

Holme Grange School Including the Early Years Foundation Stage (Little Grange and Reception)



Complaints Procedure

Date:	Amendment:	Reviewed by:
Aug 2023	Reviewed	M.Jelley
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	Original Version	

This policy relates to parents of pupils who attend Holme Grange School including parents/carers of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

If you wish to raise a concern related to safeguarding and/or child protection, please refer to the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Introduction

Holme Grange School has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents of pupils do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School with care and in accordance with this procedure. Holme Grange School makes its complaints procedure available via the School's website. A hard copy is available on request from the School Office. Holme Grange School will ensure that parents of pupils are made aware that this document is available and the form in which it is published or available.

This complaints procedure applies to past pupils only if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil was still registered with the School.

What Constitutes a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. There is no distinction between a complaint or a concern: any matter about which a parent of a pupil is unhappy and seeks action by the school is regarded as a complaint, and in the scope of this

procedure. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the school has done something wrong, or failed to do something that it should have done or acted unfairly.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. The school is here for your child and you can be assured that your child will not be penalised for a complaint that you [or your child] raises in good faith.

Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively. Received concerns and complaints will normally be acknowledged within 48 hours. It is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible:

- The school's target is to complete the first two stages of the procedure (if a complaint progresses past Stage 1, the informal stage) within 28 days.
- Written complaints about the fulfillment of the EYFS requirements will be investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days.
- Stage 3, the Panel Hearing, normally will be completed within a further 28 days of the conclusion of Stage 2.

The Recording of Complaints

Whilst the formal written record of complaints is limited to all those made in writing under the formal part of the procedure (i.e. those proceeding to Stages 2 and 3), records of all complaints and expressions of concern are kept by the School via their MIS in order for patterns of low-level concern to be monitored. Complainants are requested to provide full details of the complaint in writing. For this purpose, a '*complaints form*' is available for this purpose and may be asked for in order to clarify the issues under discussion (see Appendix III)

Following resolution of a complaint that has progressed to the formal procedure, the Headteacher will keep a written record of these complaints and the stage at which the complaint was resolved (i.e. formal procedure, Stage 2, or Panel Hearing, Stage 3). The School will also record the action taken by the School as a result of any complaint (regardless of whether they are upheld). At the school's discretion, additional records may be kept which may contain the following information:

- Date when the issue was raised
- Name of parent
- Name of pupil
- Description of the issue
- Records of all the investigations (if appropriate)
- Witness statements (if appropriate)
- Name of member (s) of staff handling the issue at each stage
- Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of phone conversations)

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

In the EYFS the record of complaints is made available to Ofsted and ISI on request. If a parents or carer believes the School's EYFS setting is not meeting the EYFS requirements, parents and/or carers may contact ISI and/or Ofsted. Contact details for both organisations are detailed below.

Stages of Complaint:

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

*For further detail on timeframe, please see above: **Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints.** It is the School's every intention to ensure that complaints and concerns are resolved quickly and informally.*

- If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their son/daughter's Form Teacher. In many cases, the matter will be resolved by this means, in a timely fashion, to the parents' satisfaction. If the Form teacher cannot resolve the matter alone it may be necessary for him/her to consult the Headteacher of School.
- Complaints made directly to the Headteacher of School will usually be referred to the relevant Form teacher unless the Headteacher of School deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
- A member of staff managing a complaint will make a written record of the concerns and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within 7 days or in the event that the Form teacher and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.
- If, however, the complaint is against the Headteacher, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chairman of Governors.
- Although all formal complaints will be made in writing (see Stage 2), this does not mean that the formal stage is *automatically triggered* whenever a concern is expressed in writing, for example, by email. Complaints will usually only progress to the formal stage after first being considered at Stage 1, the preliminary stage, usually by the Form Teacher, and only then if the complainant intends to escalate a matter to the formal stage.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Headteacher. The Headteacher will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Headteacher will meet the parents concerned, normally within 7 days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- It may be necessary for the Headteacher to carry out further investigations.

- The Headteacher will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Headteacher is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Headteacher will also give reasons for the decision.
- If the complaint is against the Headteacher, the Chairman of Governors will call for a full report from the Headteacher and for all the relevant documents. The Chairman may also call for a briefing from members of staff, and will in most cases, speak to or meet with the parents to discuss the matter further. Once the Chairman is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed of the decision in writing. The Chairman will give reasons for his/her decision.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to the Convenor, who will be appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel. The Convenor may be contacted c/o the Clerk to the Governors at the School.
- The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school. The other two Panel members will be Governors. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Governing Body. The Panel Convenor, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 21 days of the conclusion to Stage 2.
- The parents and the Head/Chairman of Governors will be asked in advance of the meeting whether there are any papers they would like to have considered at the meeting, bearing in mind the need for all to keep the proceedings confidential. The papers will be copied and distributed within a reasonable timeframe in advance of the meeting. If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing.
- The complainant(s) may be accompanied to the panel hearing if they wish. This may be a relative or friend. Legal representation is not appropriate.
- A sufficient amount of time will be committed to the meeting and, if possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.
- Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out. After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, and normally within 7 days of the Hearing, the Panel will reach a decision and may also make recommendations. The decision of the panel shall be final.
- The panel's findings and recommendations will be
 - provided to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about;
 - available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the headteacher;

- Where a parent has proceeded a complaint to Stage 3, having not been satisfied with the School's response to their complaint at Stage 2 a panel hearing *should* take place unless the parent later indicates that they are now satisfied and do not wish to proceed further¹.

Persistent complaints

Unreasonably persistent complaints

Most complaints raised will be valid, and therefore we will treat them seriously. However, a complaint may become unreasonable if the person:

- Has made the same complaint before, and it's already been resolved by following the school's complaints procedure
- Makes a complaint that is obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, defamatory or repetitive
- Insists on pursuing a complaint that is unfounded, or out of scope of the complaints procedure, beyond all reason
- Pursues a valid complaint, but in an unreasonable manner e.g. refuses to articulate the complaint, refuses to co-operate with this complaints procedure, or insists that the complaint is dealt with in ways that are incompatible with this procedure and the timeframes it sets out
- Makes a complaint designed to cause disruption, annoyance or excessive demands on school time
- Seeks unrealistic outcomes, or a solution that lacks any serious purpose or value

Steps we will take

We will take every reasonable step to address the complainant's concerns, and give them a clear statement of our position and their options. We will maintain our role as an objective arbiter throughout the process, including when we meet with individuals. We will follow our complaints procedure as normal (as outlined above) wherever possible.

If the complainant continues to contact the school in a disruptive way, we may put communications strategies in place. We may:

- Give the complainant a single point of contact via an email address
- Limit the number of times the complainant can make contact, such as a fixed number per term
- Ask the complainant to engage a third party to act on their behalf, such as [Citizens Advice](#)
- Put any other strategy in place as necessary

¹ The panel hearing should, therefore, proceed notwithstanding that the parent may subsequently decide not to attend. If necessary, the panel should consider the parent's complaint in his/her absence and issue findings on the substance of the complaint thereby bringing the matter to a conclusion. The requirement for the panel to proceed does not prevent the School from accommodating parental availability for dates or considering comments concerning panel composition.

Stopping responding

We may stop responding to the complainant when all of these factors are met:

- We believe we have taken all reasonable steps to help address their concerns
- We have provided a clear statement of our position and their options
- The complainant contacts us repeatedly, and we believe their intention is to cause disruption or inconvenience

Where we stop responding, we will inform the individual that we intend to do so. We will also explain that we will still consider any new complaints they make.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from our school site.

Duplicate complaints

If we have resolved a complaint under this procedure and receive a duplicate complaint on the same subject from a partner, family member or other individual, we will assess whether there are aspects that we hadn't previously considered, or any new information we need to take into account.

If we are satisfied that there are no new aspects, we will:

- Tell the new complainant that we have already investigated and responded to this issue, and that the local process is complete
- Direct them to the ISI/FDfE if they are dissatisfied with our original handling of the complaint
- If there are new aspects, we will follow this procedure again.

Complaint campaigns

Where the school receives a large volume of complaints about the same topic or subject the school may respond to these complaints by:

- Publishing a single response on the school website
- Sending a template response to all of the complainants

If complainants are not satisfied with the school's response, or wish to pursue the complaint further, the normal procedures will apply.

Notes

Academic Year	Complaints dealt with at Stage 2	Complaints Dealt with at Stage 3
2015-16	0	0
2016-17	0	0
2017-18	4	0
2018-19	2	0
2019-20	1	1
2020-21	2	2

2021-22	0	0
2022-23	1	1

WRITTEN COMPLAINTS RELATING TO THE REQUIREMENTS UNDER THE STATUTORY FRAMEWORK FOR THE EYFS: Holme Grange School will provide the Independent Schools Inspectorate, on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period, and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint. The record of any such complaints will be kept for at least three years.

Appendix I

Complaints Procedure – Independent Member of the Panel

The following guidance comes from a letter sent by the DfE to the ISC General Secretary in 2002. Although dated, the advice is extant.

Whilst we do not intend to be prescriptive our general view is that suitable people would be those who have held positions of responsibility and who are used to analysing evidence and putting forward balanced arguments/points. It would add credibility if independent panel members had some standing in the local community. In this connection serving or retired business people, civil servants, Headteachers or senior members of staff at other schools, people with a legal background – perhaps retired members of the Police Force – might be considered suitable by schools. Schools will have their own views and may well have other suitable suggestions to make.

You asked if it would be acceptable to appoint former governors or staff of the school as the independent panel member. The regulations do not preclude this since the stipulation is that the person must be independent of the management and running of the school. Clearly former governors or staff would not have any such involvement. However, schools should bear in mind that they may be subject to criticism that such people would remain too close to the school and would not be truly independent.

This was expanded in the DfE's Registration of Independent Schools Information Pack of July 2011:

Whilst we do not wish to be prescriptive about who schools should appoint as an independent person our general view is that people who have held a position of responsibility and who are used to analysing evidence and putting forward balanced arguments would be suitable. Examples of persons likely to be suitable are serving or retired business people, civil servants, Headteachers or senior members of staff at other schools, people with a legal background and retired members of the Police Force might be considered by schools. Schools will of course have their own views.

Appendix II - Contact details

The Chair of Governors, Mrs Sue Northend:

Holme Grange School
Heathlands Road
Wokingham
Berkshire
RG40 3AL

Clerk to the Governors

Holme Grange School
Heathlands Road
Wokingham
RG40 3AL

COMPLAINTS TO THE INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE REGARDING EYFS SERVICE PROVIDERS: Parents may also complain directly to the Independent Schools Inspectorate if they wish. Independent Schools Inspectorate may be contacted on 020 7600 0100, or concerns@isi.net. You may also write to:

The Independent School's Inspectorate
Cap House,
9-12 Long Lane,
London
EC1A 9HA.

To contact OFSTED:

enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

0300 123 4666

Appendix III – Complaints Form



**Holme Grange School
Parental Complaint Form**

Complaint made by:		Date of Complaint:	
Pupil Name:		Pupil Year Group:	

The information below should contain specific detail, including:

- The nature of the complaint;
- Who the complaint is being made against;
- Time and date of the nature of the complaint.

Where there is more than one complaint a separate form should be used for each issue.

Nature of complaint
What outcome are you seeking in order to resolve this complaint?

Please forward this to, together with any additional information you wish to be considered, to your child’s form teacher in the first instance or the Head of School/Year: Mrs Cox, Head of Pre-Prep; Mr Boynes, Head of Prep; Mrs Curtis, Head of Y7&8; Mr Dewar, Head of Y9; Mr Armstrong, Head of Y10&11

If you are not satisfied with the outcome you may direct your complaint to the Deputy Head or the Headteacher. Any complaints about the Headteacher should be directed to the Chair of Governors.