

Understanding your School's

Complaint-handling process: An overview



The complaints process – an overview

Our school is a part of a System of Schools with a complaint-handling process in place to receive, record, manage, resolve and report on complaints.

1

Receiving a complaint

Complaints may be made in various ways, including in person, by phone, via an online complaint form, by email. Unless your complaint is resolved at first point of contact, details of your complaint will be recorded along with other relevant information.

2

Recording a complaint and relevant information

When a complaint is made we may ask you for your details, details about any person being complained about, and the issues. A person may choose to make an anonymous complaint but doing so may impact our ability to respond.

3

Acknowledging a complaint

- We will always acknowledge a complaint at the time of receipt or as soon as possible afterwards. We may acknowledge verbally or in writing.
- We will provide a contact point for the child or young person and their parent or carer.
- We will provide information about the complaint-handling process, the likely next steps and expected timeframe.

4

Assessing a complaint and addressing immediate risks

Our initial assessment of a complaint involves the following questions being asked:

- Does the complaint raise any immediate risks to the safety or wellbeing of a child or young person or other person?
- What other issues does the complaint raise?
- What steps need to be taken to address and manage risks throughout the complaints process?
- Does the child or young person affected by the complaint (or other children involved or impacted) require any additional immediate support?



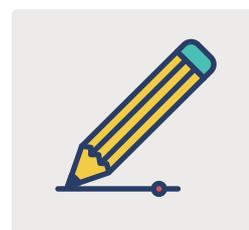
- Is there evidence that needs to be immediately protected?
- How serious, complicated or otherwise urgent are the issues raised in the complaint (from both the perspective of the complainant, involved child or young person and our school)?
- Are the issue/s raised within the school's control?
- Are the outcomes sought by the complainant achievable?
- If more than one issue is raised, will they need to be separately addressed?
- What other authorities or agencies (e.g. police, community services) need to know about the issues raised by the complaint or be involved in any response?
- What type of information should the complainant be provided following our assessment?
- Is further information needed from the complainant in order to properly assess and resolve the complaint?

If the complaint is **not** about something the school can respond to, we will ensure that you are told and (wherever possible) referred to a person or organisation that can help as quickly as possible.

5

Planning the involvement of a child or young person

Once the issues raised by the complaint have been assessed, we may develop a plan involving any affected child or young person and their parent/carer. We will continue to communicate at key stages of a complaint. Any information we communicate will include information about the process and how they will be supported.



6

Resolving a complaint

After assessing a complaint, we will plan any actions required to manage and resolve it. Wherever possible, we try to resolve complaints promptly with a complainant and—particularly where the matter is minor—as soon as possible after the complaint is made. However, where the complaint relates to a serious allegation or incident, this may not be possible or appropriate. We will keep you informed about what is happening with your complaint and advise where there are delays.

To resolve the complaint:

- We will work with you to see how the issues can be appropriately addressed
- We will make inquiries with any person who is the subject of the complaint, and/or
- We may conduct an investigation into the issues raised in a complaint, in cooperation with police/child protection authorities where relevant.

The nature and scope of any action:

Possible action will depend on a number of factors including:

- the circumstances of each case
- any statutory requirements
- the issue(s) complained about
- the parties involved
- the likely outcome.

More serious complaints will require an evidence-based rather than an outcome-focused approach.

7 Conducting an investigation

The following steps are generally undertaken as part of an investigation:

- Action the relevant issues identified through the assessment process, starting with any immediate safety risks posed to a child, young person or class of children, and undertake any risk management associated with the subject of complaint.
- Select the appropriate investigative approach by looking at any statutory requirements, consulting relevant external bodies (e.g. police and child protection agencies) and considering the nature of the issue or allegations raised and the likely outcome of the investigation.
- Develop an investigation plan, ensuring that, where appropriate, relevant authorities are consulted and involved in its design and implementation to ensure an organisation's actions do not compromise a police or child protection investigation.
- Obtain and protect evidence, including identifying relevant witnesses and putting the allegations to the subject of complaint at the appropriate point in time—affording them fairness.
- Analyse, assess and weigh all of the evidence gathered.
- Make findings about the allegations, and explain them to the subject of complaint and the complainant.

8

Providing regular updates throughout a complaints process

We will always let a complainant and—depending on the complainant's needs, also their family, guardian and/or support person—know what is happening with their complaint, when they can expect to hear from us and who to contact for more information or if they have questions about the process.

The frequency of updates and the nature and quantity of information provided to a complainant will be determined in accordance with their specific needs, the law and our privacy and confidentiality obligations.

9

Advising the final outcome

We will always seek to be transparent about our response to a complaint. This may involve providing details of a final findings to a complainant, any person subject of complaint and possibly other stakeholders. The detail of information may be impacted by privacy, confidentiality and procedural fairness obligations.

We will provide our reasons for our decision, and advise of available avenues for review and/or appeal if you are dissatisfied with the outcome and/or the complaints process.

10

Closing the complaint and recording the outcome

When we close a complaint we keep comprehensive records about:

- ▶ how the complaint was managed
- ▶ the outcome
- ▶ any recommendations and/or outstanding actions and how they have been addressed.



We welcome feedback at the conclusion of a complaints process.

11

Facilitating ongoing support for those involved in the complaint

As part of our process for finalising complaints, we always consider whether the person who made the complaint or a child or young person involved in the complaint (or their parents/carers) is likely to need or want ongoing support.

This might include support we can provide or a referral that we can facilitate to other organisations where required (for example, referrals for counselling).

12

Continuous improvement

In addition to making adjustments to our system where weaknesses are identified by a specific complaint or general feedback, we collect, maintain and review complaints data to identify any broader trends with the aim of improving service delivery/performance.

We look for opportunities to communicate with people who have made complaints, and with stakeholders broadly, about any changes or improvements brought about through the handling of a complaint, or review of complaint data.

We are committed to helping people see the tangible improvements that can result from making a complaint.

