

ARMATHWAITE SCHOOL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

This procedure fulfils the requirements of The Education Act 2002 (Section 29) for “all governing bodies to have a procedure to deal with complaints relating to aspects of the school, and any community facilities or services that the school provides.”

Following this page there is an information sheet for parents and others, giving them clear advice on how to raise a concern; make a formal complaint; and appeal to the governing body. It also outlines the way the school will respond. The school will provide a copy of the information sheet on request, and include it (or a summary of it) in the school prospectus and on our website.

This procedure does not apply to (and should not be used for) statutory appeals in relation to:

- Admissions
- Exclusions
- Statementing for children with special educational needs

Similarly, it should not be used for dealing with complaints relating to

- Child protection
- Staff discipline, capability or grievance

If a concern is brought to the attention of the school that relates to any of these matters, the school will refer to the local authority or its HR provider to ensure that the relevant statutory or local authority procedure is used.

The governing body is not responsible for handling complaints about third party providers offering community facilities or services through our premises or using school facilities for external events. They have their own complaints procedures.

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Who can raise a concern or make a complaint?

Anyone who has dealings with the school can use this procedure, whether a pupil, a parent or carer, a visitor, a neighbour, or a provider of a service to the school. If you wish to raise a concern or complain on someone else's behalf, the school will only deal with this if the person on whose behalf you are complaining is unable to do so for themselves. If this is the case, we may be able to direct you to or obtain support from a local advocacy service, such as People First.

How will my concern or complaint be handled?

Our procedure has three stages:

1. Responding to concerns
2. Investigating complaints
3. Appeal to the governing body

At any point in the handling of your complaint, there is the possibility of a 'resolution' meeting. The school will try to deal with your complaint as quickly as possible. If you have concerns about the time being taken, you should raise this with the Clerk to the governing body.

1. Responding to concerns

If your concern is about something that a person has or has not done, for example the headteacher, another member of staff, a governor, or a volunteer, you should make an arrangement through the school office to speak to that person or their manager (and not approach them while they are 'on duty'). If your concern is about an aspect of school practice or policy, you should contact the headteacher. We want to respond to your concern as quickly as possible, but it may not be possible to arrange an immediate meeting: an appointment within a few days may be necessary. We can reassure you that most concerns are usually resolved at this stage.

2. Investigating complaints

If you remain dissatisfied by our response to your concern, then you should make a complaint to the headteacher. The headteacher will arrange for the complaint to be investigated and respond to you within a reasonable time.

If your complaint is about the headteacher, you should contact the chair of governors who will arrange for it to be investigated by a nominated member of the governing body. If your complaint is about the chair of governors, you should contact the clerk to the governing body, who will make the arrangement. In all cases,

- state that you are making a complaint
- give specific details
- say what you want the school to do to put things right

If you need help to set out your complaint in writing, the school will arrange for this for you. All letters should be sent to the school address, marked 'Confidential: for immediate attention'.

Please be aware that if your complaint alleges misconduct by a member of staff, any investigation by the school and subsequent formal action is protected by confidentiality. You will not know the outcome and the right of appeal will not apply.

3. Appeal to the governing body

If you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation into your complaint, you may appeal to the governing body. The chair of governors (or the clerk) will arrange for a panel of governors to consider your appeal and respond to you within a set timescale. For complaints about staff (except the headteacher) or volunteers who work in school, this is the final stage of the complaints procedure and the panel's decision is final. If you are complaining about either the headteacher or a member of the governing body, and are dissatisfied with the nominated governor's response, you have a further right to appeal to a panel of governors (not including the nominated governor who first investigated your complaint).

The letter giving the school's decision following the investigation will tell you how to make an appeal; this is usually by writing to the clerk. The governing body will arrange for a panel of three governors to **[hear your appeal in person] OR [review your complaint]**. After this **[hearing] OR [review]**, the panel will notify you of their decision. This will include informing you that the school's procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed. There is no further right of appeal to the school against the decision.

Unreasonably persistent, abusive or harassing complainants and vexatious complainants

The school expects anyone who wishes to raise problems with the school to:

- treat all staff with courtesy and respect;
- respect the needs of pupils and staff within the school;
- recognise the time constraints under which members of staff in schools work and allow the school a reasonable time to respond to your concern;

Whilst we recognise that some concerns may relate to serious and distressing incidents, we will not accept threatening or harassing behaviour, and will take steps supported by legal action as appropriate to ensure that the school can continue its work safely and securely.

Further Information

The governing body is not responsible for handling complaints about third party providers offering community facilities or services through our premises or using school facilities for external events. They have their own complaints procedures. However, the school will liaise with such providers as appropriate.

For any complaint about the following, contact the local authority on 0800 121 8800 for advice and information

- an appeal against a decision relating to the admission or exclusion of your child
- an appeal against a local authority decision about your child's special educational needs
- an allegation of a criminal offence