

Paulton Junior School Complaints Policy

1. Aims

Our school aims to meet its statutory obligations when responding to complaints from parents of pupils at the school.

When responding to complaints, we aim to:

Be impartial and non-adversarial

Facilitate a full and fair investigation by an independent person or panel, where necessary

Address all the points at issue and provide an effective and prompt response

Respect complainants' desire for confidentiality

Treat complainants with respect

Keep complainants informed of the progress of the complaints process

Consider how the complaint can feed into school improvement evaluation processes

We try to resolve concerns or complaints by informal means wherever possible. Where this is not possible, formal procedures will be followed.

The school will aim to give the complainant the opportunity to complete the complaints procedure in full.

To support this, we will ensure we publicise the existence of this policy and make it available on the school website.

2. Legislation and guidance

This document meets the requirements of section 29 of the [Education Act 2002](#), which states that schools must have and make available a procedure to deal with all complaints relating to their school and to any community facilities or services that the school provides.

It is also based on [guidance for schools on complaints procedures](#) from the Department for Education (DfE).

3. Definitions and scope

The DfE guidance explains the difference between a concern and a complaint.

A **concern** is defined as “an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought”.

The school will resolve concerns through day-to-day communication as far as possible.

A **complaint** is defined as “an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action”.

The school intends to resolve complaints informally where possible, at the earliest possible stage.

There may be occasions when complainants would like to raise their concerns formally. This policy outlines the procedure relating to handling such complaints.

This policy does not cover complaints procedures relating to:

- Admissions
- Statutory assessments of special educational needs (SEND)
- Safeguarding matters
- Exclusion
- Whistle-blowing
- Staff grievances
- Staff discipline

Please see our separate policies for procedures relating to these types of complaint.

Arrangements for handling complaints from parents of children with SEND about the school's support are within the scope of this policy. Such complaints should first be made to the SENCO; they will then be referred to this complaints policy. Our SEND Policy includes information about the rights of parents of pupils with disabilities who believe that our school has discriminated against their child.

Complaints about services provided by other providers who use school premises or facilities should be directed to the provider concerned.

4. Principles for investigation

When investigating a complaint, we will try to clarify:

What has happened

Who was involved

What the complainant feels would put things right

We also intend to address complaints as quickly as possible. To achieve this, realistic and reasonable time limits will be set for each action within each stage.

Where further investigations are necessary, new time limits will be set, and the complainant will be sent details of the new deadline with an explanation for the delay.

The school expects that complaints will be made as soon as possible after an incident arises and no later than 3 months afterwards. We will consider exceptions

to this time frame in circumstances where there were valid reasons for not making a complaint at that time and the complaint can still be investigated in a fair manner for all involved.

Our Complaints Procedure:

We believe there is a free flow of information between home and school but recognise there may be times when misunderstandings arise, you are concerned about aspects of your child's progress or you may be unhappy about a particular event or activity which you have heard has taken place. In any event it is important you do not keep a problem or concern to yourself but approach the school.

Step 1 - Informal Discussions with Class Teacher

Before making a complaint, we would suggest that you are clear about your concern and also that you discuss this with an appropriate member of staff.

The first point of contact for a specific concern should always be the appropriate teacher. If you are not sure who is most appropriate, explain your concern to your child's class teacher, or tutor, who will be able to suggest whom it is best to speak to.

It is preferable if you can agree a time and place to discuss your concerns in peace and quiet rather than at a time when the teacher concerned is possibly surrounded by other children and/or parents this could be a telephone conversation at an agreed time.

We would expect most problems to be sorted out in this informal way by a frank and open discussion, free from distraction.

Please remember that all members of staff wish to help reassure you by listening to you and helping you meet with the most appropriate person. This stage of the procedure should normally be completed within two weeks.

Step 2 - Informal Discussions with Senior Members of staff and Headteacher

Sometimes you may still feel dissatisfied with the outcome of your discussions and want to take the matter further. If you are in this situation you may make an appointment to contact the Headteacher. This should normally be completed within four weeks.

Step 3 - Formal Investigation by the Headteacher

If, following your informal discussions you wish an investigation to be undertaken by the school you should put your concerns in writing to the Headteacher. You should state the outcome which you feel would satisfy your complaint. The Headteacher will undertake a full investigation which may require a further interview with you or a request for additional written information. A written reply will be sent to you following the investigation. This will normally take place within a four week period.

Step 4 - Formal Investigation by the Governors

If the problem cannot be resolved by you and the Headteacher, you may make a formal complaint to the Governing Body. The complaint, which you should put in writing and send to the Chair of Governors (send a letter to school or email chair.governors@paultonjuniorschool.co.uk), should set out precisely why you are

dissatisfied and what you wish to be done. The Chair of Governors will nominate a small group of Governors to investigate your complaint. You may be invited to attend an interview by the investigating Governors in addition to any written submission you make.

Following the investigation by the Governors you will be sent a formal response informing you of their decision. This investigation will be completed within a maximum six week period.

Step 5 - Investigation by the LA

Following your formal complain to the Governing Body, you have a further right of appeal, to the LA, if you consider the Governing Body has not acted properly in carrying out its investigation into your complaint. The LA cannot investigate if you are simply unhappy with the conclusion the Governors have reached. Complaints should be sent to the LA's Complaints officer (the Clerk to the Governors can advise you of the address to contact). You should receive a reply to your complaint within four weeks of it being acknowledged.

Step 6 - Appeal to the Secretary of State for Education and Employment

After appealing to the LA, you have the final right of appeal to the Secretary of State that the LA has acted unreasonably. If your complaint to the LA is not upheld the officer investigating it will inform you of your rights and the address for contact.

Complaints Involving the Headteacher

If your complaint involves the Headteacher you should firstly have direct discussions with the Headteacher. Where it is not possible to resolve the complaint through discussions you should set out your complaint in writing and send it to the Chair or Governors (Mr Simon Memory) chair.governors@paultonjuniorschool.co.uk with a copy to the Headteacher. If your complaint could involve disciplinary action against a member of staff, the Governors should follow procedures set out by the LA. If this situation arises, the Chair of Governors will inform you of the procedures to be followed.

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