

Hunsdon JMI School

Complaints Procedure

How we will deal with your concerns

Hunsdon JMI, 01279 842644, www.hunsdon.herts.sch.uk

HOW TO COMMENT OR COMPLAIN

We care about what you think

Each day this school makes many decisions and tries hard to do the best for all the children. Your comments - either positive or negative - are helpful for future planning.

You may want to talk to us about a particular aspect of this school, though not actually make a complaint - you just want to get something 'off your chest'.

If you are dissatisfied about the way your child is being treated, or any actions or lack of action by us, please feel free to contact us using the details listed above.

Our aims

- Your complaint will be dealt with honestly, politely and in confidence.
- Your complaint will be looked into thoroughly and fairly.
- If your complaint is urgent we will deal with it more quickly.
- We will keep you up to date with progress at each stage.
- You will get an apology if we have made a mistake.
- You will be told what we are going to do to put things right.
- You will get a full and clear written reply to formal complaints within **28 school days (5½ weeks)**.

How to make a complaint

In the first instance – informal stage

If you have a concern about anything we do, or if you wish to make a complaint, you can do this by telephone, in person or in writing (by letter or email). We hope that most complaints can be settled quickly and informally, either by putting matters right or by giving you an explanation. If there is something you are not happy about, or you don't understand why we are doing something in a particular way, please come in and discuss it with the class teacher or another appropriate

member of staff, such as the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) if it is about Special Needs.

We know that it can feel uncomfortable to question or challenge something, but if you don't tell us what is worrying you we cannot explain what we are doing or try to put it right. If the member of staff you speak to in the first instance is unable to attempt to resolve the matter, you should make an appointment with the Headteacher. You should be able to sort out your worries but sometimes this is not possible. In this case there is a next step.

First - formal stage

Request a meeting with the Headteacher who will investigate your complaint and aim to inform you of the outcome **within 10 school days (2 weeks)**.

If your first contact is with individual Governors, they will advise you to take up your concerns with the appropriate member of staff or Headteacher. A Governor should not be made aware of a potential complaint as they may be required to sit on a Panel in the event of a formal hearing (Stage Two) and should be impartial.

If your complaint is about the Headteacher, you should **write to the Chair of Governors**. If your child has a Statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) or an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) you might find it helpful to talk to our Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) or your child's named Special Needs Officer at the Local Authority. The SEND Information Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS – formerly Parent Partnership) may also be able to help you.

Second - formal stage

If you remain dissatisfied following Stage 1 and wish to take your complaint further, you will be asked to complete a form or write a letter addressed to the Chair of Governors. In the letter you should:

- Make it clear why you are complaining.
- Say who you have spoken to already.
- Explain what you want to happen as a result of your complaint.

The Chair of Governors will arrange for your complaint to be considered and investigated under the arrangements approved by the Governing Body. This is likely to involve a Panel of Governors. If the Chair of Governors or another Governor has been involved in discussions to help settle the disagreement at Stage 1, s/he should arrange for another Governor to take charge of the investigation. The Governor in charge of investigating the complaint may ask to meet you to discuss your concerns.

You should make sure that the Governors' Complaint Panel is provided with any written information or evidence you intend to use in a formal hearing. You may bring a friend, representative or interpreter to any meeting if you wish. The Chair of the Panel may invite any person who may help establish the facts of the complaint. The Chair should tell you who this person is before the meeting. If any member of staff is required by the Governing Body to attend a meeting they will have the opportunity to be accompanied or represented as they wish. A member of staff named in a complaint may also choose to attend a meeting, even if not

required to do so by the Governors. They may be represented. If this happens, we will inform you in advance.

When the Panel has fully investigated your complaint, the Chair of the Panel or the Governor in charge of the investigation will write to you to tell you the findings. These findings will be reported to the Governing Body. The Chair of Governors will then write to you confirming the outcome of your complaint and any agreed actions to be taken. Our Governing Body will aim to deal with your complaint **within 28 school days (5½ weeks)**.

Further recourse

Most complaints are resolved by this process. Should your complaint not be resolved, your further options are as follows:

You can complain to the Secretary of State at the Department for Education:

The Secretary of State
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT
Website: www.education.gov.uk
Telephone: 0370 000 2288

In the case of complaints about **Special Educational Needs provision**, you may complain further to the Local Authority. This should be done by writing to the Children's Services Complaints Manager.

It should be noted however that if you wish to pursue this route, you must do so within **20 working days (4 weeks)** of receiving the written outcome of the hearing into your complaint. After **20 working days (4 weeks)**, neither the school nor the Local Authority is under any obligation to investigate or progress your complaint any further.

Useful contacts

Advisory Centre for Education

Education Advice & Training
72 Durnsford Road
London
N11 2EJ
Web: www.ace-ed.org.uk
Phone: **0300 0115 142**

POhWER

Hertlands House
Primett Road
Stevenage
SG1 3EE
Web: www.pohwer.net
Phone: **0300 456 2370**

Children's Legal Centre

Riverside Office Centre
Century House North
North Station Road
Colchester
Essex
CO1 1RE
Web: www.childrenslegalcentre.com
Phone: **0345 345 4345**

National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS)

Egerton House
Tower Road
Birkenhead
Wirral
CH41 1FN
Web: www.nyas.net
Phone: **0345 345 4345**

SENDIASS (Special Educational Needs & Disability Information Advice Support Service – formerly Parent Partnership)

Registry Office Block
CHR102
County Hall
Hertford
SG13 8DF
Web: www.hertsdirect.org/parentpartnership
Email: parent.partnership@hertfordshire.gov.uk
Phone: **01992 555847**

Family Lives

(Formerly Parentline Plus)

15-17 The Broadway
Hatfield
Hertfordshire
AL9 5HZ
Web: www.familylives.org.uk
Phone: **0808 800 2222**

General Principles of complaints

Some text extracted from 'School Complaints Procedure' document (DCSF – now DFE)

Dealing with Complaints – Initial concerns

1. Schools need to be clear about the difference between a concern and a complaint. A concern can be defined as a cause of worry, whilst a complaint can be defined as an expression of dissatisfaction. Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage will reduce the numbers that develop into formal complaints.

2. These key messages deal with complaints but the underlying principle is that concerns ought to be handled, if at all possible, without the need for formal procedures. The requirement to have a complaints procedure need not in any way undermine efforts to resolve the concern informally. In most cases the class teacher or the individual delivering the service in the case of extended school provision, will receive the first approach. It would be helpful if Staff were able to resolve issues on the spot, including apologising where necessary.

Schools may also wish to meet with Parents if that would help resolve the issue.

Similarly Parents can be given details of support organisations that may be able to impartially discuss their concerns with them.

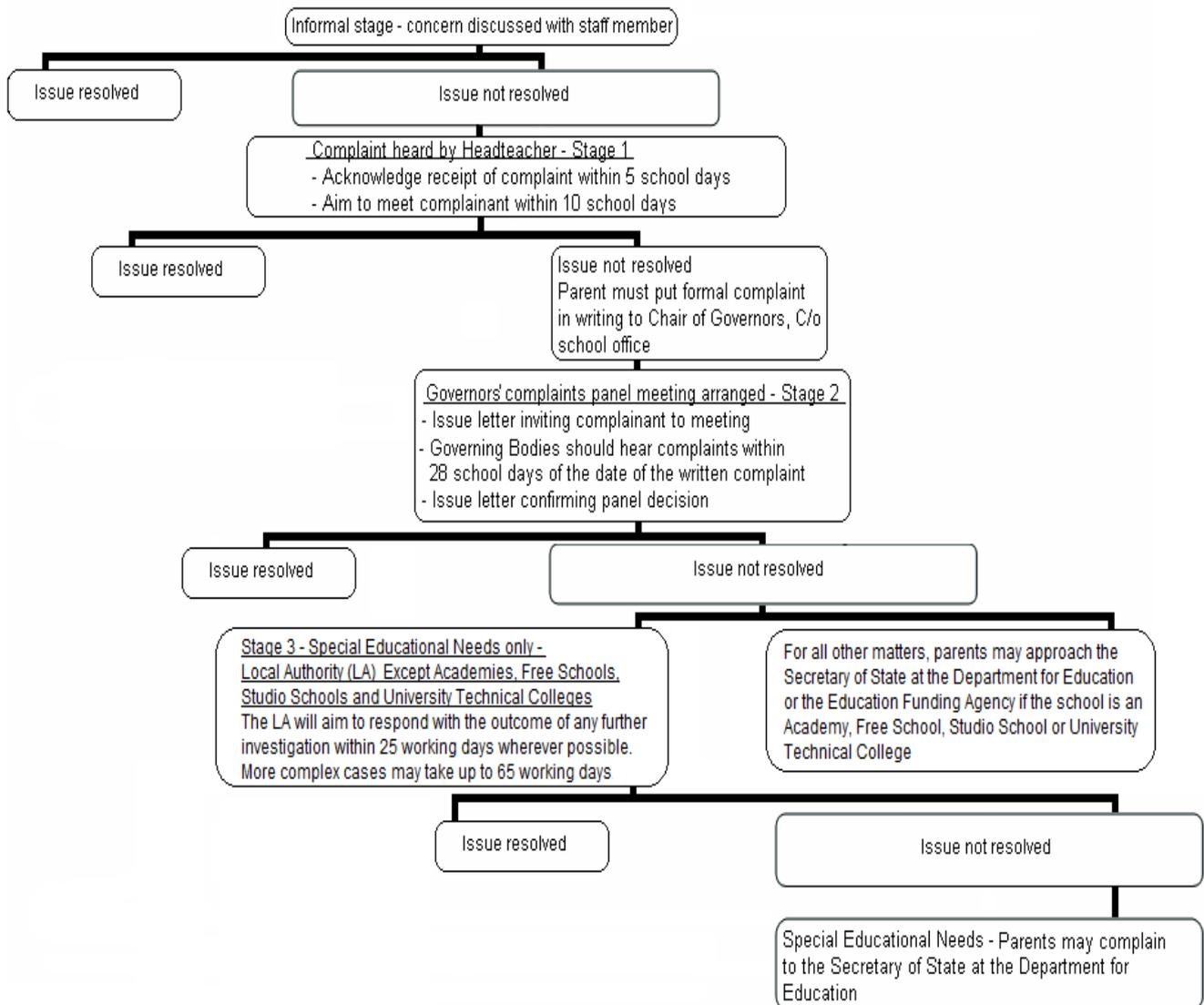
Dealing with Complaints – Formal procedures

3. The formal procedures will need to be invoked when initial attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further.

4. Schools might wish to nominate a member of Staff to have responsibility for the operation and management of the school complaints procedure. They could be termed the school's 'Complaints Co-ordinator'. In smaller schools this may often be the Headteacher.

Flowchart - Summary of Dealing with Complaints

Dealing with complaints



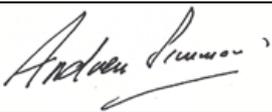
This policy was developed from:

Children's Services

MODEL PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH SCHOOL BASED COMPLAINTS

Guidelines and suggested best practice for Headteachers and Governing Bodies of Community, Voluntary-Controlled, Voluntary-Aided, Foundation and Trust schools

(Headteachers and Governing Bodies of Academies, Free Schools, Studio Schools and University Technical Colleges should obtain guidance on complaints handling from the Education Funding Agency as they are independent schools. Guidance is available at the following link:
www.gov.uk/government/publications/setting-up-an-academies-complaints-procedure/putting-in-place-a-complaints-procedure)

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