



**Quintin Kynaston**

Policy for Handling Complaints

September 2009

# Quintin Kynaston School

## Complaints Policy

### Aims

The policy aims to ensure that the person best able to do so deals with all complaints from parents, students and others as quickly and sensitively as possible.

As far as possible all concerns should be dealt with informally. A parent, student or other complainant should be able to expect to have a response, even if not the final response, to their complaint within 24hrs of having made the complaint.

If parents, students or other complainants wish to register a formal complaint, this should be put in writing and addressed to the Headteacher.

### Formal Procedure

#### Stage 1:

- Complaint is heard by an appropriate member of staff (who is not the subject of the complaint)
- The school will aim to resolve the complaint within 24hrs of receiving it. Where this is not possible, the parties will be informed of the action being taken and a time frame for resolution.
- No complaint should normally be left unresolved at this stage for more than 3 days after receipt of the complaint. In certain circumstances the matter will be referred to the Headteacher who will determine the appropriate action and inform the relevant parties accordingly.

#### Stage 2:

- Complaint heard by Headteacher. The Headteacher will determine the outcome at this stage, but may delegate the collating of information to relevant members of staff.

#### Stage 3:

- Complaint follows Complaints Procedures Policy
- Complainants who are not satisfied by the Headteachers decision re the complaint can make representations to the governing body. This should be done in writing and addressed to the Vice Chair of Governors.
- On receipt of the complaint the Vice Chair of Governors will follow the procedures set out in the Complaints Policy.

## **Standard Policy Background Statement**

### **Intention**

1. The purpose of this policy on Handling Complaints and Suggestions Received by Governors is to ensure that when a complaint is raised:
  - It is resolved informally, where possible
  - All parties are satisfied by the resolution
  - The roles and responsibilities of school management, governors and other parties is clear
  - That, because of the sensitive of the issues raised, its circulation is limited to those who need to know
2. It supports the School Aims by ensuring that:
  - Concerns of parents are investigated
3. The policy statement itself (starting overleaf) describes the following:
  - Preamble
  - Actions Before a Complaint Reaches the Governors
  - Procedure on Receipt of a Complaint by a Governor
  - Procedure on Receipt of a Formal Complaint by the Vice Chair of Governors
  - Reporting of Complaints to the Governing Body

### **Practice**

4. The policy is designed to support the school management in resolving any complaint while ensuring that the complainant can follow up the complaint if it can not be resolved
5. The policy will be successful to the extent that complaints are resolved as quickly and as informally as possible, and with full co-operation between governors and school management.
6. Other documents closely related to this policy are:
  - Appendix three Guidance for Good Governance October 1996
  - The school Prospectus

### **Updates**

7. This document was drafted by Irene Forster – Deputy Headteacher on behalf of the Senior Leadership Team.
8. Consultation on this policy must be with Vice Chair of Governors and the Headteacher
9. The policy has to be agreed and adopted by the whole Governing Body
10. Copies of this policy are available from the Clerk of Governors
11. The next review of this policy is scheduled for April 2010
12. The review will be instigated by the Deputy Headteacher on behalf of the Senior Leadership Team

## **Preamble**

Most complaints will be received from parents but it is possible that a complaint could be received from: a guardian, pupil, local resident, member of the public or another institution. To cover all of these the word 'complainant' is used.

This policy only describes how the governors should react to a complaint, it does not describe how the school management should respond.

It does not describe how the Governing Body should respond to a complaint about itself.

Neither does it define how to respond to any suggestions.

The policy assumes that the vast majority of complaints are resolved by the school management.

## **Actions Before a Complaint Reaches the Governors**

All complaints should be handled by the school management following defined procedures. In all cases the Headteacher is the final authority.

The only exception is if the complaint is directly about the Headteacher in which case it should be directed to the Vice Chair of Governors.

If the Headteacher cannot resolve this issue to the satisfaction of the complainant, they must be told of their right to raise it with the Vice Chair of Governors. If this occurs the Headteacher should inform the Vice Chair of Governors as soon as possible.

## **Procedure on Receipt of a Complaint to a Governor**

If a governor receives a complaint they must ensure that the normal school management procedures are used (they must not try and resolve the complaint in any way that bypasses these procedures), in particular any curriculum related complaint must be directed to the Headteacher. So they should:

- Listed to the complaint, show understanding and empathy
- Advise the complainant that a formal complaint must be received in writing
- If appropriate attempt to resolve the complaint by discussing the problem with the complainant using the governor's knowledge and understanding of the school (see example below)
- If appropriate suggest the complainant approach the school management, or if the complainant prefers bring the complaint to the head's attention for resolution
- In all formal complaint cases write to the Headteacher describing the complaint and any resolution or follow up
- For informal complaints (which the governor has been able to resolve), governors need only inform the Headteacher verbally

If the governor is not certain of the correct procedure then they should clarify it with the Headteacher or the Bursar.

**Example:** A complaint is received that pupils were on the street during school hours, however the governor knows that the pupils were on an official outing.

### **Procedure on Receipt of a Formal Complaint by the Vice-Chair**

When the Vice-Chair first receives the complaint in writing, by phone or in person they should:

- Get a brief description of the problem from the complainant
- Ascertain that discussions with the Headteacher have taken place and have not been able to come to a resolution. (A message from the Headteacher that a complainant has been told of their right to talk to the chair will help in this situation).
  - If the above has not been completed then the Vice-Chair should give advice to the complainant as to how to resolve the issue with the Headteacher. The Vice-Chair could offer to accompany the complainant but only if the complainant really wants this
  - If it has been completed go to next step
- Discuss the problem in more depth with the complainant
- Notify the Chair of Governors
- Attempt to resolve the problem
  - Confirming the views of the Headteacher where appropriate (having the Headteacher's view supported by a third party may satisfy the complainant)
  - Suggest possible further steps that could be taken with the Headteacher to resolve the issue
  - Discuss the issue with the Headteacher and arbitrate
  - Write to the complainant with the Vice-Chair's findings and views of the Vice-Chair
- Experience has shown that most if not all complaints are resolved in this manner  
However if:
  - The Headteacher does not accept the findings of the Vice-Chair then the matter must be raised at a full Governors meeting

### **Reporting of Complaints to the Governing Body**

Complaints should only be reported to the full governing body if they have been submitted to the Vice-Chair and if one or more of the following apply:

1. The school management does not accept the findings of the Vice-Chair of Governors
2. The school management does accept the findings and instigate substantive changes to procedure or policy
3. The complaint is not resolved and the complainant indicates that they intend to take further action

In all other cases the matter need not be reported to the Governing Body