



Complaints Policy

2023 24

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Cambridge School Complaints Procedure

The school's Governors and the Headteacher are committed to providing the best educational experience they can for all pupils attending this school. They recognize the value to all concerned of dealing fairly, speedily and effectively with any complaint concerning their decisions, actions or omissions, which a pupils or parent/carer or other aggrieved person may have. To this end, we have adopted the underlying principles and procedures set out in this document.

Definition of complaint

If you are a parent or carer of a Cambridge child who has a problem at school you should be able to resolve it through an informal discussion with your child's teacher. If you can't resolve a problem informally Cambridge has a formal complaints procedure that you can follow. Generally a school complaint is any communication made by a person with a legitimate interest in the school, a parent for example, which expresses dissatisfaction about the standard of teaching, or about the conduct of members of staff employed at the school. The feedback received from complaints helps Cambridge as it strives to improve services.

Who do I complain to?

The senior management team at the school, if you are a parent or carer or your line manager if you are a school employee. Most complaints can be satisfactorily resolved through our informal resolution process. Each stage seeks to reach a satisfactory resolution to avoid the need to escalate it. However, in the rare event that this is unsuccessful there are three formal stages to making a complaint.

Informal Resolution

You should contact the school first and explain your complaint to a member of staff associated with you or your child, this is likely to be the class teacher or the Pod Lead. Your complaint will be investigated, dealt with and you will be contacted to discuss the outcome. The majority of school-related concerns and complaints are dealt with successfully in this way. Few people want a long drawn out process, so the aim is to ensure that complaints are addressed promptly and resolved informally wherever possible. It may help to make an appointment with an Assistant Head or the Headteacher to discuss your concerns at this stage.

If you are a member of staff you should discuss your complaint with your line manager. If your complaint is regarding your line manager you should discuss your complaint with the Headteacher. It is acknowledged again that most people are seeking a quick resolution to their complaint.

Stage 1 – Formal Referral to the Headteacher

Where it is not possible to resolve the matter informally, the next step is to write to the Headteacher, who may be contacted via the school email address admin@cambridge.lbhf.sch.uk. The Headteacher will then investigate your complaint.

At the end of the investigation, you may be invited to a meeting to receive feedback or you will receive a full written response by email or post.

Stage 2 – Formal Referral to the Chair of Governors

Where it is not possible to resolve the matter at Stage 1, or is your complaint is specifically about the Headteacher, the next step is to write to the Chair of Governors, who may be contacted via the school email address; admin@cambridge.lbhf.sch.uk The Chair of Governors will either:

- Investigate your complaint, or
- Ask the Local Authority to investigate your complaint.

At the end of the investigation, you may be invited to a meeting to get feedback or you will receive a full written response by email or post.

Stage 3

Where it is not possible to resolve your complaint at the second stage, an independent panel of governors will convene a complaints committee to hear your case at a mutually convenient time and place.

Timescales

- **Informal Resolution**
You will receive a reply (usually verbally) to your complaint as quickly as possible or within a maximum of 5 school days
- **Stage 1**
You will receive a reply (usually in writing) from the Headteacher within 15 school days.
- **Stage 2**
You will receive a reply (usually in writing) from the Chair of Governors within 15 school days.
- **Stage 3**
You will receive a reply within 20 school days from the panel. If more time is needed you will be notified.

Additionally, if you have already followed the school's complaints procedure, or there are reasons why you cannot use the procedure, for example; if you feel your complaint has not been or will not be given fair consideration due to a conflict of interest – you can send your complaint to the Department for Education, using their online school complaints for available on www.education.gov.uk

Why are complaints referred to governors rather than the local authority:

Under Local Management of Schools legislation, Headteachers are directly accountable to the governing body of the school, and not to the local authority. Complaints and concerns must therefore be dealt with by the governors of a school, with guidance and advice from the local authority where they request it.

Are there any exceptions to 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;

- Admissions to school
- Exclusions from school
- School reorganization 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 the children's services department.

What if I remain dissatisfied after the governors' complaint committee hearing?

Stage 3 is the last school-based stage of the complaints process, however if you remain dissatisfied there is one further possible course of action:

- Complaints have a lawful right of appeal to the Secretary of State for Education. In such cases, the Department for Education (DfE) will examine the complaint. The DfE has the power to require the LA to take certain actions (including the issuing of instructions to school governing bodies in appropriate circumstances).

For further information and advice please contact the schools' information section of the children's services department.

What should I do if I have a complaint against a governor?

Please put your complaint in writing to the clerk of the governing body via the school email address admin@cambridge.lbhf.sch.uk.

How long is information about a complaint/grievance retained?

A complaint issued by, or regarding, a member of staff is retained for that person's employment for a variety of timescales based on the nature of the complaint, as part of the employee's personal file and specified in the Cambridge School Data Protection Policy. If the complaint contains child protection or safeguarding concerns, these are retained until the pupil is at least 25 years old, or indefinitely depending on the case.