



the
Chiltern School

Complaints Procedure

Purpose

The school's values are concerned with meeting the needs of pupils, parents and others who have a stake in the school. The governing body believes that constant feedback is an important ingredient in self-improvement and raising standards. We try very hard to get things right, but we also recognise that there may be occasions where people have concerns that they want to share with us and that on occasion, very rarely we hope, things can go wrong and you may feel that you need to complain.

Section 29 of the Education Act 2002 requires Governing Bodies of maintained schools in England to have in place and to publish a procedure to deal with complaints relating to the school and to any community facilities or services that the school provides. Pupils, parents, carers, or other adults who have concerns or complaints should feel that they can be voiced and will be considered seriously. All complainants have the right to be accompanied when making the complaint, and pupils may be accompanied by a parent or another adult.

Principles

There are various principles behind this policy:

- There is a difference between a concern and a complaint. A concern is likely to require discussion between teacher, pupil and parent. If the concern is not resolved by that means then it could become a complaint.
- A complaint is likely to arise when there are issues of physical or emotional well-being and security or when the school's stated values or aims are being ignored.
- A breach of the law will always constitute a complaint.
- We will seek to resolve complaints by informal means wherever possible.
- Investigations will be full, fair and swift.
- People will be kept informed of progress and the decisions reached.
- Every effort will be made to respect confidentiality.
- Feedback will be actively sought from those voicing complaints in order to minimise complaints and maximise accountability.

It's sometimes difficult to differentiate between a concern, a problem and a formal complaint. Whatever the issue, we want to work with you to resolve the matter to your satisfaction. To achieve this we will:

- Listen to any concerns, problems or criticisms and respond positively; and
- Treat all concerns and complaints seriously and courteously; and
- Deal with any complaint against the school in a fair, open and impartial way, with the aim of achieving a speedy and satisfactory resolution.

Dealing with complaints - informal resolution

We recognise that dealing with a concern positively when it first arises is in everyone's best interests and can often lead to improvements in school practices and provision for pupils, whilst avoiding more time consuming and potentially stressful formal complaints procedures.

Most concerns can be sorted out quickly by speaking with either the class teacher, a member of the school's administration team, one of our Assistant Headteachers, Deputy Headteachers or, if the matter is more serious, with the Headteacher personally. You can raise your concern in person, in writing, by e-mail or by telephone. It may be necessary to make an appointment for a meeting at a time that is convenient to both of you.

Who you choose to approach is a matter of personal choice, but all staff will make every effort to resolve your concern quickly and efficiently. We will make sure that we understand your concerns, and we will explain the school's perspective. The aim is to arrive at an amicable and realistic resolution as quickly as possible. We will make a short written record of the concern that has been raised and any actions that have been agreed and give you a copy.

If the matter has not been resolved satisfactorily, you may choose to make a formal complaint to the school authorities.

Dealing with complaints - formal resolution

The Chiltern School operates a three-tier system for investigating and resolving formal complaints.

Stage One	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You should normally make your complaint in writing and submit it to the Headteacher . Your letter should explain the nature of the problem and why you feel that the matter has not been satisfactorily resolved. If you are having difficulty writing the letter, please contact the school and we will try to help you.• The complaint will be recorded and we will formally acknowledge receipt within five working days of receiving it. The Headteacher will then invite you to visit the school at a mutually convenient time to discuss the matter. You can bring a friend with you if you wish.• Once the Headteacher has had opportunity to discuss the details of the complaint with you, she will either appoint a member of the senior management team to conduct a full investigation into the matter or she will personally investigate the complaint herself.• As soon as the investigation is complete, the Headteacher will provide a written response to the complaint. We would hope to issue a response within ten working days from receipt of the complaint; however, this may take longer if the matter is particularly complex or if key personnel are absent from school. If there is going to be a delay, we will let you know and explain why.
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Stage Two	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the Headteacher’s investigation, you can write to the Chair of Governors at the school. Your letter should explain why you feel that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved. • The complaint will be recorded and we will formally acknowledge receipt within five working days of receiving your letter. The Chair of Governors will then either appoint another Governor to investigate the matter or he will personally investigate the complaint himself. • Once the investigation is complete, the Chair of Governors will provide a written response to the complaint. The Chair of Governors would normally hope to respond within fifteen working days of receipt of your letter. If there is any delay, the Chair of Governors will let you know and explain why.
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Stage Three	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaints rarely reach Stage Three and are usually resolved amicably long before this; however, if you are still not satisfied, you can request a formal review of the investigation by the Governing Body. You should write to the Clerk to the Governors at the school. The Clerk will acknowledge receipt and invite you to attend a formal review hearing at the school, which will normally take place within 20 working days of receipt of your letter. You can bring a friend with you if you wish. • At the review hearing, the complaint will be heard by a panel of three governors who have no previous knowledge of the problem and so will be able to give it fresh assessment. You will be invited to speak to the panel and to detail the nature of your complaint. You will also be able to submit evidence or call witnesses in support of your complaint if you wish. The panel may question you to seek further clarification of the detail of your complaint. The panel will also hear representations from the Headteacher and other members of the school staff as appropriate. • The panel will then withdraw to consider its findings and all parties will be notified in writing of the outcome within three working days. • In reaching its decision, the panel can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part. ○ Uphold the complaint in whole or in part. ○ Decide on any appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint. ○ Recommend changes to the school’s systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur. • This will bring to a close the school’s involvement with the complaint. The decision of the panel is final and the school will consider the matter closed.
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Complaints about the Headteacher

Complaints about the Headteacher should be referred direct to the Chair of Governors as outlined in Stage Two, bypassing Stage One.

Vexatious or anonymous complaints

Whilst we are committed to the open, fair, impartial and effective resolution of problems, The Chiltern School and its Governing Body reserves the right to decline to investigate or respond to vexatious complaints which, in our opinion, are designed solely to cause nuisance or mischief. The Chiltern School will not normally respond to anonymous complaints.

Complaining to the local authority

Local authorities are required to set up procedures for dealing with certain types of complaints, for example complaints about the curriculum or collective worship in a school. Complaints about these matters should be referred to Central Bedfordshire Council.

Complaining to the Secretary of State

If you think the Governing Body or the Local Authority is acting 'unreasonably' or if you feel that the Governing Body or the Local Authority has failed to discharge its duties under the Education Acts, you can write to the Secretary of State for Education. Complaints to the Secretary of State are handled by the government's Department for Education (DfE).

Complaining to the Local Government Ombudsman

The Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 has extended the Local Government Ombudsman's remit to examine complaints about schools. New complaints procedures are gradually being introduced in England. Details are available from the Local Government Ombudsman at <http://www.lgo.org.uk>.

Relationship to other policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with all other school policies.

Arrangements for monitoring and evaluation

All complaints and the action taken will be documented and a summary included in the head teacher's termly report to the governors, with advice on any implications for policies.

Date established by governing body: September 2012

Date for full implementation: October 2012

Last Reviewed: September 2015

Last draft: January 2017

Approved by Governors: January 2017

Review period: 2 yearly

Date for next review: January 2019

