



# **Hardenhuish School Complaints Policy And Procedure**

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the Office Manager**



# Hardenhuish School

## Complaints Policy and Procedure

### Introduction

The aim of this policy is to ensure that a concern or complaint is managed sympathetically, efficiently and at the appropriate level and resolved as soon as possible. Doing so is good practice, is fair to those concerned and helps to promote good relationships with our stakeholders and the local community. The School will try to resolve every complaint in a positive way with the aim of putting right a matter which may have gone wrong and, where necessary, reviewing our systems and procedures in the light of circumstances. This complaints procedure meets the standards; set out in the Education (Independent School Standards (England)) Regulations 2014, Schedule 1, Part 7.

The School recognises that a difficulty which is not effectively resolved as quickly as possible can be damaging to relationships and also to our School ethos and reputation. If the complaint is from a parent or pupil, the School offers an assurance that a complaint will not be taken amiss or adversely affect a pupil or his/her opportunities at the School.

### Timescales

The School aims to resolve any complaints in a timely manner. Timescales for each stage of the Complaints Procedure are set out below. For the purposes of this policy, a "working day" is defined as a weekday during term time, when the School is open, including TD days. Term dates are published on the School's website.

### Complaints Procedure

#### Stage 1: Informal Stage

**1.** We expect that most concerns, e.g. where somebody is seeking intervention, reconsideration or some other action to be taken, can be resolved informally. Examples might include dissatisfaction by a parent about some aspect of teaching or pastoral care, or by a neighbour about the height of the hedge.

**2. Notification:** Please raise the concern initially as follows:

**2.1.** Issues of a pastoral or welfare nature regarding a pupil or student should initially be raised with the relevant Pastoral Manager, or if medical in nature, to Matron.

**2.2.** Issues of an educational nature should initially be raised with the subject teacher or Head of Faculty/Department. Any issues to do with learning across a number of subject areas should be directed to the Learning Manager.

**2.3.** Financial matters, e.g. a query relating to invoice payments or payments for trips or visits should be directed to the Finance Office.

**2.4.** Administrative complaints, e.g. the school bus not running should be directed to the Office Manager.

**2.5.** Complaints of a serious nature will be re-directed to a senior member of staff.

**2.6.** Complaints from the local community should in the first instance be forwarded to the Headteacher who will re-direct them appropriately.

**2.7** Should a concern or complaint be raised with a member of staff other than those designated at item 2.1 to 2.4 above, he or she will redirect it to the appropriate individual under this policy.

**2.8** If the complaint is against the Headteacher, the complaint should be made/forwarded directly to the Chair of Governors via the Clerk to the Governing Body.

**3. Informal Resolution:** on receipt of a concern or a complaint, the member of staff identified in paragraph 2 above will investigate the matter, consulting with other staff as appropriate, and will attempt to resolve the matter informally via conversation/email/written correspondence with the complainant.

If within ten working days from the receipt of the complaint, the concern has not been resolved or is not expected to be resolved, or the complainant is not satisfied with the response to the complaint, it will then be notified as a formal complaint in accordance with Stage 2 below.

**4. Record of concerns:** In the case of concerns raised under Stage 1 of this procedure, a brief file record will be made of the concern and its resolution by the person dealing with the complaint, e.g. in the form of correspondence.

### **Stage 2: Formal Stage**

**5. Notification:** If a complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis under Stage 1 of this procedure or if the complainant is not satisfied with the response to the complaint, the complaint should be notified to the Headteacher in writing together with any relevant accompanying documentation.

**6. Acknowledgement:** The complaint will be acknowledged by telephone or in writing within five working days of receipt. The acknowledgement may indicate the action that is being taken and the likely timescale for resolution.

**7. Investigation and resolution:** The Headteacher may deal with the matter personally or may ask a senior member of staff to act as “investigator”. The investigator may request additional information from the complainant verbally or in writing. The investigator may also seek further information from other interested parties. The investigator will report his/her findings to the Headteacher who will then notify the complainant in writing of the outcome of the investigation, any decisions made and the reasons for them.

If the complaint is against the Headteacher, the Chair of Governors will call for a full report from the Headteacher and for all the relevant documents. The Chair of Governors may also call for a briefing from members of staff and will in most cases, speak to or meet with the complainant to discuss the matter further. Once the Chair of Governors is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed of the decision in writing together with the reasons for the decision.

**8. Timescale:** Every effort will be made by the School to complete the investigation and to inform the complainant of the outcome within four working weeks from the receipt of the complaint.

**9. Record of complaints:** The Headteacher’s PA will keep a log of all complaints received or referred under this stage of the procedure. The log will comprise the name of the complainant, the date the complaint was received, the matter complained of, and the manner and date of its resolution. Written records will also be kept of any meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

### **Stage 3: Panel Hearing**

**10. Notification:** If a complainant is dissatisfied with the response to the complaint under Stage 2 of this procedure, their complaint will be submitted to a Complaints Panel for review by the complainant writing to the Clerk to the Governing Body within five working days of receiving the decision. This letter should give full details of the complaint and enclose all relevant documents. The letter will be acknowledged within five working days of receipt, indicating the action that is being taken and the likely timescale.

**11. Complaints Panel:** The Governing Body (or committee of the Governing Body) will appoint a Complaints Panel which will consist of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. One panel member shall be independent of the management and running of the School, i.e. not a governor.

**12. Convening the Panel:** The Clerk to the Governing Body will convene the Complaints Panel as soon as is reasonably practicable. Wherever reasonably practicable this will be within ten working days of receipt of the notification. Five working days' written notice will be given of the date, time and place of the Complaints Panel Hearing, together with brief details of the Panel members who will be present. If the Complaints Panel deems it necessary, it may request further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars together with copies of additional documents the complainant wishes the Complaints Panel to consider must be sent to the Clerk to the Governing Body at least three clear working days prior to the hearing.

**13. Attendance:** The complainant will be invited to attend the hearing and may be accompanied by one other person such as a relative, teacher, or friend, who is not providing legal representation, but rather acting as a personal supporter, but who has no role in the meeting. The Clerk to the Governing Body or other nominated person will also attend the hearing in order to keep a record of the proceedings.

**14.** The Chair of the Complaints Panel will conduct the hearing in such a way as to ensure that all those present have the opportunity of asking questions and making comments in an appropriate manner.

**15. Adjournment:** The Chair may at his discretion adjourn the hearing for further investigation of any relevant issue.

**16. Decision:** After due consideration of the matters discussed at the hearing, the Complaints Panel will notify the complainant of their decision, findings and any recommendations, as soon as possible. These will subsequently be confirmed to the complainant (and where relevant, the person complained about) in writing within ten working days. A copy of the Complaints Panel's findings and recommendations will be made available for inspection on the School premises by the Governing Body and the Headteacher. If the complainant is not satisfied with the School's handling of their complaint, the Clerk to the Governing Body will direct the complainant to the Education Funding Agency's schools complaints form: ([Complaint Form](#))

**17. Confidentiality:** A written record will be kept of all complaints, and of whether they are resolved at Stage 1 or 2 or proceed to a Complaints Panel hearing. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential in accordance with data protection regulations except where disclosure is required for legal reasons or where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them. Papers relating to complaints will be stored securely, and in due course securely destroyed, in accordance with the School's Security of Information Policy.