



COMPLAINTS POLICY

RATIONALE

This policy is intended to set out how the school will deal with complaints about the school or education. All young people, members of the school community, members of the local community and any external agencies should feel able to express their views in the full knowledge that they will be dealt with fairly.

We welcome suggestions for improving our work.

All concerns or complaints are important to us and will be investigated with due urgency and thoroughness. Our primary concern is the quality education and welfare of each child. Whenever a complaint is upheld, every effort will be made to rectify the issue and, if necessary, action will be taken to try to prevent a reoccurrence of the problem. The school will not investigate anonymous complaints or allegations.

AIMS

- To provide an accessible and easily understood procedure for complaints.
- To encourage parents and social workers from the placing authority and members of the school community to express their views at the earliest opportunity, through the appropriate channels.
- To increase mutual understanding between all parties.
- To create an ethos where all are committed to working together for the benefit of each child.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Whether a complaint is made informally or formally, all parties involved should ensure that every effort is made to respect confidentiality and ensure that all documentation etc remains confidential to those parties directly involved in the complaint other than by request from the Secretary of State.

All parties should be assured that making a complaint would not adversely affect the child.

DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS INFORMALLY

The school needs to be clear about the difference between a concern and a complaint. Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage will reduce the numbers that develop into formal complaints.

The requirement to have a complaints procedure need not in any way undermine efforts to resolve the concern informally. In the majority of concerns, the class teacher will receive the first approach, hoping to resolve the concerns immediately.

HOW WE MANAGE CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS

STAGE ONE - Informal Complaint

There are many occasions where concerns are resolved straight away through direct contact with the teacher, however it would always depend on the nature of the concern or complaint.

We aim to resolve any internal informal complaint within one working day. If the person first contacted cannot deal with the matter immediately, they will refer to the Quality Manager.

The person dealing with the complaint will continue to follow the matter through until it has been fully addressed and the matter is resolved either at a face-to-face meeting or by telephone. On certain issues, the teacher may decide to deal with concerns directly at this stage.

If the concern relates to the teacher, the person is advised to contact their immediate line manager.

Where no satisfactory solution has been found, complainants are asked if they wish their concern to be considered further. If so, they are given clear information about how to make a formal complaint.

If a complaint is in relation to an Alternative Provider, then this will be dealt with through their complaints procedures and a copy of the complaint and outcome will be kept on record by Meadows school.

INVESTIGATING COMPLAINTS

At each stage, the person dealing with the complaint must:

- 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 if more information is needed.
- Clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.
- 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.

RESOLVING COMPLAINTS

Our school must always keep in mind ways of resolving the issue. Ideas may be:

- An apology.
- An explanation.
- An admission that the situation could have been handled better.
- Reassurance that it will not happen again.
- An explanation of what has been put in place to prevent it from happening again.
- Review of the school policy in light of the complaint.

DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS FORMALLY

Formal procedures will take place when initial attempts are unsuccessful and the complainant wants to take it further. The Head teacher will be the 'complaints coordinator,' being responsible for the management of the complaint.

STAGE TWO - Formal Complaint

The member of staff makes a written complaint to their line manager.

The young person or any persons not working for the school should put the complaint in writing to the Head teacher.

If the complaint was against an Alternative Provider and the complainant is not satisfied with their outcome, then the complainant can request for the complaint to be addressed formally by Meadows school.

When a formal written complaint is made, it will be acknowledged in writing within three working days of receiving the complaint.

The acknowledgement gives a brief explanation of the complaints procedure and a target date for providing a response to the complaint.

We aim to resolve any formal complaints within ten working days; if this proves impossible, a letter is sent explaining the reason for the delay.

The line manager or Head teacher will provide an opportunity for the complainant to meet with them to supplement any information provided previously.

It is made clear to the complainant that if they wish, they may be accompanied to any meeting by a friend, relative, representative or advocate who can speak on their behalf.

If necessary, the teacher (or designate) should interview witnesses and take statements from those involved. If the complaint centres on a pupil, the pupil should also be interviewed.

Pupils would normally be interviewed with parents/guardians present. In some situations, circumstances may prevent this e.g. where this would seriously delay the investigation of a serious/urgent complaint or where particular circumstances mean that a pupil has specifically said they would prefer that parents or guardians were not involved. In such circumstances, another member of staff with whom the pupils feel comfortable should be asked to attend.

If a member of staff is complained against, the needs of that person should be borne in mind.

The Head teacher will keep written records of meetings, telephone conversations and other documentation.

Once all the relevant facts have been established, the Head teacher should then produce a written response to the complainant, or may prefer to meet with them to discuss / resolve the matter directly.

A written response includes a full explanation of the decisions and the reasons for it. Where appropriate, this includes what action the school will take to resolve the complaint.

The complainant is advised that should they wish to appeal they should notify the Head teacher within five weeks of receiving the outcome letter.

STAGE THREE - Formal Complaint to the Welfare Attendance Team (WAT)

The complainant makes a written complaint to the Welfare Attendance Team.

The Chair of the WAT should write to the complainant to acknowledge receipt of the written complaint within three working days of receiving the complaint.

The acknowledgement should inform the complainant that the complaint is to be heard by the Welfare Attendance Team which includes Senior Leaders from each service (Care, Therapy and Education)

The letter should also explain that the complainant has the right to submit any further documents relevant to the complaint.

These documents must be received in time to be sent out to the WAT before they meet.

We aim to resolve any formal complaints within twenty working days; if this proves impossible, a letter is sent explaining the reason for the delay.

STAGE FOUR - Formal Complaint to the Managing Director

The complainant makes a written complaint to the Managing Director.

The Managing Director should write to the complainant to acknowledge receipt of the written complaint within three working days of receiving the complaint.

The acknowledgement should inform the complainant that the complaint is to be heard by three senior managers.

The letter should also explain that the complainant has the right to submit any further documents relevant to the complaint.

These documents must be received in time to be sent out to the three senior managers before they meet.

We aim to resolve any formal complaints within twenty working days; if this proves impossible, a letter is sent explaining the reason for the delay.

The Director should arrange to convene a Complaints Panel comprising at least three persons who have had no previous links with the complaint being investigated including one independent person who has had no previous links with the management and running of the school.

The Director will ensure that the Panel hears the complaint within twenty working days of receiving the letter at Stage Three.

WRITTEN RECORDS

The Teacher (or designate) or Headteacher will keep written records of meetings, telephone conversations and other documentation at all stages of the procedure including a written record as to whether the complaint was resolved at the preliminary stage or proceeded to a panel hearing. Once all the relevant facts have been established, the Teacher (or designate) or Headteacher should then produce a written response to the complainant, who may prefer to meet with them to discuss/resolve the matter directly. The Headteacher will provide a written statement on the decision as to whether the complaint has been resolved at the informal stage or is proceeding to the formal stage and a written record will be kept.

MEETING

All relevant correspondence regarding the complaint should be given to each panel member as soon as the composition of the Panel is confirmed. If the correspondence is extensive; the Chair of the Panel should prepare a thorough summary for sending out to panel members. The Chair / Vice-Chair will write and inform the complainant, designate, any relevant witnesses, and members of the Panel meeting at least five working days in advance of the date, time and place of the meeting. The notification to the complainant should also inform them of their right to be accompanied to any meeting by a friend, relative, and representative or advocate who can speak on their behalf.

They should also be asked if they have any special requirements the school needs to be aware of, signing, language support etc. The letter will also explain how the meeting will be conducted and the complainant's right to submit further written evidence to the Panel. If either party wishes to introduce previously undisclosed evidence or witnesses, it is in the interests of natural justice to adjourn the meeting so that the other side has time to consider and respond to the new evidence.

Extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a young person. Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings will ensure that the young person is not intimidated. The panel needs to be aware of the views of the young person and give them equal consideration to those of adults.

The meeting will allow for: -

- The complainant to explain their complaint;
- The designate to explain the school's response;
- The designate to question the complainant about the complaint;
- The complainant to question the designate and/or other members of staff about the school's response;
- Panel member to have the opportunity to question both the complainant and the designate;
- Any party to have the right to call witnesses (subject to the approval of the Chair of the Panel);
- All parties having the right to question the witnesses;
- Final statement by both the complainant and the designate;.
- The Chair of the Panel to explain to the complainant and the designate that the panel will next consider its decision and a written decision will be sent to all parties within twenty working days.
- The panel will then consider the complaint and all the evidence presented reach a majority decision on the complaint and decide upon the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint including outlining the findings and recommendations.
- Where appropriate the Headteacher will recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not happen again.
- A written statement outlining the findings and recommendations of the Panel must be sent to the complainant, proprietor, Headteacher and the person complained about. The letter to the complainant should explain whether a further appeal could be made.

PUBLICISING THE PROCEDURE

There is a legal requirement for the Complaints Procedure to be publicised. This should be included in:

- The school prospectus

- Documents supplied to the local community
- Documents supplied to external agencies
- Company website

RESPONSIBILITY

The Head teacher and Directors will monitor and review this policy annually or as legislation requires.

December 2014

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 Headteacher may question both the complainant and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The Headteacher is then invited to explain the school's actions and be followed by the school's witnesses.
- The complainant may question both the Headteacher 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 is then invited to sum up the schools 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.

	Name	Date
Created/updated by:	Paula Forth	May 2017
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