



Raising Concerns and Dealing with Complaints Policy December 2017

Reviewed annually by the Governing Body

Introduction

It is recognised that, from time to time, concerns or complaints may arise in relation to the School and this policy seeks to address the School's obligations and duties in relation to Section 29 of the Education Act 2002. In the Department for Education Guidance published in January 2016, it is stated that 'concern' may be defined as 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'. A complaint may be generally defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'. It is in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to invoke formal procedures. Schools should take informal concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible. There are occasions when complainants would like to raise their concerns formally. In those cases, the school's formal procedure should be invoked through the stages outlined within their procedure.

All suggestions for improving our work are welcomed and so it is our policy to ensure that any concerns or complaints raised are discussed and resolved quickly. Be assured that, no matter what you want to tell us, our support and respect for your child will not be affected in any way.

Please tell us of your concern as soon as possible because it is difficult for us to look into an incident or problem properly if it took place some time ago. We do appreciate the assistance we receive from parents in addressing any problems that arise.

Concerns sometimes arise from misunderstandings which in many cases can be easily addressed. Most concerns can be sorted out quickly by speaking with your child's class teacher. When parents and teachers treat each other with mutual respect and support, this provides a very good role model for all our children.

This policy and procedure applies to all parents/carers as well as to members of the general public. If any staff member wishes to raise their concerns, they should refer to the Grievance Policy for guidance.

Procedure

The procedure below explains how to raise a concern or make a formal complaint. There are three stages, which move from informal to formal action. At each stage, the nature of the complaint and all related documents and correspondence will be deemed confidential and known only to the parties involved.

Stage 1: Informal action – Raising a concern

- If a parent has a concern, the matter initially should be raised and discussed with their child's class teacher.
- If the teacher is unable to deal immediately with the matter, the teacher will write a clear note, detailing the key aspects of the concern, including the parent's name, phone number and date the concern was raised.
- The teacher will then look into the matter, and the parent will be contacted as soon as it has been investigated. The class teacher may also consult the Head Teacher at this stage for advice.

- The class teacher will explain to the parent what action is to be taken or what is being put in place to monitor a situation.
- If no solution is found to resolve the concern, and parents are not satisfied with the outcome of this first Stage, they may move to the next stage by submitting a complaint to the Head Teacher in writing.

Stage 2: Formal action – *Written complaint to the Head Teacher*

- A formal complaint should be made in writing to the Head Teacher.
- The Head Teacher will acknowledge the complaint in writing, within 3 working days.
- A meeting will be arranged with the complainant to clarify the basis of the complaint and to discuss any further information that may be relevant. The Head Teacher will make a note of any additional points raised.
- The Head Teacher will investigate the complaint further, interviewing those involved as appropriate.
- The Head Teacher will keep a written record of all interviews, meetings, telephone conversations and keep any other supporting documentation.
- Once all relevant facts have been established, the Head Teacher will respond in writing, but will also aim to have a face to face meeting with the complainant to explain the outcome of the investigation.
- If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of Stage 2, the Head Teacher will advise that the matter be raised with the Governing Body.

The School aims to comply with its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and although it is common practice to express a formal complaint in writing, the complainant may have communication preferences due to disability or learning difficulties and the School will, therefore, allow alternative methods of contact.

Note: If the complaint that has been made is against the Head Teacher, these Stage 2 procedures above will be carried out by the Chair of the Governing Body instead of the Head Teacher. If the complaint is made against the Chair of the Governing Body or any individual member of the Governing Body, it must be made, in the first instance, to the Clerk of the Governing Body.

Stage 3: Formal Action – *Complaint Heard by Governing Body Complaints Panel*

- If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the Stage 2 procedures, a formal complaint should be made in writing to the Chair of Governors.
- The Chair will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing and inform the complainant that the complaint will be heard within 20 working days by a Complaints Panel comprising three members of the School's Governing Body.
- The Chair will arrange to convene a Complaints Panel elected from members of the Governing Body. The Panel will comprise three members of the Governing Body who should have had no prior involvement with the complaint and one of those three should be elected as Chair of the Panel. All relevant documentation regarding the complaint should be given to the members of the Panel as soon as possible.
- The Chair of the Panel will write and inform all concerned of the date, time and place of the meeting at least 5 working days in advance. The notification to the complainant should also inform him/her of the right to be accompanied to the meeting by a friend and the right to submit further written evidence.
- It is the responsibility of the Chair of the Panel to ensure that the meeting is properly minuted.
- After the meeting, the Panel will consider the evidence and a written decision will be sent to the Head Teacher, the Chair of Governors and the complainant within 15 working days of the meeting.
- If the circumstances of the complaint are such that it would be a challenge for the School to convene a Complaints Panel of members with no prior knowledge or involvement in the complaint, it may be appropriate for the Governing Body to consider asking individuals from outside the Governing Body to

comprise the Panel. This option may be considered only in exceptional circumstances and should be agreed both by the Governing Body and the parties involved.

Recording Complaints

The School will record the progress of the complaint and the final outcome. The Head Teacher is responsible for these records and holds them centrally. The School is aware that complainants have a right to copies of these records under the Freedom of Information and Data Protection Acts.

How the Complaints Process positively influences School Improvement

At The Priory, we pride ourselves not only on the academic and personal and social education that we provide but also on the services that we offer to the entire Priory community. Nonetheless, we recognise that even in spite of our very best efforts, there will be occasions when issues and complaints are raised. However, we are continually striving to get better and we believe that the process of listening to and resolving complaints can indeed contribute to school improvement. When individual complaints are heard, underlying issues that need to be addressed may be identified and we will, therefore, use the monitoring and review of complaints as a useful tool in evaluating the school's performance.

Beyond the Governing Body

Complaints can be taken to the Secretary of State for Education under the Education Act 1996 on the grounds that a Governing Body is acting or proposing to act unreasonably or has failed to discharge its duties under the Act.

Parents also have a right to complain directly to Ofsted if the complaint concerns whole school issues.

Annual Review

The Governing Body will monitor and promptly review the nature of formal complaints, and the School's response to them, to ensure that the School is effectively meeting the expectations of parents and the local community.

If you have any queries about this policy or the Complaints Procedure, please contact the Head Teacher.