

# Enfield Grammar School

Founded 1558



An Academy Trust

(Company No. 07697044)

## Complaints Policy

Reviewed by	Governing Body
Approved	March 2019
Next review	March 2021

## 1. **Complaints Policy**

This procedure aims to reassure parents and others with an interest in the School that:

- Any complaint against the School will be dealt with in a fair, open and responsive way, with the aim of achieving a speedy and satisfactory resolution; and
- The School recognises that a willingness to listen to questions and criticism and to respond positively can lead to improvements in School practices and provision for students.

## 2. **Scope of the Policy**

2.1 A complaint is defined as a clear statement of dissatisfaction about any specified aspect of the School's work.

2.2 This procedure deals with complaints against the management and/or operation of the School which fall outside the scope of the following procedures:

- Complaints which have an alternative statutory avenue of appeal or complaint e.g. school admissions, fixed term or permanent exclusions from School, SEND assessments, complaints covered by the Education Regulations 1989, claims against the School such as Disability Discrimination claims.
- Complaints that must be dealt with by specific employment procedures e.g. allegations of professional misconduct, criminal offences or those that are potentially staff disciplinary issues.
- Staff grievances.
- Allegations relating to abuse of children or vulnerable adults.

2.3 Complainants may be anyone with an interest in the work of the School e.g. parents, carers, grandparents, neighbours of the School or anyone with an interest in the work of the School. However, it is expected that it will be mainly parents or carers who will make use of this procedure. Therefore, the term "parent" is used throughout this policy as a generic term but the policy also applies to any other type of complainant.

## 3. **General**

3.1 Records of all conversations and meetings with parents will be kept. Copies of correspondence and notes will be kept on file in the school's records, separately from individual student records.

3.2 If at any stage in the procedure it becomes apparent that for any reason the complaint falls outside of this general complaints procedure, parents will be informed.

3.3 There may be rare occasions when, despite all the stages of the procedure having been followed, a parent remains dissatisfied. If the parent seeks to re-open the same issue, the school reserves the right to inform him/her in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and the matter is closed.

- 3.4 Complaints need to be considered, and resolved, as quickly and efficiently as possible. All complaints will be acknowledged in the shortest time possible but no later than two working days following receipt of the complaint. The time limits set within this procedure will be adhered to wherever possible, however where further investigations are necessary, new time limits can be set and the parent sent details of the extended deadline, with an explanation of the reasons for extending.
- 3.5 Where complaints are made about events that took place more than 6 months earlier, or where a student concerned has left the school, the school reserves the right to not consider those complaints through this procedure, for example where proper investigation would not be possible given the passage of time or where it is clearly impossible for the Governing Body to put things right for that student. However, the Governing Body has a duty of care to the students who remain on roll and where appropriate such complaints may be considered by means of a management review. In these circumstances the parent will be informed of any changes to practice and procedures which have been agreed by the Governing Body as a result of the issues raised but there is no right of escalation through this procedure.

#### **4. Complaint Procedure - Informal Stage**

- 4.1 On occasion, a parent may raise a concern directly with school staff informally. At this stage, it may be unclear whether the parent is making a complaint or seeking information or clarification. In any event, the school aims to resolve the concern at this point in a speedy and effective way, without recourse to the formal stages of this procedure. At this stage issues can be raised verbally or in writing.
- 4.2 If the concern is not resolved, the opportunity will be given to discuss the matter with a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT member) nominated by the School. In the case of an issue raised about a decision or action by the Headteacher, the matter will always be considered by the Chair of Governors.
- 4.3 Complaints need to be considered, and resolved, as quickly and efficiently as possible. All complaints will be acknowledged in the shortest time possible but no later than two working days following receipt of the complaint. The time limits set within this procedure will be adhered to wherever possible, however where further investigations are necessary, new time limits can be set and the parent sent details of the extended deadline, with an explanation of the reasons for extending.
- 4.4 The SLT member will discuss the issue with the parent and those involved in School, with the aim of resolving the matter as soon as possible. A written response will be provided, within ten school days of the parent discussing their concerns with the SLT member subject to the complexity of the complaint and the degree of investigation required. The response will include the outcome and what action, if any, the School proposes to take.
- 4.5 The parent will be advised of their right to request that the matter is considered formally as a complaint at Stage 1 of this procedure if they are dissatisfied with the response and resolution offered at the informal stage.
- 4.6 If the parent wishes to proceed with a complaint, they will be invited to put the complaint in writing to the Headteacher (see form Appendix 2). The complaint should be sent to the Headteacher within ten school days of receipt of the response provided at the informal stage.

- 4.7 If a parent has difficulty in writing their Stage 1 complaint, for example where English is not their first language or they have a disability which prevents them from submitting a complaint in writing, assistance will be provided.

## **5. Complaint Procedure - Stage 1: Formal Investigation and response**

- 5.1 Where the complaint has been addressed by the Headteacher at the informal stage, Stage 1 will be conducted by the Chair of Governors. Where another staff member has addressed the complaint at the informal stage, Stage 1 will be conducted by the Headteacher.
- 5.2 The complaint will be acknowledged by the School upon receipt.
- 5.3 An opportunity will be given to the parent to meet with the Headteacher or Chair of Governors to discuss the complaint.
- 5.4 Complaints need to be considered, and resolved, as quickly and efficiently as possible. All complaints will be acknowledged in the shortest time possible but no later than two working days following receipt of the complaint. The time limits set within this procedure will be adhered to wherever possible, however where further investigations are necessary, new time limits can be set and the parent sent details of the extended deadline, with an explanation of the reasons for extending.
- 5.5 The Chair of Governors or Headteacher will investigate the complaint and a written response will normally be made within ten school days of receipt of the complaint subject to the complexity of the complaint and the degree of investigation required. If this is not possible, a letter will be sent explaining the reason for the delay and providing a revised target date.
- 5.6 The written response will include reasons for the conclusions reached by the Headteacher or Chair of Governors and what action, if any, the school proposes to take to resolve the matter.
- 5.7 The response will also advise that if the parent remains dissatisfied, and wishes to pursue the complaint further, they must write to the Clerk to the Governing Body within ten school days of receipt of the Stage 1 response, requesting that the complaint escalate to Stage 2. The parent should set out in their letter what issues are outstanding and what outcome they hope for.
- 5.8 If a parent has difficulty in writing their Stage 2 complaint, for example where English is not their first language or they have a disability which prevents them from submitting a complaint in writing, assistance will be provided.

## **6. Complaint procedure - Stage 2: Review by the Governors' Complaints Panel**

- 6.1 Complaints rarely reach this stage. However, where the need arises, the Governors' Complaints Panel (GCP) will consider the complaint.
- 6.2 The GCP will consist of three members from the Governing Body. An independent panel member may be asked to attend, when deemed necessary.
- 6.3 The GCP will appoint a Clerk to make the arrangements for the meeting, take minutes and advise the panel on the process.

- 6.4 Any non-staff member of the Governing Body can sit on a GCP, subject to usual conflict of interest considerations. No member of the GCP should have had prior involvement with the complaint.
- 6.5 A written acknowledgement of the complaint and the request for it to be heard at Stage 2 of the Procedure will be sent to the parent by the Clerk to the GCP within two school days of receipt.

The letter will inform the parent that the complaint will be heard as soon as possible by the GCP, at the latest within ten school days of receiving the complaint, subject to availability of relevant attendees. It will also inform the parent of the right to submit any written information they wish, and that this must be made available to the Clerk to the GCP at the latest five school days before the date of the GCP meeting. The right to call witnesses to the meeting, subject to the approval of the Chair of the GCP, and the right of the parent to be accompanied by a companion of her/his choice, will also be explained in the letter.

- 6.6 The Clerk to the GCP will send a copy of the Stage 2 letter of complaint to the Headteacher and/or Chair of Governors and request a written response at the latest five school days before the date of the GCP meeting. The right to call witnesses, subject to the approval of the Chair, will also be explained.
- 6.7 The Clerk to the GCP will convene a GCP meeting at an appropriate venue, having consulted with all parties on convenient times. The date, time and venue for the meeting will be confirmed to all parties at least five school days in advance of the meeting.
- 6.8 The names of all parties and witnesses (if any) to attend the meeting and all relevant documents to be referred to at the meeting will also be provided by the Chair of the GCP to:
- The parent;
  - The Chair of Governors and/or Headteacher;
  - Each panel member.

This will be provided as soon as possible and, in any event, at least five school days prior to the meeting.

- 6.9 The meeting will be held following the procedures for hearing a complaint detailed in Appendix 1.
- 6.10 A written decision will be sent to the parent, the Chair of Governors and the Headteacher by the Chair of the GCP within ten school days of the hearing.
- 6.11 The decision of the Governors' Complaints Panel represents the end of the school's complaint procedure and in the decision letter parents will be informed of what options remain open to them should they remain dissatisfied.

## **7. Further options following Stage 2**

- 7.1 There will be occasions when, despite all stages of the complaint procedure having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If a complainant tries to re-open the same issue, they will be informed that the procedure has been completed and that the matter is now closed.

7.2 If the complainant believes the school did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact the Department for Education after they have completed Stage 2.

The complainant can refer their complaint to the Department for Education online at: [www.education.gov.uk/contactus](http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus), by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:

Department for Education  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by the School. They will consider whether the School has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint.

## Governors' Complaints Panel

### Procedures for hearing the complaint

#### Introduction

The aim of the meeting is to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the parent.

The Chair of the Governors' Complaints Panel (GCP) will ensure that the meeting is properly minuted.

Although the meeting will follow the structured order below, given potential sensitivities and anxieties, the Chair will endeavour to ensure that the proceedings are as informal as possible and that all parties are put at their ease.

The introduction of new information or witnesses, previously not notified to all parties, would be reason to adjourn the meeting so that everyone has time to consider and respond to the new information.

#### Order of the meeting

1. The Chair welcomes the parent and his/her companion and the Headteacher and the Chair of Governors (where the complaint has been addressed by the Chair of Governors at stage 2) and introduces the GCP.
2. The Chair explains the purpose of the meeting, the procedure, and that all written evidence has been made available to all parties.
3. The parent/companion explains the complaint, calling in witnesses if appropriate.
4. The GCP may question the parent/companion and witnesses.
5. The Headteacher/Chair of Governors present a response to the complaint, including action taken to address the complaint at stage 1 and 2 of the procedure and calling witnesses, if appropriate.
6. The GCP may question the Headteacher/Chair of Governors.
7. The Headteacher, together with the Chair of Governors, where applicable, is invited make a final statement.
8. The parent/companion is invited make a final statement.
9. The parent/companion, Headteacher, Chair of Governors and any witnesses leave the meeting.
10. The GCP considers the complaint and reaches a unanimous or majority decision. The GCP also decides what action (if any) to take to resolve the complaint and any organisational learning for the school.
11. The outcomes are confirmed in writing to both parties.
12. The records of the GCP meeting including a copy of the decision letter are retained in school along with all other records of the complaint.

**Complaint Form**  
**(please return to the School Office or to [complaints@enfieldgrammar.org](mailto:complaints@enfieldgrammar.org))**

Name of Complainant:
Date:
Name of Pupil (if relevant):
Address:
Telephone number:
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?):
What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

**Signed by Complainant:** .....