

Lower Farm Primary School Complaints Procedure

Introduction

We hope that in general you and your children are happy with our school. However, over a period of time the odd problem may possibly arise. This document hopefully, will explain the procedure that is followed in the event of a complaint.

General complaints

Walsall schools aim to provide good quality education to the children of Walsall, but we realise that sometimes things go wrong. When this happens, we want to know about it.

The Council has defined a complaint as “**an expression of dissatisfaction with the Council, its services or the actions of its staff**”. We want to learn from our mistakes, to get it right next time, and, if we have got things wrong we want to provide redress, where possible by putting things right.

So What do I do?

Schools want complaints to be brought to their attention as soon as possible so that action can be taken swiftly to put things right. This complaints procedure is designed to provide a quick response to your complaint and to let you know what is happening with your complaint.

Step 1

Any formal procedure can take time so why not make an informal approach to the Head Teacher (or to the Chair of Governors if the Head Teacher is the subject of your complaint) before you make a complaint in writing. This informal approach will give the school a chance to respond to your complaint quickly and a formal complaint may not be necessary.

Step 2.

If you think your complaint cannot be resolved informally, or if you are not satisfied with the school's attempt to resolve the matter informally, you should contact the Head Teacher in writing. You should receive an acknowledgement within 5 working days and a full written reply within 15 working days. If the complaint is a complex one you will be told of any delay. These time limits relate to school working days not including the school holidays.

If your complaint concerns the Head Teacher personally return write directly to the Chair of the Governing Body care of the school.

The Headteacher/Governing Body or committee shall consider the complaint and decide whether to:

- i. reject the complaint;
- ii. uphold the complaint;
- iii. investigate the complaint further.

The complainant will be notified of the decision of the Headteacher/Governing Body/Committee in writing within 5 school days.

Step 3

If you are not satisfied with the response from the school or Governing Body you may ask for it to be reconsidered. This will be carried out by a different group/ person who will not have been involved in the first investigation.

- a) The Headteacher/Governing Body or committee shall consider the complaint and decide whether to:
- iv. reject the complaint;
 - v. uphold the complaint;
 - vi. investigate the complaint further.

The complainant will be notified of the decision of the Headteacher/Governing Body/Committee in writing within 5 school days.

Step 4

If you are not satisfied with the school's response you should write to Walsall Children's Services who may investigate the matter and respond to you in writing. Where appropriate the Chief Education Services Officer will submit a report to the Governing Body of the school concerned.

Step 5

If you are not satisfied with the Chief Education Services Officer's response, you can approach the Secretary of State at the Department for Education.

Curriculum Complaints

These complaints are concerned only with the actions of the Governing Body and Local Education Authority. They do not cover complaints about the actions of individual teachers or the Head Teacher.

A record of complaints will be kept by the school.

Areas covered by the procedure

The duties covered by the curriculum complaints procedure are as follows:

1. the provision of a curriculum which meets the general requirements of sections 356 and 357 of the Education Act 1996;
2. the implementation of the National Curriculum and compliance with Orders and Regulations made about its requirements and exceptions to its provision;
3. provision of courses leading to external qualification, only if that qualification and the associated syllabus have been approved;
4. provision of religious education and worship as required by sections 379 – 385 of the Education Act 1996, and other enactments;
5. the need to act reasonably in deciding whether to apply to the Secretary of State, either with or without the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority, for exemption from all or part of the National Curriculum in order to carry out developmental work;
6. consideration of appeals by parents about the temporary withdrawal of pupils from part or all of the National Curriculum;
7. operation of charging policies in relation to the curriculum;

8. compliance with requirements relating to the provision of information;
9. compliance with any other enactments relating to the curriculum.

Stages in the complaints procedure

The various stages of the complaint procedure can be summarised as:

- Informal** discussion with the teachers and/or the Head Teacher;
Formal formal written complaint to the Head Teacher;
Referral of the complaint by the Head Teacher to the Governing Body;
Appeals to the LEA/Diocese or to the Secretary of State.

Stage 1

This is the essential preliminary to any complaint and should in the majority of circumstances be able to resolve any issue. However, if this is not possible then there is recourse to stage 2.

Stage 2

- a) This involves making a formal complaint to the complaints officer designated by the Head Teacher, who may be the Head Teacher him/herself. The complaints officer will then inform the complainant of their decision, in writing, within 10 school days of receipt of the complaint. The decision letter informs the complainant of their right, if still dissatisfied, to refer the matter to the Head Teacher for reconciliation within 10 days of the receipt of the decision letter.
- b) At this stage the complainant is entitled to meet the Head teacher. The decision of the Head teacher will then be conveyed to the complainant within 10 school days of the receipt of the complaint. The letter will inform the complainant of their right to appeal to the Governing Body within 10 school days of the receipt of this decision letter.

Stage 3

If the complainant wishes to appeal against the decision the Head Teacher/Governing Body should be informed within 10 school days and within 5 school days should inform the Chair of the Governors. The Governors will delegate the investigation to a committee of the Governing Body who will set a timetable for the investigation and give this to the complainant and the Governing Body. An oral hearing may be held to which all parties to the complaint are entitled to be represented. At the meeting the usual order of proceedings will be:

- b) The Chair will welcome the complainant and any representative and introduce those present.
- c) Complainants may, if they choose, restate the nature of the complaint.
- d) Complainants may be asked questions by the Governing Body or Committee and by the Head Teacher.
- e) The Head Teacher may be asked to make a statement to the Governing Body or Committee, regarding the complaint, and may be asked questions by the Governing Body, Committee or complainant.
- f) The complainant may summarise the complaint.
- g) The Head Teacher, complainant will be asked to leave.
- h) The Governing Body or committee shall consider the complaint and decide whether to:
 - vii. reject the complaint;

- viii. uphold the complaint;
- ix. investigate the complaint further.

The Clerk to the Governing Body will inform the complainant of the decision of the Governing Body/Committee in writing within 5 school days.

Stage 4

Should a complainant not be satisfied with the Governors' response they have recourse to:

- i. appealing to the LEA
- ii. taking their complaint to the Secretary of State.

Withdrawing a complaint

It should be noted that a complaint can be withdrawn at any stage of the procedure