

Sharing concerns about your child's education: A Parent's Guide

Benson C of E Primary School recognises with regret that at times things can go wrong. This guidance will help you understand how to resolve concerns you may have about your child's education.

The school has procedures for dealing with concerns or complaints and we value any feedback about our services, including compliments and suggestions. Full details of our complaints policy and procedure can be found on the school website. If you are concerned about any aspect of your child's education, you should in the first instance discuss the matter with your child's class teacher. If, following this, your concerns remain unaddressed please contact the Headteacher at the school through the school office.

As a member of the Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust the school's Local Governing Body (LGB) has delegated responsibility for the school and for ensuring the well-being of pupils and that all pupils receive an appropriate and high standard of education.

The Headteacher is responsible for making decisions on a daily basis about the school's internal management and organisation. So, you should contact the school if you are concerned about an issue such as:

- your child's academic progress;
- special education needs provision;
- your child's welfare;
- bullying;
- something that has happened in school.

How do I complain to the school?

First, we hope you will speak to the relevant member of staff as soon as you have a concern. This is likely to be the class teacher. This informal approach is nearly always the quickest and most effective way of resolving your concerns.

If you feel that your concern has not been resolved, then it is important to speak to or write to the Headteacher who will look into your concern.

If you are unhappy with the Headteacher's response you should write with your complaint to the Chair of the Local Governing Body at the school address. Mark your envelope 'Private and Confidential FAO Chair of the LGB'.

This is how your formal complaint will be handled;

- Within 5 working days of receiving your completed complaint form the Headteacher or LGB Chair will decide whether mediation should be offered to help you and the school to explore possible resolution.
- If mediation is agreed, the Headteacher or LGB Chair will endeavour to set up the meeting within 10 working days. If that timescale is not possible you will be told the reason.

- If mediation is not deemed appropriate or if it is not successful, the clerk to the LGB will convene a panel of governors to meet within 20 working days to consider your complaint. The clerk will provide details of the hearing and will request any further information you may wish to provide.
- The complaints panel will consist of at least 3 members, usually LGB members but also including one member independent of the management and running of the school, who will have no prior knowledge of the events being complained of. The panel will be supported by a clerk who will take notes during the hearing and will stay with the panel while they make their decision. The panel will hear the complaint impartially and make their decision without fear or favour.

Five working days before the hearing the clerk will send to you, the complainant, the Headteacher and the three panel members, copies of all papers submitted by both sides so that there is sufficient time to read the evidence before the hearing.

The process at the hearing will depend on the chair but is likely to follow the format below:

- The chair will introduce the panel members and the clerk and outline the process to the complainant and Headteacher.
- The complainant is invited to explain their complaint
- The headteacher may question the complainant
- The panel will question the complainant
- The headteacher is invited to explain the school's actions
- The complainant may question the headteacher
- The panel will question the headteacher
- The complainant is invited to sum up their complaint
- The headteacher is invited to sum up the school's actions and response to the complaint.
- Both parties will then leave the meeting, the clerk will remain with the panel members whilst a decision is made. You will receive a formal outcome from the panel within five school days.

Can I take my complaint further?

For most complaints, you cannot take your complaint to the ODS. ODS will not investigate school matters on a parent's behalf. However, ODS may review the LGB panel's decision on the complaint having regard to the tests of illegality, irrationality or procedural impropriety; i.e. ODS would review whether the LGB complaints panel has acted fairly and reasonably. It would not consider the detailed submissions put as evidence to the complaint panel by both parties. Any such panel would be comprised of Trustees, committee members or officers of the ODS. If, following these steps, you still feel that the school has acted unreasonably or not followed the correct procedures, you can contact the Education and Skills Funding Agency on-line at https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complain-about-an-academy/complain-about-an-academy_or_in_writing.