



## **COMPLAINTS POLICY**

**2017**

Agreed: September 2017

Review date: 2019

This policy should be used in conjunction with the DfE School Complaints Toolkit 2014 and the Best Practice Advice for School Complaints Procedures 2016.

It was agreed and issued in September 2017, updated in March 2018 and is due for full review in 2019.

It will be available on the Federation's website and copies will be held in both school offices.

## **Introduction**

Since 1 September 2003 governing bodies (GBs) of all maintained schools and maintained nursery schools in England have been required, under Section 29 of the Education Act 2002, summarised in Annex A, to have in place a procedure to deal with all complaints relating to their school and to any community facilities or services that the school provides. This does not limit complainants to parents or carers of pupils registered at a school. A complainant could be a member of the wider community or representing an ex-pupil. The law also requires the procedure to be publicised.

The majority of issues raised by parents, the community or pupils, are concerns rather than complaints. The Phoenix Federation of Schools is committed to taking concerns seriously, at the earliest stage, in the hope of keeping the number of formal complaints to a minimum and without needing formal procedures. However, depending on the nature of the complaint, you may wish or be asked to follow the school's formal complaints procedure.

The prime aim of Phoenix Federation's policy is to resolve the complaint as fairly and speedily as possible. Formal complaints will be dealt with in a sensitive, impartial and confidential manner.

The following details outline the stages that can be used to resolve complaints.

The Phoenix Federation Policy has four main stages. In summary they are as follows: -

- Stage 1 (informal): concern heard by an appropriate staff member
- Stage 2 (formal): complaint heard by Headteacher
- Stage 3 (formal): complaint heard by Executive Head
- Stage 4 (formal): complaint heard by Chair of Governors
- Stage 5 (formal): complaint heard by GB's complaints appeal panel.

### **Stage 1 – Concern heard by staff member**

Concerns can be raised with the school at any time and will often generate an immediate response, which will resolve the concern. The school requests that parents make their first contact with their child's class teacher. On some occasions the concern raised may require investigation, or discussion with others, in which case you will receive an informal but informed response within a day or two from the Senior Leader in the relevant part of school. The vast majority of concerns will be satisfactorily dealt with in this way.

However, if you are not satisfied with the result at stage 1, please write to or email the school within 10 school working days. The school will then look at your complaint at the next stage.

### **Stage 2 – Complaint heard by Headteacher**

The Headteacher may delegate the task of collating the information to another staff member but not the decision on the action to be taken. The Headteacher will arrange for the complaint to be acknowledged within 5 school working days of receiving it and a meeting may be convened to discuss the matter further. Following the investigation the Headteacher will aim to provide a written response within 10 school working days of sending the acknowledgement. However if a complaint is more complex to review this can be extended to a maximum of 20 school working days. The school will provide you details of the new deadline and an explanation on the delay.

If you are not satisfied with the result at stage 2 please write to or email the Executive Head within 10 school working days of getting your response. The school will then look at your complaint at the next stage

### **Stage 3 – Complaint heard by Executive Head**

If the matter has not been resolved by the Headteacher of either school, then the next stage of complaint will be heard by the Executive Head. Equally, if the complaint is about the Headteacher of either school, then Stage 2 will not be undertaken and the complaint will be heard by the Executive Head who will acknowledge receipt of your complaint. Following an investigation, the Executive Head will aim to provide a written response within 10 school working days of sending out the acknowledgement. However if a complaint is more complex this can be extended to 20 school working day. The school will provide you details of the new deadline and an explanation of the delay.

If you are dissatisfied with the result at stage 3, you will need to let the school know within 10 school working days of getting the response. Your complaint will move to the next stage where it will be heard by Governors.

### **Stage 4 – Complaint heard by Chair of Governors**

If the matter has not been resolved at Stage 3 or the complaint is about the Executive Headteacher, then you will need to write to the Chair of Governors c/o the school. The Chair of Governors will arrange for the complaint to be acknowledged within 5 school working days of receiving it and a meeting may be convened to discuss the matter further. Following an investigation, the Chair of Governors will aim to provide a written response within 10 school working days of sending out the acknowledgement. However if a complaint is more complex to review this can be extended to 20 school working days. The school will provide you details of the new deadline and an explanation of the delay.

If you are dissatisfied with the result at stage 4, you will need to let the school know within 10 school working days of getting the response. The complaint will then move to the next stage.

## **Stage 5 – Complaint heard by Governing Bodies Complaints Appeal Panel**

If the matter has still not been resolved at Stage 4, then you will need to write to the Clerk of Governors giving details of the complaint and asking that it is put before the appeal panel. Should the Chair have been involved at any previous stage in the process a nominated Governor, impartial to the complaint, will convene a complaints panel. The complaint will be acknowledged within 5 school working days of receiving it. The hearing will normally take place within 20 school working days of sending the acknowledgment.

The aim of the Appeal panel hearing is to impartially resolve the complaint and to achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. All parties will be notified of the Panel's decision in writing within 5 school working days after the date of the hearing. The letter will also contain what you need to do if you wish to take the matter further.

The Governors appeal hearing is the last school-based stage of the complaints process.

From 1 August 2012 complaints about maintained schools not resolved by the school should be addressed to the School Complaints unit (SCU), Department of Education, 2nd Floor, Piccadilly Gate, Manchester, M1 2WD