



PROSPECT SCHOOL

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COMPLAINTS POLICY & PROCEDURE

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COMPLAINTS POLICY

1. School Vision:

We provide each student with the opportunity to succeed. We are committed to high standards: hard work, good behaviour and positive relationships enable our students to achieve excellence. We work hard to ensure that our school is a lively, purposeful and supportive community, meeting the needs of each and every person.

2. Policy Status - Statutory:

This document sets out the policy for dealing with concerns, grievances and complaints by parents or carers of pupils registered at the School. A complainant could also be a member of the wider community or representing an ex-pupil. Section 29 of the Education Act 2002 states the need to have in place a procedure to deal with complaints relating to the school and to any community facilities or services the school provides. The law also requires the complaints procedure to be publicised. This policy can be found on our School website and in the staff shared area under policies / student policies.

3. Policy Statement:

The school takes informal concerns seriously and aims to resolve them at the earliest stage in order to reduce the numbers that develop into formal complaints. The requirement to have a Complaints Procedure will not in any way undermine the efforts to resolve the concern informally. Staff will wherever possible endeavour to resolve issues immediately.

4. Aims of the Policy:

The school's values are concerned with meeting the needs of pupils, parents and other stakeholders. The governing body believes that feedback is an important ingredient in self-evaluation and raising standards. All should feel that their concerns or complaints can be voiced and will be considered seriously.

5. Equality Statement:

At Prospect, we believe that all individuals and groups should receive equal access and opportunities to develop and learn. In line with the Equality Act 2010, the School is committed to ensuring there is no discrimination arising from disability, race or gender.

6. Applicability:

The policy shall apply to all employees and governors of the school. It is the responsibility of the Head Teacher to ensure that these groups are made aware of the policy and procedure. This policy applies to all complaints received by the school as follows:

- complaints relating to the schooling of your child;
- complaints about the education and care provided to pupils at the school;
- complaints about the school's operational arrangements.

This policy is limited to matters which can reasonably be investigated and therefore complaints should relate to matters which have occurred within the last 12 months. For any other type of complaint, the School has separate policies.

7. The Complaints' Procedure will:

- encourage resolution of problems by **informal** means wherever possible;
- be easily **accessible** and **publicised**; be **simple** to understand and use;
- be **impartial**;
- be **non-adversarial**;
- allow **swift** handling with established **time-limits** for action and keeping people informed of the progress;
- ensure a full and **fair** investigation by an independent panel where necessary;
- respect people's desire for **confidentiality**;
- address all the points at issue and provide an **effective** response and **appropriate** redress, where necessary;
- provide **information** to the school's senior management team so that services can be improved.

If, at any stage of the process, the complainant starts legal action in relation to the matters under consideration, the complaints process will automatically cease, and all further correspondence will be with the school's legal representatives.

8. Monitoring and evaluating the policy:

All documentation regarding complaints (including notes of any related meetings and telephone calls), the action taken and the final outcome will be recorded and a summary included in the head teacher's termly report to governors.

The governing body will monitor the level and nature of complaints and review the outcomes on a regular basis to ensure the effectiveness of the procedure and make changes where necessary. Complaints information shared with the whole governing body will not name individuals.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE:

Although governing bodies are required by law to have a formal procedure in place to deal with complaints, the vast majority of complaints and concerns can be resolved informally.

The complainant must feel able to raise concerns and complaints with members of staff without formality, either in person, by telephone or in writing. At first it may be unclear whether a complainant is asking a question or expressing an opinion, rather than making an education complaint. A complainant may want a preliminary discussion about an issue to help decide whether he or she wishes to take it further. Complainants will be encouraged to state what actions they feel might resolve the problem at any stage. When a complaint has been made, it can be resolved or withdrawn at any stage.

The following outlines the procedure to follow:

- 1. Investigating complaints** - At any investigation stage, the person investigating the complaint will ensure that they:
 - establish what has happened so far, and who has been involved;
 - clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved;
 - meet with the complainant or contact them (if unsure or further information is necessary);
 - clarify what the complainant feels would put things right;
 - interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
 - conduct the interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning;
 - keep notes of any telephone conversation, interview or meeting;
 - communicate with the complainant at each stage over discussions and agreements reached.

- 2. Resolving complaints** - At each stage in the procedure, successful resolution of the complaint will take priority. If appropriate, one or more of the following may be offered:
 - 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.

- 3. Time limits** - The meeting will normally take place within fifteen working days of your request, however due to availability of Governors, this time limit may need to be extended. You will be kept informed at all stages and Governors will endeavour to ensure complaints will be considered and resolved as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Realistic time limits will be set for each action within each stage. However, where further investigations are necessary, new time limits may need to be set and the complainant will be sent details of the new deadline and an explanation for the delay.

On occasion, the school may need to extend the time to respond to a Stage 1 or Stage 2 complaint. This may be because of resource or capacity issues, or because additional information needs to be obtained to investigate the complaint. In such cases, the school will provide a holding letter, explaining the reason for the delay, and providing a date by which a response will be supplied.

- 4. Record keeping** - All complainants will be responded to in writing. At all stages, there should be clear communication in writing throughout the handling of the complaint. A copy of all written communication should be retained for reference. Only complaints relating to the schooling of a specific student would be

kept within the student's files. Other issues will be filed separately in a secure location and will be retained for a period of seven years.

5. Stage 1 Informal – (1st level) Complaint heard by staff member:

Most complaints are best dealt with informally and it is in the best interests of all parties that complaints are resolved at the earliest stage. If you have any concerns about the School or the education provided for your child, please discuss the matter initially with your child's tutor, class teacher or Achievement Leader.

6. Stage 1 Informal – (2nd level) Complaint heard by Deputy Head Teacher:

If you feel that a concern has not been addressed through discussion with the tutor, class teacher or Achievement Leader, please make an appointment to discuss it with the Deputy Head Teacher who will consider any such complaint very seriously.

7. Stage 2 Formal – Complaint heard by Head Teacher:

If you feel that a concern has not been addressed through discussion with the Deputy Head Teacher, tutor, class teacher or Achievement Leader, or that the concern is of a sufficiently serious nature, please make an appointment to discuss it with the Head Teacher. The Head Teacher considers any such complaint very seriously and most complaints can be resolved at this stage.

8. Stage 3 Formal – Complaint heard by the Governing Body Appeal Panel:

If the matter cannot be resolved, or your complaint is about the Head Teacher then it may be appropriate for you to write to the Chair of Governors to make a formal complaint. (Verbal complaints will be taken just as seriously). Please state the nature of the complaint, the steps taken to resolve it and the action you would like to see taken to remedy your concern.

The meeting will normally take place within fifteen working days of your request, however due to availability of Governors, this time limit may need to be extended. You will be kept informed at all stages and Governors will endeavour to ensure complaints will be considered and resolved as quickly and efficiently as possible.

At this stage, a panel of **three** will meet to consider the complaint and make a final decision about it on behalf of the Governing Body. The panel will consist of **two** governors who have no connection with the complainant and **one** person who is independent of the management and running of the School. The Chair of Governors will review the way in which the complaint has been handled by the School and ensure that the issues have been dealt with properly and fairly.

You will have the opportunity to submit written evidence on the complaint prior to the meeting of the panel and also to attend part of the meeting accompanied by a friend/partner if wished, to put your case forward. The Head Teacher will be given the same opportunities. The panel will write to you with its conclusion within **five** working days of the meeting.

The panel can:

- Uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
- Dismiss 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 procedures to ensure problems of a similar nature do not reoccur.

The decision of the panel is final. If you are still not satisfied, you may wish to put your complaint to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills.