

COMPLAINTS POLICY

Last reviewed: September 2020

Next review: September 2023

Governor Committee: Risk and Compliance

SLT Responsibility: Principal

Linked policies:



INTRODUCTION:

Fulneck School prides itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a concern or complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the school with care and in accordance with the procedures set out below. Fulneck School makes its Complaints Policy available to all parents and pupils, prospective and current, by being on the school's website and available by request at the school reception. This policy applies to the whole school which includes EYFS.

The majority of issues raised by parents, the community or pupils, are concerns rather than complaints. Fulneck School is 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. An effective complaints procedure can diffuse problems and can provide the school with helpful information. Concerns treated as constructive suggestions can be used to improve standards and may prevent cause for further complaint. However, 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 one year of the incident occurring. If a complaint is older than a year it will not be investigated.

The prime aim of Fulneck 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.

In accordance with paragraph 32(1)(b) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2016, we will make available to parents of pupils and of prospective pupils and provide, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate, details of the complaints procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. It may be made about the school as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff,

and any matter about which a parent is unhappy and seeks action by the school is within the scope of this procedure. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the school has done something wrong, failed to do something that it should have done or has acted unfairly.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. The school is here for your child and you can be assured that your child will not be penalised for a complaint that you [or your child] raises in good faith.

The following details outline the stages that can be used to resolve complaints.

The School's complaints procedure has four main stages.

In summary they are as follows: -

- Raising a concern – the informal contact that happens regularly but is still recorded so that patterns can be spotted.
- Stage 1 – a complaint or concern is addressed to the Head of the Junior School or Vice Principal Seniors (Academic or Pastoral) or an appropriate member of staff such as the Bursar.
- Stage 2 – the complaint is heard by the Principal.
- Stage 3 – the complaint is heard by Governing Body's Complaints Appeal Panel.

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 with the class teacher, form tutor or appropriate member of the academic or pastoral staff. Parents are also requested to note any concerns on the appropriate page of their son's or daughter's Planner.

On some occasions, the concern raised may require investigation, or discussion with others, in which case parent will receive an informal but informed response within a day or two, sometimes in the form of a holding email. The vast majority of concerns will be satisfactorily dealt with in this way. However, if the outcome is not satisfactory the formal complaints procedure should be followed and the school will then look at the complaint as set out below. Concerns are all logged centrally.

Stage 1 (Formal) – Complaint heard by the appropriate staff member (usually a Vice Principal or Head of Junior School).

Formal complaints shall be put in writing (email is acceptable) and addressed to the Head of Junior School or Vice Principal Seniors (Academic or Pastoral) as appropriate. The complaint will be logged, including the date it was received along with written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint. 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 1 please contact the Principal within 10 school working days of receiving our response. You will need to tell the Principal why you are still not satisfied and what you would like the school to do.

Stage 2 (Formal) – Complaint heard by Principal

If the matter has not been resolved at Stage 1, the Principal will arrange for a further investigation. In most cases the Principal will meet with the parents concerned within 5 working days of receiving the complaint and then decide on the appropriate course of action to take. It may be necessary to carry out further investigations. The Principal will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint. Following the investigation, the Principal will normally give a written response to the parents within 10 school working days, giving reasons for the decision. If you are dissatisfied with the result at stage 2, you will need to let the Principal know within 10 school working days of receiving the response. Occasionally, the seriousness of a complaint may warrant it beginning at Stage 2.

Stage 3 (Formal) – Complaint heard by the Governing Body’s Complaints Appeal Panel

If the matter has still not been resolved at Stage 2, then parents will be referred to a nominated Governor who will convene an Appeal Panel. The panel will consist of two Governors and another person who will be independent of the management and running of the school. The DfE guidance is that a suitable person is one who has *“held a position of responsibility and is used to analysing evidence and putting forward balanced arguments ... Examples are ... serving or retired business people, civil servants, heads of senior members of staff at other schools, people with a legal background and retired members of the Police Force”*. These three people will not have had any involvement with the complaint up to this point. The hearing will normally take place within 10 school working days of the receipt of the written request for Stage 3 investigation. The parents may, if they wish, be accompanied by a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.

The aim of the Appeal panel hearing is to impartially resolve the complaint and to achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. All parties will be notified of the Panel’s decision, with reasons, in writing within five school working days after the date of the hearing.

Furthermore, the panel is entitled to make findings and recommendations which will be provided to the complainant and the person complained about. A copy of these recommendations will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Principal and the Chair of Governors. The decision of the Panel will be final.

The School will keep a written record of all complaints with details of the stage at which they are resolved.

All 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 Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them.

* **N.B.** In cases where a complaint concerns the conduct of the Principal, the Principal and Chairman of Governors will be informed of the complaint. The Chair of Governors will call for a full report from the Principal and for all relevant associated documentation. The Chair may call for a briefing from staff members and will in most cases meet with the parents to discuss the matter. Once the Chair has established the facts, the parents will be informed of the decision in writing. In cases where the matter concerns the conduct of a member of the Governing Body the member will be informed of the complaint.

The Governors appeal hearing is the last school-based stage of the complaints process.

Recording Complaints

Following resolution of a concern or complaint, the school will keep a written record, (whether they are resolved at the informal or formal stage) of any action taken by the school as a result of the complaint (whether or not the complaint is upheld).

Formal complaints received in the last year:

	No of complaints	Resolved stage 1	Resolved stage 2	Resolved stage 3
2019-20	2	1	1	0

Notes: Fulneck School will provide Ofsted, on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period, and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint. The record of any such complaints will be kept for at least three years.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate inspects the EYFS, educational and boarding provision and compliance in independent schools. Any parents/carers who are concerned that the EYFS requirements are not being met, may contact the ISI or Ofsted. The addresses are detailed below.

ISI (Independent Schools Inspectorate)

Independent Schools Inspectorate
Ground Floor,
Cap House
9-12 Long Lane
London EC1A 9HA Tel: 020 7600 0100 email: concerns@isi.net

Ofsted
Picadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester M1 2WD Tel: 0300 1231231 email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Work Hard, Be Kind, Be Useful, Go Well