

The Hills Academy

# Complaints

*Updated: September 2016*

*Scheduled Review Date: September 2017*



# POLICY

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## **1. Information for Parents – Procedure for Dealing with Concerns and Complaints about Your Child’s Education**

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The staff and governors at The Hills Academy are committed to providing a high quality education for your child in a secure and supportive environment. Whilst all concerned strive to achieve their best for the welfare of the pupils at the school, it is appreciated that there may be occasions when you have concerns about your child’s education or about particular incidents which have occurred at school. If such a situation arises, we would ask you to follow the procedure outlined below.

## **2. General Procedure for Concerns and Complaints**

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This procedure is intended to allow you to raise a concern or complaint relating to the school, or the services that it provides.

An anonymous concern or complaint will not be investigated under this procedure, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

To enable a proper investigation, concerns or complaints should be brought to the attention of the school as soon as possible. In general, any matter raised more than 3 months after the event being complained of will not be considered.

## **3. Raising a Concern or Complaint**

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The procedure is presented as a series of stages, in a question and answer format.

It is important that you follow through the various stages in the order in which they are given.

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure a fair and consistent approach to dealing with concerns and complaints for all parties.

## 4. Informal Stage

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### **1. I am concerned about some aspect of my child's school life. Who should I speak to first?**

In the first instance you should always address your concern to the member of staff who has direct responsibility for your child's welfare. At The Hills Academy this is your child's class teacher. You can contact them to arrange an appointment to discuss your concern when you collect your child at the end of the school day or by telephoning the school, writing a letter or sending a note via your child. Many concerns can be resolved by simple clarification or the provision of information. It is always best to make contact at an early stage so that any problems can be dealt with before they become major issues, and so that parents and the school can work together to find a satisfactory solution to the problem. An informal solution is more likely to emerge if you are able to identify what you think would resolve the situation.

### **2. I've spoken to the class teacher but the situation hasn't improved. What should I do next?**

If you are not satisfied with the response you have received from the class teacher, or in the case of serious concerns, it may be appropriate to address them directly to the Headteacher, who has overall responsibility for the day-to-day management of the school. You can contact the Headteacher for an appointment either by telephone or in writing. He/she will listen to your concerns, investigate the matter, and then report back to you within 10 school days.

### **3. I've been in to see the Headteacher, but I'm not satisfied with the response I've received. Is there anyone else I can talk to about the problem?**

If you feel that your approach to the Headteacher has not resolved the issue as far as you are concerned (or if the complaint is about the Headteacher), the next person you can refer the matter to is the Chair of Governors of the school. The Chair of Governors will not get involved in the day-to-day management of the school, but will investigate whether your problem has been dealt with in an appropriate manner and report back to you within 10 school days.

If you are uncertain about who to contact, please seek advice from the school office or the Clerk to the governing board.

## 5. Formal Stage

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### 4. I've spoken to the Chair of Governors, but I'm still not happy. Is there anything more I can do?

If your concern or complaint is not resolved at the informal stage, the matter becomes more formal. At this stage of the procedure, if you have not already done so, you will be asked to put your concerns in writing to the Headteacher, who will be responsible for ensuring that the matter is investigated appropriately. If the complaint is about the Headteacher, your complaint should be passed via the school office to the Clerk to the governing board, for the attention of the Chair of Governors, marked private and confidential.

A Complaint Form is provided to assist you.

You should include details which might assist the investigation, such as names of potential witnesses, dates and times of events, and copies of relevant documents.

It is very important that you include a clear statement of the actions that you would like the school to take to resolve your concern. Without this, it is much more difficult to proceed.

Please pass the completed form, in a sealed envelope to the school office. The envelope should be addressed to the Headteacher, or to the Clerk to the governing board, as appropriate.

The Headteacher (or Chair) will contact you and may invite you to a meeting to clarify your concerns and to explore the possibility of an informal resolution. If you accept that invitation, you may be accompanied by a friend, if you wish, to assist you in explaining the nature of your concerns.

It is possible that your complaint will be resolved through a meeting with the Headteacher (or Chair). If not, arrangements will be made for the matter to be fully investigated, using the appropriate procedure. In any case you should learn in writing, usually within 10 school days of the school receiving your formal complaint, of how the school intends to proceed. This notification should include an indication of the anticipated timescale.

Any investigation will begin as soon as possible and when it has been concluded, you will be informed in writing of its conclusion.

The outcome of the investigation will be:

- To uphold the complaint and explain the action to be taken;
- To partially uphold the complaint and explain the action to be taken;
- To dismiss the complaint and give details of the review process;
- Cannot uphold the complaint due to lack of evidence.

If you are not satisfied with the manner in which the process has been followed, you may request that the governing board reviews the process followed by the school, in handling the complaint. Any such request must be made in writing to the Clerk to the governing board within 10 school days of receiving notice of the outcome and include a statement specifying any perceived failures to follow the procedure. The procedure described below will be followed.

A Review Request form is provided for your convenience.

## 6. Review Process

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You are now reaching the stage where your original concern is turning into a complaint about the way matters have been dealt with by the school. If you wish to pursue this complaint, you have the opportunity of a formal hearing before a Complaints Panel of the Governing Board. Neither the Headteacher nor the Chair of Governors will be on this panel, which will normally consist of three impartial governors with no prior knowledge of the content of the complaint appointed by the Governing Board as a whole. This will usually take place within 10 school days of receipt of your request.

There are guidelines available about how such a hearing will be conducted, and what you can expect to happen as a result. These guidelines are described in a separate information leaflet, "Guidance for Parents on the Conduct of Governing Board Complaints Panel Hearings", which will be sent to you by the Chair of Governors if your complaint reaches this stage.

The review will normally be conducted through a consideration of written submissions, but reasonable requests to make oral representations should be considered sympathetically.

Whatever the result of the review, this ends the Local complaints procedure.

### **5. The Governing Board Complaints Panel has not upheld my complaint. Is there anyone else I can refer the matter to?**

A complainant has the right to refer their complaint to the Secretary of State at the Department for Education or the Education Funding Agency (EFA). The Secretary of State has a duty to consider all complaints raised but will only intervene where the governing board has acted unlawfully or unreasonably and where it is expedient or practical to do so.

If you feel this to be necessary, you will need to write to the Secretary of State, who will then investigate your complaint and let you know the result. However, you should be aware that such an investigation can take up to 6 months or more and decisions will only be overturned in extreme circumstances.

The vast majority of concerns and complaints will be dealt with by the staff and governors of the school. Please remember that they, like yourself, only want to achieve the best they can for the children in their care.

## **7. Serial, Persistent or Vexatious Complaints**

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Every reasonable effort will be made to address the complainant's needs. However, should the complainant continue to make contact on the same issue, the Chair of Governors has the power to inform them that the process is complete and the matter is therefore closed. This will happen if it is clear that there is insufficient evidence to pursue the case, but the complainant is persistently raising the same issue. Equally, this may happen if a complaint has been investigated and no justification for the complaint found.

It will be acceptable for the Chair of Governors to close a complaint if the complainant refuses to co-operate with the school's relevant procedures, places excessive demands on the time of staff and governors and if the complainant acts in an abusive or offensive manner.

## **8. Social Media and Data Protection Principles**

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In order for complaints to be resolved as quickly and fairly as possible, we request that the complainants do not discuss complaints publically via social media such as Facebook and Twitter. Complaints will be dealt with confidentially for those involved and we expect complainants to observe confidentiality also.

Personal information and a log of all correspondence in relation to the complaint will be kept in accordance with Data Protection Principles.

## **9. Monitoring and Review**

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The Governing Board reviews the complaints procedure at regular intervals in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. Details about individual complaints are not shared with the whole Governing Board, except in general terms, in case a Review Panel needs to be convened.

Please note that all designated timescales in complaints procedures apply during term time. Additional time will be required over the school holiday periods. However, complaints will be dealt with as swiftly as possible in agreement with those investigating the complaint and the person making the complaint.

## 10. Other Complaints Procedures

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In addition to this general complaints procedure, there are a number of other statutory procedures that relate to specific aspects of the education system, which lie outside the scope of this policy.

- Admissions to school
- Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs
- School re-organisation proposals
- Matters likely to require a Child Protection investigation
- Exclusion from school
- Whistleblowing
- Staff grievances and disciplinary procedures
- Complaints about services provided by external bodies using a school's premises or facilities.

If you require more information about any of these procedures, you should contact either the Headteacher or Education Services at Bedford Borough Council.

## Amendments

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Amendment Details	Made By	Date
Complaints Form updated	Governors and Headteacher	October 2016



What action, if any, have you already taken to try to resolve your complaint. (Who have you spoken with or written to and what was the outcome)?

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

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.

Signature:

Date:

Official Use:  
Date form received:  
Received by:

Date acknowledgement sent:  
Sent by:

Complaint referred to:

Date:



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

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.

Signature:

Date:

Official Use:  
Date form received:  
Received by:

Date acknowledgement sent:  
Sent by:

Complaint referred to:

Date:

## Appendix 3 – Complaints Procedure Flow Chart

