



YARMOUTH C E PRIMARY SCHOOL SCHOOL GUIDE TO COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

PHILOSOPHY

Having an open relationship prevents minor incidents from becoming potential problems. So, in line with the principles of our Home-School Agreement, parents and pupils are encouraged to make staff aware of any concerns they may have. We believe in a happy, welcoming and inclusive environment and will seek at all times to find solutions to such concerns.

PRINCIPLES

- All staff should be committed to the philosophy, principles and procedures of the school's complaints policy and should be familiar with the procedures so that they can advise parents about their operation.
- All staff should have a clear understanding about staff roles and responsibilities so that they are able to put parents in touch with the appropriate member of staff to deal with their complaint.
- Once made aware of any concerns or issues that a parent/carer might have, staff should ensure they are available to discuss and seek to resolve the concerns informally as soon as possible.
- The Headteacher should always be notified of all complaints
- Where concerns cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of the parent/carer they are entitled to make use of the *General Complaints Procedure* where they can raise concerns or lodge a formal complaint. This document is kept in the School Office.
- This procedure should be easily accessible and brought to parents/carers' attention at regular intervals.
- Internal school procedures should be followed before a parent takes the matter further e.g. contacts the LA.
- Staff who may be questioned as part of a complaints procedure investigation should feel that they are being treated in a fair way with the opportunity to put their case. They should be told about the procedure and be kept informed of progress.
- Conversations and correspondence should be treated with discretion; parents should feel confident that their complaint will not penalise their child.
- Fear of litigation should not prevent a school from admitting to parents when mistakes have been made but advice should be taken from the Council's Insurance and Legal Services Manager if litigation could be possible.

PROCEDURES

1. Publicity

- A summary of how the school deals with complaints is included in the School Brochure and also in information given to the children.
- A guidance leaflet is available for parents explaining how problems are dealt with and how the complaint procedures work (see Annex A; Concerns and Complaints about Schools).

- Procedures can be made available in languages other than English and also through tape cassette, Braille, large print version or as appropriate, to ensure that all parents have access to them.
- In the case that a parent does contact the LA before following internal school procedures they will usually be referred back to the school.

2. Speed of Procedures

- Each stage of the procedure will have known time limits with complainants aware of any possible delays (see stages for Handling Complaints: section 1.1 - 5.2).

3. Support for Complainant

- It is important that parents know where they can go for information, advice and advocacy if they require it, e.g. the Parent Partnership and other local advice centres.
- Parents raising concerns or complaints are invited to be accompanied to a meeting by a friend, a relative or a representative at any stage of the procedure.

4. Support for a Person Complained Against

- The complaints procedure is distinct from formal disciplinary proceedings although on occasion it may lead to these proceedings, in which case the complainant will be informed of this and kept regularly updated if any aspects of the complaints procedure have to be put on hold.

5. Confidentiality

- From the outset all parties to a complaint are made aware that some information may have to be shared with others involved in the operation of the complaints procedure.
- In the case of anonymous complaints, although it is usually proper to disregard these unless someone is prepared to substantiate them, it may be prudent for the Headteacher in consultation with the Chair of Governors to decide whether they are of sufficient gravity to warrant an investigation.

6. Redress

- If the outcome of the complaint procedure shows that the school is at fault there will be an acknowledgement that the complaint is valid. This may also be accompanied by an apology, explanation, a promise that the event complained of will not recur, an undertaking to review school policies or practice or, in appropriate circumstances, financial compensation.

7. Staff Awareness and Training

- All staff are given basic training on an annual basis to do with the practical interpersonal skills needed in dealing with people who are upset or angry (see also Annex B).

8. Record Keeping

- Complaints are recorded and monitored termly by senior staff and governors so that they are able to contribute to raising the quality of education.
- Recording begins at the point when a concern or initial complaint has become the kind of complaint that cannot be resolved on the spot but:
 - needs investigation and/or consultation with other in the school.

- will later require a report back(either orally or in writing) to the parent.
- Recording at the earliest stages is a very basic record of the complaint, giving the date, name of parent and general nature of the complaint, with details of any follow-up action taken (see Appendix) and is kept in a Complaints File, held centrally.