



Kind Hearts, Ambitious Minds, Striving for Excellence

HODGE CLOUGH PRIMARY SCHOOL

Complaints Policy

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Date of next Review: November 2026

Control Sheet

Control Sheet		
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Amendments and Adaptions		
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This policy relates to most general complaints and is not written to cover those matters for which there is a specific statutory requirement, in particular complaints under Section 409 of the Education Act 1996 about the delivery of the National Curriculum and the provision of religious education and collective worship.

Separate procedures also exist for appeals about special needs assessments and school admissions and exclusions. Concerns about allegations of child abuse and staff discipline would need to be dealt with through the Governing body and LA procedures that have been adopted for these purposes.

Parents are informed within the school's prospectus that this procedure exists.

General Principles:

- Parents are given information about how they can raise concerns or lodge a complaint with the school. A copy of this procedure can be found on the school website.
- This procedure has been written so that, where possible, a swift, consistent and fair resolution is achieved.
- A complaint is distinct from any formal disciplinary procedure. Staff who may be questioned as part of a complaints procedure are fairly treated and have an opportunity to put forward their case.
- Confidentiality is considered to be a vital part of the procedure. All conversations and correspondence are treated with discretion. It is intended that parents feel confident that a complaint will not disadvantage their child in any way. Anonymous complaints will be disregarded unless someone is prepared to substantiate the complaint. All parties involved in a complaint will need to realise that some information may be shared in order to carry through an investigation.
- If the outcome of a complaint is that the school is shown to be at fault, then the school will look at making amends in an appropriate way.
- Staff and Governors at the school will have the opportunity, where appropriate, to take part in training to raise awareness of complaint procedures and develop skills in dealing with people who wish to complain.
- All complaints will be recorded and monitored to allow for any outcomes to be realised by the school.

Guidelines

Stage 1:

- The vast majority of concerns or complaints can be resolved informally, often straight away by the class teacher or headteacher, depending on whom the parent makes contact with first.
- This school aims to ensure that parents feel able to raise concerns with staff without undue formality, either in person, by telephone or in writing. There may be occasions when it is appropriate for someone to act on behalf of a parent in such an approach.
- It is understood that parents may not be clear at first that they are making a complaint. They may wish to ask a question or express an opinion. A preliminary discussion with school staff may be needed to clarify the issue and help to decide whether the parent wishes to take the matter further.

Procedure

Stage 1:

- Parents will be able to have an informal discussion regarding any concerns with an appropriate member of staff. This discussion will be to clarify the nature of the parent's concern and assure them that the school wishes to hear about them. The discussion will also aim to clarify what kind of outcome the parent is seeking. School will record this discussion on CPOMS system.
- If the member of staff first contacted cannot deal with the matter immediately, s/he will make a firm arrangement to deal with it at a future date or refer the matter to another member of staff. In either case a note will be made of the parents (complainant) name, the date and contact details.
- If the matter is referred, either because the person first contacted is not available or it is best dealt with by another member of staff, then the first contact will be expected to check later to see that the referral has been made successfully.
- The headteacher will ensure that staff have guidelines about when to refer a matter. In all cases, members of staff dealing with a complaint at this stage will make a note of the date, time, details and outcome and inform the headteacher.
- The headteacher reserves the right to decide to deal directly with a matter at this stage if it seems the most appropriate course of action to take.
- If the complaint relates to the headteacher, the complainant will be advised to contact the Chair of Governors.
- The staff member dealing with the complaint will make sure that the complainant is clear what will happen next (if anything). This will be put in writing only if it seems the best way of making the outcome clear.
- If no satisfactory solution can be found within 10 days, the complainant will be asked if they wish their concern to be considered further. If so, they will be given clear information on how to proceed, and any advice and support will be made available to them.

Guidelines

Stage 2:

- This is the stage it becomes clear that there is a definite complaint. The headteacher will ensure that the guidelines and procedures are used consistently at this stage to make sure nothing happens which would prejudice the later stages of the procedure. In, particular, Governors will not become involved at this stage so that any future involvement is not prejudiced.
- The headteacher will take responsibility for then implementation of the complaints process, including the decision about his/her involvement at various stages. One of the reasons for having different stages in the procedure is to re-assure parents that their concern is being heard by more than one person. The headteacher will try to make arrangements to ensure that their involvement does not dominate every stage of the process. Normally arrangements will be made to ensure that staff deal with complaints made at Stage 1, and for the headteacher to deal with any complaints that proceed to Stage 2. Even at Stage 2 the headteacher reserves the right to designate the complaint to another member of staff for further investigation. Conversely, if the headteacher has been so involved at Stage 1 the Chair of Governors may carry out Stage 2.

Procedure

Stage 2:

- Parents who wish to pursue a complaint to Stage 2 will be asked to put the complaint in writing to the school. The headteacher (or designated member of staff) will acknowledge the complaint orally or in writing within 3 days of receipt giving a brief explanation of the complaints procedures and a target date for providing a response. This will be within 10 days. If for any reason it is not possible to deal with the matter in this time, the complainant will be informed of when it is likely to be concluded.
- The headteacher (or designated member of staff) will provide an opportunity for the complainant to meet him/her. The complainant will be allowed to be accompanied by a friend or relative who can speak on their behalf, if s/he wishes. Interpreting facilities will be made available, where appropriate.
- Where it is felt necessary, the headteacher (or designated member of staff) will keep written records of meetings, telephone conversations and other documentation.
- Once all the relevant facts have been established, the headteacher (or designated member of staff) will arrange a meeting with the complainant to discuss or resolve the matter. This meeting will be followed up with a letter setting out the outcomes of the meeting. The complainant will be advised in this letter that if they wish to take the complaint further s/he should notify the Chair of Governors within 5 weeks of receiving the letter detailing the outcome of the complaint.
- If the complaint is against the action of the headteacher, or the headteacher has been closely involved at Stage 1, the Chair of Governors will carry out all the Stage 2 procedures.

Guidelines

Stage 3:

- Complaints only rarely reach this formal stage, but it is important that the Governing body are available to deal with them, when necessary. At this stage, the school will seek advice from the Local Authority and/or the appropriate diocesan authority.
- The school considers this stage of review to be very important as is the need for the Governing body to remain impartial and independent. Complaints will not be considered by the full Governing body as potential conflicts of interest may arise. The Governing body has a complaints committee which will be established to deal with any complaints at this level. Individual Governors will not get involved in looking into complaints before this stage so as not to prejudice their potential involvement. If individual Governors are approached by parents or others with complaints, they will not enter into any discussions regarding the issue but refer the complainant to the school's complaints procedure, making the necessary introduction to a member of staff or the headteacher if appropriate.
- Complaints that reach this stage will do so because the complainant is not satisfied with the response so far. In this situation the Governing body will view the complaint as being against the school rather than one individual staff member whose actions may have led to the original complaint.

Procedure

Stage 3: Review by the Governing Body

- The following procedure will follow upon receipt of a written request from the complainant for the complaint to proceed to Stage 3.
- The Clerk to the Governors will write acknowledging receipt of the written request and informing the complainant that it will be heard by a committee of the Governing body within 20 working days of receipt. The letter will also inform the complainant that they have the right to submit any further documents relevant to the complaint and that these must be received in time for circulation to the committee members.
- The clerk to the Governing body will convene a meeting of the complaints committee. In establishing the committee the Governing body will nominate a pool of 5 Governors from which 3 can be drawn for any hearing. This will ensure that there are always sufficient Governors with no conflict of interest to constitute the committee when required. The committee will elect its chair.
- The committee members will have had no prior involvement with the complaint. Generally, it will not be appropriate for the headteacher to have a place on the committee. The Governing body will have regard for the advantages of having a mix of different types of Governors on the committee and be sensitive to the issues of equal opportunities in the composition of the committee.
- All relevant correspondence and documentation will be given to each committee member. The chair of the panel will ensure the complainant, headteacher and any other witnesses are given 5 days' notice in writing of the date, time and place of the hearing. The letter of notification to the complainant will inform him/her of their right to be accompanied by a friend/relative who can act as an advocate. The Chair will ensure

that interpretation facilities for the hearing are offered and made available, if required. The letter will set out the procedure for the conduct of the hearing (see Annex B) and the complainants right to submit further written evidence to the committee.

- The Chair will invite the headteacher to attend the hearing and prepare a written report for the committee in response to the complaint. The headteacher may also invite other members of staff directly involved in matters raised by the complainant to respond in writing and/or in person to the complaint. Any involvement of other staff will be at the discretion of the chair of the committee. Any relevant documents will be circulated to all concerned (including the complainant) at least 5 days before the meeting of the committee.
- The Director of Children's Services or his/her representative may attend the meeting to advise the committee.
- The Chair of the committee will ensure that the meeting is properly minuted.
- The aim of the meeting will be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. However, it may only be possible to establish the facts of a situation and make recommendations about future action which will satisfy the complainant that their complaint has been taken seriously.
- The Chair of the committee will try to ensure that the proceedings are as informal as possible and that the complainant feels at ease.
- At the conclusion of the meeting, the Chair will explain that the committee will consider its decision and write to both parties with the outcome within 15 days.
- The headteacher and any witnesses will then withdraw and the committee will consider its decision. This will include: a decision non the complaint; appropriate action to be taken by the school and where appropriate, recommendations on changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that similar problems do not arise in the future.
- The school will ensure that a copy of all correspondence and notes is kept on file in the school. This will be stored separately from pupil's personal records.

The Role of the Local Authority

When the LA receives a general complaint which does not come under one of the areas covered by the statutory requirements nor is obviously concerned with child abuse or staff disciplinary matters, the complainant will be referred to the school's complaints procedure. The complainant will be advised to contact the headteacher to take the matter further.

If the complainant has already involved the headteacher but has not achieved a satisfactory resolution from the perspective of the complainant, the complainant will be referred to the Chair of Governors. In this situation the headteacher will be notified of the referral and details of the complaint.

The LA is always available to give advice to headteachers and schools on the use of the complaints procedures. This should normally be through the LA Complaints Department in the first instance.

The LA will provide advice and support to complaints committees of Governing bodies, including attendance of a Director's representative at meetings to hear complaints, where appropriate.

The LA will provide advice to complainants on how they can access complaint procedures and what support is available to them to do this

Concerns and Complaints about Schools

If you have a concern or complaint

Please tell us about it. We welcome any suggestions for improving the work of our school. Be assured that no matter what you are wanting to tell us, our support and respect for you and your child in the school will not be affected in any way. Please tell us of your concern as soon as possible as it is difficult for us to properly investigate an incident or problem which has happened some time ago.

What to do first

Most concerns and complaints can be sorted out quickly by speaking to your child's class teacher. If you have a complaint which you feel should be looked at by the headteacher, you can contact him straightaway if you would prefer. It is usually best to discuss the problem face to face. You may need to make an appointment to do this, and can make one by ringing or calling into the school office. You can take a friend or relation to the appointment with you if you would like to.

All school staff will make every effort to resolve your problem informally. They will make sure that they understand what you feel went wrong, and they will explain their own actions to you. They will ask what you would like the school to do to put things right. Of course, this does not mean that in every case they will come round to your point of view but it will help both you and the school to understand both sides of the question. It may also help to prevent a similar problem arising again.

What to do next

If you are dissatisfied with the teacher's response (or with the headteacher's initial response if he has already been involved) you can make a complaint to the headteacher. This should be in writing. If your complaint is about the action of the headteacher personally, then you should refer it to the Chair of Governors. You can contact him by arrangement through the school office. You may also find it helpful at this stage to have a copy of the full statement of the General Complaints Procedure as this explains in detail what procedures are followed. This is available from the school office or can be found on the school's website.

The headteacher will ask to meet you to discuss the problem. Again, you may take a friend or someone else with you if you wish. The headteacher will conduct a full investigation of the complaint and may interview any members of staff or children involved. You will receive a written response to your complaint.

If you are still unhappy

The problem will normally be solved by this stage. However, if you are still not satisfied you may wish to contact the Chair of Governors to ask for a referral of your complaint to a Governors' Complaints Panel. The complaint will then be heard by a group of 3 Governors who have no previous knowledge of the problem and so will be able to give it a fresh assessment. You will be invited to attend and speak to the panel at a meeting and the headteacher will also attend. The General Complaints Procedure statement explains how these meetings operate.

Annex B

Procedure for the Conduct of a Meeting to hear a Complaint

1. The Chair of the committee will invite everybody (except any witnesses) into the room, introduce them and explain the role of each person.
2. The chair will explain to all present that the purpose of the hearing is to review a complaint and try to resolve the complaint and achieve a reconciliation between the school and the complainant.
3. The chair will then ascertain whether the proposed procedure is acceptable. If so, the meeting will proceed along the following lines:
 - i. the headteacher will present the report on the complaint and may call witnesses;
 - ii. the complainant will be given the opportunity to seek clarification from the headteacher and any witnesses;
 - iii. the committee (including Director's representative) or senior officer may seek clarification from the headteacher and any witnesses;
 - iv. the complainant will be given the opportunity to respond and may call witnesses;
 - v. the headteacher will be given the opportunity to seek clarification from the complainant and any witnesses;
 - vi. the committee (including Director's representative) or senior officer may seek clarification from the complainant and any witnesses;
 - vii. the headteacher will be given the opportunity to sum up;
 - viii. the complainant will be given the opportunity to sum up; and
 - ix. both parties will leave the room to allow the committee to deliberate but the Director's representative may remain to offer technical and procedural advice.
4. The committee should make a decision on: the complaint; appropriate action to be taken by the school; and where appropriate, recommendations on changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure similar problems do not arise in the future.
5. The decision will be confirmed in writing within 15 days.