



Complaints Policy

Statutory

This policy explains how Wandsworth's Complaints Procedure operates for complaints relating to schools. The aim of the procedure is resolve complaints as quickly and as informally as possible. The idea of a 3 stage approach is to provide formal steps if concerns or problems cannot be resolved informally.

How do I make a complaint?

- If you wish to complain about the school, you should follow Step 1 (a) below, and contact the Executive Headteacher.
- If your complaint is about the Executive Headteacher, you should go directly to step 2 below and contact the Governing Body of the school.
- If your complaint is about the governing body, you should contact the Wandsworth mediation service directly.

How will my complaint be dealt with?

Step 1

- If you make a complaint, the Executive Headteacher will investigate it and contact you to discuss this further.

Step 2

- If you are unhappy with the way the Executive Headteacher has dealt with your complaint, or if your complaint is about the Executive Headteacher, you should contact the Chair of Governors at your school. The School Governors will look into your complaint and will write to you with a reply. **(See Appendix)**

Step 3

- If you are unhappy with the way the Governing Body has dealt with your complaint, or if your complaint is about the Governing Body, please refer to the Local Authority Mediation Service. Although the Local Authority no longer has a formal role to play in school complaints; it will offer to mediate between a complainant and a school, if both parties agree to this. The Local Authority will work with both parties to agree a satisfactory outcome.

Step 4

If you are still unhappy following mediation, contact the **Secretary of State for Education**. Making a complaint to the Department for Education should only happen after other routes have been followed. The exception to this may include such matters as child protection, or where a child is missing education.

Legal advice

You can get free legal advice on matters relating to children's education at Coram Children's Legal Centre.

How long will it take to deal with my complaint?

We aim to resolve all complaints as quickly as possible. If we cannot deal with your complaint immediately, we will send you an acknowledgement within 5 working days and a final answer within 10 working days. If your complaint is a complex one and cannot be answered within this time we will keep you regularly informed.

Complaints Procedures

Investigation of any complaint or review request will begin within 5 school days of receipt of the same, save in exceptional circumstances. The investigation will be completed as soon as reasonably practicable.

The Executive Headteacher or chosen representative will collect such other evidence as he/she deems necessary. Where this involves an interview with a member of staff, who is the subject of the complaint, that member of staff may be accompanied by a friend or representative if they wish.

The investigation will begin as soon as possible and when it has been concluded, the complainant, and the member of staff concerned will be informed in writing of the outcome.

The complainant is not entitled to access to any details of the investigation except for any statements that may have been provided by their child. Any information relating to the application of disciplinary procedures is strictly confidential.

The investigation of an allegation or a complaint should always be carried out thoroughly and responsibly, irrespective of whether the complaint appears to be trivial or serious. The outcome of such an investigation will have significance not only for the complainant but also for the member of staff against whom the complaint has been made.

Where the Executive Headteacher or Chair of Governors receives a complaint, it should be acknowledged formally and a commitment made that the complaint will be investigated and the outcome of the investigation notified to the complainant in due course.

It is essential that there is a clear understanding of the complaint. Where necessary the nature of the complaint should be confirmed with the complainant.

Once the complaint has been confirmed the investigator should establish who they wish to interview and what documentation they will need to review.

Arrangements should be agreed so that accurate notes can be taken of all interviews and the outcome of the investigation be accurately recorded.

Where children are potential witnesses, discretion should be exercised over their involvement. Pupils should only be interviewed when the nature of the complaint is sufficiently serious to warrant it and adult witnesses are not available. Only in extreme circumstances will younger pupils be interviewed.

Any interviews should be conducted as soon as possible to ensure that recollections are as fresh as possible and to minimise the possibility that evidence will become tainted through witnesses discussing alleged incidents with other persons.

In conducting interviews, the investigator should prepare the questions to be asked prior to the interview. These can always be supplemented during the interview. The investigator should allow the interviewee to answer in their own way. Their responses should be listened to attentively. Any temptation to cut an interviewee short or to seek to "lead" them must be resisted. The interviewee should be given the opportunity of providing other relevant information at the end of the interview.

Interviewees should, however, be advised that their responses must be confined to the substance of the complaint. Any attempt by the interviewee to introduce information relating to other members of staff or to issues unrelated to the complaint should be resisted. The investigator should avoid reaching conclusions or passing judgement until the investigation has been completed.

A summary of the process undertaken and the outcome of the investigation should be provided to both the complainant and the member of staff against whom the complaint has been made. Caution must be exercised in reporting back to the complainant as revealing certain details may prejudice the ability of the employee to continue in post.

Any recommendations should also be shared with the parties, unless there is good reason not so to do. Wherever possible, recommendations should be constructive and not punitive.

Appendix : Exemplar letter to the Chair of Governors

To: The Chairman of Governors

School

I am requesting the Governors to deal with my complaint. I have referred the complaint to the Executive Headteacher but I am not satisfied with the outcome.

Details of my complaint are as follows:

(You may wish to continue on a separate sheet of paper)

Name

Address

.....

Telephone

Date