

Bishop Hedley RC High School

Ysgol Uwchradd Gatholig Esgob Hedley

Complaints Policy

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Bishop Hedley Catholic High School takes complaints very seriously. We aim to resolve concerns and complaints as soon as we can, in the interests of all concerned and to learn lessons from complaints made to us.

Principles of the procedure

The school will make every effort to respond quickly in order to resolve the complaint at an early stage if possible.

The school will seek to provide a fair and consistent approach when dealing with complaints.

All those involved in dealing with complaints at Stages 2 and 3 must be impartial and have no previous involvement with the complaint, personal links with the complainant or the person against whom the complaint is being heard.

Everyone involved with a complaint will treat the process and the parties involved with respect.

The details of the complaint will remain confidential to those investigating. However the person complained against is entitled to know the substance of the accusation.

All parties will be kept informed throughout the process.

A timetable for the investigation of the complaint will be set out.

If a complaint is made just before the beginning of a school holiday, other than a half term holiday, the school will try to resolve the matter before the school closes.

All complaints including anonymous and withdrawn complaints will be recorded.

A report summarising key trends and issues relating to complaints will be presented by the Headteacher to the governing body annually.

INVESTIGATING COMPLAINTS

what has happened will be established and who was involved, with any witnesses if relevant.

the nature of the complaint will be clarified.

a meeting with the complainant or appropriate contact will be arranged if further information is necessary.

what the complainant feels would put things right will need to be clarified.

those involved/those complained about will be talked to, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish.

matters will be approached with an open mind.

accurate records will be kept.

Complaints will be resolved using a three stage procedure.

Stage 1

The complaint may be oral or in writing to the Bursar. Every effort will be made to resolve the complaint at this stage.

A decision will be reached within 10 school days if possible and conveyed to the complainant.

If the complainant is not satisfied, they must be informed (orally or in writing) that they can take their complaint to the Headteacher.

If the Headteacher was the first person to receive the complaint, he/she can decide whether to deal with it straight away or delegate to another member of staff.

The following details will be recorded:

the name of the complainant

the date of receipt of the complaint

a brief description of the complaint

action taken to resolve the complaint and the outcome

any issues for action by the school

Stage 2 – Consideration by the Headteacher

The complaint should be put in writing for clarity at this stage. (N.B. arrangements need to be put in place to help those who cannot write or who have another main language).

The Headteacher will acknowledge receipt in writing, enclose a copy of the complaints procedure and provide a date for a response (usually within 10 school days) and in writing.

The complainant will be given the opportunity to meet the Head. The complainant can be accompanied by a friend or relative if they wish. The Head may wish to have a witness present.

Record keeping will include the following:

- the name of the complainant
- the date of receipt of the complaint
- a brief description of the complaint
- action taken to resolve the complaint and the outcome
- any issues for action by the school
- a written record of discussions, interviews, and evidence collated
- the date the complainant was informed of the outcome

The complainant may make their complaint to the Governing Body if they are not satisfied with the outcome.

Stage 3 – Consideration by the Governing Body

Complaints considered by the governing body should be rare and governors must check that Stages 1 and 2 have been exhausted before considering the matter. The complaint will be heard by the Complaints Committee.

Complaints Committee

Receipt of the complaint will be acknowledged usually within 5 school days.

All parties involved are entitled to provide evidence/written documentation.

The letter will include the following timetable:

- the date by which this written evidence should be submitted
- the date by which documents will be sent to the person complained about
- the date by which the person complained about must forward their response
- the date that the response will be made available to the complainant
- the date of the hearing (if available at this point).

The Complaints Committee will meet to hear the complaint, usually within 15 school days of receipt of the complaint. The availability of all parties involved will be checked to ensure everyone is able to attend.

The person against whom a complaint is made will be given sufficient time (usually 10 school days) to consider all the evidence and take advice before providing a response and before any hearing takes place.

Everyone concerned will be given at least 5 days notice of the date of the hearing in writing.

The letter must provide the following information:

- the time and place of the hearing
- the grounds of the complaint with copies of all relevant documentation
- the right of all parties to be accompanied
- details of those who will be present and their role in the hearing
- the Complaints Committee's right to hear the complaint in the absence of one or both parties if there is good reason.
- the entitlement of the parties to seek an adjournment if there is a good reason that they are unable to attend.

The Hearing

The purpose of the hearing is to clarify facts and ascertain whether there are grounds for upholding the complaint.

Proceedings

- The procedure for this committee will be conducted in line with Welsh Government guidance.
- The Chair will inform both parties that they will be informed of the governors' decision in writing usually within 5 days.
- Governors may take advice from LA officers but the committee will make its decision in private.

Appeals Committee

If the complainant is not satisfied they have right of appeal to the Appeals Committee.

An appeal will be heard usually no later than 15 school days after the day the appeal was lodged.

The appeal will be heard by governors who were not involved in hearing the original complaint.

All relevant documentation will be circulated to all parties usually 5 school days before the hearing. This will include:

- the decision of the Complaints Committee
- notice of appeal, and the grounds for the appeal any
- written representation from any party documentation
- presented to the Complaints Committee

Finalisation of a Complaint

If there is no appeal stage, the decision letter will include the information below. Following an appeal, the decision letter will make clear:

that the complaint has been thoroughly investigated
the decision is final
if new issues arise they will be treated as a new complaint as long as they are demonstrably different from matters raised under a previous complaint

Record

At Stage 3 the record will include the following:

a full record of the proceedings of the Complaints Committee and Appeal Committee (if appropriate)
evidence and other relevant documentation
the decision reached and any action to be taken by the school, Head, governing body or staff
the date of the decision with a copy of the decision letter sent to the complainant.

There will be occasions when the three stage approach will need to be adapted:

Complaint against the Headteacher

This will be referred to the Chair of Governors who will decide whether to delegate investigation to the Vice Chair or to a designated governor.

The procedure to be followed is as described at Stage 2.

Following this process, if the complainant is still not happy he/she will be advised to write to the Chair of Governors who will forward the complaint for consideration by the Complaints Committee (Stage 3).

Complaint against the Complaints Officer

These complaints should be referred to the Headteacher who can decide to delegate investigation to another senior member of staff under Stage 1 of the procedures or investigate it him/herself under Stage 2.

If the complainant is not satisfied, he/she should be advised to write to the Chair of Governors who will forward the complaint for consideration by the Complaints Committee (Stage 3).

Complaint against the Chair of Governors

Any complaints about the Chair of Governors should be sent to the Vice Chair who will immediately inform the Head, the Diocese and the LA.

The Vice Chair may consider investigating the complaint or delegating this to another designated governor. This would follow Stage 2 of the procedures. Alternatively the Vice Chair could refer the matter directly to the Complaints committee (Stage 3).

Complaint against the Headteacher and the Chair of Governors

This complaint should be sent to the Vice Chair of Governors who should inform the Diocese and the LA.

The Vice Chair may investigate or delegate this task to another designated governor under Stage 2 of the procedures. Alternatively the matter could be referred directly to the Complaints Committee – under Stage 3.

Complaint against the Chair and Vice Chair

This complaint should be sent to the Clerk to Governors who will refer it to the Chair of the Complaints Committee. The Committee Chair will refer to the Diocese and the LA for advice and arrange for the Complaints Committee to consider the complaint (Stage 3).

Complaint against a Governor (including the Vice Chair)

This complaint should be referred to the Chair of Governors, and it should be dealt with in the same way as a complaint against the Headteacher.

Complaint concerning the whole Governing Body

Any complaints about the actions of the whole governing body should be sent to the Clerk to Governors, who should immediately inform the Head, the Diocese and the LA. The Diocese/LA may wish to seek the agreement of the governors that the complaint be heard by a specially constituted committee independent of the governing body.

If the Diocese/LA decides not to take any action, the Clerk to Governors may inform the complainant that the matter will be raised at the next meeting of the governing body. If the next meeting is some time away, the Chair and Clerk may consider convening a separate meeting to consider the complaint. The complainant should be informed of this proposal and the date of the governing body meeting.

The procedures should then be the same as for a complaint heard by the Complaints Committee (Stage 3).

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the decision, they can ask for the procedures to be reviewed by the Diocese/LA, but the decision is final. The Diocese/LA cannot reinvestigate complaints.

Copies of this policy are available on our website, in policy folders on the school network and can be made available on request.

Date: September 2013

Policy Review Date: July 2014