



COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Definition: Concern

A 'concern' may be defined as 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'.

Definition: Complaint

A complaint may be generally defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'.

It is in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to invoke our formal school procedures.

Informal Concerns

At Valewood we take informal concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible. There are occasions when complainants would like to raise their concerns formally. In those cases, the school's formal procedure should be invoked through the stages outlined within this procedure.

Who Can Make a Complaint?

Any person, including members of the general public, may make a complaint about any provision of facilities or services that a school provides, unless separate statutory procedures apply- such as exclusions or admissions.

If you have a concern or complaint we would like you to tell us about it. At Valewood Primary School, we welcome suggestions for improving our work. Be assured that no matter what you want to tell us, our support and respect for you, and for your child if you are a parent of the school, will not be affected in any way. Please tell us of your concern as soon as possible. It is difficult for us to investigate properly a concern, an incident or a problem, which has happened some time ago. Complaints should to be made as soon as possible after a concern, an incident or a problem has arisen. Three months is generally considered to be an acceptable time frame in which to lodge a complaint.

Stage 1: Informal Concerns and Complaints

Most concerns or complaints can be sorted out quickly. If you are a parent/ carer of a pupil at school, please speak to your child's class teacher, in the first instance. At Valewood, we believe that it is always best to discuss informal concerns face to face. Alternatively, parents/ carers may contact the Headteacher if they feel that this is more appropriate. If you are a member of the public, you can call the school office and ask to speak with the Headteacher or write a letter to school, for the attention of the headteacher or email your concern to admin.valewood@schools.sefton.gov.uk. If you wish to see the Headteacher and speak about your concern in person, you will need to make an appointment to do this. Please call the school office to arrange this.

We hope that we can resolve any problem informally and within 10 working days. We will make sure that we understand what you feel went wrong and we will explain our own actions to you. We will ask you what you would like the school to do to put things right and explain what we intend to do. Of course, this does not mean that in every case you will be satisfied with our response, but it will help us all to understand the situation. It may also prevent a similar concern arising again.

Stage 2: Formal Complaints to the Headteacher from a Parent/ Carer

If you are dissatisfied with a teacher's response, you can make a formal complaint to the Headteacher in writing. The Headteacher will ask to meet you for a discussion of the problem, within five working days. The Headteacher will conduct a full investigation of the complaint and may interview any member of staff or pupils involved. You will receive a written response to your complaint, within five working days, following completion of the investigation.

Stage 2: Formal Complaints to the Headteacher

If you are dissatisfied with the Headteacher's initial response to your informal concern or complaint, you can make a formal complaint to the Headteacher in writing. The Headteacher will ask to meet you for a discussion of the problem. The Headteacher will conduct a further review/ investigation of the complaint and you will receive a written response to your complaint, within five working days following completion of the review/ investigation.

Stage 3: Formal Complaints to the Governing Body from a Parent/ Carer

If your complaint is about an action or decision of the Headteacher, then you should refer it to the Chair of Governors, in writing, via the school office. This stage offers an opportunity for achieving conciliation between all parties. We hope that informal discussions, between the Chair of Governors and the Headteacher and the complainant, within 10 working days upon receipt of the complaint, will resolve the complaint and that all parties will be able to agree a way forward.

Stage 3: Formal Complaints about a Member of the Governing Body

If your complaint is about an action or decision of the Chair of Governors, or indeed any governor, then you should refer it to the Clerk of the Governing Body, in writing, via the school office. The Clerk will then arrange for the complaint to be heard by the Vice Chair (in the case of a complaint against the Chair) or the Chair (in the case of a complaint about a member of the Governing Body, within 10 working days upon receipt of the complaint. We hope that informal discussions between the Chair of Governors and the Headteacher and the complainant will resolve the complaint and that all parties will be able to agree a way forward. A complaint about the whole Governing Body must also be made in writing, to the Clerk. The Clerk will determine the most appropriate course of action, depending on the nature of the complaint. This could involve asking the Governors' Services team at the local authority to investigate.

Stage 4: Governing Body's Complaints Panel: Reconsideration or Review

On the rare occasion where an agreement cannot be reached, the Chair of Governors or Vice Chair of Governors (in the case of the complaint referring to the Chair of Governors) will arrange a meeting of the Governors' Complaints Panel to investigate your complaint. The Complaints Panel will conduct a full investigation of the complaint including interviews with those involved. You will receive a written response to your complaint within 10 working days following the investigation.

Stage 5: Signposting to the Local Authority

Complaints about school problems are almost always settled within schools, but in exceptional cases it may be possible to refer the problem to an outside body such as the Local Authority. Please contact Sefton's Complaints Officer, Ms Penlington: 0151 934 3628.

Stage 5: Signposting to the Department of Education

If the local authority is not able to resolve your problem then complaints can be signposted to the Department for Education. Further information can be found by calling the National Helpline on 0370 000 2288 or going online at: www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus or by writing to: Department for Education School Complaints Unit 2nd Floor, Piccadilly Gate Store Street Manchester M1 2W.

Adopted by the Governing Body