



Aberdare Park Primary School Complaints Procedure Policy



Complaints Procedure Policy

Introduction

“A key sign of quality in an organisation is its willingness to listen to criticism and challenge from the users of its services and its ability to respond positively to these in order to bring about improvement. The way in which complaints are handled is a crucial indicator of success. In a context where complaints are welcomed, high numbers of complaints do not mean necessarily that a school is performing badly. A school which has an effective complaints system reaps the benefit of the goodwill of the community, from savings in time and resources and from high staff satisfaction and moral. Good quality information from users on the service being provided can help to improve the organisation. This, in turn, assists the school to develop a more confident and responsive image”.

(RCT Education Dept)

The purpose of a complaints procedure is to ensure that should members of the public be dissatisfied with the service they have received, or are receiving, they have a method of recourse to try and resolve their complaint.

Aims

We wish to make our complaints procedure effective by making it:

- Easily **accessible** and well publicised.
- **Simple** to understand and use.
- Allow **speedy** handling with established time limits for action, and keep people informed of progress
- Ensure a full and **fair** investigation.
- Respect people’s desire for **confidentiality**.
- Address all the points at issue, provide an **effective** response and appropriate redress.
- Provide **information** to management so that services can be improved.

Implementation

A complaint can be defined as an expression of discontent or dissatisfaction about standards of service, actions or lack of action by the Education Authority or its staff. It can

be made by a customer, a group of customers, their advocates or representatives. It can be in person, by letter or by telephone.

The definition of a complaint against a school

- A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about:
- The standard of teaching of members of the teaching staff.
- The conduct, actions or omissions of members of the teaching staff.
- The conduct actions or omissions of non-teaching staff employed by the school, or those working in a voluntary basis for whom the school is responsible.
- The conduct or actions of pupils.
- The conduct or actions of the Governing Body.

Complaints are not always easy to define. It is important, therefore to keep in mind the distinction between the handling of worries, problems and complaints. In the event of confusion, it is for the complainant to decide whether or not their concern should become a formal complaint, although this does not in any way mean that those complained against are necessary at fault. Complaints about conduct / misconduct of members of staff are dealt with via the Disciplinary Procedures Policy.

Stages for handling complaints.

Stage 1 - Informal stage. Expression of dissatisfaction to a member of staff. Informal complaint to the Headteacher.

- The complaint can be written or made by phone or in person or by someone acting on the complainant's behalf.
- The school needs to consider whether and how to record.
- Discuss complainant's desired outcome and possibilities of redress (this is not an admission of liability).
- Attempt to resolve quickly and informally if possible within 10 school days.
- School and/or complainant can decide to move on to stage one – formal complaint(or other routes if appropriate.)
- Provide complainant with written information on how to proceed to formal complaint stage if unresolved.

Stage 2: Formal complaint to the Headteacher

Even formal complaints to the Headteacher may be resolved verbally and immediately. If this is not possible:

- The complainant is asked to put in writing if not already done so, but is not obliged to do so, offer help if needed to compose and record the complaint or offer to make referral, or refer to an independent organisation to assist e.g. Citizens Advice Bureau.
- Acknowledge receipt of complaint within 10 school days, explaining what will happen next and indicating the timescale for a fuller response.
- Discuss complainant's desired outcome and possibilities of redress (this is not an admission of liability).
- Appoint an investigator – **optional**.
- Undertake investigation, record findings.
- Report to complainant with explanation or redress within 15 schooldays of acknowledgement of letter, in a genuine attempt to resolve the complaint and, if possible, to the satisfaction of the complainant.
- Complainant, if not satisfied, can decide to move to stage 2.
- Provide to complainant with written information on how to proceed to stage 2.
- Monitor and record the progress in each case.

NB. If the complainant legitimately triggers the use of disciplinary or capability procedures at this or further stages, these should take precedence and the complainant should be advised accordingly.

Stage 3: Formal complaint to the Governing Body Complaints Panel.

- Acknowledge complaint and set up a panel meeting within 10 school days of receipt of complainers ensuring that the governors on the panel have not been involved in the matter at an earlier stage.
- Invite documentation beforehand from both the Headteacher and the complainant and try to circulate before the meeting.
- Invite both parties, in turn, to explain their case. Both parties may call witnesses.
- Discuss complainants desired outcomes and possibilities of redress (this does not an admission of liability).
- Attempt to resolve the complaint, if possible, to the satisfaction of the complainant.
- Panel reports their decision within 15 school days of the receipt of the complaint, including explanation, recommendations, redress measures if appropriate and rationale for decision.
- Complainant can decide to refer to the Review stage if still unsatisfied with the outcome of the process. Ensure complainant understands particular role of the LA.
- Provide complainant with written information on how to proceed to review stage.
- Monitor and record process in each case.

Note - Complaints to RCT Local Authority.

- Although a complaint about a situation or individual regarding a School may be made to RCTCBC (or any other body), the Local Authority will always refer the complaint back to the Headteacher and Governing Body of the school involved to go through the above 3 stages.

Support and Advice

At all stages complainants should be advised that they may seek advice and support from other sources.

Roles and Responsibilities

It is the role of the Headteacher:

- To have day to day responsibility for the implementation of a complaints system which is compatible with the ethos of the school and the directions of its Governing Body.
- To formulate a clear strategy to review the school's policy and practice for dealing with complaints at regular intervals

It is the role of the Governing Body:

- To ensure that there is an effective complaints procedure within the school and to keep the operation of this system under review.
- The Governing Body ultimately may be called upon, if the matter is referred to them by the Headteacher or a complainant, to consider, adjudicate or resolve complaints. In order to be prepared for this they should establish a standing panel from whom three members can be drawn to perform this role on behalf of the whole Governing Body .

It is the role of the LA:

- To provide an agreed and consistent policy framework.
- To provide advice and guidance to schools on good practice.
- To provide advice to complainants on how to complain.
- To operate a fair complaints system for the services it provides in addition to those at school.

Detailed guidance on handling specific complaints is laid out in the RTC Education Dept. document:

“Policy and Procedures for Dealing with Complaints about RCT County Borough Schools”

Monitoring /Evaluation

The policy will be monitored annually within staff meeting procedures already in place.

Staff will evaluate the types of complaints received (if any), actions taken to resolve issues and their outcomes. We will look at ways to improve or modify our procedures in the light of our experiences.

The Headteacher will report back to Governors.

This policy will be reviewed in Autumn Term 2016

Signed:

J Evans
Headteacher

Cllr Ann Crimmings
Chair of Governors