

IRIS SCHOOL

Complaints Policy

Policy for dealing with parental complaints

Introduction

It is our aim at IRIS SCHOOL to work closely with all parents in a partnership which benefits all children and ensures that their school experience is happy and secure. The home/school agreement clearly states expectations of pupils, staff and parents.

Aims

- To reaffirm the partnership between parents, staff and governors as they work together for the good of the pupils in the school
- To ensure that it is easy for parents to inform the staff and governors of any concerns they may have and that they will respond quickly and positively to complaints from parents.

What is a complaint?

From time to time parents express concerns and these are dealt with as a matter of routine through discussion with the class teacher or another member of staff. Occasionally a parental concern may become more serious and develop into a complaint and be a clear statement of dissatisfaction. This may relate to a variety of issues.

Arrangements for managing complaints

- Parents may request a copy of this policy from the school office at any time.
- The head teacher or deputy head teacher will respond to a verbal or written complaint within 24 hours of receiving it but may well need longer to fully investigate the circumstances leading to the complaint. Parents will be kept informed of time scales involved. Timescales need to be flexible to meet particular circumstances however a response will normally be provided within 5 school days.
- All complaints are handled in strict confidence and the school's attitude to a pupil would never be affected by a parental complaint
- The school will ensure that all staff have opportunities to discuss, respond and understand the concerns and complaints made by parents
- Any person complained against has equal rights with the person making the complaint
- The school would not seek to directly involve pupils in a complaints procedure.
- Anonymous complaints are discouraged as they are difficult to deal with in a way that will be useful to all parties.

The role of the head teacher

The head teacher is responsible for the internal organisation and management of the school. He therefore has overall responsibility for considering complaints in the first instance or arranging, if appropriate, for a designated member of staff to deal with them. The head teacher will keep a record of complaints received and outcomes.

The role of the governing body

The governing body is responsible for the overall conduct of the school and must ensure that a complaints procedure is in place and reviewed regularly. The head teacher will normally inform the Chair of the governing body of complaints received unless he is going to form part of any committee to hear disciplinary or capability procedures in which case he must remain untainted.

If a governor receives a complaint from a parent it will be referred to the head teacher to investigate. If the head teacher is the subject of the complaint then the Chair of the governing body will undertake the investigation.

The governing body should appoint a Complaints Committee of three governors to consider any formal written complaints should it reach this stage. A pool of governors from which this committee can be formed will be agreed at the beginning of each school year. Regard must be given to confidentiality throughout the process to ensure that governors do not become tainted and are therefore not able to serve on such a committee.

After a complaint has been dealt with it may be appropriate for the head teacher or Chair of the governing body to make a brief report to the governing body without mentioning names and protecting confidentiality.

Philosophy

In order to provide a high standard of education for the students, IRI School is happy to receive and discuss with parents any comments, suggestions or complaints they may have.

This policy and procedure apply equally to parents, staff working at IRI School, visitors, including placing authorities and those involved indirectly in the education of students.

You can make your feelings known, particularly, if they are not about major issues, by posting your comment, complaint or suggestion in the 'suggestion box' in the school reception area. You can do this anonymously if you wish.

The Principal, Deputies or other member of the management team will address all issues weekly. Staff is encouraged to resolve any issues or problems through their line manager, or can approach any other senior member of staff if they prefer. Staff may request a supervision session for this purpose at any time. This policy should be read in conjunction with IRISchool procedures on:

- Anti-Bullying
- Safeguarding Children

Principles

Staff at IRIS School believes that it is in the best interest of the schools, students and staff to implement a procedure that will respond promptly and fairly to any worries concerns. Comments or complaints will be treated confidentially and will be taken seriously. Anonymous comments and complaints will be treated in the same way.

Procedures and Practice

(a) **Stage 1** - Local resolution at service/site level

Some complaints represent a minor concern for the complainant and these may include general comments, suggestions or criticisms about a service. Complaints falling into this category will normally be made verbally to 'front line staff' and will be seen as issues that can be 'fixed' either immediately or relatively quickly.

If the employee to whom the complaint is made is unable to resolve the problem immediately or feels unable to give the assurances that the complainant is looking for, School Principal or Deputy Head will take responsibility to resolve the complaint, by the next working day, in an informal and conciliatory manner ('next working day' excludes weekends and bank holidays).

Should a school principal or the Deputy Head be unable to resolve the matter quickly and to the complainants' satisfaction, they must advise the complainant that their concerns will require further time to investigate fully prior to responding to the issues raised.

In such circumstances, staff should assist the complainant in putting their concerns in writing, if previously verbal, and advise them further on the complaint process. It should be noted, however, that failure to put a verbal complaint in writing, will not prevent a complaint from being investigated.

In those cases in which staff is able to satisfactorily address and resolve a minor concern by the next working day, the complainant should receive a full and positive response with the aim of assuring them that their concerns have been addressed and this should include an expression of regret and/or explanation for the earlier problem.

Some concerns, be they verbal or written, will be viewed as more serious or complex and it will not be possible to address and resolve these by the next working day.

Staff receiving such a complaint either verbally or in writing (including email) must ensure that it shows the date of receipt by the site/service and is passed **immediately** to the School Principal for recording and investigation purposes. Full details of the complaint must be recorded on Complaint Reporting system and a note made of the system generated Complaint Reference Number which will be unique to that service/site complaint. An investigating officer must also be assigned. A letter of acknowledgment **MUST** be sent to the complainant, by the School Principal or delegated member of staff **within 2 working days** of the date on which the complaint was received. A copy of the **signed** letter must be kept in the case file. This letter must also offer the complainant the opportunity to meet with the Investigating Officer if this would be helpful and will state that we aim to respond fully to all complaints within 20 working days of the date of receipt.

If at working day 15, it is clear that the investigation and response will not be complete within the agreed 20 working day timeframe a further letter will be issued informing the complainant of the reason for the delay and advising on a revised timeframe.

The complaint investigation should be assigned to the investigating officer for their action, which includes production of an investigation report and subsequent preparation of a draft response to the complainant. All investigation documentation should be placed in the complaint case file.

A formal and detailed response should be sent to the complainant within the agreed timescale. This letter **must** also signpost the complainant as to the course of action available to them should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of the Stage 1 investigation.

In the event that a complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the Stage 1 investigation, they have the right to request that their case be considered at Stage 2.

(b) **Stage 2** - Internal Review by the school principal

If a complainant remains dissatisfied after **all** attempts to resolve a complaint locally have failed, they may, within 6 months of the date of the Stage 1 formal response, request that their case be reviewed at Stage 2 of the Priory process. The request must be in writing and forwarded to principal.

(c) **Stage 3 – INDEPENDENT COMPLAINT PANEL (EDUCATION)**

Should a parent, carer be dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation at Stage 1 and at Stage 2, the complainant can make a written request for the complaint to be heard by a panel; thereby fulfilling the requirements of Schedule 1 (Part 7) of The Education (Independent School

Standards) (England) Regulations 2010 with regards to the arrangements made in the event that a parent remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the school's earlier investigation.

The Panel of which one member is independent of the running management of school will be convened and a date for hearing set within seven days of the written request being received; with the parents/carers being invited to attend with a representative should they wish.

The Panel will make findings and recommendations, with copies of the findings being sent or given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about and will also be made available for inspection on the school premises.

Outcomes

A record is kept at the school of all complaints, whether they are resolved at the preliminary level, or whether they proceed to a panel hearing. These records are kept in a confidential file. The records are indexed in the School's Complaints File, which is kept at the school site. The information kept in the confidential file is only made available to the inspectors of regulatory bodies, or to the Secretary of State, on request.

Evaluation

Evaluation of the policy will be based upon monitoring of:

- Student views where appropriate.
- Family views.
- Professional judgments.
- Staff views – daily practitioners and seniors.
- Numbers of comments and complaints.

The effectiveness of the policy and procedures will be reviewed annually, and the outcomes of monitoring will be used to make recommendation for improvement if necessary.

This policy will be reviewed and updated on an annual basis.

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