

## COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

---

Version: 9.0  
 Approved: 18 June 2019  
 Next review: June 2022  
 Co-ordinator: Tracey Savage

---

### Rationale

The Governors of Sandwich Technology School are committed to ensuring that the highest standards are maintained at the school, both in the provision of education to students and in every other aspect of the running of the school. A complaints procedure is an important part of the management of a well-run school allowing parents and others the opportunity to voice any concerns that they might have through appropriate channels. This policy explains the procedure that has been adopted by the Governing Body to ensure a systematic and fair approach to the resolution of such concerns.

We recognise the need to be clear about the difference between a concern and a complaint. Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage reduces the numbers that develop into formal complaints. We aim to ensure that concerns are handled, if at all possible, without the need for formal procedures. Our formal complaints procedure is only necessary if efforts to resolve the concern informally are unsuccessful. In most cases, a class teacher or an individual delivering the service will receive the first approach.

Our formal procedures are invoked when initial attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further.

This procedure deals with complaints relating to the school and to any community facilities or services that the school provides. It provides a mechanism for both parents and members of the general public to raise their concerns; complaints by staff members will be addressed under the school's grievance procedure.

A complaint may result in disciplinary action by the school against a member of staff and this would be confidential between that member of staff and the school, but otherwise the complainant will be kept fully informed of the handling of any complaint. Any complaint will be kept confidential unless it is necessary to involve other parties and will be dealt with as quickly as possible.

---

### Purpose

To be effective our complaints procedure will:

- encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible;
  - be transparent, 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 progress;
  - ensure a full and fair investigation by an independent person 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 leadership team so that services can be improved.
- 

### Implementing the policy

At Sandwich Technology School the Headteacher has overall responsibility for the operation and management of the school's complaints procedure. In practical terms, the Headteacher will nominate a senior member of staff to deal with matters on a day-to-day basis.

In general, any written complaint should be addressed to the Headteacher, although it is expected that attempts will be made to resolve difficulties informally with the class teacher/form tutor/head of college/school business manager before being referred to the Headteacher. The informal stage of the procedure should be exhausted before the matter is referred to the formal stage and a complaint form issued. If any substantial complaint is made to a member of staff it should be referred to the line manager or Headteacher, as appropriate, if it cannot be resolved immediately by the member of staff to the satisfaction of the parent/member of the public.

Whenever a complaint is received it will be investigated. At each stage, the person investigating the complaint makes sure 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 the interview.

### **Stages in the procedure**

There are four stages in the school's complaints procedure. At each stage in the procedure we will remain mindful of ways in which a complaint can be resolved. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- an apology;
- an explanation;
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
- 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.

We encourage complainants to state what actions they feel might resolve the problem at any stage. An admission that the school could have handled the situation better is not the same as an admission of negligence.

At all times we will seek to identify areas of agreement between the parties and clarify any misunderstandings that might have occurred because this can create a positive atmosphere in which to discuss any outstanding issues.

### **Stage 1: Informal (complaint heard by staff member)**

At this stage, the class teacher/form teacher/head of college/school business manager will deal with the complaint. Most concerns can be adequately resolved by discussion with the class teacher/form teacher/head of college/school business manager or with other members of staff. There may be no need for the complaint to be put in writing, which would formalise matters and may lead complainants to feel less prepared to articulate concerns (for parents there might be a fear that such action might prejudice the interests of their child). If the complainant wishes to take the matter further then the Headteacher is informed and Stage 2 is implemented.

On occasions, individuals might feel that they are unable to discuss a complaint with a particular member of staff. In these cases, the complaint can be referred to another member of staff. Where the complaint concerns the Headteacher, the complainant will be referred to the Chair of Governors.

## **Stage 2: Informal (complaint heard by Deputy Headteacher)**

If the concern is not addressed to the complainant's satisfaction by discussion, then the initial recipient of the complaint should refer the matter to the Deputy Headteacher. It might be appropriate at this stage for the complaint to be put in writing.

The Deputy Headteacher will investigate the circumstances of the complaint and may find it appropriate to ask for written statements from staff or students and to call for any relevant documentation.

If the complaint is against a member of staff, that member of staff has a right to be given details of the complaint and the opportunity to make representation about it. The person investigating the incident will take these details into account.

If a complaint concerns the conduct of the Headteacher or a governor, or where the Headteacher or governor has been involved in the issue previously, then the matter will be referred to a senior member of staff or member of the Governing Body not previously involved.

The Deputy Headteacher will respond to the person who complained with the outcome of the investigation, normally within ten school working days of receipt of the substance of the complaint. The response might be in writing or be conveyed at a meeting, with written confirmation of the outcome.

---

## **Stage 3: Informal (complaint heard by the Headteacher)**

If the concern is not addressed to the complainant's satisfaction by the Deputy Headteacher, then the complaint should be referred to the Headteacher. It is appropriate at this stage for the complaint to be put in writing.

The Headteacher will investigate the circumstances of the complaint and may find it appropriate to ask for written statements from staff or students and to call for any relevant documentation.

If the complaint is against a member of staff, that member of staff has a right to be given details of the complaint and the opportunity to make representation about it. The person investigating the incident will take these details into account.

If a complaint concerns the conduct of the Headteacher or a governor, or where the Headteacher or governor has been involved in the issue previously, then the matter will be referred to a senior member of staff or member of the Governing Body not previously involved. In some circumstances, the school reserves the right to refer the matter to an external body.

The Headteacher will respond to the complainant with the outcome of the investigation, normally within ten school working days of receipt of the substance of the complaint. The response might be in writing or be conveyed at a meeting, with written confirmation of the outcome.

The complainant must be informed of his or her right to have the matter referred to the Governors' Complaints Appeal Panel if the outcome of the informal stage is not satisfactory. Any such request by a complainant should be addressed to the Company Secretary and the matter becomes a formal complaint.

---

## **Stage 4: Formal (complaint heard by the Governors' Complaints Appeal Panel)**

On receipt of a formal request for the Governors to consider a complaint, the Company Secretary will take steps to convene a hearing. The hearing will be before a panel of at least three people who have not been involved directly in the matters detailed in the complaint; one member of the panel will be independent of the management and running of the school.

The Company Secretary will write to the complainant, the Headteacher and panel members giving details of the meeting, requesting copies of any documents to be put before the meeting and the names of any witnesses that either party might wish to call. The complainant will be informed of the right to be accompanied by a friend. The hearing should be on reasonable notice and be held as soon as practicable after receipt of the referral.

The procedure at the hearing needs to be appropriate for the circumstances and is at the discretion of the Chair of the Governors' Complaints Appeal Panel, but is likely to involve:

- presentation of the complaint;
- a reply by the Headteacher;
- questioning by all parties;
- representation about ways to resolve the complaint satisfactorily.

If necessary, the panel will withdraw to consider their findings of fact on the evidence put before them and their conclusions, which may include measures to redress problems identified. The panel can:

- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;
- uphold 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 that similar problems do not recur.

A copy of the findings and recommendations of the Governors' Complaints Appeal Panel will be provided to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about. A copy of the findings and recommendations will be held centrally and available for inspection by the proprietor and Headteacher and will form part of the written record.

The Governors' appeal hearing is the final stage of the school's complaints process and the panel's decision is final.

If, having followed appropriate procedures, a complainant remains dissatisfied or tries to reopen the same issue, the Chair of the Governing Body will inform him or her in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed. If the complainant wishes to take the complaint further, he or she should complete the form available at:

[www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/schoolperformance/school-complaints-form](http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/schoolperformance/school-complaints-form)

and the Education Funding Agency will deal with the complaint.

### **Time-limits**

Complaints are considered, and resolved, as quickly and efficiently as possible. When a written, formal complaint is received, the Headteacher will acknowledge receipt within five school days and explain the next steps that will be taken. At each stage of the process thereafter, the complainant will be given an anticipated time frame for the action being taken.

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

### **Recording complaints**

The progress of any complaint and the final outcome will be recorded by the individual hearing the complaint at each stage. A complaint may be made in person, by telephone, or in writing. At the end of a meeting or telephone call, the member of staff will ensure that the complainant and the school have the same understanding of what was discussed and agreed. A brief note of meetings and telephone calls will be kept and a copy of any written response added to the record.

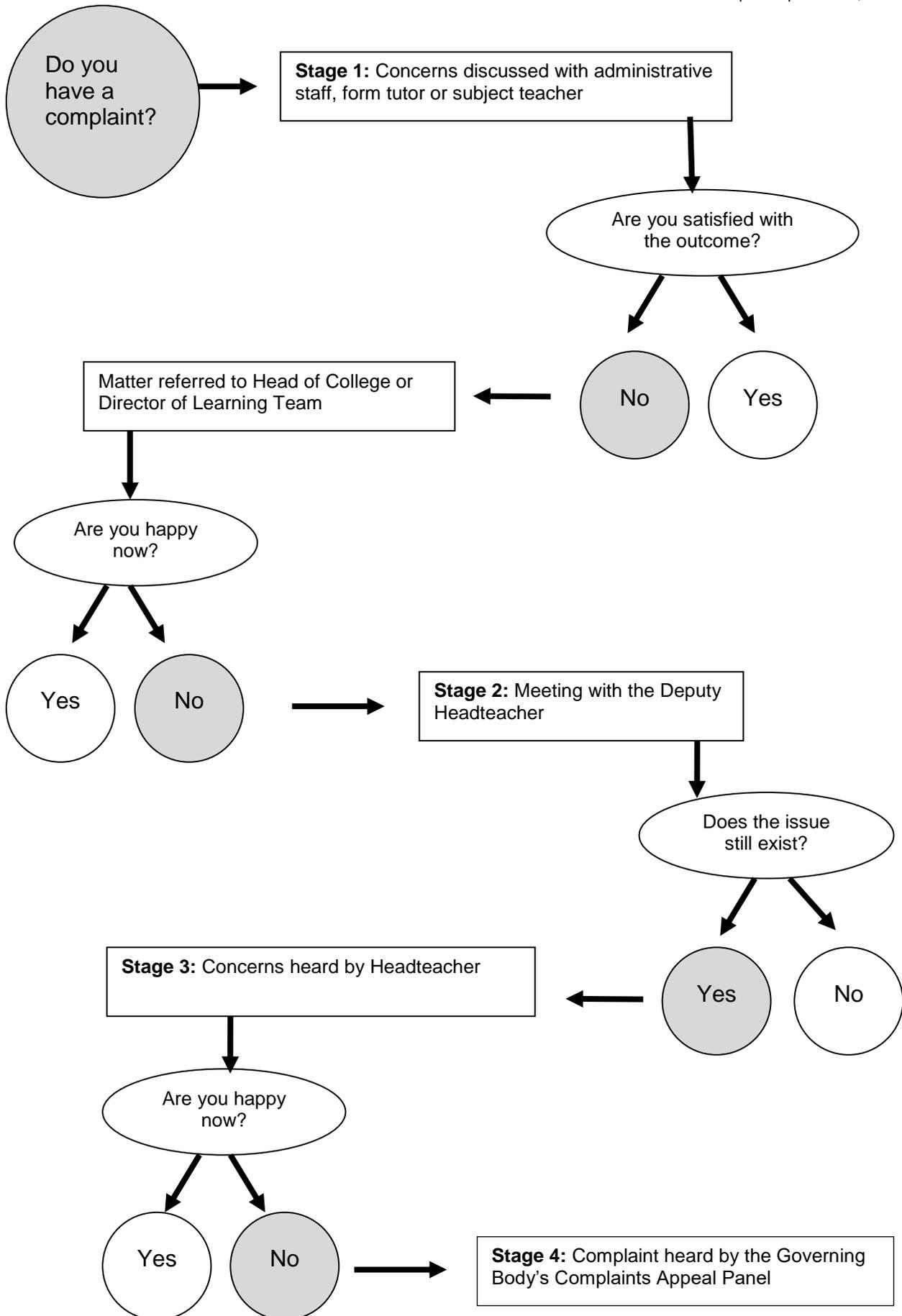
A written record will be kept of all complaints that proceed to a formal process or panel hearing. The record will include the outcome/resolution and the action taken by the school as a result of the complaint(s) (regardless of whether or not they are upheld).

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 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

## **Vexatious complaints**

The school will always ensure that a complaint is investigated properly according to its published complaints procedure and is committed to dealing with all complaints equitably, comprehensively and in a timely manner.

In a minority of cases, the complainant may pursue their complaint in a way that is deemed to be unreasonably persistent or vexatious, which can impede the investigation or have significant resource implications for the school. If a complainant is judged to be unreasonably persistent or vexatious, restrictions may be imposed on the school's contact with him or her.



**Complaint Form**

*Please complete and return to the Headteacher,  
who will acknowledge receipt within five school days and explain the next steps that will be taken.*

<b>Your name:</b>
<b>Student's name (if applicable):</b>
<b>Your relationship to the student (if applicable):</b>
<b>Address:</b>
<b>Postcode:</b>
<b>Day time telephone number:</b>
<b>Evening telephone number:</b>
<b>Email address:</b>
<b>Please give details of your complaint:</b>
<b>What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint? (Who did you speak to and what was the response?)</b>
<b>What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?</b>

**Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.**

**Signature:**

**Date:**

**Official use**

**Date acknowledgement sent:**

**By whom:**

**Complaint referred to:**

**Date referred:**