



COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Archibald First School

Introduction

At Archibald First School we have a vision of 'Having Fun, Achieving Excellence' and strive to develop all children into successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens. The staff and governors work extremely hard to ensure that our vision is realised, but we accept that sometimes things don't always go as planned.

Legislation requires us to have in place a formal complaints procedure. The law also requires this to be published. This document is intended to fulfil that purpose.

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

A complaint is 'an expression or statement of dissatisfaction about actions taken or a lack of action which requires a response'.

Examples could include:

- Dissatisfaction with a school policy.
- Poor standard of teaching.
- Inaccurate information being provided.

It is in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally. In the school's complaint procedure, there is an informal stage for doing so (Stage 1). The school will take informal concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve the matters as quickly as possible.

However, there will be occasions when complainants want to raise their concerns formally. In those cases, the Formal Complaints Procedure (STAGE 2) should be followed.

Nevertheless, the school encourages persons with complaints or grievances to try to resolve their matters at the Informal Stage (STAGE 1), if possible.

Complaints about the school must be made to the school itself, not to the Local Authority.

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Areas not covered by the School's Complaints Procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by Archibald First School other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, for example, Admissions and Exclusions, Child Protection, Statutory assessment of Special Educational Needs, Whistleblowing, Staff Conduct, Safeguarding, Staff grievances, School re-organisation proposals, National Curriculum content, complaints about services provided by other providers who use the school premises etc it will not be considered under this procedure.

If a complaint has already been dealt with, or is part of a malicious, vexatious, unreasonable or serial complaint, the Local Authority and the Department for Education procedures for managing such complaints will be consulted.

Persons able make complaints

Anyone is able to make a complaint under this procedure, including parents, children and young people, members of the local community and other users of the school facilities.

Anonymous complaints

Investigation of any complaints made anonymously will be at the Headteacher's discretion - unless the anonymous complaint is against the headteacher in which case it will be at the Chair of Governor's discretion.

Time Limits for bringing complaints

The complainant must make the complaint to the school within 3 months of incident, or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents, or it occurred earlier than three months ago but the complainant has only just reasonably become aware of the situation.

We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

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Stages of Complaint

The stages to the school complaints procedure, are detailed below. The timescales for each stage are also shown. Complaints received at any stage of the procedure will be **acknowledged within 3 school days**.

The timescales are calculated in school days, so do not include school holidays, bank holidays or teacher training days. If we require longer than the published timescales to investigate your complaint, we will let you know to ensure you are kept informed throughout the process.

INFORMAL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

STAGE 1

Under the Informal Stage a concern or informal complaint may be raised with an individual member of staff or the headteacher, where appropriate. The school encourage parents to speak to their child's class teacher if they have any concerns as many issues can be addressed and resolved at this stage.

The person expressing the concern should make it explicitly clear that they are raising this under the Informal Stage of the school's complaints procedure. The concern can be raised verbally with the relevant member of staff although to avoid any misunderstandings it is advisable to provide a written record of the issue as well.

When advised that the concern/informal complaint is being raised under this procedure, the school will acknowledge the concern/informal complaint in writing within **3 school days**. Within this response, the headteacher will seek to clarify the nature of the concern/complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see.

Concerns/informal complaints should be able to be addressed and resolved within **5 school days** from the date it is acknowledged.

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STAGE 2

If the complaint is not resolved at the Informal Stage (Stage 1) and the complainant wishes to pursue the matter further, the person must put the complaint in writing or email to the Headteacher and must state:

- clearly and in detail what the nature of the complaint is.
- what resolution(s) are being sought by the complainant in order to resolve their complaint.

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- if appropriate, what attempts have been made to try to resolve the complaint at the Informal Stage.

A request to escalate to Stage 2 must be made to the Headteacher, via the school office, **within 5 school days of receipt of the Stage 1 response**. Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

In some circumstances it may be appropriate for complaints to go straight to Stage 2. (For example, if the complainant was making a complaint about a member of staff and did not feel able to discuss the issue with the member of staff concerned; the matter needs to be addressed by senior management, or the complaint was of a sufficiently serious nature). Complaints about the headteacher or the governing body can be raised at Stage 3.

The school will acknowledge the formal complaint in writing within **3 school days**.

Stage 2 complaints will be responded to in writing within **10 school days** by the headteacher from the date the complaint was acknowledged.

Complaints will be taken very seriously by the headteacher and any such complaint will be investigated thoroughly.

Most complaints are resolved at this stage.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the headteacher's decision the person can appeal against the decision. In this case the matter will be considered at Stage 3 of the procedure. (See below.)

STAGE 3

i. APPEALS STAGE

If a complainant is not satisfied with a decision made at Stage 2 of the complaints procedure they must write to the Chair of Governors, C/O the school address **within 5 school days of receipt of the Stage 2 response**, stating they wish to appeal, explain their complaint and set out the details of their grounds of appeal e.g. why they are unhappy with the decision made by the headteacher at Stage 2.

The Chair of Governors will acknowledge the appeal in writing within **3 school days**.

If necessary, the Chair of Governors will convene a Governing Body Appeals Panel, formed by three impartial* school governors, to investigate and consider the appeal/complaint. (*The term impartial means governors who have not been directly involved with the complaint to date).

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The Chair of Governors will respond to Stage 3 complaints in writing within **25 school days** from the date the appeal is acknowledged.

ii. STAGE 3 COMPLAINT

A Stage 3 complaint regarding the head teacher must be made in writing to the Chair of Governors, C/O the school address.

The Chair of Governors will acknowledge the appeal in writing within **3 school days**.

If necessary, the Chair of Governors will convene a Governing Body Panel, formed by three impartial school governors, to investigate and consider the complaint. (*The term impartial means governors who have not been directly involved with the complaint to date).

The Chair of Governors will respond to Stage 3 complaints in writing within **25 school days** from the date the appeal is acknowledged.

A Stage 3 complaint regarding governing body must be made in writing to the Clerk of Governors, C/O the school address.

The Clerk of Governors will acknowledge the appeal in writing within **5 school days of receipt**.

External Bodies

Stage 3 is the end of the school's internal complaints procedure.

If the complainant believes the school did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact the Department for Education at the end of the process.

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by a school. They will consider whether a school has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint.

The complainant can refer their complaint to the Department for Education online at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus, by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:

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Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD.

Withdrawal of A Complaint

If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

Further Information

Further information can be found on the Newcastle City Council Website at <https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/services/schools-learning-and-childcare/about-our-schools/making-complaint-about-school>

Monitoring and Evaluation

This procedure was reviewed and agreed by the Governing Body. The procedure will be reviewed every 3 years by the Leadership Support Committee or in line with updates from the Department of Education.

Date of last review: Autumn 2019

Date of next review: Autumn 2022

Date of Interim Review: Summer 2021 [School complaints procedures: guidance for maintained schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)