



Halebank Church of England Primary School

Complaints Procedure

1. Introduction

This procedure provides a clear and transparent process for dealing with complaints as quickly and efficiently as possible. The length of time that this takes will vary with the gravity and complexity of the complaint and the urgency with which it needs to be settled. However, all complaints should be settled within a period which is reasonable in the circumstances.

The Procedure meets the school's statutory obligation to establish a complaints procedure and takes into account the principles laid down in Government guidance. It will be available in the school office and on its website, and be referred to in school publications as appropriate.

All references to working days are to days on which the school is open to pupils and for staff training.

2. Scope of the Procedure

This procedure covers all external complaints against the school where there is no alternative statutory avenue of appeal or complaint. It does not therefore apply to pupil admissions, exclusions, delivery of the National Curriculum, some safeguarding children issues, provision of collective worship and religious education and SEN assessments.

Employees of the school cannot use this procedure but, where necessary, should raise concerns via the appropriate staffing procedure, full details of which are available from the school.

3. General Principles

All complaints will be dealt with in a transparent way and as quickly as is reasonably practicable. Every effort will be made to resolve complaints as informally and as non-confrontationally as possible. Complainants will be kept informed throughout the process, except in relation to confidential matters (for example, concerning a pupil or a staffing procedure). Where a timescale within this procedure cannot be adhered to, the complainant will be informed of the reason within the timescale, and given a revised timescale.

The headteacher will record all complaints, including the way in which they are resolved. The headteacher will annually report this to the Governing Board, which will monitor the nature and level of complaints, so as to ensure the effectiveness of the procedure, and identify any underlying issues the school may need to address. Should a complainant seek to re-open an issue

which has already been fully addressed through this procedure, the Chair of Governors has the right to inform him/her that the procedure has been exhausted and the matter is closed.

4. Resolving Complaints

Complainants may be asked to indicate what outcome they are seeking through their complaint. Outcomes could include one or more of the following:

- an apology;
- an explanation;
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
- an assurance that the event complained of will not recur;
- an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again;
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint.

5. Stages of the Procedure

The procedure has three stages. Every effort should be made to resolve the complaint at the earliest Stage and with the least formality possible.

Stage 1: Informal Stage

The complainant will be invited to discuss and attempt to resolve any issue directly with the member of staff concerned, or another member of staff. If this does not resolve the issue, the complainant should contact the headteacher, who will consider what other informal attempts should be made to resolve the issue without recourse to formal investigation and process.

Where the complaint is against the headteacher, the complainant should contact the Chair of Governors, who will consider possible informal resolution. Where the complaint is against the Chair of Governors, the Vice Chair of Governors, or another governor nominated by him/her, will consider this.

Stage 2: Formal Stage

If the complaint cannot satisfactorily be resolved informally, the complainant may put the complaint formally in writing to the headteacher, or if the complaint is against the headteacher, to the Chair of Governors, or if the complaint is against the Chair of Governors, to the Vice Chair of Governors. The person receiving the complaint, or another appropriate person he or she may nominate, will meet with the complainant to discuss his/her concerns within ten working days of receiving the complaint. Where necessary, that person will carry out, or nominate another appropriate person to carry out, an investigation into the issues raised by the complaint. In any event, that person will give a written response to the complainant within ten working days of meeting him or her.

Stage 3: Appeal Stage

A complainant who is dissatisfied with the response given at Stage 2 may, within five working days of receiving the response, appeal in writing to the Chair of Governors, or, where the complaint is against the Chair, to the Vice-Chair of Governors. This should state the original complaint and the reasons for on-going dissatisfaction. The Governor receiving the appeal may refuse to accept it as an appeal if he or she reasonably believes that the complaint has been wholly upheld at Stage 2 and in all the circumstances there is no merit in the matter proceeding further.

Otherwise, a Complaints Appeal Panel will be convened, consisting of three Governors who have had no previous involvement in consideration of the complaint. The Panel will meet as soon as reasonably practicable. The complainant will be notified of the date of the meeting within twenty working days of the appeal being received and will be given at least five working notice of that date. Where this date is not convenient for the complainant, reasonable attempts will be made to find a mutually convenient date.

All documents which form a significant part of the appeal or the response to the appeal must be copied to the other party at least five working days before the meeting.

The Panel will hear the appeal in accordance with the procedure in Appendix A.

6. Raising the Matter with Other Agencies

Some issues can be raised with other agencies, although they may not agree to become involved until the School's Complaints Procedure has been exhausted.

The Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families

The Department for Education may be asked to intervene in the complaint in certain serious circumstances.

Ofsted

Ofsted has powers to investigate certain types of complaint from parents to help them to decide whether to inspect a school.

Date: May 2022

Review: May 2024

APPENDIX A

Conduct of Complaints Appeals

- 1 The hearing will be conducted in as informal as way as possible within the broad structure of this procedure.
- 2 The meeting will be minuted.
- 3 The meeting may be attended by:
 - the complainant, with a companion if desired;
 - the headteacher and/or Chair of Governors, as appropriate;
 - the members of the Panel;
 - a minute taker, appointed by the Governors;
 - witnesses called by either side to attend part of the meeting to provide information to the Panel.
- 4 The Panel will select a Chair from amongst their number.
- 5 The Chair of the Panel will introduce all those present and explain the procedure to be followed.
- 6 The complainant (or his/her companion) will outline the complaint and explain why s/he is dissatisfied with the school's response to date. The complainant may call any witnesses in support of his/her complaint who will attend the meeting only for the time that they are providing information, and may be questioned by all parties.
- 7 The headteacher and the Panel will have the opportunity to ask questions of the complainant.
- 8 The headteacher and/or the Chair of Governors will explain their involvement in the complaint and the reasons for their decisions at the previous stage. The headteacher and/or Chair of Governors may call any witnesses in support of his/her statement who will attend the meeting only for the time that they are providing information, and may be questioned by all parties
- 9 The complainant and the Panel will have the opportunity to ask questions of the headteacher and/or Chair of Governors.
- 10 The Panel may decide to adjourn the hearing pending further investigation at any stage, if this seems necessary.
- 11 Both parties will leave the meeting and the Panel will consider the information that has been put to them.
- 12 The Panel will decide whether to uphold the complaint wholly or in part, and any action the School needs to take to resolve the complaint. Every

effort will be made to reach a decision on the day, but where this is not possible, the Panel will endeavour to reach a decision as soon as possible.

The Panel will communicate their decision and a summary of their reasons to both parties in writing as soon as possible and, in any case, within five working days of reaching their decision.