

Eltham Hill School



Eltham Hill  
SCHOOL

**PARENTS COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

**Governors Committee:** Teaching & Innovation

**Date Adopted/Reviewed:** September 2014

**Date of next review:** September 2017

For more information please call 0208 859 2843 or email [info@elthamhill.greenwich.sch.uk](mailto:info@elthamhill.greenwich.sch.uk)

# **Parents Complaints Procedure**

## **Introduction**

We aim to provide your child with the best possible education and meet his or hers needs as well as we can. However, in any school, parents may occasionally feel concerned about something or have a complaint. If this is the case we want to hear from you. This leaflet explains how you can voice a concern or complaint and how we will respond.

## **What do I do if I have a complaint about the school?**

In the first instance speak with your child's Form Tutor or Pastoral Manager. She/he will discuss your complaint with you and seek to resolve the matter. You may need to make an appointment to see the appropriate teacher or Year Leader to resolve the complaint. Your child will not be penalised or treated less favourably as a result of you making a complaint.

There are certain specific complaints that are handled differently.

If your child is refused admission to the school you have a statutory right to appeal to an independent appeals panel. The School will be able to give you details.

If your child has been excluded for between 5 and 15 school days, you have a right to make representation to the governing body. If your child has been permanently excluded you have the right to an independent appeal.

If your child has Special Educational Needs (SEN) and you have a complaint about their SEN provision, the school will be able to give you details of the Local Authority's dispute resolution arrangements, the Parent Partnership service and the SEN Tribunal for disputes about a Statement of Special Educational Need.

## **What do I do if I feel my complaint hasn't been sorted out?**

You may contact the school office and ask for an appointment to see the Vice Principal/Principal. The Vice Principal/Principal will listen carefully and ask you any questions to help him/her understand the situation fully. She/he will probably then has to talk to other people, but will get in touch with you as soon as she/he is able to respond fully. This is referred to as the **informal stage** of the complaints procedure.

## **If you feel unhappy with what the Vice Principal/Principal says, what can I do then?**

You may then write to the Chair of the Governing Body at the school address, setting out your complaint and why you are unhappy with the school's response. Please write within 14 days of receiving the Vice Principal/Principal's response. The chair will write acknowledging your letter within a few days and may invite you for an informal meeting to discuss your

complaint. If not, the Chair will then write again once she/he has investigated more fully. You should receive a full response within 14 days. This is still referred to as the **informal stage** of the complaints procedure.

### **What happens if I am unhappy about the Chair of Governors' response?**

You are entitled to ask a panel of governors to meet to consider your complaint. If you want to do this, write to the Clerk to the Governing Body within 14 days of receiving the Chair's response, say that you have a formal complaint and that you remain unhappy with the way the school and Chair of Governors have responded and that you would like a panel of governors to consider your complaint. There is no need to write all the details of the complaint in this letter but you will be required to explain clearly what you are complaining about. The clerk will contact you about the panel and explain what will happen. You may bring someone with you if you wish. This part of the procedure is referred to as the **formal stage** of the complaints procedure.

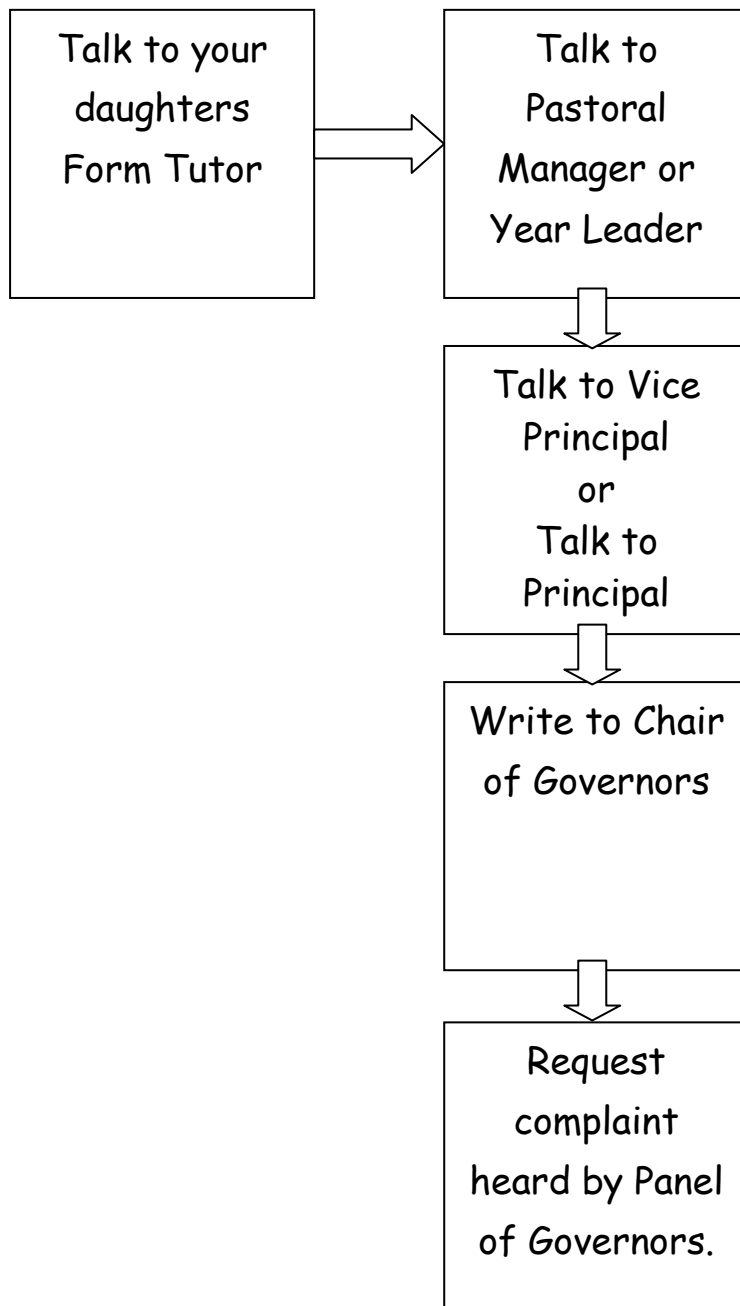
### **What happens at the Panel meeting?**

One of the governors will chair the meeting and she/he will explain what will happen. You may be asked to outline your complaint. Panel members and/or the Vice Principal/Principal who will also be present may ask you questions. The Vice Principal/Principal, will then explain how the school has responded to the complaint and then you and the panel may ask the Vice Principal/Principal questions. You may also ask other people (witnesses) to speak about what happened.

After this, everyone except the panel and the person taking minutes will leave, so that the panel can consider its findings. The Chair of the panel will write to you within a few days setting out the panel's findings. They will also write to the Vice Principal/Principal and Chair of Governors. Their findings are binding upon the school.

The panel's findings are the school's final response to you about your complaint. Schools are responsible for their own activities and the Local Authority cannot get involved. The Local Authority cannot tell a governing body what to do. If you are still unhappy you could write to the Secretary of State for Education, but again there is no power to intervene unless the governing body has acted unreasonably or has failed to fulfil its statutory responsibilities.

### Complaints Process – A Summary



Please be assured that we will take your complaint seriously and treat you fairly and deal with it promptly. If something has gone wrong we want to put it right, and if you are not happy with the result then neither are we!

## **Procedural Guidelines for Each Stage**

### **Informal Stage**

#### 1. Informal discussion with staff member

The staff member will give the parent her/his undivided attention for a reasonable time in order to listen and respond to the concern. If the staff member is unable to do so immediately, she/he will offer the parent an appointment as soon as possible (with 5 working days). If the staff member subsequently needs to investigate the issue before responding, she/he will inform the parent and state when a response should be available (with 5 working days). If it proves impossible to meet the deadline the staff member will contact the parent and explain the reasons for the delay and give further time limit for their response. The staff member should consider the advisability of asking a third person to be present and is encouraged to speak with the Line Manager.

#### 2. Meeting with the Vice Principal/Principal

Upon receiving the parents request for a meeting, the Vice Principal/Principal will offer an appointment within 5 working days. If the Vice Principal/Principal subsequently needs to investigate the issue before responding she/he will inform the parent and state when a response should be available, within 5 working days. If it proves impossible to meet this deadline the Vice Principal/Principal will contact the parent and explain the reasons for the delay and give a further time limit for their response.

The Vice Principal/Principal will inform the parent that should she/he remain dissatisfied she/he have recourse to the governing body and should write to the Chair of Governors within 2 weeks.

#### 3. Referral to Chair of Governors (or designated Governor)

Upon receipt of a parent's letter of complaint, the Chair of Governors will write to the parent with 5 days acknowledging the letter and stating that the matter will be investigated. The Chair will inform the parent that a full response will be made in writing within 14 days. If it proves impossible to meet this deadline the Chair will write to the parent and explain the reasons for the delay and give a further time limit for the full response.

The Chair will send a copy of the school's complaints procedure and policy to the parent with the initial acknowledgement.

### **Formal Stage**

#### 4. Referral to panel of Governors

If the parent is dissatisfied with the full response from the Chair of Governors (or designated governor) or if the Chair fails to respond as outlined above, the parent may write to the Clerk of the Governing Body within a further 14 days, requesting that a panel of governors be convened to hear the complaint. The letter should be acknowledged

with 5 days, and the panel convened to hear the complaint within a further three weeks. The Clerk should liaise with the parent to agree mutually convenient times.

#### Constitution of Panel

The panel will consist of three governors, none of whom have detailed knowledge of the complaint or are involved personally in any way. There should be no more than one staff member on the panel.

#### Panel Procedure

The hearing will be minuted by someone other than a panel member. A panel member will be appointed Chair. The parent may be accompanied by someone of their choosing. The format of the hearing should be as follows:

Parent outlines complaint

Vice Principal/Principal and panel are given opportunity to question parent

Vice Principal/Principal outlines School's response to complaint

Parent and panel are given opportunity to question Vice Principal/Principal

Each side may ask witnesses to speak as appropriate

Everyone except panel and clerk withdraw

Panel considers its findings

Panel writes to parent, Chair and Vice Principal/Principal setting out findings within 2 days.

Draft minutes of meeting are sent to parent, Vice Principal/Principal, Chair of Governors and panel members with 7 days.

Anyone objecting to anything in the minutes may write their comments to the Clerk with 7 days of receiving them and their letter will be appended to the minutes.

As an alternative format, more in keeping with a "committee of inquiry" approach, the panel asks the parent, the Chair and then the Vice Principal/Principal to attend separately from each other. This avoids the possibility of argument, may help each person to speak completely openly (and may be quicker) but has the disadvantage that each party does not know what the others have said or has had the opportunity to question them. It is up to the governing body to decide which approach to adopt, depending on the nature of the complaint.