



Complaints Policy

Date of Policy: September 2024

Next Review Due: September 2026

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Complaints Procedure | Your Ideas School

Introduction

Your Ideas School is committed to providing the best nurturing, educational experience it can for its pupils. However, if parents/carers have a concern or complaint, they can expect that it will be dealt with sensitively, fairly and efficiently. This policy sets out the procedure for raising a complaint.

Definition of a Complaint

It is important to define the difference between a 'concern' and a 'complaint'.

A concern is an *expression of worry or doubt* about something or a situation that a parent/carer deems important, for which they might seek reassurance.

A complaint is an *expression of dissatisfaction* about a certain situation, actions or the lack of actions taken by the school and its staff.

The School's aim is to resolve every concern or complaint informally, where possible. If a matter cannot be resolved informally, the matter may proceed as a formal complaint.

This policy applies to all parents/carers of current registered pupils. It also applies to the parents/carers of past pupils if the complaint was originally raised when the child was a registered pupil. The complaints procedure does not apply to prospective parents/carers.

Initial Concern/Complaint

Your Ideas School has an open-door policy and we strive to establish and maintain positive home-school links. We believe a collaborative approach between home and school to pupils' education and wellbeing, leads to the best outcomes for our pupils. When a concern or complaint first arises, we strongly encourage parents and carers to approach the key staff concerned to resolve the issue through open and honest communication, with mutual respect and understanding. You can be assured that complaints will be dealt with fairly, quickly and as thoroughly as possible.

Informal Meeting

Once a concern has been raised, you will be invited to attend an informal meeting with a member of staff or the Headteacher to discuss your concerns. It may or may not be appropriate for a pupil to attend the meeting, if their parent/carer has raised a concern, depending on the nature of the issue. This decision will be made mutually between you and the school and its staff.

It is hoped that the matter will be resolved informally at this stage. Staff may need to consult with others in order that they can resolve matters effectively and to the satisfaction of the parents/carers. If this is the case, they will get back to the parents/carers within 5 working days. Initial concerns made directly to the Headteacher, will usually be referred to the relevant teacher or staff member, unless they deem it appropriate for the matter to be dealt with by the Headteacher personally.

Where appropriate, staff will ensure that you understand the agreed future actions as a result of this meeting. Staff will make a written record of what has been discussed, plus any outcomes or actions plans if appropriate. This will be shared with you and stored securely.

Staff will endeavour to deal with your concerns fairly, swiftly and effectively, but if you cannot come to an agreement, or are dissatisfied with the outcome of your meeting, you can make a Formal Complaint to the Headteacher. At the end of each stage of the Formal Complaint Procedure, the school or its staff will inform you of the next stage of the procedure.

Where to direct your complaint

If your complaint is about a member of staff, you should first raise this with the Headteacher (Clare Whalley) either in person or in writing, and a meeting will be arranged to discuss the issue.

If your complaint is about the Headteacher, you should raise your concern in writing with the Complaints Governor (Ella Colley). The Complaints Governor will implement Stage 2 of the Formal Complaints Procedure.

If your complaint is about the Complaints Governor, you should raise your concern in writing with the Chair of the Proprietor Body (Clare Whalley). If you feel that your complaint has not been dealt with you should refer your complaint to the Appeals Panel.

Formal Complaints Procedure

To ensure the efficient and effective processing of complaints, Your Ideas deals with formal complaints in the three stages which are listed below.

Stage 1: Formal Complaint to Headteacher

If you do not feel that your concern has been dealt with as you would like, are unhappy with the outcome of your informal meeting, or feel that the issue is serious enough that it warrants it, you can make a formal complaint in writing to the Headteacher.

The Headteacher will acknowledge your complaint in writing as soon as reasonably practicable (and normally within 5 working days of receipt of the written complaint). They may already be aware of the situation. The Headteacher will call you in for a meeting to discuss the issue, outcome, possible solutions, to ask how you think the issue can be resolved or to explain what has or will happen as a result of your complaint. You are welcome to bring a friend, partner or teacher to accompany you to the meeting. The Headteacher will outline their decision, if there is one to be made, and any action to be taken as a result of your complaint.

If the complaint is against a member of staff/volunteer, the Headteacher will talk to that employee. If it is an allegation of abuse, a formal investigation will be instigated by the school or external child welfare authorities where appropriate. Advice will be taken from the Local Authority Designated Officer. Complaints about the Headteacher should be reported directly to the Complaints Governor..

A written record of all concerns and complaints will be kept by the School. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except in so far as is required of the Regulatory Requirements of the Independent School Standards, where disclosure is required in the course of the School's inspection, or where any other legal obligation prevails.

If you are not satisfied with the response to the complaint made in accordance with the formal procedure, you should proceed to Stage 2 of this Procedure.

Stage 2: Formal Complaint to Complaints Governor

If, having spoken to the Headteacher, you are dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint, you may lodge your complaint with the Complaints Governor in writing, by post or by email, explaining your concern and the steps that have led up to you taking this course of action.

If the complaint is against a member of staff/volunteer, that employee will be given the opportunity to write a response, which will be sent to the Complaints Governor within 10 working days of the complaint being lodged with them.

The Complaints Governor will respond to you in writing as soon as is reasonably practicable (and normally within 10 working days, where possible), outlining their response to your concern, and any action that has or will be taken. If they have decided not to take any further action on the issue, they will explain what they have decided, how they have reached this decision, and will outline your right of appeal and how to proceed with your appeal.

Stage 3: Appeals Panel Hearing

If you wish to lodge an appeal, following the outcome of a formal complaint, this will be referred to the Appeals Panel. In order to have your complaint heard by the Panel, complainants must write to the Appeals Chairperson (Nick Roberts), setting out in full the details of the complaint, normally within 10 working days of receiving the Complaints Governor's decision.

Your letter should give full details of the complaint and enclose all relevant supporting documents. A request for a hearing will normally only be considered if you have invoked Stage

1 and 2, however if the complaint is against the Headteacher, you can skip Stage 1 and proceed to Stage 2 immediately.

The matter will then be referred to the Appeals Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, at least one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Complaints Governor. The Complaints Governor, on behalf of the Panel, will acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 10 working days of receiving the complaint or as soon as reasonably practicable during school holidays. You are welcome to bring along another person to the meeting, this may be a partner, friend or teacher.

The Appeals Panel will review the Complaints Governor's decision. The Panel will not consider any new complaints that have not been raised as part of the initial complaint. After due consideration of all available evidence they consider to be relevant, the Panel will reach a decision on the balance of probabilities as to whether or not the complaint is dismissed or upheld (in full or part). They will then decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint. The Panel may recommend changes to the school's policies or procedures, to prevent similar issues recurring.

The Panel will write to you, informing you of their decision and the reasons for it, normally within 10 working days of the panel hearing.

The Panel will provide the complainant, and where relevant, the person complained about, with a copy of their findings and recommendations.

In the unfortunate event that you are not satisfied with the Panel's decision, they may refer their complaint to:

The Secretary of State for Education, Department for Education, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD.

Recording Complaints

A written record (which will be kept for at least three years) will be kept of all complaints in a Complaints File. The proprietor will review this record of formal complaints at least annually.

In addition, a separate log of all informal complaints will be kept on site. This will be reviewed periodically by the Headteacher to identify patterns and trends.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except in so far as is required of the school by paragraph 33(k) of the Education (Independent Schools

Standards) Regulations 2010 where disclosure is required in the course of the School's inspection, or where any other legal obligation prevails.