

Norton Junior School Concerns & Complaints Procedure



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The majority of concerns from parents, carers and others are handled under the following general procedures. The procedure is divided into three stages;

Informal Stage	aims to resolve the concern through informal contact at the appropriate level in school
Stage One	is the first formal stage at which a written complaint will be considered and investigated by the School's Complaints Lead. Depending on the complaint this might be the head teacher, a designated person in school or a governor who has responsibility for dealing with complaints
Stage Two	involves a complaints appeal panel of governors and is the next stage once stage one has been worked through

Progression through each of these stages is explained below:

Informal Stage

1. Many concerns will be dealt with informally when you make them known to us.
2. Should you have a concern it would be usual to raise this with the appropriate person as soon as possible after the matter arose. The first point of contact should be your child's teacher or the member of staff involved with your concern. This could be by telephone, email, in writing or in person. Should you raise your concern in person, please remember it may not be suitable at that time to be able to discuss any issues in full.
3. All staff and governors are aware of the process with regards to receiving a concern or complaint. Once your concern is made known to us, we will contact you as soon as possible to arrange an appointment with the appropriate member of staff to ensure there is sufficient time for you to discuss your concerns.
4. Any agreed actions or monitoring of the situation you have a concern about, will be communicated clearly to you.
5. If necessary we will contact appropriate people who may be able to assist us with our enquiries into your concern.
6. We will aim to update you on the progress of our enquiries into your concern within 10 school working days. Once we have responded to your concern, you will have the opportunity of asking for the matter to be considered further.
7. If you are still dissatisfied following this informal approach, your concern will become a formal complaint and we will deal with it at the next stage.

Stage One: Formal Consideration of a Complaint

1. Stage one in our procedures will require submission of a written formal complaint. This stage applies where you are not happy with the outcome after following the informal stage as outlined above.
2. Your written complaint needs to be submitted on a school Stage One Complaint Form. When you have completed the form it should be addressed to the head teacher of Norton Junior School. If, however, your complaint concerns the head teacher, it should be sent to the school marked "for the attention of the Chair of Governors". If your complaint is about the Chair of Governors or any individual governor it should be made in writing and sent to "Governor Support Service, Doncaster Council, Civic Building, Floor 3, Waterdale, Doncaster DN1 3BU". See *Appendix A: Complaints Form*.



Norton Junior School

Concerns & Complaints Procedure



XP.
TRUST

3. The Stage One Complaint Form should be received by the school within five school working days of the conclusion of the informal stage.
4. We will acknowledge your complaint in writing within five school working days of receiving it and a copy of the school's Concerns and Complaints Procedures will be enclosed.
5. Normally we would expect to respond in full within 15 school working days of receiving the written complaint. If this is not possible we will write to explain the reason for the delay and let you know when we hope to be able to provide a full response.
6. At stage one, written complaints (that are **not** concerns about the head teacher) will be considered / investigated by the School Complaint Lead which could be either the head teacher, a designated person in school or a designated governor who has special responsibility for dealing with complaints. The School Complaint Lead will not be the same person who dealt with the concern at the Informal Stage.
7. If the complaint is about the head teacher the Chair of Governors, or appropriate designated member of the Governing Body, will become the School Complaint Lead and the following procedure will still apply. The Chair of Governors in this instance may seek advice, information and guidance from the Local Authority and may also designate another governor to share the role as School Complaint Lead.
8. As part of our consideration of your complaint, you may be invited to a meeting with the School Complaint Lead to discuss the complaint and fill in any additional details required. If you wish, you can ask someone to accompany you to this meeting.
9. The School Complaint Lead may also be accompanied by a suitable person at this meeting.
10. Following the meeting with you, the School Complaint Lead will, where necessary, talk to witnesses and take statements from others involved or present at the time of the incident / concern in question.
11. If the complaint is against a member of staff, it will be dealt with under the school's internal confidential procedures, as required by law. Some areas of complaint are subject to statutory procedures and there is clear guidance on how such issues should be dealt with. *See Appendix B: Complaints not in Scope of the Procedure*
12. The School Complaint Lead will ensure accurate, signed and dated records are kept of all meetings, telephone conversations and relevant documentation relating to the investigation.
13. When all the relevant facts have been established and the investigation concluded, a written response will be sent to you. This will include the School Complaint Lead's decision, the reasons for it and, if follow up action is needed, it will say what we are proposing to do. You may be invited to a meeting to discuss the outcome of your complaint.
14. The School Complaint Lead who investigates your complaint may decide that we have done all we can to resolve the complaint, in which case at this point the complaint will be closed.
15. If you are unhappy with the way the stage one process has been implemented; feel the school have not fully acted on your complaint or you are not happy about the way they have acted you may wish to proceed to Stage Two, as described below.

Stage Two: Consideration by a Governor Appeal Panel

If a complaint has progressed through stage one and you are not happy with the way in which the complaint has been handled, you can proceed to Stage Two. This is a formal appeal process, and the ultimate recourse at school level.



Norton Junior School Concerns & Complaints Procedure



XP.
TRUST

The purpose of this arrangement is to give you the chance to present your arguments to a panel of Governors who have no prior knowledge of the case and who can, therefore, consider it without prejudice.

However, the aim of a panel is **not to rehear the complaint**. This is not about investigating the complaint again or looking at additional things you are not happy about. The purpose of the appeal is to review how the complaint has been investigated and to determine whether this has been conducted fairly. It is there to reassure you that we have taken the complaint seriously and implemented a full and fair process.

The Governor Appeal Panel operates according to the following formal procedures:

1. The Stage Two Complaint Form must be received within ten school working days of the date on the Stage One conclusion of investigation letter.
2. Your written complaint needs to be submitted on a school 'Stage Two Complaints Form' (See Appendix C attached) and should include clear reasons why you want to progress to Stage Two of the complaints procedure. The completed form should be sent to the school marked "for the attention of the Chair of Governors".
3. Your complaint will be acknowledged in writing within five school working days of receipt and you will be asked whether you wish to provide any further written documentation in support of your appeal.
4. The governing body will convene a panel of three governors and will aim to meet within 20 school working days from receipt of the Complaints Form.
5. The School Complaint Lead will be asked to prepare for the appeal panel a pack containing all records and documentation relating to the investigation and outcome. The panel can request additional information from other sources if necessary.
6. You will be informed, at least five school working days in advance, of the date, time and place of the meeting. We hope you will feel comfortable with the meeting taking place in the school but we will do what we can to make alternative arrangements if you prefer.
7. With the letter, you will where appropriate receive any relevant correspondence or reports regarding Stage One and you will be asked whether you wish to submit further written evidence to the panel. Any additional documentation must be submitted at least three school working days prior to the review panel meeting.
8. The letter will explain what will happen at the panel meeting and if you wish, you can ask someone to accompany you. The choice of person to accompany you is your own, but it is usually best to ask someone in whom you have confidence but who is not directly connected with the school. They are there to give you support but also to witness the proceedings and to speak on your behalf if you wish.
9. If it is necessary, the School Complaints Lead may, with the prior agreement of the chair of the panel, invite relevant witnesses directly involved in matters raised by you to attend the meeting.
10. The chair of the panel will bear in mind that the nature of the meeting can be intimidating for you. They will do his or her best to put you at your ease, ensuring everyone is treated with respect and courtesy and has the opportunity of putting forward their case without undue interruption.
11. No evidence or witnesses previously undisclosed should be introduced into the meeting. If either party wishes to do so, there will be a short adjournment so that the other party has a fair opportunity to consider and respond to the new evidence.



Norton Junior School Concerns & Complaints Procedure



XP.
TRUST

12. The chair of the panel will ensure that minutes of the meeting are recorded. Please understand that any decision to share the minutes with you, the complainant, is a matter for the panel's discretion and you do not have an automatic right to see or receive a copy as the minutes are the property of the governing body. Since such minutes usually name individuals, they are understandably of a sensitive and therefore confidential nature.
13. During the meeting, you can expect there to be opportunities for:
 - the panel to hear you explain your reason for why your case should be heard at stage two
 - the panel to hear the School Complaint Leads case in response
 - you to raise questions via the chair of the panel
 - you to be questioned by the School Complaint Lead through the chair of the panel
 - the panel members to be able to question you and the School Complaint Lead and for both of you to make a final statement
14. In closing the meeting, the chair will explain that the panel will now consider its decision and that written notice of the decision will be sent to you and the headteacher within three school working days. All participants other than the panel and the clerk will then leave.
15. The panel will then consider the process followed and all the evidence presented in order to:
 - reach a decision on the case
 - decide on the appropriate action to be taken, if necessary. For example if the panel decide the correct process was not followed they may ask for another investigation of the complaint, either by the original investigator, themselves, or a third party depending on the circumstances
 - recommend to the governing body, where appropriate, changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that similar problems do not happen again
16. The clerk to the appeal panel will write to you and the headteacher outlining the decision of the panel.
17. A copy of all correspondence and notes will be retained on file but separate from pupils' personal records.

Closure of a complaint

Very occasionally, a school may feel that it needs, regretfully, to close a complaint where the complainant is still dissatisfied. We will do all we can to help to resolve a complaint against the school but sometimes it is simply not possible to meet all of the complainant's wishes. Sometimes it is simply a case of "agreeing to disagree".

It can be extremely time consuming and can detract from our responsibility to look after the interests of all the children in our care if a complainant persists in making representations to the school for example to the head teacher, designated governor, chair of governors or anyone else. For this reason, we are entitled to close correspondence (including personal approaches, as well as letters and telephone calls) on a complaint where we feel that we have taken all reasonable action to resolve the complaint and that the complaint has exhausted our official process, especially where the complainant's action is causing distress to staff and/or pupils.

The chair of governors may decide that every reasonable action has been undertaken to resolve the complaint and that a complaints review panel would not help to move things forward.

Where you have been through the school's internal complaints procedures (with or without recourse to a complaints review panel) and are still unhappy with the outcome or decision from the governing body, you can contact the Secretary of State for Education:

DfE website: www.education.gov.uk **Telephone:** 0370 000 2288 or **Write to:** The School Complaints Unit (SCU), Department for Education, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD.



Stage 1 Complaints Form – Appendix A



Please complete within 5 school working days of the conclusion of the informal complaint stage and return to the Headteacher, senior teacher or governor as appropriate who will acknowledge receipt of the complaint and the actions to be taken within 15 school working days.

Your Name:

Pupil's Name:

Your relationship to the pupil:

Address:

..... Post Code:

Home Tel. Number: Mobile Tel. number:

Please give details of your Stage 1 Complaint:

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



[Empty box for writing the response]

What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your concern/complaint? (Who did you speak to and what was the response?)

Signature: Date:

Official Use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By Who:

Complaint referred to:

Date:

Some areas of complaint are subject to statutory procedures and there is clear guidance on how such issues should be dealt with. These include:-

• Admissions to schools	Concerns should be raised with the Local Authority. Complaints about Admissions appeals are dealt with by the Local Government Ombudsman.
• Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs	Concerns should be raised with the Local Authority.
• Exclusion from school	Information about raising concerns on exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions
• Staff grievances and disciplinary	These matters will invoke the school's internal grievance procedures. Complainants will not be informed of the outcome of any investigation.
• Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities	Other service providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. They should be contacted directly.
• Matters likely to require a child protection investigation	Concerns should be raised with the Local Authority.
• Whistleblowing	Schools have an internal whistleblowing procedure for their employees and voluntary staff. Other concerns can be raised with Ofsted by telephone on: 0300 123 3155, via email at: whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk or by writing to: WBHL, Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD. The Department for Education is also a prescribed body for whistleblowing in education.

The head teacher will in most cases determine which, if any of these statutory procedures apply. In this instance, the head teacher may seek information and guidance from the Local Authority.

If one of these statutory procedures needs to be invoked at some point during the investigation of a more general complaint the complaints procedure should be suspended until the statutory procedure has been concluded.

Although prejudicial incidents in respect of race, gender, religion, disability or sexual orientation are subject to a statutory procedure, the Equality Act 2010, this does not necessitate the complaints procedure being suspended.

Stage 2 Complaints Form – Appendix C



Please complete and return to school 'For the attention of the Chair of Governors' within 10 school working days of the date on the Stage 1 conclusion of investigation letter. Your complaint will be acknowledged within 5 days of receipt and a panel of three governors will aim to arrange an appeal panel meeting within 20 school working days to which you will be invited.

Your Name:

Pupil's Name:

Your relationship to the pupil:

Address:

..... Post Code:

Home Tel. Number: Mobile Tel. number:

Please explain why you wish to progress to Stage 2 of the Complaints Procedure:

What elements of the process do you deem to be unfair?



If there is any further information you wish to submit in support of your Stage 2 complaint, please indicate below and attach to this form.

Signature: Date:

Official Use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By Who:

Complaint referred to:

Date: