



The Queen's Church of England Primary School

Encouraging every child to reach their full potential, nurtured and supported in a Christian community which lives by the values of Love, Compassion and Respect.

THE QUEEN'S SCHOOL Complaints Procedure

Agreed by: The Governors' Pastoral Committee

Date: October 2017

Review Cycle: 3 years

Next Review: October 2020

All the Queen's School policies should be read in conjunction with the Equality Policy

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COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

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1. Introduction

At The Queen's C of E School we encourage every child to reach their full potential, nurtured and supported in a Christian community, which lives by the values of love, compassion and respect. The school's governors and Headteacher are committed to providing an excellent education that inspires and encourages its pupils and the entire school community. As a parent or carer of a pupil at Queen's or as a member of our wider community, you may wish to raise and resolve questions or concerns with the school or indeed make a formal complaint. This procedure sets out the school's procedure for addressing your concerns or formal complaint. We aim to address your concerns or complaints openly, fairly, promptly and without prejudice. (Please note this procedure does not address certain complaints which are covered elsewhere by statutory procedures; these include admissions, exclusions and child protection issues. A full list can be found in section 5.)

Are you a parent or carer with a concern or issue you wish to raise?

We have an open door policy at The Queen's. We value feedback from parents and carers at the school and encourage you to approach the school with any concerns you may have. If you have a concern that you would like to discuss or an issue you wish to draw to the school's attention, we encourage you to first raise this with your child's class teacher after school, send an email for their attention to info@queens.richmond.sch.uk or leave a note with the school office. If your class teacher is unable to discuss the concern with you at the time you raise it, they will arrange a convenient time for you both to discuss it. If the concern is not within the teacher's remit, he or she will ensure that the right person receives that concern and they should respond within 2 school days.

Where you have a concern or issue which you consider is best dealt with by the Headteacher, Miss Bentham, or you consider that the class teacher did not resolve your concern to your satisfaction, you may set it out in an email to the school office for Miss Bentham's attention, or contact Mrs O'Neill in the school office to make an appointment with Miss Bentham in person or by telephone. Please briefly explain the nature of your concern to Mrs O'Neill when you make the appointment. You should receive a response to your email or the date and time of an appointment with the Miss Bentham within 2 school days.

Is your concern not as a parent of the school?

If your concern is not as a parent of the school, please raise concerns either with your usual contact, in person through the school office, by email to info@queens.richmond.sch.uk, by phone on 020 8940 3580 or by letter to the address at the top of this policy for the attention of Mrs O'Neill.

We hope that most concerns will be addressed to your satisfaction at this informal stage, however if you feel that your initial attempts to raise a concern have not been satisfactorily resolved and you would like to make a formal complaint you should follow the steps set out in the Complaints Procedure below.

2. Complaints procedure

This procedure covers complaints related to the school and to any community facilities that the school provides. It might include complaints about school provision, an issue relating to a child at the school (that is not excluded on page 11 below) or frustration that a question or concern raised has not been resolved following your initial attempts to raise your concern.

We recognise the value to everyone concerned of dealing fairly, speedily and effectively with any complaint against our decisions, actions or omissions, which a pupil or parent or other aggrieved person may have. To this end, we have adopted the underlying principles and procedures set out in this document.

Please note the school's Child Protection Policy takes precedence over any complaint to the school.

Framework of principles

Our complaints procedure:

- encourages resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible;
- is easily accessible and publicised;
- is simple to understand and use;
- is impartial;
- is non-adversarial;
- allows swift handling with established time-limits for action and keeping people informed of the progress;
- ensures a full and fair investigation by an independent person where necessary;
- respects people's desire for confidentiality;
- addresses all the issues and provides an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary; and
- provides information to the school's senior management team so that services can be improved
- ensures the procedure is without prejudice, with all equality and disability rights being respected.

Definition of Complaint

A school complaint is any communication received from a person or persons with a legitimate interest in the school that expresses dissatisfaction about the standard of teaching of members of the teaching staff, or about the conduct, actions or omissions of members of the teaching or non-teaching staff employed at the school.

Where a complainant is a pupil under the age of 18 years, the complaint may be pursued only by, or on behalf of, the child's parent or carer. Where someone other than a pupil or a parent or carer is pursuing a complaint on their behalf, this can be done only with the express consent of the pupil or parent concerned.

Complaints fall into three parts:

Part A- Stage 1- complaint heard by a staff member

Stage 2- complaint heard by the Headteacher

Part B- Complaining about the Headteacher

Part C- Complaint heard by Governing body review panel

Timescales

The following time limits apply to all complaints handled under the school's complaints procedure. Complaints generally need to be made within a three month timescale. Complaints received more than three months after the original incident will only be accepted in exceptional circumstances.

Part A - Stage 1:

It is reasonable that parents seeking to resolve issues should receive a response within 15 school days of making initial contact, unless there is a good reason not to do so.

The response should offer the complainant a full explanation, or set out the steps that are proposed to resolve the complaint.

Part A - Stage 2:

Review by Headteacher

Should be responded to in 15 school days.

Part B:

Review by Headteacher

Should be responded to in 15 school days.

Part C:

Review by governing body panel

Should be responded to in 20 school days.

The longer time limit for Part C reflects the fact that these complaints may be complex and therefore likely to take longer to resolve. Where it is not possible to respond to complaints within these timescales, the complainant should be informed in writing of the reason for the delay and given an anticipated response date.

Contact details

The Complaints Coordinator, Headteacher, or in her absence the Deputy Headteacher, can be contacted through the school office in person, by phone 020 88789790, or by email info@queens.richmond.sch.uk

The Chair of Governors can be contacted through the school office or by email to the Clerk to the Governors panderson@queens.richmond.sch.uk

Part A

Complaining about the actions of a staff member other than the Headteacher

Stage 1 - Complaint heard by staff member

If your complaint is related to your child, you should make an appointment with the staff member concerned, which in the first instance is likely to be your child's class teacher. You can arrange an appointment by speaking to them directly after school, sending an email for their attention to info@queens.richmond.sch.uk or by leaving a note with the school office.

For all other complaints, whether from a parent or the wider community, please contact Mrs O'Neill in the school office, who will make an appointment for you to meet the appropriate school staff member. You can do this by email to info@queens.richmond.sch.uk, by leaving a note with the school office or by telephone on 020 89403580. You can also write to the address at the top of this procedure.

In all situations, when you arrange your appointment please communicate that you wish to raise and discuss a complaint and briefly explain the nature of the complaint. When you contact the school please tell us how you would like us to contact you and leave your contact details over the next two school days. You should expect someone to contact you in order to make an appointment within that time. If it is not convenient for you to meet in person, a time can be arranged for a telephone meeting. A meeting should take place within 5 school days of the school contacting you and you should then receive a response to your complaint within 15 school days after that meeting.

Most complaints can be resolved by clarification or the provision of information and it is anticipated that the majority of complaints will be resolved at Stage 1. Should you feel that your complaint has not been resolved please refer to Stage Two below.

Further, in the case of a serious complaint it would be appropriate to address your complaint directly to the Headteacher, Miss Bentham or other designated member of staff on behalf of Miss Bentham in accordance with Stage 2 procedures below. (In such cases the Headteacher must be satisfied that the process has been conducted properly and accept responsibility for the same).

Stage 2 - Complaint heard by Headteacher

If your complaint is not resolved at Stage 1 (or Stage 1 does not apply), you must complete the complaint form at Annex A of this procedure and pass it to Mrs. O'Neill in the school office, email it to info@queens.richmond.sch.uk or post it to the Queen's school address.

Please include details on the form that might help the investigation, such as names of potential witnesses, dates and times of events, and copies of relevant documents. The school office will pass it to the Headteacher who will be responsible for its investigation.

The school should contact you within two school days of receipt of your form. The Headteacher may consider it useful to meet with you to clarify your complaint; this meeting should take place within **5 school days** of the school contacting you and you should then receive a response to your complaint within **15 school days** after that meeting. She may invite relevant members of staff to attend the meeting and you are welcome to bring someone to support you. If the Headteacher is not in school for whatever reason, the Deputy Headteacher or designated person in charge will deal with the complaint. If it is not convenient for you to meet in person, a time can be arranged for a telephone meeting.

Note, you may be referred back to Stage 1 of this procedure, or if the complaint is judged to be vexatious, then you will be informed that your complaint will not be accepted and will not be

investigated.

The Headteacher will collect all other evidence that she considers necessary. Where this involves an interview with a staff member who is the subject of the complaint, a friend or representative may accompany that staff member if they wish.

The investigation will begin as soon as possible and when it has been concluded, you and the staff member concerned, will be informed in writing of the outcome. This may be to the effect that:

- The matter has been fully investigated and appropriate procedures are being followed which are strictly confidential (for example, where staff disciplinary procedures are being followed).
- The concern was substantiated in part or in full. Some details may then be given of action the school may be taking to review procedures, but details of the investigation or of any disciplinary procedures will not be released.
- There is insufficient evidence to reach a conclusion, so the complaint cannot be upheld.
- The concern is not substantiated by the evidence.

You will be formally advised that consideration of your complaint by the Headteacher is now concluded.

We hope that your complaint will be resolved by this Stage 2. Should you feel that the decision of the Headteacher is unreasonable, or that the Headteacher has acted unreasonably in considering the complaint, then it would be appropriate to raise your complaint with the governing body by following the procedures in Part C below.

Part B

Complaining about the actions of the Headteacher

If your complaint is about the decisions, actions or perceived omissions by the Headteacher, Miss Bentham, you are encouraged to communicate directly with her by way of an appointment. You can do this by email to info@queens.richmond.sch.uk, by leaving a note with the school office, by telephone on 020 89403580 or in person by appointment which can be arranged through Mrs. O'Neill in the school office. **When you arrange your appointment please communicate that you wish to raise and discuss a complaint relating to the Headteacher and briefly explain the nature of the complaint.**

In all situations, when you contact the school please tell us how you would like us to contact you and leave your contact details over the next two school days. You will be contacted to make an appointment within that time. If it is not convenient for you to meet in person, a time can be arranged for a telephone meeting. The meeting should take place within 5 school days of the school contacting you and you should then receive a response to your complaint within 15 school days after that meeting.

We hope that your complaint can be resolved at this stage through clarification or the provision of information. However, in the case of a **serious complaint, or complaints about the Headteacher not resolved to your satisfaction** it would be **appropriate to raise your complaint with the Governing Body by following the procedures in Part C below.**

Part C

Complaint heard by governing body review panel

For the rare occasion when your complaint cannot be resolved under Parts A and B, or in the case of a serious complaint against the Headteacher, it would be appropriate to **request that the governing body review** the process followed by the Headteacher. This request should be made **within two weeks of receiving a response** to your complaint under Parts A or B above.

This is the last Queen's school-based stage of the complaints process.

You must put your request in writing to the Chair of the Governing Body through Mrs Anderson in the school office and Clerk to the Governors. You can do this by email to panderson@queens.richmond.sch.uk, by leaving a note with the school office or by telephone on 020 89403580. You can also write to the Queen's School address. Your request should set out why you are still unhappy and what outcome you would like or what would put it right. Your request will be acknowledged within **two school days** of receipt and the procedure outlined below should then be followed:

Any review of the process followed by the Headteacher will be conducted by a panel of at least three members of the Governing Body (without any conflict of interest). These governors will be appointed by the Governing Body.

The review will normally be conducted by considering written submissions, but reasonable requests to make oral representations should also be considered. A formal meeting may then take place.

The panel will first receive written evidence from you.

The panel will then invite the Headteacher or the Chair (or designated governor), as appropriate, to make a response to the complaint.

The panel may also have access to the records kept of the process followed (to eliminate doubt or ambiguity, it is helpful to specify to all parties the persons who are allowed access to records).

You are not entitled to access any details of the investigation except for any statements that may have been provided by your child. Any information relating to the application of disciplinary procedures is strictly confidential.

The panel can:

- uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint; or
- recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.
- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;

Within **20 school days** of the school's acknowledgement of your request for the review, you and the Headteacher or the Chair, as appropriate, will be informed in writing of the outcome.

This may be to the effect that:

- The concern was substantiated in part or in full and the governing body will take steps to prevent a recurrence or to rectify the situation (where this is possible).
- The concern was substantiated in part or in full but that the procedural failure did not affect the outcome significantly so the matter is now closed.
- There is insufficient evidence to reach a conclusion, so the complaint cannot be upheld.
- The concern is not substantiated by the evidence.

Unreasonable complaints

Where a complainant raises an issue that has already been dealt with via the school's complaints procedure, and that procedure has been exhausted, the school will not reinvestigate the complaint except in exceptional circumstances, for example where new evidence has come to light.

If a complainant persists in raising the same issue, the Headteacher will write to them explaining that the matter has been dealt with fully in line with the school complaints procedure, and therefore the case is now closed. The complainant will be provided with the contact details of the Department for Education (see the end of this document) if they wish to take the matter further.

Unreasonable complaints include the following scenarios:

- The complainant refuses to co-operate with the school's relevant procedures.
- The complainant changes the basis of the complaint as the complaint progresses.
- The complainant seeks an unrealistic outcome
- Excessive demands are made on the time of staff and school governors and it is clearly intended to aggravate.
- The complainant acts in a way that is abusive or offensive.

The Headteacher will use their discretion to choose not to investigate these complaints. Where they decide to take this course of action, they must inform the chair of governors that they have done so, explaining the nature of the complaint and why they have chosen not to investigate. If the chair deems it appropriate to, they can redirect the Headteacher to investigate the complaint. The full complaints procedure will commence from stage one on this direction.

If the chair upholds the HT's decision not to look into the complaint and the complainant deems this decision to be so unreasonable that no other rational body in the same position would have made that decision, then the complainant may write to the Department for Education (see the contact details at the end of the document).

3. Further rights of appeal

Parents may, if they believe the Governors' complaints panel has acted unreasonably, or that the governors have not followed their own procedures in considering the complaint, make a complaint to the Department for Education using an on-line complaints form.

Parents may also complain to OFSTED, but OFSTED will not normally investigate complaints concerning individual pupils, but if there are any child protection concerns they may pass these to social services, or the police and this may trigger an inspection.

4. Additional Information

Complaints will be treated as **confidential** and records will be kept by the school of all complaints received and the action taken. The Headteacher and governors regularly review the records of complaints to allow the school to continuously improve our practice. Those making complaints are also asked to keep them confidential.

Please inform the school of any reasonable adjustments you would like us to make to enable you to use this procedure.

Finally, **guidance** for parents and carers on complaining about schools in the Richmond Borough can be found on the Richmond website via the following link
http://www.richmond.gov.uk/making_a_complaint.pdf

5. What this procedure does not cover: Statutory Procedures

The Governing Body has determined this Complaints Procedure to deal with school complaints from parents, carers, pupils and members of our wider school community. They cover all areas of complaint, except in relation to those matters already provided for by existing statutory procedures, which are:

- admissions
- exclusions
- safeguarding (including bullying, discrimination, staff allegations, child protection)
- special education provision
- school organisation
- complaints by school staff or prospective staff]

Appendix A Complaint Form

Please complete this form and return it to Mrs O'Neill in the school office, who will acknowledge its receipt and inform you of the next stage in the procedure.

Your name:

Relationship with school (eg, parent of a pupil on the school's roll):

Pupil's name (if relevant to your complaint):

Your address:

Daytime telephone number:

Evening telephone number:

Please give concise details of your complaint, (including dates, names of witnesses etc), to allow the matter to be fully investigated:

Number of additional pages attached =

What action, if any, have you already taken to try to resolve your complaint? (ie who have you spoken with or written to and what was the outcome?)

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Signature: _____

Date: _____

School use:

Date form received:

Received by:

Date acknowledgement sent:

Acknowledgement sent by:

Complaint referred to

Date: