

# Stretford High School

## Complaints Policy

Ratified by the Board of Governors:	April 2015
Review date:	January 2018

## **Policy Statement**

It is in everyone's best interests in our school and community to communicate well with one another and to ensure that any concerns and complaints are dealt with as quickly and appropriately as possible. In addition, concerns and complaints brought to the attention of the school can be an opportunity to inform, review and help improve school procedures.

## **Aims and principles of the policy**

This policy aims to:

- Encourage the resolution of concerns and complaints by informal means wherever possible
- Ensure that concerns are dealt with quickly, fully and fairly and within defined time limits where possible
- Provide effective and appropriate responses to concerns and complaints
- Maintain good working relationships between the school and all those involved

Key principles of the policy are:

- The legal context of the Complaints Policy
- Good communication – clarification of the process involved in dealing with complaints
- Clear and adhered to recommended timescales (where appropriate)
- Clarity over roles and responsibilities of those involved in the process
- Appropriate confidentiality which must be maintained by all involved in the process (including any school staff, administrative staff and governors)

## **Legal context**

From September 2003, Section 29 of the Education Act 2002 has required governing bodies of all maintained schools and nursery schools in England to have procedures in place to deal with complaints. The Board of Governors must establish and publish procedures for dealing with complaints relating to the school.

## **Summary**

1. This policy sets out the procedures which Stretford High School will follow whenever it receives a complaint for which there are not alternative statutory procedures.
2. In all cases where the complaint directly concerns the school's Headteacher, the chair of governors (or nominated governor) in the first instance will investigate the complaint
3. If and when complaints about any school are brought to the attention of Trafford Council (the local authority), the complainants will be advised to contact the school and to follow the procedures set out within the school's complaints policy.
4. This policy may be used by anyone who has a concern or complaint about any aspect of the school. In the main this will mean parents and carers of the

school's pupils, but may include neighbours of the school or other members of the local community.

5. The Board of Governors may need to consider setting up collaboration arrangements with another Board of Governors in the eventuality of not having enough impartial governors to hear an appeal.

### **Monitoring and recording complaints**

At all stages of the complaints procedure the following information should be recorded:

- Name of the complainant
- Date and time at which complaint was made
- Details of the nature of the complaint
- Desired outcome of the complainant
- How the complaint is being investigated
- Results and conclusions of investigations
- Any action taken
- The complainant's response
- Record of any subsequent action if required

The Board of Governors should appropriately monitor the general nature of complaints over each academic year to inform practice and potential improvements to procedures and policies within the school.

### **Upholding or not upholding complaints**

At each stage of the complaints procedure the conclusion will be either:

- That the complaint is upheld (in part or full) and where appropriate some form of action is taken **OR**
- That the complaint is not upheld and reason(s) for this, where appropriate, are clearly given

In the first instance of receiving a complaint it may be appropriate to resolve the issue by offering to the complainant one or more of the following:

- An emphatic response
- An explanation of events
- A recognition that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- An explanation of the steps that have been taken to endeavour that it will not happen again. However, this must not include any information or detailed action taken involving a member of staff
- An undertaking to review school policies in light of the findings of the complaint

The complainant may choose to take no further action or take their complaint to the next stage.

## **The Stages of the Complaints Process**

### **Stage 1 (also known as the Informal Stage)**

The complainant raises and discusses their concerns/issues with young person's class teacher or form tutor. Most concerns can be resolved satisfactorily at this stage. However, the staff member may feel it more appropriate to refer the complainant to a more senior or experienced member of staff who will try to resolve the concern informally.

### **Stage 2**

If the complainant remains unhappy, they should then contact the Headteacher either by arranging an appointment to see them or putting their concerns in writing. The Headteacher (or their nominated representative) will then investigate the concerns and respond within agreed timescales. An acknowledgement will be made of the concern/complaint within five school working days. The Headteacher will respond to the issues raised within 15 school working days of receiving the complaint. If it is not possible to meet these timescales, then the Headteacher will contact the complainant to discuss reviewing these.

If the concern or complaint is against the Headteacher, in the first instance the complainant will need to write in confidence to the chair of governors at the school. The chair of governors will seek to resolve the issue informally before, if necessary, moving to Stage 3.

### **Stage 3 (also known as the Formal Stage)**

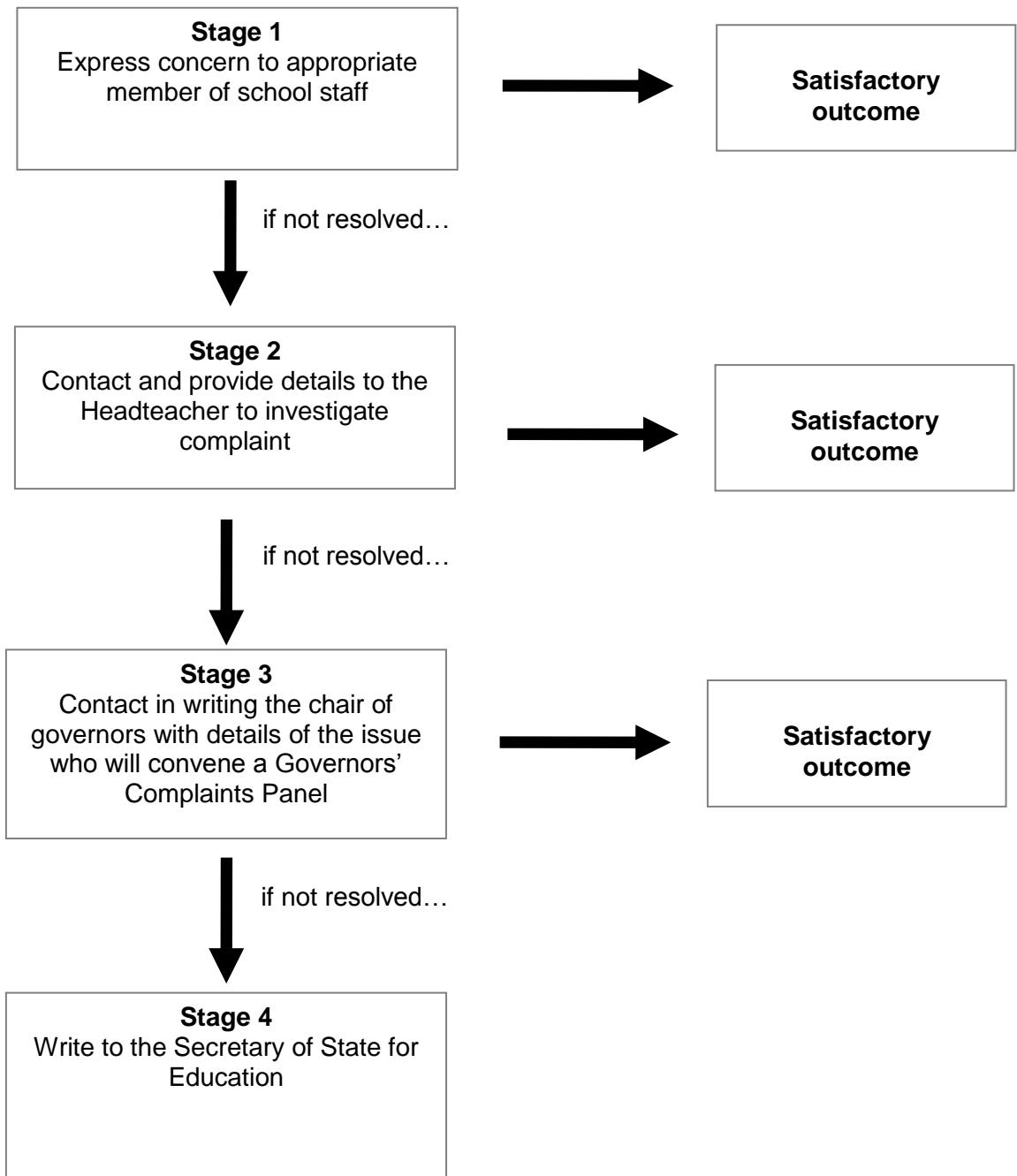
If the Headteacher is unable to resolve the concern to the satisfaction of the complainant, the complainant may write to the chair of governors at the school. The chair of governors will acknowledge the complaint within five school working days and arrange a panel of governors to be formed to hear the complaint (within agreed timescales). These governors will have no previous involvement or knowledge of the case. The chair/clerk of the complaints panel will contact the complainant with the arrangements. Both parties may bring their representative with them.

Once the panel has been held the complainant and school will be informed of their decision within five school working days. If it is not possible to meet these timescales then the chair of the panel will contact both parties to discuss a mutually convenient date. For further details about how the panel should operate see Appendix 1.

### **Stage 4**

If the complainant is unsatisfied at the end of Stage 4 they can contact the Secretary of State for Education.

## Complaints Procedure



## Appendix 1

### How the Governors' Complaints Panel will run

Although the panel will follow formal procedures, the hearing should be conducted as informally as possible. Extra care will need to be taken if the hearing involves a child or young person being present.

1. Both the complainant and the school are invited to attend the panel and arrive at the same time.
2. The chair of the panel will introduce everyone and set out that the remit of the panel is to investigate the complaint. They will do this by allowing each party the opportunity to put their case without undue interruption.
3. Any witnesses or representatives are only required to attend to give their supporting information and may leave once they have done so.
4. The complainant is given the opportunity to state their case. The panel and the Headteacher have the opportunity to ask any questions.
5. The Headteacher is given the opportunity to state the school's case. The panel and the complainant have the opportunity to ask any questions.
6. The complainant is invited to sum up their complaint.
7. The Headteacher is invited to sum up the school's actions and response to the complaint.
8. The chair lets both parties know how they will be notified of the panel's findings, within agreed timescales. The chair draws the meeting to a close.
9. Both parties leave at the same time and the panel withdraws to make their findings.

## Appendix 2

### The Governors' Complaints Panel: Roles and Responsibilities of those involved in the process

#### The Clerk to the Panel

The panel must be clerked. The clerk organises the complaints panel and must:

1. Send acknowledgement on behalf of the Chair of the Governors' Panel of the written complaint within **five school working days**, outlining the next steps
2. Arrange membership of the panel, in discussion with the chair of governors, which should be three governors who have no prior knowledge of the complaint
3. Set the date, time and venue of the panel, ensuring the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible. The hearing should be set within **15 school working days after receiving the complaint**. If the timescales cannot be adhered to the chair of the panel should discuss with the school and the complainant the next most appropriate date
4. Write to all parties, detailing the following:
  - Date, time and venue of hearing
  - Aims and objectives of the hearing and how it will be conducted
  - A request for any documentation that either party wishes the panel to consider. This must be with the clerk so that it can be sent to all parties **at least five school working days** before the hearing
  - The rights of equal access, accompaniment and representation for both the complainant and the school, ensuring that everyone is notified as to who will be attending the panel, in advance of the hearing
  - How and when the panel will reach their decision
5. Record the proceedings
6. Notify all parties of the panel's decision within **five school working days**

#### The Chair of Governors

- If the formal stage is required the chair of governors will notify the clerk to the panel to arrange the Governors' Appeal Panel
- If the complaint is about the Headteacher the chair of governors will investigate informally the issue, taking advice from the Governor Support Team where appropriate, and will inform the Corporate Director, Children, Families and Wellbeing at Trafford Council, that a complaint has been made

- The chair of governors will need to ensure that general nature of complaints over the academic year are appropriately monitored by the Board of Governors to inform practice and potential improvements to procedures and policies within the school

### **The Chair of the Panel**

The chair of the panel has a key role and will need to ensure that:

- The hearing is as informal as possible
- After introductions the remit of the panel is explained to the parties and each party has the opportunity of putting their case without undue interruption
- The complainant is given the opportunity to state their case – the panel and school then have the opportunity to ask questions and clarify points
- The school is given the opportunity to state their case – the panel and complainant then have the opportunity to ask questions and clarify points
- Any witnesses or representatives are only required to attend to give supporting information
- Both parties have the opportunity to sum up
- The meeting is drawn to a close and both parties leave the panel **at the same time**
- The issues are discussed fully, fairly and are addressed
- The key findings of the facts are made

### **Notification of the Panel's Decision**

The chair of the panel must ensure that the complainant and the school are notified of the panel's decision. This is usually within a set deadline that is published in the Complaints Policy or mutually agreed.

The panel will either:

- Uphold the complaint
- Reject the complaint
- Uphold the complaint in part

The letter must explain any further rights of appeal and if so, who to contact.



## Complaint Form

Please complete this form as fully as possible and return to the Headteacher, who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:
Student's name (if relevant)
Your relationship to the student (if relevant):
Your Address:
Daytime telephone number: Evening telephone number:
Please give details of your complaint:
What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint. (Who did you speak to and what was the response)?

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?
Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.
Signature:
Date:
Official use
Date acknowledgement sent:
By who:
Complaint referred to: