

Making a complaint about a school – a guide for parents

Background

It is in the best interests of pupils, parents and schools to work together and maintain good relations. However, there may be an occasion when you want to raise a complaint with your child's school. All schools have a complaint policy and many welcome complaints as an important source of feedback.

How do I make a complaint?

Informal stage

Initially, you should address your concerns to a class teacher, head of year or another appropriate member of staff on an informal basis. This can be in person, by phone or in writing. You may be upset or angry about something that has happened so it is important to keep calm, especially in face-to-face situations as being aggressive or abusive can be counter-productive. It is helpful if you are clear about the issues and the actions you feel might resolve the problem.

In most instances, you will find the person you make contact with will be sympathetic and as anxious as you are to solve the problem.

Stage 1

If you are still not satisfied, if the complaint is about a matter of school policy or you feel it is more appropriate, you can put your complaint in writing to the headteacher. You can do this by letter or by filling in a complaints form which you can get from the school.

Your complaint should be lodged as soon as possible but in any case no later than **three months** after the incident.

You should get an acknowledgement of your complaint within **three school days**. The headteacher will make sure a full investigation is carried out and a full response will be sent within **15 school days**.

Note: if your complaint is about the headteacher, you should send your complaint to the chair of governors for the school who will follow the same timescales for Stage 1.

Stage 2

If you are still not satisfied after Stage 1, you can address your complaints to the governing body. This must be done in writing within **ten school days** of getting the response from the headteacher or chair of governors.

A panel, made up of at least three governors with no previous knowledge of or involvement in the case, will be convened within **20 school days**. The panel **will not hear the case again**. Instead, they will carry out a review of the investigation to make sure it has been carried out fairly and the correct procedure has been followed.

The panel will tell you and the school what they have decided within **three school days**.

LEA Review

If you believe that the matter has not been dealt with fairly you can ask Education Leeds to examine the process that has been followed. Education Leeds will appoint an investigating officer who will check that:

- reasonable procedures have been followed;
- that the person making the complaint has been treated fairly; and
- that there has been no breach of statutory regulations.

Education Leeds does not have the power to set aside the decision of the governors' panel. It can only comment on the fairness of the process.

Local Government Ombudsman

If you feel that Education Leeds has not followed the process correctly, you can take your complaint to the local government ombudsman.

Finally, a further stage of appeal can be taken to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills, but only on the grounds that the governing body or Education Leeds is acting or proposing to act unreasonably or illegally.