



NORTHAMPTON SCHOOL *for Boys*

Complaints Policy (General)

Approved by: Governors Personnel Committee

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1. INTRODUCTION

This policy will apply to most general complaints made by parents of students at the school. It is not intended to cover matters for which there is a specific statutory process to object, complain or appeal. These exceptions are listed below:

- School admissions and exclusions are governed by appeals processes laid down in DFE guidance (currently School Admissions Code 2014 and Exclusions guidance 2015).
- Child abuse allegations are dealt with through a separate policy.
- Racism – for complaints linked to racism see Annex A.

As parents, you have access to this and other policies on the school website. You are informed of this in the Headmaster's Annual Letter at the start of the academic year.

Complaints by non-parents will be dealt with under stage 2 of the procedure and there will be no right of appeal to the Complaints Panel.

2. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- Resolution of a complaint provides an opportunity for us to improve our practice and so strengthen our partnership with parents.
- It is desirable for any concern/complaint to be addressed by a member of staff or governor at a level close to the cause for the concern.
- Our procedures should be quick, consistent and fair to all.
- A complaint is distinct from any formal disciplinary procedure. Staff who are questioned during the investigation of a complaint will be treated fairly and have an opportunity to put their case. They will be offered support if needed.
- If your concern/complaint has the potential to become a staff disciplinary issue, professional advice will be sought.
- Confidentiality is important in securing the confidence of all concerned. Conversations and correspondence will be treated with discretion. You need to feel confident that a complaint will not disadvantage your child. However, you must realise that some information may have to be shared – as sensitively as possible - for us to carry out a thorough investigation.
- All formal complaints will be recorded and monitored to identify issues and improve our practices.
- Every complaint will be acknowledged as 'genuinely felt' by the complainant.

3. COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES

This complaints procedure has three stages:-

1. Initial Approach
2. Formal Complaint (to Headmaster or Chair of Governors)
3. Appeal (to Governor Committee)

4. STAGE 1 - INITIAL APPROACH

Guidelines

- The vast majority of concerns and complaints can be resolved informally, often straight away by the class teacher, Curriculum or Year Team Leader or member of the Leadership Group.
- We aim to ensure that as parents you feel able to raise concerns with staff without undue formality in person, by telephone or in writing.
- You may not be clear at first whether you wish to make a complaint. You may simply ask a question or express an opinion. A preliminary discussion will usually clarify the issue and help you decide whether you wish to take the matter further.

Procedure

1. You will have an opportunity for informal discussion of your concerns with an appropriate member of staff. This discussion will aim to clarify both the nature of the concern and the intended outcome. We will assure you that we wish to hear about it.
2. If the member of staff first contacted cannot deal with the matter immediately, s/he should **either** make a firm arrangement to deal with it by a specific future date **or** refer the matter to an appropriate person. A note of your name, the date and contact details will be taken. The first contact should check to make sure the referral has been successful.
3. If the concern relates to the Headmaster and you feel unable to raise it with the head, you should contact the chair of governors.
4. The person dealing with the complaint should make sure you are clear about what will happen next and the timescale for a response. This may later be put in writing in order to make the next steps or outcome clear. Informal complaints will usually be responded to within three school days and you will be informed if a further period of time is required to deal with the issues raised.
5. If no satisfactory solution is found, you will be informed about how to proceed if you wish to take your complaint further.
6. You must complete the Complaints Form (Annex C) together with a more detailed written submission of the exact nature and details of the complaint.

5. STAGE 2 - FORMAL COMPLAINT TO THE HEADTEACHER OR CHAIR OF GOVERNORS

Guidelines

- The Headmaster will determine who will respond to a formal complaint.
- If your complaint is about the Headmaster (or the Headmaster has been closely involved in Stage 1) the chair of governors will carry out the Stage 2 procedures, with support if necessary from another governor.
- The rest of the governing body will not become involved in discussing the complaint at this stage.

Procedure

1. If you are issuing a stage 2 Formal Complaint you must put the complaint in writing to the Chair of Governors or Headmaster on the appropriate form (see Annex C). The chair of governors, Headmaster or person investigating your complaint should acknowledge the complaint orally or in writing within three school days of receipt and set a target date for providing a response. Ideally, this should be within ten school days. If it is not possible to deal with the matter in this time, you should be informed of when it is likely to be concluded.
2. The person investigating your complaint may offer you an opportunity to meet him/her. You can be accompanied by a friend or relative who can speak on your behalf if you so wish.
3. If necessary the person investigating will interview witnesses and take statements from those involved.
4. If your complaint is against a pupil, the pupil will be interviewed, sometimes with their parent/guardian present. This may not be possible, in which case a senior member of staff with whom the pupil feels comfortable will be present.
5. If your complaint is against a member of staff, our responsibilities as the employer of that person will be borne in mind and professional advice may need to be obtained.
6. The person investigating will keep written records of meetings, telephone conversations and other documentation. Once the relevant facts have been established, the person investigating will either write to you or arrange a meeting to resolve the matter. This meeting will be followed up with a letter summarising the outcome of the meeting.
7. You will be advised in this letter that if you remain unhappy with the outcome, you may appeal to a panel of governors. You must notify the chair of governors of your intention to appeal within two weeks of receiving the letter detailing the outcome of your complaint.

6. STAGE 3 – APPEAL TO GOVERNORS

Guidelines

- Complaints rarely reach the appeal stage, but it is important that our governing body is prepared to deal with them. Professional advice may be sought.
- The aim of the appeal is to resolve your complaint and achieve reconciliation between yourself and the school. This is not always possible. It may only be possible for governors to hear the facts and views of a situation, make recommendations about future action, and satisfy you that your complaint has been taken seriously.
- The governing body must be impartial and independent and be seen to be. Your individual complaint will not be considered by the full governing body. The governing body will establish a complaint panel (the ‘Panel’) to deal with your complaint. The Panel will consist of two governors taken from a nominated pool and a person who is independent of the management and running of the school.
- Panel members should have had no prior involvement with your complaint. The chair of governors will not be on the panel if they have been involved at an earlier stage. Governors will have regard, where possible, to having a mix of types of governor on the panel and be sensitive to issues of equal opportunity in the composition of the panel.
- Individual governors should not get involved in looking into your complaint before this stage to avoid prejudicing their potential involvement. If you approach an individual governor regarding your complaint, they should refer you to the schools complaints procedure, making the necessary introduction to a member of staff or Headmaster if appropriate.
- If your complaint reaches the appeal stage it is because you are not satisfied with our response so far. In this situation it is perhaps helpful for the governing body to view your complaint as being against the school rather than an individual staff member whose actions may have led to the original complaint.

Procedure

Upon receipt of your written request for the complaint to proceed to Stage Three, the following procedure will be followed.

A suitable clerk to the Panel will be appointed by the Chair of Governors, who will also determine the membership of the Panel.

1. The clerk will write to you acknowledging receipt of your written request, and informing you that it will be heard by the Panel within 15 school days of receipt.
2. The clerk will convene a meeting of the complaints panel at a time which is convenient for you, the panel and the school. Where it is not possible to agree

a date despite the clerk having made reasonable attempts to do so with you, the Panel may convene and hear the complaint in your absence.

3. The clerk will ensure that you, the Headmaster and any other witnesses are given at least five school days notice in writing of the date, time and place of the hearing or otherwise are in full agreement of a shorter timescale. The letter of notification to you will also inform you of your right to be accompanied by a friend/relative who can speak on your behalf. The letter should establish whether there are communications issues – such as language, hearing impairment – and the clerk should make suitable arrangements as required. The letter will set out the procedure for the conduct of the hearing (see annex B) and your right to submit further written evidence to the committee.
4. The clerk will invite the Headmaster and/or the person investigating your complaint to attend the hearing and to submit a written report for the panel in response to your complaint. The Headmaster may also invite the chair of governors or any other members of staff directly involved in matters raised by you to respond in writing and/or in person to your complaint. Any involvement of other staff is at the discretion of the chair of the panel.
5. All relevant documents should be received by all parties at least five school days before the meeting of the panel. This provides adequate opportunity to read them prior to the start of the meeting.
6. The chairman of the Panel should ensure that proper minutes of the meeting are taken.
7. The chair of the Panel should try to ensure that the proceedings are sufficiently informal that all participants feel at ease.
8. At the conclusion of the representations and questions, the chair should explain that the Panel will consider the issues and write to both parties with their decision or judgement within three school days.
9. All except for the Panel and any advisers should then withdraw and the Panel should consider the evidence. This should include: a judgement about the validity of your complaint; appropriate action to be taken by the school and/or you; and where appropriate, recommendations on changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure similar problems do not arise in the future.
10. The school will keep a copy of all correspondence and notes confidentially on file. This should be separate from pupils' personal records.
11. The broad outcomes recommended by the Panel can be reported to the next full governing body or appropriate committee with the identity of all those taking part kept confidential. The governing body should monitor implementation of the recommendations.

Approved by: **Governors Personnel Committee**
Date: **January 2015**
Review: **January 2016**

ANNEX A

Dealing with Complaints about Racism

1. Racist Behaviour to a Pupil or Student

When an incident is reported as one pupil being racist towards another, there is a Racial Incident Form which must be completed and returned to the Headmaster.

All such Racist incidents are reported at meetings of the Full Governing Body.

2. Racist Incident Alleged Against School Staff

- i. The report/complaint should be made to the head teacher, or if the head teacher is the subject of the report/complaint, to the Chair of Governors;
- ii. As racism is a disciplinary offence, the normal disciplinary procedures will be followed.

3. Institutional Racism

Parents who perceive that racist practice or policies are operated by the school should pursue these through the General Complaints Procedure.

ANNEX B

Model Procedure for the Conduct of a Stage 3 Panel Hearing

1. The chair of the Panel should invite all parties (except any witnesses) into the room, introduce and explain the role of each person. The person investigating the complaint will be able to respond instead of or as well as the Headmaster.
2. The chair should explain that the purpose of the hearing is to review the complaint and try to resolve it and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. This will not always be possible. It may only be possible to establish the facts of the situation and make recommendations about future action.
3. The chair should ascertain whether the proposed procedure is acceptable. If so, the meeting will proceed along the following lines:
 - i. The complainant describes her/his complaint and may call witnesses.
 - ii. The Headmaster may seek clarification from the complainant and any witnesses.
 - iii. The Panel or its advisers may seek clarification from the complainant and any witnesses.
 - iv. The Headmaster will respond to the complaint and may call witnesses.
 - v. The complainant may seek clarification from the Headmaster and any witnesses.
 - vi. The Panel (including any advisers) may seek clarification from the Headmaster and any witnesses.
 - vii. The Headmaster will be given the opportunity to sum up.
 - viii. The complainant will be given the opportunity to sum up.
 - ix. Both parties will leave the room to allow the Panel to deliberate but any advisers may remain to offer technical and procedural advice.
4. The Panel should make a decision or judgement on:-
the validity of the complaint; appropriate action to be taken by the school and/or parent; and where appropriate, recommendations on changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure similar problems do not arise in the future.
5. The decision or judgement will be confirmed in writing within three school days.

NB If there is more than one complainant this procedure should be followed for each one in turn, unless the complainants agree to the complaint being heard with all present in one sitting.

Stage 2 - Formal Complaint

Part One – to be completed by the complainant

Your Name:

Address:

Date: **Contact Phone number:**

Name of son/daughter: **Form:**
(if applicable)

Brief statement of the nature of complaint (a summary of the complaint only):

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Was the complaint raised informally? **Yes/No**

If so, with whom?

When?

Part Two – to be completed by the school:

Person to deal with complaint:

Has the complainant put their full complaint in writing? **Yes / No / Not yet**

Date complaint received **Signed:**

Once the complaint is in writing, this pro-forma and full written complaint must be forwarded to the Head (unless the complaint is against the Head) who will decide who will conduct the investigation.

The investigation will follow the procedures laid down in the school's Complaints Policy. (Available on the website: www.nsb.northants.sch.uk)

Summary

For full details see the Complaints Policy on the school website: www.nsb.northants.sch.uk

Stage 1 – Initial Approach

If you have a complaint against the school, you should in the first instance raise it informally with the most appropriate member of staff (or chair of governors if the complaint is against the Headmaster)

Stage 2 – Formal Complaint

If the complaint is not resolved at Stage 1, the complainant should complete the form overleaf and send it to:

The Headmaster
Northampton School *for Boys*
Billing Road
Northampton
NN1 5RT

Stage 3 – Appeal to Governors

If dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2, the complainant has the right of appeal to a complaints panel. You will be informed of this right when receiving the letter explaining the outcome of Stage 2.



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COMPLAINTS POLICY (General)