



NORTON COLLEGE

Policy: Concerns & Complaints Policy

Member of Staff Responsible: Deputy Headteacher

Approved on: 28.04.15

Review Date: April 2018

Signed off by :

Chair of Governors:

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Andy Swain'.

Date: 28.04.15

Introduction

This policy and procedure is for use in dealing with concerns and complaints about aspects of the school. It complies with DfE guidelines. It is intended for use by parents, carers and legal guardians of pupils at the school, and adult members of the general public. It is recognised that, from time to time, pupils at the school may also have legitimate concerns; they are encouraged to make their concerns through the normal procedures.

This policy **does not cover** the following for which there are separate procedures:

- Delivery of the national curriculum and the provision of collective worship and religious education;
- School admissions;
- School exclusions;
- Special educational needs;
- Sex education;
- Child protection

Concerns and Complaints

There is a clear difference between a concern and a formal complaint. Dealing with parental concerns at the earliest stage will reduce the numbers that develop into formal complaints. The underlying principle is that concerns ought to be handled, if possible, without the need to implement formal complaints procedures.

The requirement to have a complaints procedure need not in any way undermine efforts to resolve the concern informally. In most cases the ALC or Progress Leader will receive the first approach. Staff should, wherever possible, be encouraged and able to resolve issues. However, in some circumstances parents may write to make a formal complaint.

When a concern becomes a complaint

The formal complaints procedure will be invoked when initial attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further.

Resolving Complaints

At each stage in the procedure all parties need to consider ways in which the complaint can be resolved. Complainants should be encouraged to state what actions they feel might resolve the problem at any stage. An admission that the school could have handled the situation better or differently is not the same as an admission of negligence or wrongdoing. An effective procedure will identify areas of agreement between the parties. It is also of equal importance to clarify any

misunderstandings that might have occurred as this will encourage a positive atmosphere in which to discuss any outstanding issues.

Stage 1: Raising Concerns-the informal procedure

Norton College school staff and governors are fully committed to trying to resolve parents' concerns and anxieties about any aspect of school life. If parents are concerned about anything to do with their child's education or the running of the school, we want to know about it at the earliest opportunity and we will aim to address it as quickly as possible.

Parents are strongly encouraged to discuss such concerns with the most appropriate member of staff; this is usually the ALC, subject teacher, head of year, but occasionally parents may then wish to raise their concerns with more senior members of staff. If a concern persists beyond this level of referral it should then be raised with the Headteacher.

Our aim throughout is that the school will have resolved concerns swiftly and to everyone's satisfaction. However, where parents remain dissatisfied, they are free to pursue the matter further and formally as a complaint contacting the Headteacher. If the complaint refers to the Headteacher, the Chair of Governors should be contacted. All complaints will be dealt with promptly and, as far as possible, in confidence.

Stage2: A Formal Written complaint

The Headteacher (or designate) will investigate all written complaints and will report the outcome of the investigation to the complainant. The Headteacher (or designate) will hold such discussions as are appropriate with parents, staff and/or pupils, keeping records as necessary, and will write formally to the complainant to indicate any action that the school will take.

The school will respect the views of a complainant who indicates that they would have difficulty discussing a complaint with a particular member of staff.

Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels too compromised to deal with the complaint, the headteacher may refer the complainant to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be: the ability to consider the complaint objectively and impartially is the crucial factor.

Where the complainant's first approach is made to a governor on any issue of complaint, the governor will refer the complainant to the appropriate contact person, usually the headteacher, and advise the complainant about the procedure. The governor should then inform the Chair of Governors of the initial approach. Governors must not act unilaterally on an individual complaint outside the formal procedure.

Consideration by Governors

If after stage 1, the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome, stage 2 (a referral to the Complaints Review Panel) can be instigated. In this case the complainant should write to the Chair of Governors who will send them a complaint proforma to complete

The Governing Body will nominate certain Governors with delegated powers to hear complaints. The CRP will be drawn from the nominated members and will consist of three or five people who will choose their own chair from amongst them.

The remit, roles and responsibilities of the CRP are set out in Annex 2, together with a checklist for a panel hearing.

Individual complaints are not heard by the whole Governing Body.

Managing and Recording Complaints

There is a legal requirement for the Complaints Procedures to be publicised. Details of the Complaints Policy will be referred to in:-

- The school prospectus
- The governors' report to parents
- The home-school agreement
- The school website

These documents will refer parents to the Norton College Concerns and Complaints Policy.

Governing Body Review

The Governing Body will monitor the level and nature of complaints and review the outcomes on a regular basis to ensure the effectiveness of the procedure and make changes where necessary. Complaints information shared with the whole Governing Body will not name individuals.

As well as addressing an individual's complaints, the process of listening to, and resolving complaints will contribute to school improvement. The monitoring and review of complaints by the Governing Body will be a useful tool in evaluating a school's performance.

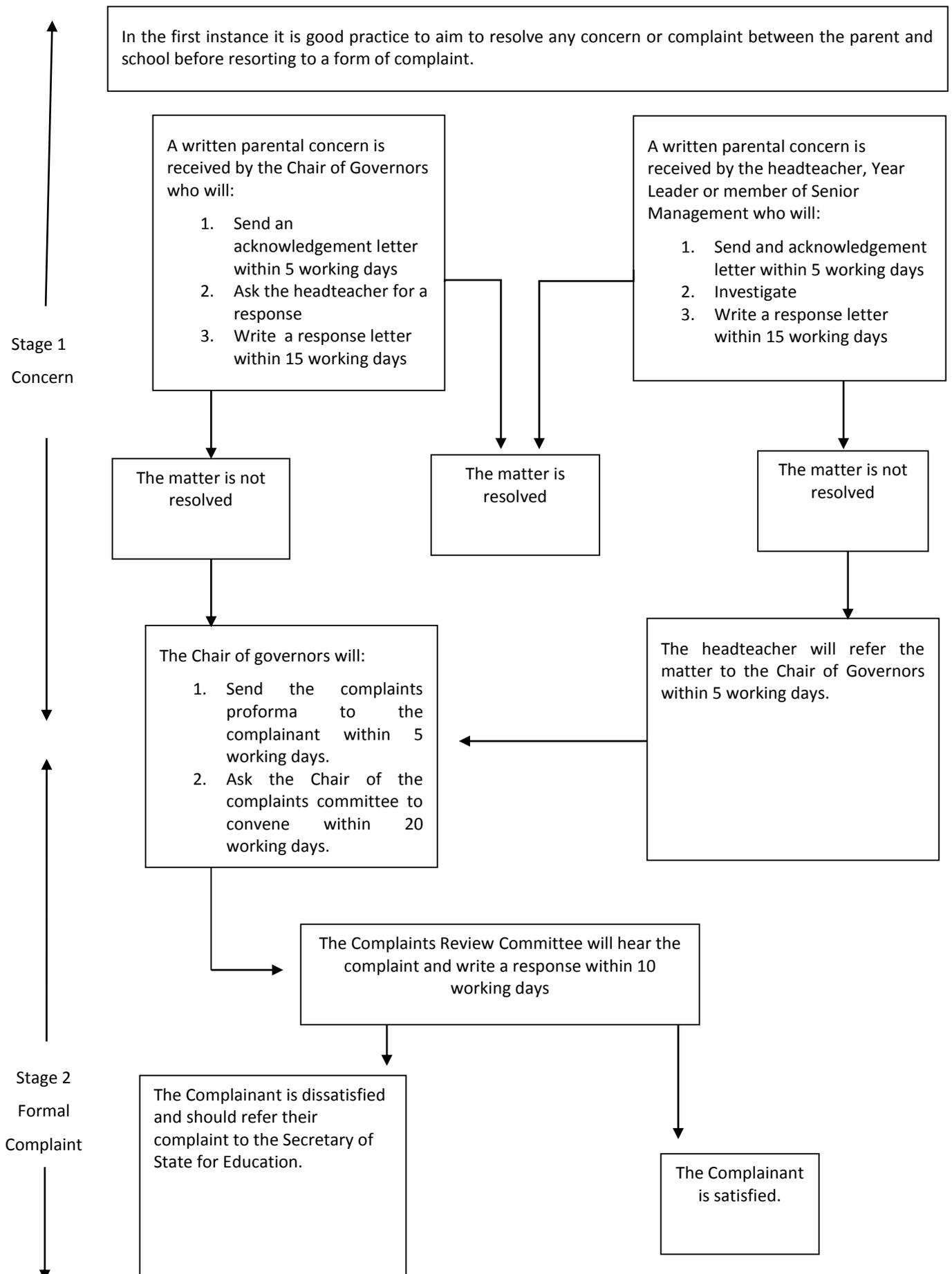
Communicating with the Governing Body

It is strongly recommended that complaints forms, letters of complaint and associated documents are sent to the Chair of the Governing Body, care of Norton College, by recorded or special delivery post, and the date-stamped consignment slips kept as evidence of postage.

Recording Complaints

The headteacher will ensure that the progress of formal complaints and the final outcomes are recorded. The headteacher is accountable for the maintenance, security and accessibility of the records.

Annex 1 Concerns and Complaints Flow Chart



Annex 2 Complaints Review Panel roles and responsibilities

The panel can:

- Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part
- Uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- Decide in the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- Recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature to not recur

There are several points that any governor sitting on a complaints review panel needs to remember:

- It is important that the complaints review hearing is independent and impartial and that it is seen to be so. No governor may sit on the panel if he or she has had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it. In deciding the make-up of the panel, governors need to try and ensure that it is a cross-section of governors and sensitive to the issues of race, gender and religious affiliation.
- The aim of the hearing, which needs to be held in private, will always be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. However, it has to be recognised the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the hearing does not find in the complainant's favour. It may sometimes be possible only to establish the facts and to make recommendations that will satisfy the complainant that his or her complaint has been taken seriously.
- An effective panel will acknowledge that all parties may feel apprehensive in such a setting. The panel Chair will ensure that the proceedings are welcoming whilst recognising the rights of all parties. The layout of the room will set the tone and care is needed to ensure that the setting is not adversarial.
- The Governors sitting on the panel must be aware of the complaints procedure.

The role of the Clerk

The Complaints Review Panel will be clerked. The clerk will be the contact point for the complainant and will:

- Set the date, time and venue of the hearing, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- Collate any written material and send it to the parties in advance of the hearing.
- Meet and welcome the parties as they arrive at the hearing
- Record the proceedings
- Notify all parties of the panel's decision

The Chair of the CAP will ensure that:

- The considerations and findings of the CRP are recorded by a clerk or suitably qualified person
- The clerk provides members of the CRP with copies of all documents relating to the complaint at least 48 hours before the meeting

- The remit of the panel is explained to the parties and each party has the opportunity of putting its case without undue interruption
- The issues are addressed
- Key findings of fact are made
- Parents and others who may not be used to speaking at such a hearing are put at ease
- The hearing is conducted in an informal manner with each party treating the other with respect and courtesy
- The panel is open minded and acting independently
- No member of the panel has a vested interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure
- Each side is given the opportunity to state its case and ask questions
- Written material is seen by all parties. If a new issue arises it would be useful to give all parties the opportunity to consider and comment on it.

Notification of the CRP's Decision

The Chair of the CRP will ensure that the complainant is notified of the panel's decision, in writing, with the panel's reasoned response, within the set deadline publicised in the complaints procedure. The letter needs to explain if there are any further rights of appeal and, if so, to whom they need to be addressed.

Checklist for a CRP hearing

The panel will ensure that:

- The hearing respects the rights of all parties
- Witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing in which they give their evidence
- After introductions, the complainant is invited to explain the complaint, and be followed by any witnesses
- The headteacher may question both the complaint and the witnesses after each has spoken
- The headteacher is then invited to explain the school's actions and be followed by any witnesses
- The complainant may question both the headteacher and the witnesses after each has spoken
- The panel may ask questions at any point
- The complainant is then invited to sum up the complaint
- The Headteacher is then invited to sum up the school's actions and response to the complaint
- The Chair explains that both parties will hear from the panel within a set time scale
- Both parties leave together while the panel decides on the issues

Annex 3 Complaints Proforma

Please complete and return to the Chair of Governors who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:

Pupil's name:

Your relationship to the pupil:

Address:

Postcode:

Day time telephone number:

Evening telephone number:

Please give details of your complaint (using the reverse if necessary)

What action, if any have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint.

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

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

Please attach all relevant copy letters and documents, and list them below:

Signature:

Date:

For Chair of Governors use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By whom:

Complaint referred to:

Date:

Annex 4 What do I do if I have a concern or complaint about the school?

Parents guide.

It is important that you raise this with the school as soon as possible. Set out below are the steps you should take.

What to do first

Most concerns can be sorted out quickly by speaking with your child's ALC or Progress Leader. Telephone the school and the receptionist will be able to help you contact the right person. The Year Team will usually contact you within 24 hours if he or she cannot speak to you straight away.

The Year Team will arrange a meeting if you both think that this is the best way forward. Most concerns are resolved quickly, once the Year Team has a clear understanding of your issues and has had the opportunity to investigate them and identify appropriate solutions. You can be accompanied at the meeting if you wish.

If you have a concern which you feel should be looked at by the Headteacher, you can contact them if you prefer. You should also contact them if you still have any concern after the Year Team has completed their investigations.

If you are still concerned

If you are still not satisfied, you may wish to make a formal complaint to the Chair of Governors of the school, using the complaint proforma (see annex 3) and enclosing copies of relevant documents. It is strongly recommended that the letter of complaint and associated documents are sent to the Chair of the Governing Body, care of the school, by recorded or special delivery post, and the date-stamped consignment slips kept as evidence of postage. You will receive a written acknowledgement within 5 working days of receipt of your complaint.

If the Chair of Governors is satisfied that your complaint has been through all the appropriate prior procedures, he will then convene a meeting of the Complaints Review Panel (CRP) within 20 working days from receipt of your letter to the Chair. Your complaint will then be heard by a panel of three governors who will have no prior involvement in the case and will therefore be able to make a fresh, unbiased assessment. You will be invited to attend the committee meeting accompanied if you wish, and to put your side of the matter. The headteacher will also attend to give his account. More information on how these meetings are conducted is contained in the school's complaints procedure and a copy will be provided upon request.

You will receive a written response with the Complaints Review panel findings within 10 working days of CRP meeting.

Is there any further action I can take?

Complaints about school problems are usually settled within the school but in exceptional cases it may be necessary to refer the matter to an outside body such as the YPLA or the Secretary of State for Education and Skills. If necessary, the Chair of the CRP will let you have further information.

