



# Complaints Policy

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# INTRODUCTION

At Harrow Primary School we aim to develop a robust, quality teaching and pastoral care experience for its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this policy. A record of all complaints will be held for three years on file.

## WHAT IS A COMPLAINT?

A complaint is *'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'* (definition from, DfE Best Practice Advice for School Complaints Procedures 2016). This policy addresses all complaints and matters of dissatisfaction with any aspect of the school's operation or decisions made in respect of an individual pupil. We recognise that some matters may be 'concerns' rather than complaints, these are defined as *'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'* (definition from, DfE Best Practice Advice for School Complaints Procedures 2016).

Complaints are handled using a four stage approach however the school aims to resolve all complaints at the earliest possible stage.

The majority of issues raised by parents, the community or pupils, are concerns rather than complaints. However, at Harrow Primary School we are committed to taking concerns seriously, at the earliest stage, in the hope of keeping the number of formal complaints to a minimum and without needing formal procedures. Depending on the nature of the complaint, you may wish or be asked to follow the school's formal complaints procedure. For the school to be able to investigate a complaint, it needs to be made within three months of the incident occurring. If a complaint is older it will not be investigated unless it is deemed that there are exceptional, extenuating circumstances and all such complaints will be addressed on this basis.

The prime aim of the School's policy is to resolve the complaint as fairly and speedily as possible. Formal complaints will be dealt with in a sensitive, impartial and confidential manner. Malicious complaints may incur appropriate action by the school. The following details outline the stages that can be used to resolve complaints.

## HARROW PRIMARY SCHOOL COMPLAINTS POLICY HAS FOUR MAIN STAGES.

In summary they are as follows:

- Stage 1 A concern is raised informally with a staff member
- Stage 2 Formal complaint is heard by the complaints co-ordinator or an appropriate member of staff e.g. Assistant/Deputy Headteacher
- Stage 3 Complaint is heard by Headteacher
- Stage 4 Complaint is heard by School's Complaints Appeal Panel

## STAGE 1 – RAISING A CONCERN

Concerns can be raised with the school at any time and will often generate an immediate response, which will resolve the concern. The school requests that parents make their first contact the child's Class Teacher. On some occasions the concern raised may require investigation, or discussion with others, in which case you will receive an informal but informed response within a maximum period of two days. The majority of concerns will be satisfactorily dealt with in this way. However, if you are not satisfied with the result at stage 1, please write to or call the school within 10 school working days and state what you would like the school to do. The school will then look at your complaint at the next stage. Complainants will be provided the opportunity to suggest what they think may resolve the issue.

## STAGE 2 – COMPLAINT HEARD BY THE COMPLAINTS CO-ORDINATOR OR BY AN APPROPRIATE STAFF MEMBER E.G. GENERAL MANAGER

Formal complaints shall be put in writing and addressed to the General Manager. The complaint will be logged, including the date it was received. Formal complaints can be around any matter e.g. accessibility around the school, or any matter of serious concern to the parent. The school will normally acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 2 school working days of receiving it. In many cases this response will also report on the action the school has taken to resolve the issue. Alternatively, a meeting may be convened to discuss the matter further. This meeting will normally take place within 10 school working days. The aim will be to resolve the matter as speedily as possible. However, if you are not satisfied with the result at stage 2 please write to or call the school within 10 school working days of getting our response. You will need to tell the school why you are still not satisfied and what you would like the school to do.

## STAGE 3 – COMPLAINT HEARD BY HEAD TEACHER

If the matter has not been resolved at Stage 2, the Headteacher will arrange further investigation. Following the investigation, the Headteacher will normally give a written response within 10 school working days. If you are dissatisfied with the result at stage 3, you should let the school know within 10 school working days of getting the response.

## STAGE 4 – COMPLAINT HEARD BY THE SCHOOL'S COMPLAINTS APPEAL PANEL

If the matter has still not been resolved at Stage 3, then you should write to the Chair of the School Complaints Appeal Panel giving details of the complaint. The Chair will convene a complaints panel. The hearing will normally take place within 10 school working days of the receipt of the written request for Stage 4 investigation. The Panel will have to be constituted of four people of which three should be independently drawn from the school community however one of these should not be involved with the management or operation of the school nor with the complaint previously. The

fourth person should be the Headteacher. Complainants will be able to be accompanied should they wish.

The aim of the Appeal panel hearing is to impartially resolve the complaint and to achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. The Panel hearing will be in two parts, at the first part of the hearing parents or the complainant will be able to make a representation of the complaint. Although, we recognise that not all parents/complainants will wish to do so. The second stage of the hearing will be for the Panel to consider the complaint independently and seek to redress the complaint satisfactorily.

All parties, namely: the Chair of the Board of Trustees, Headteacher and where relevant the person complained about and including of course the complainant, will be notified of the Panel's decision and recommendations in writing (via letter) within three school working days after the date of the hearing. The letter will also contain what the complainant will need to do if they wish to take the matter further.

All complaints, their records, outcomes and recommendations will be kept on file for three years. This will enable the school to continue to develop best practice as a consequence of any complaints, regularities of incidents and such like and to seek to continually develop its ambition of high standards for everyone associated with the school: children; parents; staff; management and others.

**The School's appeal hearing is the last school-based stage of the complaints process.**

## COMPLAINTS REGARDING THE HEADTEACHER

In cases where the matter concerns the conduct of the Headteacher, the General Manager and Chair of the Board of Trustees will be informed of the complaint. The Chair will arrange for the matter to be investigated further and will handle the complaint in the first instance. Complaints against the Chair of the Board of Trustees or any individual trustee should be made in writing to the Headteacher.

If the complainant believes that the Proprietor or Chair of the Board of Trustees acted "unreasonably", or parents wish to complain further then they have the right to contact Ofsted, they can be contacted at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

## COMPLAINTS RECORD-KEEPING

All complaints, their records, outcomes and recommendations will be kept on file for three years. The school's procedure will provide for written records to be kept of all complaints, indicating whether they were resolved at the preliminary stage or whether they proceeded to a panel hearing. These records of complaints will be available for inspection purposes by the appropriate authorities. This will also enable the school to continue to develop best practice as a consequence of any complaints, regularities of incidents and such like and to seek to continually develop its ambition of

high standards for everyone associated with the school: children; parents; staff; management and others.

All correspondence relating to complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 162A of the 2002 Act request access to them. These records will be kept in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

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**LINKED POLICIES:**

Accessibility Plan & Policy

Curriculum Policy

Health & Safety Policy

Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy

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