

Hazelwick Complaints Procedure Statement

Document Owner:	Chair of Governors/HR Manager
Committee:	Resources
Date of Policy:	June 2018
Review Date:	June 2020
Location:	Internet

1. What is a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, whether made orally or in writing.

Complaints vary in their nature and complexity. Therefore, the school will need to consider at which stage a complaint should be dealt with when it is initially raised and which member of staff is best placed to deal with it.

The School aims to deal with all complaints openly, fairly, promptly and without prejudice.

Complaints relating to a student's tenure at Hazelwick School must be lodged whilst the student is still on the Hazelwick roll and within three months of the alleged incident or issue.

Our procedure for dealing with complaints will:

- be through a policy route on the school website or through a verifiable written request for a copy of the Complaints Policy
- be simple to understand and follow
- be focused on outcomes
- have established time limits for action
- keep people informed at all stages
- where necessary, respect people's desire for confidentiality
- be carefully monitored and evaluated
- provide information to the school's Senior Leadership Team (SLT) so that the school's procedures can be monitored

2. Guidance on each stage of the Policy:

There are four stages to this procedure:

- Stage 1 is informal
- Stages 2, 3 and 4 are formal

Any person expressing continued dissatisfaction will be advised of the next stage in the procedure. All meetings between the complainant and The School will take place on the school premises.

The staged approach is designed to ensure that every effort is made to deal with complaints informally at school level in partnership with the complainant. The formal stages should only be triggered in exceptional circumstances.

3. Informal complaint

Stage 1: The Informal Stage

In the case of a complaint by a parent or guardian/carer, the relevant Head of Year will respond to the complaint or forward the complaint for a response to the relevant Subject Leader. The majority of issues should be resolved at this stage. In the case of a complaint by a member of the public, Reception should be the first point of contact and will take a brief note of the issue. If the issue cannot be resolved by Reception, they will ask for the complaint to be put in writing and when received will forward it to Mrs Bending. Mrs Bending will follow up with the member of staff best placed to deal with the complaint. There are no further stages for an external complaint.

Reception will immediately forward all issues reported to Mrs Bending or the correct member of staff.

Please note that due to teaching commitments, it is not always possible for a staff member to meet without prior arrangement.

4. Formal complaint stages

Stage Two: Lodging a Formal Complaint by using the Stage 2/3 Complaints Form

The formal complaint should be lodged by using the Stage 2/3 Complaints Form attached to the Complaints Policy on the website. This should be returned to Mrs Bending, PA to the Deputy Headteacher, who will refer the complaint to a relevant senior member of staff. Mrs Bending will also provide a hard copy of the complaints form if required. The complaint will only be considered as formal if the required complaints documentation has been completed.

Stage Three: Further Investigation of the Formal Complaint by the Headteacher

If the complainant does not accept the outcome of stage 2, they may wish to escalate it to stage 3 by referring the matter to the Headteacher, who will respond within 10 school days. Additional data/information may be requested by the Headteacher to supplement the submitted complaints form.

Stage Four: Formalised Complaint referred to the Chairman of Governors

- Governors will only proceed with this formal stage of the Complaint Procedure if they have received a Stage 4 Complaint Form (attached to the Complaints Policy) in writing addressed to the Chair of Governors and all previous stages have been exhausted
- Acknowledgement of the written complaint should be sent by the Clerk to the Governing Body, to the Complainant within 5 school days of receipt of the Stage 3 outcome letter
- The Governing Body will convene a panel of 3 Governors who have not previously been involved in the complaint. The panel will meet, wherever possible, within 20 school days of receiving the Stage 4 Complaint Form
- The Chair of the panel will notify the Headteacher and the complainant as to whether it will be necessary to invite them to attend a meeting with the panel. Alternatively, the panel can decide to consider written material only
- The Headteacher and complainant will be informed of the panel's decision in writing within 10 school days unless they have been notified that a further period of time is required to fully investigate the matter

- **This is the final stage in the school’s Complaints Policy and the Governors decision is final.**

5. Vexatious Complaints

In rare circumstances a complainant might, having exhausted the complaints procedure, persist with the complaint. Complaints become vexatious when they:

- are obsessive, persistent, harassing and repetitious
- include persistent correspondence or excessive e-mail or telephone contact
- pursue unmeritorious issues and/or unrealistic outcomes in an unreasonable manner
- involve a ‘scattergun’ approach, with copies of letters being sent to several recipients on a regular basis
- involve frequent and repeated requests for information

In a situation where the school deems a complainant to be vexatious, the Headteacher and/or the Chair of Governors will decide whether to restrict the direction of all future communication (e.g. to one named individual) and/or restrict the nature of the communication (e.g. by letter only). If a conclusion has been reached about a complaint but the complainant continues to pursue it, the school will advise the Complainant that the school considers the matter concluded and no further correspondence on the issue will be exchanged. Subsequent correspondence will be read and filed but no response or acknowledgement will be sent.

6. Abusive Complaints

All parties have a right to be treated courteously and with respect. If staff feel threatened by a complainant, they should report their fears to the Headteacher, who will consider:

- writing to the complainant requesting that the behaviour cease
- setting restrictions for further contact with staff
- reporting the incident to the police

If a telephone caller becomes aggressive or offensive, the person taking the call should explain that they will end the call if the behaviour persists. If they need to hang up, they should record this action and any further incidents.

Any visitor to reception who becomes abusive or aggressive to our members of staff will be asked to leave and to make their complaint in writing. Repeated abusive or aggressive contacts can be considered as harassment and the Headteacher will consider reporting them to police.

7. Anonymous Complaints

The School will not respond to anonymous complaints. However the Headteacher and/or Chair of Governors will review content and take appropriate steps if the issue is one of child protection or if the issue and fear of identification are genuine.

Revision history

Document will be reviewed bi-annually by the Pastoral & Community Committee

Version No	Effective date	Summary of changes
N/A	N/A	Previous updates not recorded for content change

1	Dec 2012	Significant rewrite – document considered to be new
2	Dec 2014	Reviewed – no changes made
3	May 2016	Added a process for complaints made by members of the public and added a section under point 6 about abusive or aggressive complainers being asked to leave the premises
4	June 2018	Review and minor changes made

Formal Complaint Form to accompany the Complaints Policy

For Stages 2 and 3 of the Complaints Policy, please complete this complaints form and return to Mrs Monica Bending (PA to the Deputy Headteacher) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

For Stage 4 of the Complaints Policy, please complete and return to the Clerk to the Governing Body **who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.**

Please complete section A for stages 2, 3 and 4 of the Complaints Policy.

SECTION A

Your name:

Student's name:

Your relationship to the student:

Address:

Postcode:

Telephone number:

Email address:

Please indicate preferred mode of contact

FOR STAGES 2 AND 3 COMPLAINTS ONLY

Please give details of your complaint, including dates/times/witness names etc as applicable

What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint. Please include details of actions taken /communications made at Stage 1 of the complaints process

(Who did you speak to and what was the response)?

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

FOR STAGE 4 COMPLAINTS ONLY

Please outline why you feel that this complaint should be referred to the Governing Body.

Signature:

Date:

FOR OFFICIAL USE

Date acknowledgement sent:

By whom:

Complaint referred to:

Date: