

Introduction

The Education Act 2002 states that Governing bodies must have in place and publicise a procedure to deal with all complaints relating to their school. As part of our commitment to providing an excellent education at Castle View Academy we would want any concerns to be addressed promptly and effectively. This procedure aims to make sure that this happens.

We recognise that there is a difference between a concern and a formal complaint and this procedure enables concerns to be dealt with informally without making formal procedures necessary. Raising a concern informally does not mean that the issue will be treated any less seriously. However there will be times when complainants wish to have matters dealt with more formally and the ways in which this can be done are set out below.

We also recognise that whilst the vast majority of complaints will arise from parents and families there may be other stakeholders who will wish to use this procedure to raise a concern with the school.

Stages of the Complaints Procedure

Stage 1: Informal Complaint

Our intention is that the vast majority of concerns can be raised and dealt with informally before there is a need to raise a more formal complaint. Parents and carers are encouraged to make their concerns known to the school informally at an early stage so that they can be addressed in the spirit of partnership. Effective and fair resolution of concerns usually requires they are brought to the school's attention promptly and should therefore be brought within 3 months of the relevant events.

In the first instance, a concern should be raised with the member of staff most closely involved, such as the child's class teacher or Head of Year. If that does not provide a satisfactory outcome, then an informal complaint should be made to the Principal with a view to resolving the issue informally before moving to the formal stage.

If the concern is regarding the Principal, then an informal complaint can be made to the Chair of the Local Governing Body (LGB).

Stage 2: Formal Complaint

If you do not believe that your concern has been treated seriously or resolved satisfactorily, then the next step would be to make your complaint formal and take it to the Principal. You can do this in writing (letter or e-mail are acceptable or a form is available in reception if you prefer) setting out as clearly as you can:

- the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved;
- what has happened so far and who has been involved;
- what you believe would put things right.

In this situation, the school will acknowledge your complaint within five working days and respond fully within ten working days. These timescales may need to be adjusted if the complaint requires particular investigation but in such a situation we would keep you informed of the new timescales that we are working to. If your complaint is regarding the Principal, a formal complaint can be made to the Chair of the Local Governing Body by emailing clerk@castleviewacademy.org.uk.

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Stage 3: Local Governing Body Appeal Panel

Should it be the case that the complaint has not been resolved to your satisfaction, it is possible to ask, within 10 school days of receiving the response at Stage 2, that the issue is heard by an appeal panel of the Local Governing Body. If you wish for this to happen, you should write to the clerk to the Governors (clerk@castleviewacademy.org.uk) giving details of the complaint and request that it is heard by an appeal panel. Three governors who have not previously been involved in the process will hear the complaint within twenty working days of your request being received by the clerk and will consider the information provided in reaching a decision. You are welcome to attend the panel and may be accompanied if you wish.

The panel can:

- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;
- uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
- recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

The decision of the appeal panel will be in writing and will be final and the matter will be closed.

End of Formal Process

Why are complaints referred to Governors rather than the education department?

Under the local management of schools legislation, principals are directly accountable to the Local Governing Body of the school/academy, and not to the Local Authority. Complaints and concerns must therefore be dealt with by the Governors of a school/academy, with guidance and advice from the Local Authority education department where requested.

Are there any exceptions to these complaints procedures?

Some complaints about educational issues are dealt with in a slightly different way. There are special arrangements in law if you want to appeal about the following:

- Admission to school
- Exclusions from school
- School reorganisation proposals
- Special education provision
- Religious education and collective worship
- Curriculum issues

Set procedures must be followed for each of the above. If your complaint relates to any of the above areas, please contact Portsmouth City Council, Children's Services, Civic Office, Guildhall Square, Portsmouth, PO1 2EA.

What if I remain dissatisfied after the Governor's complaints hearing?

Stage 3 is the last Academy-based stage of the complaints process, however if you remain dissatisfied you can contact United Learning's Central Office where the complaint will be picked up by a designated representative who will investigate and respond to the concern. Please be aware that Central Office won't get involved **unless** there is clear evidence that all other stages have been exhausted. A brief overview of the issue, the school involved, and the steps taken thus far to resolve it, should be set out. The earlier steps in the complaints process must have been completed

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and a formal response given by the LGB before this escalation route is used, and it must be initiated within 10 school days of the LGB panel's decision being communicated to the complainant.

Once the designated Central Office representative have details of the complaint, he/she will investigate further, including a review of the complaint and the action taken by the school up to this point. They will then give a direction and ensure you are appropriately informed.

The decision of the designated representative is final and binding. You will be given a written response to your complaint within 15 school days from the receipt of the complaint by United Learning's Central Office.

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