

LLISWERRY HIGH SCHOOL

COMPLAINTS POLICY STATEMENT

PHILOSOPHY

- The school seeks to adopt a positive attitude towards complaints which may come from many sources including parents, pupils, staff and our neighbours in the community.
- Whilst we regret that anyone should be given cause to complain, we will be grateful to be informed of any problems associated with the conduct of the school and we will be anxious to put matters right.
- The School will deal with complaints promptly, fairly and fully, irrespective of race, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, ability, disability or social class.
- When a parent has cause to visit school, we welcome the presence of friends or relatives in support. We recognise how nervous some parents are when visiting school to make a complaint. We also endeavour to meet the access needs of parents so that they can fully take part in the procedure, e.g. providing information in different formats, providing interpreters, changing the location of the meeting etc.
- We work in partnership with parents and the community. Good relations are based on mutual respect and a willingness to listen to other points of view.
- We recognise that a specific complaint may point to wider issues which will also need investigation.
- We wish to investigate all complaints thoroughly, fairly and as quickly as possible, keeping the complainant fully informed of progress.
- When investigating a complaint a member of staff will try to arrive at a complete solution. However, we recognise that some complaints will not be resolved to the complete satisfaction of all parties. The School will provide a further opportunity for a complainant to pursue such an unresolved issue before referring it to the governors or to the LEA.
- The best way to resolve a complaint is through informal discussion between the complainant and the School. The LEA will seldom become involved.

A STAGED PROCEDURE

The School will try to deal quickly and effectively with every complaint at an informal level in the first instance. However, in some cases, this will fail to resolve the matter and it may then be taken through the more formal stages set out below.

1. Informal complaints to the School
 2. Formal written complaints to the School
 3. Complaints to the Governing Body
 4. Complaints to the LEA
- There are specific procedures for serious complaints about SEN statements, accusations of child abuse, the national curriculum and religious worship. Advice about these matters can be obtained from either the School or the LEA. This policy is for complaints that do not fall into these other categories.

STAGE 1: Informal Complaints to the School

- The member of staff dealing with a complaint should express regret that the complaint was necessary and should assure the complainant that it will be taken seriously and

thoroughly and fairly investigated as quickly as possible. A slow response can be a cause of further complaint.

- No complaint should be overlooked on the grounds that it is too trivial.
- If possible, the complainant should be invited to come in to school to discuss the matter further. In some cases, a prompt home visit will prove to be the best course of action.
- In most cases, the appropriate Head of Key Stage will investigate and respond to a complaint from a parent.
- Every effort will be made to contact the parent within 24 hours of the time of receiving a complaint by letter or being informed that a parent is trying to make contact by telephone.
- A full written record will be kept, both of the complaint and of the investigation. These notes will be circulated to all concerned before being placed in the pupil file.
- At any stage in the complaints process, the School or the complainant can contact the LEA for impartial and confidential advice on matters of procedure.

Where a complainant comes into School without prior arrangement.

- First contact will usually be with a member of the support staff at reception. Although the complainant may be very angry, she or he must be received courteously and a member of the senior staff must be summoned without delay.
- The complainant should be taken to a suitable office. Complaints should not be discussed in the foyer, in the school corridors or elsewhere in the hearing of the pupils. Visitors to the school are not allowed to enter corridors or classrooms without the knowledge of senior staff.
- The member of senior staff should listen carefully to the complaint. It is polite to avoid interrupting, not to sit behind a desk and not to take notes during the initial stages of the interview.
- Having received the complaint, assurances must be given that the matter will be fully and fairly investigated and that a response will be made as soon as possible.
- If the complaint concerns a particular member of staff, confrontation between the complainant and that member of staff must be avoided. An interview between the two may be appropriate at a later stage when tempers have cooled.
- Where a complaint is made against any member of staff, she or he must be informed of its nature and given a chance to comment before any further investigation takes place. She or he may wish to seek advice from a friend or union representative.
- Complaints which reflect on the standard of teaching or conduct of lessons must be discussed with the appropriate Head of Department.
- If the member of staff investigating a complaint considers that the matter may lead to litigation, investigation should be suspended and further advice sought from the Headteacher or Assistant Headteacher.

STAGE 2: Formal Complaints to the School

- If the complaint is made in the form of a letter or a note to the school or if no satisfactory resolution has been arrived at by informal means.
 - I. Any such letter should be passed on to a member of the Senior Management Team who will deal with it.
 - II. It may still be possible to use the informal stage 1 procedure through discussion with the complainant.
 - III. The complaint will be acknowledged by telephone within 24 hours or by letter within 5 days.

- IV. If the matter is taken as a formal complaint, a written response will be made within 10 days, outlining the investigation and setting out the conclusions and the action taken.
- V. At the end of the letter there will be a clear statement that further consideration will be given to the complaint if the complainant is still dissatisfied.
- VI. If the complaint mentions members of staff by name, they must be fully informed of the details of the complaint as soon as possible.

STAGE 3: Complaints to the Governors

- If a complainant is not satisfied with the efforts of the School to seek resolution at either an informal or formal level, the complainant may wish to complain to the Chairman of the Governing Body. She or he will consult with the Clerk and determine a suitable course of action.
- A complaint to the Governing Body must take the form of a letter. The complainant should have allowed reasonable time for the School to investigate the issue and should have accepted any reasonable offer by the School to discuss the result of its investigation and take part in any process of mediation. No new complaints can be raised at this stage.
- If a formal complaint is made about the conduct of the Headteacher, a course of action will be determined by the Chairman of the Governing Body with the help of the Clerk. Such a matter would not be investigated by the School.
- Informal complaints are sometimes made to individual members of the Governing Body. The details of these are not discussed at Full Governors Meetings. The individual governor will deal with them in accordance with the staged procedure, liaising as appropriate with the complainant, the School and the Chairman of Governors.

Actions that may be taken by the Governors.

- I. Ask the LEA to investigate on their behalf. If the complaint is serious and could have a disciplinary outcome, the LEA will advise governors that a professional investigation is necessary and will undertake to carry it out on behalf of Governors.
- II. Refer the complaint to their own Complaints Panel. The Clerk will arrange a meeting within 15 days, copying the text of the formal complaint to the Headteacher to allow him or her to submit a written response.
- III. The Complaints Panel will consist of three governors who have no involvement with the complaint. The Clerk will circulate copies of all papers submitted to panel members, complainant, Headteacher, Chair of Governors and LEA, at least 5 school days before the meeting.
- IV. The Clerk will invite the complainant and any others concerned with the complaint to attend the meeting.
- V. Complainants and members of staff who may need to attend the meeting can be accompanied by one friend or representative.
- VI. The Complaints Panel will assess the evidence and discuss the issues with those attending the meeting. They will come to a decision about the complaint and determine what action should be taken. They may refer matters of principle or general practice for discussion more generally by Governors or by the School.
- VII. The Clerk will circulate a letter to all parties setting out the outcome of the meeting within 7 days.
- VIII. No further appeal to the Governing Body is available but a grievance arising from a member of staff will be heard separately according to grievance procedures.

STAGE 4: Complaints to the LEA

- If the complainant is still dissatisfied after following the procedures in Stages 1 to 3, she or he may ask the LEA to investigate further.
- Such a complaint will be heard by the LEA within 15 days of notification.
- The complaint will be investigated by an Officer who has had no previous dealings with the matter.
- In extreme cases, a complainant might have recourse to the Education Minister or the Local Government Ombudsman. In such cases, the Council will advise on procedure.