

Vernon Park Primary School

Procedure for Non-Curricular Complaints

Introduction

This document sets out the procedures for dealing with complaints about Local Authority schools which are of a non-curricular nature. It does not relate to the National Curriculum which is dealt with under a separate statutory procedure.

A separate document details the procedures for dealing with complaints about the curriculum and related matters, as required by section 23(1) of the 1988 Education Reform Act.

Other statutory procedures also exist in respect of complaints about pupil admissions, pupil exclusions and the assessment of pupil's special educational needs.

The intention of these procedures is to ensure that all complaints are investigated and dealt with speedily, efficiently, fully and fairly and that all aspects of each case are given proper consideration.

Scope

These procedures cover all schools maintained by the LA.

The arrangements cover complaints made by parents and others about the actions of employees in its maintained schools.

General Principles

All complaining received in the division should be referred, in the first instance, to the LA who will ensure that the matter has been considered at school level before proceeding any further.

All complaints will be taken seriously and treated with care and sensitivity.

Complaints may be received by telephone, in writing, via the local councillor or MP or by a personal call to the LA. All complaints will be treated as being of equal importance, unless it is obvious from the nature of the complaint that it requires urgent attention, and therefore accorded greater priority as a result.

At all stages of the complaints procedure, there should be provision for the complainant to be accompanied by a friend, if they so wish.

Stages in the Procedure

Stage 1 (Informal)

The first stage in the procedure, having listened to, or read about the complaint, is to establish whether the complainant has attempted to resolve the situation by approaching the Head Teacher of the school directly. If this has not been done, the complainant will be advised, as a first step, to contact the Head Teacher. The Education Officer will offer to discuss the matter with the Head Teacher, if required, but will not do so as a matter of course if the complainant prefers to take up the matter directly with the Head Teacher.

Stage 2 (Informal)

If the complainant has already been raised directly with the school, and the complainant is not satisfied with the response received, the Education Officer will discuss the situation with the Head Teacher and attempt to resolve the matter at an informal level. In all cases, a written record of the discussions with both the complainant and the Head Teacher will be kept. The Chair of Governor's may also be involved in informal discussions at this stage, if requested by either the Head Teacher or the complainant.

The complainant will be informed by the Education Officer of the outcome of the investigation either by telephone or in writing.

Stage 3 (Formal)

If the complainant is still not satisfied after all informal avenues have been explored, a request will be made that the complaint be put in writing to the Chair of Governors of the school. The Chair will then convene a meeting of the appropriate Sub-Group of the Governing Body, and the complaint heard. Both the complainant and the school, in the person of the Head Teacher, must be given the opportunity to present their version of events and to ask questions of the other party. The decision of the Sub-Groups should be given as soon as possible, and confirmed to both parties in writing.

Notes:

- If an individual governor is approached with a complaint the complainant should be referred directly to the Head Teacher, and the governor should not normally become involved in the complaints procedure.
- If an individual governor decides to take up a complaint on behalf of an individual or a group, he/she should not take any part in the formal hearing of the complaint.

- Complaints should not be raised at full meetings of Governing body and should not be reported to the Governing Body until resolved by the appropriate Sub-Group, and then not in detail.

Stage 4 (Formal)

If the complainant is not satisfied with the decision of the Governing Body Sub-Group, the matter should be referred back to the LA, who will conduct a formal investigation of the way in which the complaint has been handled. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the actions of any of the Council's Officers in their handling of the matter, they should have recourse to the Council's Complaints Procedure, via the Chief Executive's Department. The complainant will be informed in writing of the final outcome of this process.

Stage 5 (Formal)

If the complainant is still not satisfied, they have the final option of recourse to either the Local Government Ombudsman or the Secretary of State for Education and Employment. This action cannot be taken until the LA's procedures for dealing with complaints (Stages 1-4) have been exhausted. This provision underlines the intention that complaints should, if possible, be resolved between the complainant and the School Governing Body/ LA.