

# Ffynone House School



## Complaints policy

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## **Introduction**

Ffynone House School welcomes suggestions and comments from families, and takes seriously concerns or complaints which may arise, as they help us to improve the educational experience.

Ffynone House School prides itself on the quality of teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. We would hope that most concerns could be resolved informally, and parents are encouraged to contact the form tutor, subject teacher or Headteacher to discuss the concern in the first instance. The school considers any concerns very seriously and most problems can be resolved at this stage. However, if a complaint is made the complainant can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this policy.

## **Aims and Objectives**

The school will give careful consideration to all complaints and deal with them fairly and honestly. We will provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed and aim to resolve it through open dialogue and mutual understanding.

## **Framework of Principles**

The policy aims to:

- be easily accessible and publicised
- be simple to use and understand
- be impartial
- allow swift handling with established time-limits for action
- ensure a full and fair investigation
- address all points of issue, providing an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary

## **Professional Judgment**

Where the judgment of a member of staff is subject to complaint, the Complaints Panel will determine whether the judgment was exercised fairly and reasonably according to the school's standards. There may be more than one fair and reasonable response to a situation. The Complaints Panel will not normally substitute their decision for that of the staff concerned. Accordingly, where a complaint is upheld, the Complaints Panel will usually make recommendations to be acted upon by the school.

## **Record Keeping**

A written record of all complaints (which may include notes, correspondence and statements) will be kept at each stage of the procedure. The record will include details of any action taken by the school as a result, regardless of whether the complaint was upheld.

The written record of complaints will be reviewed regularly by the Headteacher and Chair of Trustees.

Records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 Education and Skills Act 2008 requests them. The record of complaints must be made available to Estyn on request.

## **Mediation**

At any stage of the process it may be helpful to consider mediation or a facilitated discussion by an experienced mediator.

### **Stage 1 – Informal Resolution**

In the first instance, it is advisable to speak first with your child's form teacher or subject teacher, as appropriate. In many cases the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to everyone's satisfaction. If the teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for them to consult with other staff.

The teacher will make a written record of all complaints and the date on which they were received, and any action taken by the school as a result. Should the matter not be resolved **within 10 working days**, or if a satisfactory resolution of your complaint cannot be found then you are advised to proceed with the complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.

### **Stage 2 – Formal Resolution**

#### **A: School Level**

If you feel that a concern has not been addressed through discussion with the form teacher or subject staff and you wish to have the matter investigated further, you should put your complaint in writing and contact the Headteacher. The Headteacher will decide after considering the complaint the appropriate course of action to take.

In most cases the Headteacher will meet you, to discuss your concerns, normally **within 5 school days** of receiving the complaint. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

It may be necessary for the Headteacher to carry out further investigations or ask a senior member of staff to do so.

Once the Headteacher is satisfied that, so far as practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made, and you will be informed of the decision. The Headteacher will give you reasons for this decision. The school will complete this investigation and the Headteacher will provide you with a decision **within 20 school days** of receipt of your complaint.

If it becomes apparent that the complaint is a disciplinary or capability issue, then the matter will be dealt with by following the appropriate procedure rather than the complaints procedure. You will be notified if this is the case with your complaint, but you are not entitled to know which procedure or the final outcome.

## **B: Trust Level**

If you are not satisfied with the Headteacher's decision, or if the complaint is about the Head teacher, you should write to the Chair of the Trustees. You should clearly identify the main issue(s) of concern and, if possible, indicate the nature of the resolution that you are seeking.

The Chair of Trustees will acknowledge receipt of your complaint **within 5 working days**. The complaint will then be investigated by a nominee of the Board of Trustees, who will write to you **within 20 working days** of receipt of your complaint, confirming the outcome of their investigation. In particularly complex cases, the nominee may need extra time to investigate your complaint properly; in these circumstances they will write to you confirming when they will be able to complete the investigation.

If there is no satisfactory resolution of the complaint at this stage, then you will be advised to proceed with your complaint directly to Stage 3.

### **Stage 3 – Panel Hearing**

If you are not satisfied with the decision of the nominee appointed by the Board of Trustees, you will be advised to proceed with your complaint in accordance with Stage 3 of this procedure.

This must be done by writing to the Chair of Trustees, **within 15 working days** of the completion of Stage 2, requesting a Panel Hearing and stating the main issues of concern and the outcome you are seeking as a means of resolving your complaint.

The Chair of Trustees will write to you **within 10 working days** of receipt of your letter, confirming the time, date and location of the panel meeting and clarifying the exact nature of the complaint.

Proceedings at Stage 3 will be carried out by a panel of at least 3 persons who have no detailed prior knowledge of the complaint, or connection with the complainant. The three people would normally be Governors, but should the need arise, a person independent of the school will be appointed. The hearing will take place **no longer than 15 working days** from the date of despatch of the Chair of Trustees letter to you confirming the time date and location of the hearing.

Conduct of the hearing will be at the Panel's discretion which will be exercised in the interests of a fair, effective and appropriately rapid resolution of the complaint. You are referred to Appendix A for the procedure that will usually be adopted. You will have the opportunity to submit written evidence on the complaint prior to the meeting of the panel and to attend, accompanied by a friend/partner if you wish, to put your case. The Headteacher will be given the same opportunities.

After due consideration of all relevant facts, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations. The panel will write to the complainant and the person complained about forming them their decision and the reasons for it. The Panel's findings and any recommendations will be sent to the Trustees and Head **within 5 working days** of the meeting.

The decision of the panel is final.

## **Monitoring and Review**

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. The Board of Trustees monitor the complaints procedure, in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The Headteacher logs all formal complaints received by the school and records how they were resolved.

## **Availability**

A copy of this procedure is available on request from the school.

## APPENDIX A PROCEDURE FOR STAGE 3 PANEL HEARING

The procedure for running a hearing at Stage 3 will normally be as follows:

- The complainant (and friend if accompanied) along with the school representative (this is normally the Headteacher, and for the rest of this Appendix the term “Headteacher” will be used) (and friend, if accompanied) will be invited into the room where the hearing is being held.
- The complainant will be asked to outline their complaint(s), referring to any papers they may have provided if they wish.
- When the complainant has finished their explanation, the panel, **but not the Head teacher**, may question the complainant on their complaint.
- The Headteacher will then be asked to outline his/her response, referring to any papers they may have provided if they wish.
- When the Headteacher has finished their response, the panel, **but not the complainant**, may question the Headteacher on their response.
- The complainant should then make a final statement.
- The Head teacher should then make a final statement.
- The Chair should then inform both complainant and Headteacher that the panel will inform them of its decision **within 5 working days**.

### Notes

- Anyone can be a friend.
- The friend is allowed to speak at the hearing.
- Witnesses may be called, but if a witness is a child they must be accompanied by a responsible adult.
- All papers should be sent to the Chair of the Trustees **at least 5 working days** before the date of the hearing.
- Papers may only be tabled at the panel hearing at the discretion of the Chair.