



GENERAL COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Reviewed	September 2018
Responsibility to Review	Individual Governor/Head Teacher
Next Review	September 2019
Approval	GB

Introduction

The staff and Governors of Glenwood School wish to work in partnership with all stakeholders and believe that informal discussion and open honest communication is the best way of resolving differences of opinion. This includes all parents, carers, the local community, staff and colleagues in other schools or educational establishments.

However, the means by which disagreements between school and stakeholders are resolved need to be established in such a way that all parties know and understand the process through which a complaint will be managed.

Aims & Principles

The objective of this policy and the associated procedures is to:

- resolve concerns through informal discussions at the earliest stage.
- act promptly, with well-defined timescales and named contacts
- focus on resolution and review of practices rather than apportioning blame
- promote confidentiality and discretion
- include fair and transparent investigative processes for staff as well as complainants
- indicate other sources of advice where appropriate, for example Citizens Advice Bureau, parent partnership services, the County Children's Services complaints adviser, trade union
- be forthright in dealing with vexatious, abusive, malicious and anonymous complainants

The Process

The Informal Stage

As indicated above, wherever possible concerns and complaints will be managed informally through discussion initially with the person concerned. It is hoped the vast majority of concerns expressed will be resolved through the open and honest dialogue we encourage at all levels within the School.

If the complaint has not been resolved through the initial meeting then the Headteacher / Deputy Headteacher will meet with the complainant in an attempt to agree a resolution.

Stage 1: Headteacher Meeting

- Written communication with the Headteacher should outline the details of the concern and enclose any relevant paperwork. A complaint form is available for the complainant to complete if they so wish. (see Appendix)
- The Headteacher will endeavour to respond to a complaint in writing within 7 working days of receiving the complaint. However if further time is required to resolve issues or meet with members of staff, a holding acknowledgement will be sent within the above timescale. A formal more detailed response is to be sent within 20 days.
- The Headteacher will summarise in writing the main points raised at the meeting and any agreements / actions to be undertaken and a copy will be forwarded to the complainant to ensure an agreed record of the meeting is created

If after such contact and dialogue the complaint is still not resolved then recourse to the Governors can be sought. In the first instance the Chair of Governors.

Stage 2: The Chair of Governors

- The complainant will need to write to the Chair of Governors outlining the complaint and the reasons for pursuing it beyond the Head teacher's response, and enclosing any relevant paperwork.
- The Chair of Governors will acknowledge and endeavour to respond to the complainant within seven working days of receiving the complaint.
- If the complaint needs further investigation the Chair of Governors will advise the complainant accordingly and prepare a response to the complainant within 20 working days.
- The Chair of Governors will need to decide who is responsible for dealing with the issues involved, and therefore what powers are available to the governors with respect to the particular complaint. Are the issues related to responsibilities that:
 1. are delegated to the Headteacher by the governing body, or
 2. fall within the governing body's remit only, or
 3. are within the Headteacher's terms and conditions of employment and relate to the internal organisation, management and control of the school
- For delegated responsibilities and matters within the remit of the governing body, the chair may look at the whole issue afresh.
- If the matter relates to the Headteacher's conduct, the chair of Governors will need to decide whether the matter should be dealt with through the complaints procedure or staff disciplinary procedures. The LA is available to advise further on this issue.
- For matters that are the Headteacher's responsibility, the chair of governors is only empowered to look at whether the Headteacher's decision or action was reasonable in light of the information available at the time.
- In the event that the complainant remains unsatisfied then the claimant shall be informed of their right of appeal to the Governing body's complaints panel.

Stage 3: Governing Body's Complaints Panel – reconsideration or review

- A complaints panel will be established to review and consider representations made to them. The panel will consist of no more than 3 governors, none of whom will have been involved in the issue previously, and the Clerk to the Governing Body.
- It is necessary that a formal written request be sent to the Clerk to the Governing Body in order that the Complaints Panel be convened. Complainants should describe in detail the nature of their complaint and the reasons for not accepting the resolutions

identified previously.

There are two forms of appeal:

Reconsideration

When the issue relates to delegated responsibilities the panel can reconsider the complaint afresh with any new information that may not have been available at the time of the initial complaint. The panel may decide to ask the Headteacher to give the matter further consideration.

Review

If the matter falls within the Headteacher's decision-making remit by virtue of her terms and conditions of employment, then the panel will only have the power to review the decision and not to consider the matter afresh. It may look at whether the decision or action was unreasonable. An unreasonable decision might be one that is irrational: a decision that no reasonable Headteacher, properly aware of her duties taking into account the facts before her would make.

The panel will need to consider the facts as they were known to the Headteacher at the time and then consider whether the Headteacher:

- failed to take account of a relevant consideration
- took into account an irrelevant consideration
- made a 'perverse' decision in the light of the evidence available at the time
If new evidence does come to light, the panel should refer it back to the Headteacher, who may consider amending a decision in the light of that new information.
- The clerk of the governors will inform the complainant in writing of the panel's decision. The letter should include
 - a summary of the issues
 - an outline of the main points of discussion
 - the reasons for the decision
 - proposed actions or outcomes

The panel may also suggest another meeting between the Headteacher and the complainant to agree a way forward.

For issues related to the national curriculum or the provision of religious education, parents will need to be told that they can appeal to the LA.

For general complaints this is the final stage of the school's complaints procedure.

If the complainant believes that the Headteacher's and governors' actions have been unreasonable or the process has not been adhered to, the only recourse is to the Secretary of State. Complainants will be advised to contact the LA complaints adviser at this point.

Monitoring and Review

The effective operation and content of this policy shall be the subject of review on a bi-annual basis by a governor delegated by the Full Governing Body which shall then consider for approval any recommended changes.

GLENWOOD SCHOOL

Complaint Form

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

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.
What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint. (Who did you speak to and what was the response)?
What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

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

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Signature:

Date:

Official use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By who:

Complaint referred to:

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Date:

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