



HACKNEY NEW SCHOOL

School Complaints Procedure

Hackney New School encourages communication amongst all areas of the school community. Our aim is to equip students with the intellectual and emotional tools they need to lead an interesting, rewarding and diverse life. We believe that it is essential for students, parents and staff to work together in a climate of trust and respect for these aims to be fulfilled.

There may be occasions where parents raise legitimate concerns about their children's education. Most parents do not regard such inquiries as complaints in the formal sense and in most cases the Form Teacher will be the first port of call and should be able to resolve an issue. Parents' concerns will be addressed with urgency and thoroughness. If matters raised as concerns are not resolved to the satisfaction of all parties, the dissatisfied party may wish to appeal through the formal complaints procedure.

Every complaint will be investigated with due urgency and thoroughness. Whenever a complaint is upheld, every effort will be made to rectify the issue and, if necessary, action will be taken to prevent a reoccurrence of the problem. The school will not investigate anonymous complaints or allegations but confidentiality will be respected.

The school complaints procedure is available on the school's website and on request.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- It is the aim of the school to resolve concerns quickly and informally.
- If parents have a concern they should normally contact their child's Form Tutor. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway to the parents' and teacher's satisfaction. If the teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary to consult the Pastoral Manager, Assistant Head or Headteacher.
- Concerns made directly to the Pastoral Manager, the Assistant Heads, or Headteacher will usually be referred to the relevant Form Tutor unless the Pastoral Manager, the Assistant Heads or Headteacher deem it appropriate to deal with the matter personally.
- Concerns which come to a member of staff from other sources should be passed immediately to the relevant Assistant Head who will discuss the matter directly with the complainant in an attempt to resolve the matter quickly and informally.

- The Form Tutor will make a written record of all concerns and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within 7 working days or in the event that the Form Tutor and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then the parent will be advised to proceed with their concern in accordance with Stage 2 of this Procedure.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution of a Complaint

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parent/complainant should put their complaint in writing to the Headteacher. The Headteacher will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action. If the complaint is about the Headteacher, the complaint will be given directly to the Governing Body via the school Finance Director.
- In most cases, the Headteacher will contact the parent/complainant concerned within 5 working 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, in which case a definitive answer will be given within ten further school days.
- The Headteacher will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Headteacher is satisfied that, as far as 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 give reasons for the decision.
- If the parent/complainant is still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

Stage 3 - Panel Hearing

- If parents/complainants seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to the Finance Director, who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Conciliation Committee.
- The matter will then be referred to the Conciliation Committee for consideration. The Conciliation Committee will consist of a panel of at least 3 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 Headteacher's PA, on behalf of the panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable within ten school days.
- If the panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint and any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than 4 working days prior to the hearing.
- The parent/complainant may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.

- If possible, the panel will resolve the 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 the facts they consider relevant, the panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within 5 working days of the hearing. The Conciliation Committee will write to the parent/complainant informing them of its decision and the reason for it. The decision of the Conciliation Committee will be final. The panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing to the parent/complainant, the Headteacher, the Governors and, where relevant, the person complained of.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records 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.

The Headteacher and Assistant Heads will review the handling of complaints from time to time in order that services can be improved. We believe that the process of listening to and resolving complaints contributes to school improvement. When individual complaints are heard there is an opportunity to identify possible issues that need addressing.

The Headteacher will report to staff from time to time and to the Governing Body each term on the number and type of complaints received and their outcomes.

Recording Complaints

Written records will be kept of all complaints whether they are resolved following a formal procedure or proceed to a panel hearing. A copy will be kept on the school premises available for inspection. Individual complaints may be revealed to the Secretary of State as well as inspectors as stated above.

Responsibilities

Governing Body

Responsible for:

- adopting the policy, procedures and guidelines;
- appointing where necessary an independent panel to hear complaints, when complainants are not satisfied with the school response;
- receiving reports and findings from the panel or;
- receiving reports from the Headteacher and advising the Headteacher.

Chair of the Conciliation Committee

To ensure that:

- the parties understand the procedure;
- the issues are addressed;
- key findings of fact are established;
- complainants are put at ease;
- the hearing is conducted as informally as possible;
- the panel is open-minded and acts independently;
- no member of the panel has a vested interest in the outcome, or has been involved in the issues previously;
- all parties have the chance to be heard;
- any written material is seen by all parties;
- findings are communicated to the complainant and school within 5 days of the hearing.

Clerk to the Governing Body

The Clerk (Finance Director) must act as the reference point for the complainant when the complainant has not been satisfied with the school's response.

The Clerk must:

- set convenient dates, times and venues for hearings;
- collate any written material and forward it to the parties;
- meet and welcome the parties;
- record the proceedings;
- notify the parties of the decision.

Headteacher

Responsible for:

- the overall internal management of the procedures;
- ensuring that there is both an informal and formal procedure;
- ensuring that the written policy and procedures are available to parents, students and members of the public on request;
- hearing complaints at the second stage;
- ensuring that the procedures are monitored and reviewed with regular reports made to the Governing Body.

Assistant Heads

Responsible for:

- the efficient operation and management of the policy and procedures;
- training staff on how to deal appropriately with complaints;
- keeping parents, students and others informed of the procedure;
- compiling reports for the Headteacher as required.

Finance Director and Business Manager

Responsible for environmental and financial queries and complaints.

Heads of Department

Responsible for dealing with and where possible resolving complaints about academic matters/programmes of study/teaching methods at Stage 1 of the

procedure.

Form Tutors and Pastoral Managers

Responsible for dealing with and where possible resolving complaints about student progress, discipline issues and pastoral care.

All Staff

Responsible for hearing concerns brought to them by parents and students and reassuring them that they will be dealt with as soon as possible by the appropriate member of staff; informing the relevant member of staff of the concerns; passing on any complaints received from other people who are not parents or students to an Assistant Head.

This policy is reviewed annually and the review brought to the Governing Body.

This policy does not cover complaints regarding the Admissions process. These are dealt with as appeals under the HNS Admissions Policy.

Lesley Falconer
Executive Headteacher
September 2016