

Leytonstone School Complaints Policy



Approved by:	F. Sinclair	Date: March 2020
Last reviewed on:	March 2020	
Next review due by:	March 2021	

Leytonstone School: Complaints Procedure

Introduction

Since 1 September 2003 Governing Bodies of all maintained schools and maintained nursery schools in England are required to have in place a procedure to deal with complaints relating to the school. This also includes any community facilities or services that the school provides. It is also a requirement by law that the procedure be publicised.

Concerns

Occasionally parents have concerns about an aspect of their child's education or welfare at school. This could include issues concerning the school's approach to aspects of the curriculum, homework, behaviour or any other issue.

In the first instance, it is usual to speak to the pupil's class teacher, or contact the school office to arrange an appointment to discuss the concern. Staff will always aim to help to resolve a concern.

If parents wish to make their concerns formal, the school has defined procedures for handling this.

Complaints: overview

As mentioned above the usual procedure would be to speak to the child's form tutor or class teacher, or to arrange an appointment to discuss the complaint with whomever the parent wishes to speak to.

There are three stages to the nationally accepted procedure:

Stage 1: Aims to resolve the concern through informal contact at the appropriate level in school.

Stage 2: Is the first **formal stage** where written complaints are considered by the Head Teacher or a designated member of the governing body who has responsibility for dealing with complaints.

Stage 3: Is the stage following Stage 2 if the response or outcome to the complaint is not seen to be satisfactory. It involves the governing body complaints review panel. At this stage, the decision of the review panel is final.

If the complainant is unhappy with the outcome after Stage 3, or the way that the complaint has been handled at school level, they can write to the Secretary of State at the following address:

The Secretary of State
Department for Education
20 Great Smith St, Westminster, London SW1P 3BT

Complaints: Details of the process

Stage 1 – Your initial contact with the school

1. Many concerns will be dealt with informally when they are made known to the school. The first point of contact should be the child's class teacher or form tutor.
2. Contact will be made face-to-face, by telephone or in writing as soon as possible (but within 72 hours) after the concern is made known to the school. All members of staff know how to refer, if necessary, to the appropriate person with responsibility for particular issues raised by the complainant.
3. The complainant will be updated on the progress and outcome of the school's investigation (within 10 working days).
4. If the complainant is still dissatisfied following this informal approach, the concern will become a formal complaint and the school will deal with it at the next stage.

Stage 2 - Formal consideration of your complaint

1. The written complaint should be addressed to the Head Teacher. If, however, the complaint concerns the Head Teacher personally, it should be sent to Governor Services marked "For the attention of the Chair of Governors".
2. The complaint will be acknowledged in writing, with a copy of the school's complaints procedures as soon as possible after receiving it. This will be within three working days.
3. A full response will be made to the complainant within ten working days but if it is not possible to respond within this timescale, then the complainant should be informed of the reason for the delay.
4. As part of the consideration of the complaint, the complainant might be invited to a meeting to discuss the complaint and provide additional details. The complainant may be accompanied by a suitable person if felt necessary.
5. The Head Teacher, or Chair of Governors may also be accompanied by a suitable person if they wish.
6. 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.
7. Once the relevant facts have been established, a written response will be sent to the complainant. This will provide a full explanation of the Head Teacher's or Chair of Governors' decision and the reasons for it.
8. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of the Stage 2 investigation and the school's findings, they could request to proceed to Stage 3.

Stage 3 – Consideration by a complaints review panel

- a) If the concern has already been through Stages 1 and 2 and the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, the Chair of Governors will instruct the Clerk to set up a complaints review panel to consider it. This is a formal process.
- b) The purpose of this arrangement is to give the complainant an opportunity to have their complaint heard in front of a panel of governors who have no prior knowledge of the details of the complaint and who can, therefore, consider it without prejudice.
- c) The aim of a complaints review panel is to resolve the complaint and to achieve reconciliation between the school and the parent.

The complaints review panel operates according to the following formal procedures:

1. The clerk to the governing body will aim to arrange for the panel meeting to take place within **20 working days** of reaching Stage 3.
2. The complainant would be asked whether they wish to provide any **further written documentation** in support of their complaint. This can include witness statements, or the complainant could ask witnesses to give evidence in person.
3. The Head Teacher will prepare a **written report** for the panel. Other members of staff directly involved in matters raised will also be asked to prepare reports or statements.
4. The clerk will inform the parent, Head Teacher, any relevant witnesses and members of the panel by letter, at least **five working days** in advance of the meeting. All parties will receive the same written documentation. The complainant is entitled to be accompanied to the meeting. With the agreement of the Chair of the panel, the Head Teacher may invite **members of staff** directly involved in matters raised by the complainant to attend the meeting.
5. No evidence or witnesses **previously undisclosed** should be introduced into the meeting by any of the participants. If either party wishes to do so, the meeting will be adjourned so that the other party has a fair opportunity to consider and respond to the new evidence.
6. The chair of the panel will ensure that the meeting is properly **recorded (minutes)**. The complainant can request a copy of the minutes. This is at the panel's discretion.
7. During the meeting, there will be opportunities for:
 - Complainant to state argument;
 - The Head Teacher to respond
 - Complainant to question the Head Teacher
 - The Head Teacher to question the complainant
 - The panel to question the complainant and the Head Teacher;
 - Any party to call witnesses (subject to the chair's approval) and any party question all witnesses;
 - Complainant and the Head Teacher to make final statements

8. 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 the Head Teacher and complainant **within two weeks**. All participants other than the panel and the clerk will then leave.
9. The panel will then consider the complaint and all the evidence presented in order to:
 - reach a unanimous, or at least a majority, decision on the complaint;
 - decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
 - recommend, where appropriate, to the governing body changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that similar problems do not happen again.
10. The final stage of appeal is to the Secretary of State for Education.

The School Complaints Unit (SCU) at:
Department for Education
20 Great Smith St, Westminster, London SW1P 3BT