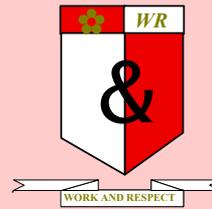


The William Ransom Primary
School
Hitchin
Herts.



Complaints Procedure and Information for Parents

Mission Statement

The William Ransom School aims to provide all its pupils with the highest possible educational opportunities. We believe that the best education is the entitlement of every child and this is realised at this School within a structured, disciplined, caring and safe environment where expectations are high.

Introduction

Department for Education (Dfe) guidance explains the difference between a concern and a complaint.

A **concern** is defined as “an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought”.

The school will resolve concerns through day-to-day communication as far as possible.

A **complaint** is defined as “an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action”.

Most of the time, any concerns you have about your child’s school can best be resolved by talking to the Headteacher or a member of the school staff in the first instance – we would encourage you to do this before raising a formal complaint.

However, there may be occasions when you want to make a formal complaint. This information is designed to help you understand how to do this and the procedures that we will follow.

Principles for investigation

When investigating a complaint, we will try to clarify:

- What has happened
- Who was involved
- What the complainant feels would put things right

We also intend to address complaints as quickly as possible. To achieve this, realistic and reasonable time limits will be set for each action within each stage.

Where further investigations are necessary, new time limits will be set, and the complainant will be sent details of the new deadline with an explanation for the delay.

The school expects that complaints will be made as soon as possible after an incident arises and no later than three months afterwards. We will consider exceptions to this time frame in circumstances where there were valid reasons for not making a complaint at that time and the complaint can still be investigated in a fair manner for all involved

When responding to complaints, we aim to:

- Treat complainants with respect
- Be impartial and non-adversarial
- Facilitate a full and fair investigation by an independent person or panel, where necessary
- Address all the points at issue and provide an effective and prompt response
- Respect complainants' desire for confidentiality
- Keep complainants informed of the progress of the complaints process
- Consider how the complaint can feed into school improvement evaluation processes

Under this complaints procedure any member of school staff who is complained about will have the opportunity to respond to the complaint during its investigation and will be able to see any subsequent response sent to the complainant.

There is an entirely separate procedure for schools to follow in dealing with staff disciplinary matters. Therefore, if in the course of their consideration of a complaint the Governing Body or Local Authority conclude that disciplinary proceedings should be started, they will take separate action.

Stages of complaint

Stage 1: informal (not complaints against the Headteacher)

The school will take informal concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve the matter quickly. It may be the case that the provision or clarification of information will resolve the issue.

You should be able to resolve many concerns or potential complaints by talking to a member of the school staff concerned. You should raise your concerns as soon as possible with the relevant member of staff or the Headteacher as appropriate, either in person, or by letter, telephone or email. If you are unclear who or how to contact them, you should contact the school office.

If you get in touch first with individual Governors, they will need to ask you to take up your concerns with an appropriate member of staff, the Headteacher or the Chair of Governors as appropriate. This is to ensure they are not involved as their impartiality may be required if your complaint is not resolved in this first stage.

The informal stage will involve a meeting between yourself and the member of staff and/or person designated by the Headteacher, as appropriate. If the complaint is not resolved informally, you may choose to escalate it to a formal complaint.

If your child has a Statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) or an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), you might find it helpful to talk to our Special Educational Needs Co-

ordinator (SENCo – senco@wransom.herts.sch.uk) or your child's named Special Needs Officer at the Local Authority. The SEND Information Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS – formerly Parent Partnership) may also be able to help you. You can contact them by email at SENDIASS@hertfordshire.gov.uk

Stage 2: formal

Inform the Headteacher in writing

This should include everything you wish considered in respect of your complaint such as relevant dates, times, and the names of witnesses of events, alongside copies of any relevant documents.

You should make it clear:

- why you are complaining
- who you have spoken to already
- what you want to happen as a result of your complaint

The Headteacher (or designated member of the senior leadership team) will call a meeting to clarify concerns and seek a resolution. The complainant may be accompanied to this meeting and should inform the school of the identity of their companion in advance.

In certain circumstances, the school may need to refuse a request for a particular individual to attend any such meeting – for example, if there is a conflict of interest. If this is the case, the school will notify the complainant as soon as they are aware, so that the complainant has the opportunity to arrange an alternative companion.

The Headteacher (or other person appointed by the Headteacher for this purpose) will then conduct their own investigation.

If your complaint is about the Headteacher, you should write to the Chair of Governors.

We aim to inform you of the outcome within 10 school days (2 weeks).

If you wish to proceed to the next stage of the procedure, you should inform the Chair of Governors in writing within 10 school days (2 weeks) from the date you receive the letter stating the outcome of your Stage 2 complaint

Stage 3: formal

Inform the Chair of Governors in writing

This should set out the details of the complaint including evidence as set out above. You should also specify what you feel would resolve the complaint, and how you feel the previous stage of the procedure has not addressed your complaint sufficiently.

Your complaint will then be considered by a panel of Governors appointed to act on behalf of the Governing Body. Where the Governing Body is aware of the substance of the complaint before the review panel stage, the school will (where reasonably practicable) arrange for an independent panel to hear the complaint.

These individuals will have access to the existing record of the complaint's progress.

You will have reasonable notice of the date of the review panel; however, the review panel reserves the right to convene at their convenience. At the review panel meeting, yourself and representatives from the school, as appropriate, will be present. You may be accompanied by a suitable companion if you wish.

At the meeting, each individual will have the opportunity to give statements and present their evidence, and witnesses will be called as appropriate to present their evidence. The panel, yourself and the school representative will be given the chance to ask and reply to questions. Once yourself and school representatives have completed presenting your case, you will be asked to leave and evidence will then be considered. The panel must then put together its findings and recommendations from the case. When the panel has fully considered your complaint, the Chair of the panel will write and let you know their findings and any agreed actions to be taken. These findings will be reported to the Governing Body, the Headteacher and, where relevant, the subject of the complaint.

In the case of Special Educational Needs complaints, the panel will send a copy of the letter to the Children's Services Complaints Manager.

We aim to deal with your complaint within 28 school days (5 ½ weeks).

What can I do if I am not satisfied with the outcome?

- If your complaint is about the way that a school is providing for your child's Special Educational Needs, you do have a fourth stage of complaint to the Local Authority:
 - You should write to the Children's Services Complaints Manager at Hertfordshire County Council. They will acknowledge your complaint and will then inform the Chair of Governors and the Headteacher. The CS Complaints Manager will arrange for your complaint to be investigated. The Investigator will seek the comments of the Governing Body and any other information or advice that they deem necessary.
 - When your complaint has been fully investigated and considered the CS Complaints Manager will write and let you know the outcome. They will give the reasons for it, any action or proposed action to be taken and any further avenue open to you. They will send a copy to the Headteacher, the Chair of Governors and to anyone else concerned in the investigation.
 - Hertfordshire County Council aim to respond with the outcome within 25 working days. More complex cases may take up to 65 working days.
 - This brings the fourth stage for Special Educational Needs complaints to a conclusion.
- For all other types of complaint, including those regarding bullying, the National Curriculum or Collective Worship there is no fourth stage of complaint to the Local Authority.

Can I complain to anyone other than the County Council?

In the event that, having exhausted the school's complaints procedure, you remain dissatisfied, it is possible for you to approach the Secretary of State if you believe the Governing Body or the Local Authority are, under the terms of the Education Act 1996:

- Acting unreasonably (section 496)
- Failing to carry out a statutory duty (section 497).

This **must** mean that the LA or the Governing Body is acting outside its powers or misusing them. Only then would the Secretary of State follow up the complaint.

The Secretary of State will then contact the Governing Body or LA for information.

The Secretary of State's contact details are:

The Secretary of State,
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London SW1P 3BT

www.education.gov.uk

Telephone: 0370 000 2288

What kind of record will be kept about complaints?

The County Council will monitor Special Educational Needs complaints referred to it under the statutory third stage of the complaint procedure.

William Ransom Primary School will formally record and monitor all stage three complaints, and report on these complaints to the Governing Body.

Statistics may be published from time to time about the number and nature of complaints about individual schools. Publications will not include reference to any named individual. This is used to identify complaint trends and whether individual schools need particular guidance or support.

Any data collected in connection with this policy will be processed in line with privacy notice available on the school website.

Date for review: Spring 2020

Useful information and contacts

- Chair of Governors – c/o the School Office. The secretary at school will tell you who this is and pass on any written correspondence.
- County Councillor for your area – see <http://cmis.hertfordshire.gov.uk/hertfordshire/CountyCouncillors.aspx>
0300 123 4040

- Complaints Team, Children Schools and Families – <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/About-the-council/Complain-or-comment/Make-a-complaint.aspx> or call 01992 588542 – cs.complaints@hertfordshire.gov.uk
- Hertfordshire County Council – General Enquiries – www.hertfordshire.gov.uk - 0300 123 4040
- SEND Information Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS – formerly Parent Partnership) - <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/microsites/local-offer/support/sendiaass.aspx> – 01992 555847 – SENDIASS@hertfordshire.gov.uk
- Minority Ethnic Curriculum Support Service (MECSS – if your complaint is about racial harassment or discrimination) – www.thegrid.org.uk/ 01582 830280/830202
- ACE (Advisory Centre for Education) – www.ace-ed.org.uk – 0808 800 5793
- POhWER (advocacy service) – www.pohwer.net 01438 740162 (North Herts)
- Family Lives – <https://www.familylives.org.uk/> - 0808 800 2222
- Carers in Herts - <http://www.carersinherts.org.uk/> - 01992 586969
- Children’s Legal Centre - <http://www.childrenslegalcentre.com/> - 0345 345 4345
- Your Local Citizen’s Advice Bureau
- **Family Lives London and the Northern Home Counties: 01163 666087**
15-17 The Broadway, Hatfield, Hertfordshire, AL9 5HZ
Email: parentssupportherts@familylives.org.uk