body:	<i>James M. Sneyd</i>
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OBJECTIVES

1. To resolve complaints from parents and the community in an impartial and swift manner.
2. To ensure a full and fair investigation while respecting students' and staff confidentiality throughout.
3. To address all points of issue, providing an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary.

This policy is not for managing allegations against staff.

MONITORING

The governing body monitors the complaints procedure, in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The Headteacher logs all formal complaints received by their School and records how they are resolved. Governors examine this log on an annual basis and consider the need for any changes to the procedure.

REVIEWING

The Governing Body is responsible for reviewing its policies and the Headteacher is responsible for reporting on the implementation of the policy.

1. Has the policy been successfully implemented?
2. Has the policy had the intended impact in the School and on the young people?
3. Are the current objectives to remain the same and do they support other policies and development priorities?

NOMINATED MEMBER OF STAFF: Headteacher



THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

It is desirable for any complaint to be addressed by a member of staff/governor at a level closest to the cause of concern. This person will be designated by the Headteacher. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the action taken only then should it be moved on to the formal process.

The Governing Body of the School has adopted the following procedure to deal with formal complaints from members of the School community or general public about appropriate matters relevant to the running of the School. This process is not for allegations against staff. This procedure is to be used only when informal attempts to resolve problems have been unsuccessful.

1. Framework of Principles

This procedure is designed to:

- be well publicised and easily accessible
- be simple to understand and use
- be impartial
- be non-adversarial
- allow swift handling with established time limits for action and keeping people informed of the progress
- ensure a fair investigation by an independent person, where necessary
- allow for a hearing of a panel of Governors, where appropriate
- allow for parents to attend the panel hearing and, if they wish, be accompanied
- respect people's desire for confidentiality, wherever possible
- address all points of issue, provide an effective response and appropriate redress where necessary
- provide information to the School's Senior Management Team so that services can be improved.

2. Making a Formal Complaint

Stage 1

Where informal attempts have been unsuccessful in resolving a complaint, the matter will be formally investigated by an appropriate person from the School. If the matter is about the day-to-day running of the School or the interpretation of School policies by members of staff of the School, or the actions or inactions of staff at the School, the matter should be investigated by the Headteacher or a delegated member of senior staff nominated by the Headteacher. If the matter is about School policies as determined by the Governing Body or the actions or inactions of the Governing Body, then the matter should be dealt with by the Chair of Governors or Governor nominated by the Chair.

A complainant wishing to instigate the formal procedure should be asked to complete a complaint form (Appendix 1). The School should offer to help an individual to complete the form and the person providing this help should be unconnected with the complaint. It is essential to report the



progress of any complaint and the final outcome. It is necessary that at each stage, the person investigating the complaint (the designated person) makes sure that they:

- establish what has happened so far, and who has been involved;
- clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved;
- meet with the complainant or contact them (if unsure or further information is necessary);
- clarify what the complainant feels would put things right;
- interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
- conduct the interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning;
- keep notes of the interview.

3. Resolving the Complaint

At each stage in the procedure, the School will want to keep in mind ways in which a complaint can be resolved. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- an apology;
- an explanation;
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
- an assurance that the event complained of will not recur;
- an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again;
- an undertaking to review School policies in light of the complaint.

It would be useful if complainants were encouraged to state what actions they feel might resolve the problem at any stage. An admission that the School could have handled the situation better is not the same as an admission of negligence. Equally, an effective procedure will identify areas of agreement between the parties. It is also of importance to clarify any misunderstandings that might have occurred as this can create a positive atmosphere in which to discuss any outstanding issues.

If the School rejects the complaint, it is important to re-assure the complainant that the matter has been thoroughly investigated.



Stage 2

Where the complainant is still not satisfied that their complaint has been dealt with fully and properly, they may choose to take it to a second stage. This stage will be referred to a panel of Governors established as outlined in Appendix 2 and a person who is independent of the management and running of the School. The Chair of the Panel will be elected by the Panel members and will be responsible for maintaining a further procedure as outlined in Appendix 2.

4. Timescale

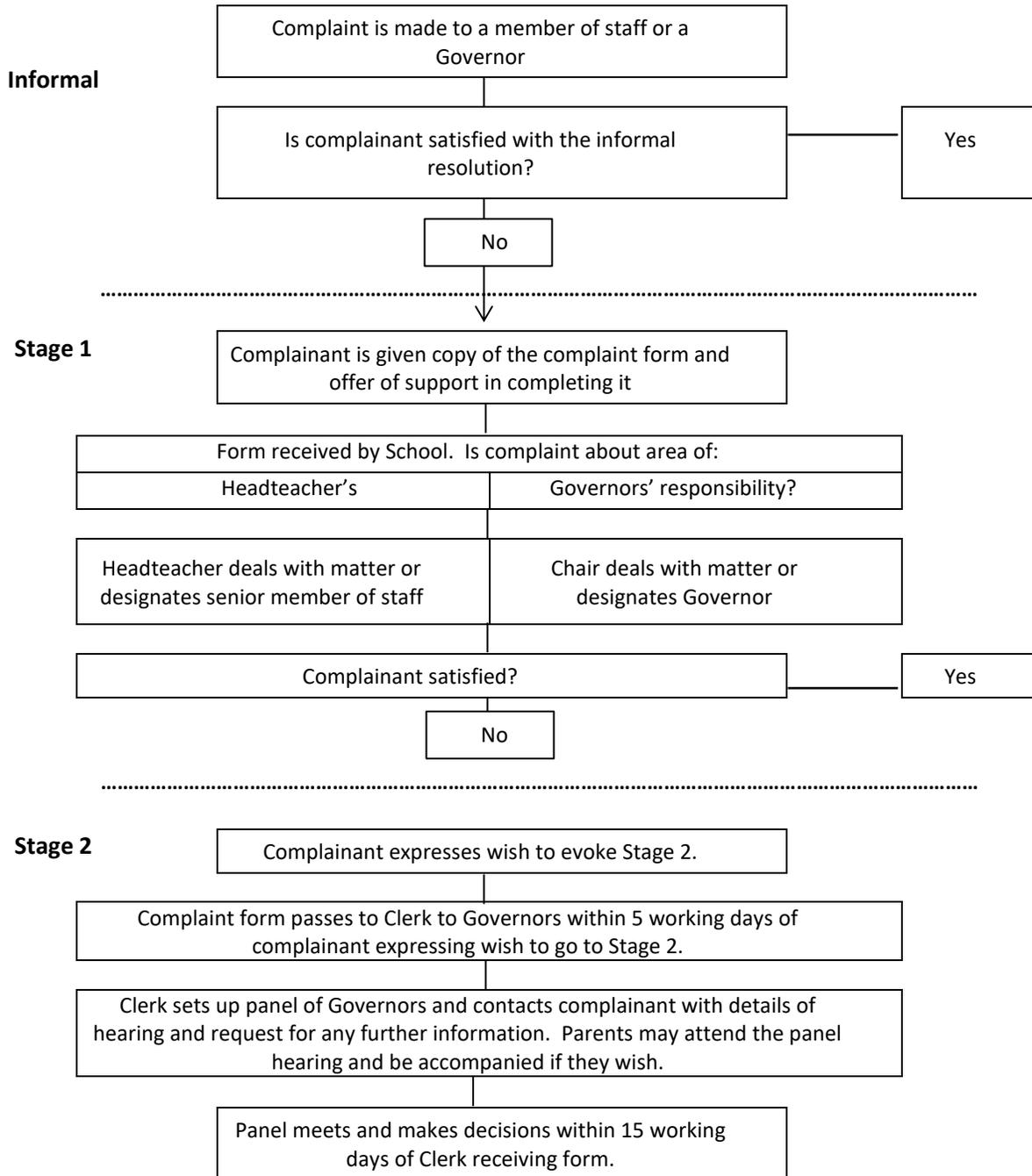
Complaints need to be considered and resolved, as quickly and efficiently as possible. An effective complaints procedure must have realistic time limits for each action within each stage. However, where further investigations are necessary, new time limits can be set and the complainant sent details of the new deadline and an explanation for the delay.

5. Monitoring Complaints

As well as addressing an individual's complaint, the process of listening to and resolving complaints would contribute to School improvements. When individual complaints are heard, the School may identify issues that need to be addressed. The monitoring and review of complaints by the School and Governing Body can be useful in evaluating the School's performance. Any discussion of complaints by the Governing Body or others in the School community should not name or be able to identify individuals.



Complaints Process





Appendix 1

Complaint Form
Slough and Eton Church of England Business and Enterprise College

Please complete and return to the Clerk to Governors who will acknowledge receipt and action the complaint.

Name:

Address:
.....
.....

Postcode: Daytime telephone number:

Evening telephone number:

If applicable, name of child(ren) at School:

Please give details of your complaint:

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

Your relationship to the School, e.g. parent, carer, neighbour, member of public:

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage? *(please continue on a separate sheet of paper if needed)*

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

Signature:

Date:

Date of acknowledgement sent:

By Whom :

Complaint referred to:

Date:

Notes

This form overleaf can be used by any person making a complaint about the operation of the School which is not covered by an alternative specific procedure. Complaints will most often come from parents or carers but may also come from pupils/students or members of the public, e.g. School neighbours. Anyone receiving this form should be advised verbally that help in completing it is available from the School. A member of School staff who is familiar with the process should be nominated to give help. If it is appropriate for a member of staff to look into this complaint, it should be returned to the Headteacher . If it is appropriate that it should be dealt with by a Governor, it should be returned to the Clerk to the Governors at the School.

Appendix 2 Part of management process

Establishing a complaints panel

- > The governing body is advised to agree the composition of the complaints appeals panel at the first meeting of the governing body each year.
- > As governors may not be available at all times it may be wise to agree the names of 4 or 5 possible governors from whom a panel of three may be drawn.
- > When the clerk of governors receives a copy of the complaint form s/he will inform the governing body that a complaint has been received and that it has been passed to the panel to deal with. No further information about the complaint should be shared with other governors.

If for any reason this procedure cannot be followed the governing body will put in place an alternative fair process.

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

- a. 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.
- b. Where there is a panel hearing of a complaint there is one person on the panel who is independent of the management and running of the School.
- c. 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.
- d. 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.
- e. Extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child. Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings will ensure that the child is accompanied and 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. Parents may attend the panel hearing and be accompanied if they wish.
- f. The governors sitting on the panel need to be aware of the complaints procedure.

The Remit of The Complaints Appeal Panel

The panel needs to firstly consider whether the appeal is

- > in relation to a decision taken by the Headteacher or a member of the School staff
or
- > whether it is about the way in which a complaint or concern was handled.

If the complaint was in relation to a decision taken by the Headteacher, the panel will need to clarify whether it was:

- (A) a decision within the Headteacher's professional responsibility or
- (B) it is an area where the governing body have responsibility, or share responsibility but have delegated this to the Headteacher.

If the complaint relates to (A)

- > the panel can consider the manner in which the complaint was addressed but not consider an alternative outcome.
- > recommend changes to the School's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

If the complaint relates to (B)

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.

APPENDIX 3 Checklist for a Panel Hearing

The panel needs to take the following points into account:

- > Although the hearing is formal it should be conducted as informally 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 Headteacher or designated person may question both the complainant and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- > The Headteacher or designated person is then invited to explain the School's actions and be followed by the School's witnesses.
- > The complainant may question both the Headteacher or designated person and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- > The panel may ask questions at any point.
- > The complainant is then invited to sum up their complaint.
- > The Headteacher or designated person 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 five working days.

APPENDIX 4 Sharing your concerns about your child's education

A guide to parents

The School recognises that at times things can go wrong. This guidance will help you understand how to resolve concerns you may have about your child's education.

When should I complain to the School?

The School is independent from Slough Borough Council.

This means that the School's governing body has overall responsibility for the School and for ensuring that all students receive an appropriate and high standard of education.

The Headteacher is responsible for making decisions on a daily basis about the School's internal management and organisation, so you should contact the School if you are concerned about a general issue such as:

- your child's academic progress
- special education needs provision
- your child's welfare
- bullying
- something that has happened in the School

or about wider issues, such as:

- the overall running of the School
- a School policy
- the management of the School budget
- the use of School facilities

The School has a complaints' procedure for dealing with these issues and welcomes feedback on our service.

How do I complain to the School?

The School will always want you to speak to the relevant member of staff as soon as you have a concern. This will be the form tutor or head of year.

This informal approach is nearly always the quickest and most effective way of resolving your concerns. If you feel that your concern has not been resolved, then it is important to ask the School for their complaints procedure. This explains what you should do next.

The School will use the following process and will advise you:

- to speak to or write to the Headteacher who will look into your concern
- to write to the chair of governors if you are unhappy with the Headteacher's response or if the matter concerns governors

The School's procedures also offer an appeal to the governing body's complaints panel. This panel consists of governors and a person independent of the management and running of the School who have no prior knowledge of your complaint and will consider written and verbal submissions from you and the Headteacher.

Can I take my complaint further?

For most complaints, you cannot take your appeal further than the governing body.

If you feel that the School has acted unreasonably or not followed the correct procedures, you can write to the School Trust or the Department for Education.

What if my complaint is about the national curriculum, religious education or related matters?

For specific complaints about the national curriculum, religious education or related matters, you can write to the Department for Education.

In some cases, parents may have a legal right of appeal to an independent tribunal or panel. These cases include special educational needs assessments, admissions and exclusions. Staff in the relevant service will explain these procedures to you.