

Complaints Policy at Hadrian School

1. INTRODUCTION

At Hadrian School our priority is to meet the needs and aspirations of pupils, Parents/Carers and the wider school community where ever possible. With this in mind, we endeavour to offer high quality stimulating and relevant educational provision and resources for our pupils. Staff aim to act professionally and courteously in all situations and at all times. We are aware, however, that for a number of reasons communications may break down, and in these instances we will utilise comments and complaints in order to improve the quality of service provided by Hadrian School.

Hadrian School endeavours to handle all complaints as sensitively as possible and in such a way as to improve its services for Pupils, Parents / Carers and the wider School Community. This Policy will be available for all to consult on our school website and meets the requirements of section 29 of the Education Act 2002.

The following general principles, as recommended by Newcastle Local Authority, have been adopted by Hadrian School:

- Treat complainants with respect and confidentiality
- The desirability for settling differences informally and impartially
- The need for more formal mechanisms for dealing fully, fairly and effectively with complaints which have proved impossible to settle informally
- The assurance that Parents / Carers, Staff and Governors are fully informed of the procedures
- Make sure any decisions we make are lawful, rational, reasonable and proportionate.

2. AIMS

In addition, the Hadrian School Complaints Policy aims to:

- Promote an understanding of the School
- Listen to our Pupils, Parents / Carers and the wider school community
- Welcome complaints as a positive means of promoting Pupil/Parent satisfaction
- Use complaints as a means of identifying opportunities to improve services
- Seek to resolve complaints swiftly and amicably
- Have clear and published procedures for dealing with complaints
- Keep complainants informed about progress as well as the eventual outcome
- Manage the expectations of the complainant
- Provide redress where a complainant is found to have substance
- Monitor the pattern and frequency of complaints
- Review regularly the effectiveness of complaints procedures, at least annually.

3. GUIDELINES / PROCEDURES

Hadrian School Governing Body has adopted model guidelines and procedures as agreed by the Governing Body based on DfE guidance. The DfE explain the difference between a concern and a complaint as follows; a concern is defined as ‘an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought’ and a complaint defined as ‘an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or lack of actions’. It is essential to remember that when faced with any complaint all parties should seek to deal with each stage WITHIN 15 DAYS of receiving notification of the complaint or of the continuing dissatisfaction of the complainant. Complaints should be treated in confidence and information only given on a need to know basis. It is not advisable for details of a complaint to be discussed at Full Governing Body meetings as this may prejudice any involvement of Governors at a later stage. However, the Governing Body may be required to consider recommendations that come out of a complaint process. Additionally, complainants should also refrain from jeopardising a fair and impartial process by breaching confidentiality or by making public comments, which could be detrimental to the professional reputation of a member of staff or the school.

Social Media

In order for complaints to be resolved as quickly and fairly as possible, we request that complainants do not discuss complaints publically via social media such as Facebook, Parent Forums and Twitter. Complaints will be dealt with confidentially for those involved, and we expect complainants to observe confidentiality also.

3.1 Complaints about Hadrian School

Complaints about Hadrian School issues should be raised, in the first instance with the Head Teacher. If the complaint is about the Head Teacher the complaint should go to the Chair of Governors. Their contact details are available on the school website.

Who can complain?

Anyone can complain, if they are affected by Hadrian School and its educational provision.

How can a complaint be made?

Complaints may be made in person, by telephone or in writing/email. A complaints form can be requested from the Admin Team at Hadrian School with a copy of the School Complaints Policy.

3.2 Informal Complaints

An informal complaint is an initial approach by an individual to Hadrian School expressing dissatisfaction with some aspect of the provision, services, its action or inaction. Informal complaints, however made, are complaints which are resolved quickly and simply, usually at the point of service delivery, and do not involve detailed or lengthy investigation.

A person with a complaint will normally seek to contact the member of staff responsible for the relevant issue. Should the complaint not be resolved the complainant will be referred to the Head Teacher or Deputy Head Teacher. The Head or Deputy will generally make every effort to deal with the issue informally and on some occasions may feel the need to inform the Chairperson of the Governing Body. Should an initial informal discussion not resolve the situation, and the complainant indicates their continuing dissatisfaction, then the Head Teacher will convene an interview to review the issue in detail.

People who make informal complaints will be given information regarding follow up procedures. If they are dissatisfied with the outcome of their initial complaint, and wish to take the matter further, then a formal complaint can be lodged.

3.3 Formal Complaints

A complaint becomes formal when the complainant remains dissatisfied after making an informal complaint, or alternatively, when, from the outset, a complaint cannot be dealt with simply and quickly and requires further investigation.

When a complaint becomes formal, care will be taken to:

- Clarify the complaint in detail. What has happened? Who was involved? What the complainant feels would put things right.
- Clarify the person dealing with the complaint
- Check whether the complainant needs support of any kind to explain the investigation procedure (e.g. English as an additional language)
- Monitor the progress of the complaint by the Head Teacher or an appointed Governor
- Make a full written response within 15 working days or where this is not possible, send a reply indicating progress to date and an estimate of time needed to make a full response
- Give the complainant the name of the person dealing with the complaint
- Advise the complainant how to proceed if they are still not satisfied.

A complaint of serious mal-administration should be progressed immediately as a formal complaint. The Chairperson of the Governing Body should be the first person to approach where the matter could involve disciplinary or legal action against the Head Teacher. The papers relating to the complaint will be passed to the Chairperson of the Governing Body who will decide how the complaint is to be progressed.

Investigation

Meetings will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless the complainant's own disability or special needs require it. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

The Chairperson of the Governing Body will ensure:

- The complaint is quickly referred to the relevant Committee (or to the Head Teacher)
- The complaint is reported to the whole Governing Body when resolved
- All parties to the complaint are given a fair hearing
- The decision of the Committee is given, in writing, to the complainant
- The complainant is told of any right of appeal if the decision is given against him or her.

3.4 Appeals

Any appeals to the final decision will be heard by a separate Governing Body Panel who were not involved in previous aspects of the investigation. This panel will have access to the existing records of the complaint's progress. The complainant will be given **five days'** notice of the Review Hearing which will be held at the convenience of the school rather than the complainant. The complainant and Review Panel ideally will meet face to face. Each will have an opportunity to set out written or oral submissions prior to the meeting. Witnesses may be called to present evidence, if appropriate. The final decisions of the Appeals Panel will be shared in writing within three days of the Panel meeting.

3.5 Complaints received outside of term time

We will consider any complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period. We will not respond to any correspondence over a weekend or a Bank Holiday.

3.6 Unreasonable complaints

Where a complainant raises an issue that has already been dealt with via the school's complaints procedure, and that procedure has been exhausted, the school **will not** reinvestigate the complaint except in exceptional circumstances, for example where new evidence has come to light. If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the Chair of the Governing Body or their designate, is able to inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed. While Parents/Carers/Guardians of children should have the opportunity to raise issues about emerging problems, all members of the school community have a right to expect that their school is a safe place in which to work and learn. Therefore, violence, threatening or aggressive behaviour, repeated harassment or racially aggravated behaviour, or abuse against school staff or other members of the school community will not be tolerated.

Unreasonable complaints include the following scenarios:

- The complainant refuses to co-operate with the school's relevant procedures
- The complainant changes the basis of the complaint as the complaint progresses
- The complainant seeks an unrealistic outcome
- Excessive demands are placed on the time of staff and school governors with excessive emails, letters or phone calls

- The complainant is clearly intending to aggravate the school and its community
- The complainant acts in a way that is abusive, defamatory, vexatious or offensive.

The Head Teacher (Or Chair of Governors) will use their discretion to choose not to continue investigate complaints under any of these circumstances. Where Parent/Carers are abusive and vexatious in their approach, school staff will be encouraged to seek advice from their professional bodies and will be protected at all costs. In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the Police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from our school site.

Where the school decide to take this course of action, they must inform the Chair of Governors that they have done so, explaining the nature of the complaint and why they have chosen not to investigate. If the Chair deems it appropriate to, they can redirect the Head Teacher to investigate the complaint. The full complaints procedure will commence from stage one on this direction. If the Chair upholds the Head Teacher's decision not to look into the complaint and the complainant deems this decision to be so unreasonable that no other rational body in the same position would have made that decision, then the complainant may write to the Department for Education.

3.7 Remedy

Where a complaint is found to be justified a remedy should be provided. A remedy needs to be appropriate to the complaint and in virtually all cases will include an apology. In some cases the remedy will be the provision of a particular service requested by the complainant and in others it may require a change in school procedure. There may be circumstances where the complainant has sustained loss or suffering. In such cases, financial compensation proportionate to the loss may be considered, and in all such cases a report to the Governing Body will be required before payments are made.

3.8 Withdrawal of a Complaint

If a complainant wishes to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

3.9 Annual Review

Annually, a brief report will be presented to the Governing Body which will detail:

- The number of complaints
- The subjects or issues in question
- The time taken to resolve complaints
- The assessment of complainant satisfaction
- Changes brought about as a result of reviewing complaints.

This report will normally be presented for the previous year at the Summer Term Governors' Meeting. The Complaints Log is kept by the Admin Team. Formal complaints will be kept for three years.

3.10 Anonymous Complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Head Teacher or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

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.

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

The complainant can refer their complaint to the Department for Education online at: 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.

This Policy does not cover complaints relating to the following areas;

Admissions, Collective Worship, Exclusions or Suspensions, Freedom of Information or Subject Access Requests, Safeguarding, SEND, Staff Discipline/Grievances

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Hadrian School Complaints Form

Please complete and return to the Head Teacher who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

chris.rollings@hadrian.newcastle.sch.uk or to the Chair of Governors at
marian.stokle@outlook.com

Your name:
Pupil's name (if relevant):
Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):
Address: Postcode: Day time telephone number: Evening telephone number:

Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it.

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.

Signature:

Date:

Official use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By who:

Complaint referred to:

Date:

Please feel free to expand with any additional information you think may inform your concerns.