

Complaints Policy

RATIONALE

Children learn best when they are happy and when parents and school work together to support their development and learning. It is vital to share and discuss any problems that arise so that misunderstandings can be ironed out, issues can be addressed and the problem resolved as quickly and effectively as possible. It is our sincere hope that the vast majority of problems can be resolved without recourse to formal procedures. However, in line with our mission statement, 'Everybody Can Be Somebody', it is very important that procedures are in place so that formal complaints can be dealt with in a consistent manner that is fair to all sides.

(Any reference to Parents includes carers or legal guardians)

AIMS

- To outline the procedures for making a complaint
- To outline the procedures for responding to a complaint.

GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS

The vast majority of problems can be sorted out informally either in person or over the telephone. At Courtland, it is our policy always to respond to a parental request for a meeting although we would ask for parents' understanding that this cannot always happen immediately except in the case of an emergency.

If, however, parents think that we have not taken action over a significant problem or that we have made the wrong decision and they wish to make a complaint, the procedures are as follows:

General Complaints

1. Take up the problem in the first instance with your child's class teacher.
2. *Either*
If a satisfactory solution is not reached then make an appointment with the Headteacher by contacting the school office.
Or
If a satisfactory solution is not reached you will need to consider whether to make a formal complaint in writing to the Headteacher. Complaint Form A is available from the school office.
3. If the problem is still not resolved then a formal complaint in writing can be made to the Chair of the Governing Body using Complaint Form B, also available from the school office or from the Chair of the Governing Body. (Please see GUIDELINES FOR THE GOVERNING BODY: DEALING WITH A FORMAL COMPLAINT for how your complaint will be dealt with.)
4. If you consider that the problem has not been resolved by the Governing Body, you have the right to make a complaint in writing to the Director of Children's Services. (For consideration as to whether correct procedures have been followed.)

Other Complaints

- If your initial complaint is about the Headteacher write to the Chair of the Governing Body using Complaint Form B.
- If your complaint is about a particular member of the Governing Body write to the Chair of the Governing Body using Complaint Form B.
- If your complaint is about the Chair of the Governing Body write to the Director of Children's Services.
- If you consider that the Governing Body is acting 'unreasonably' or failing to carry out its statutory duties properly write to the Secretary of State for Education.

GUIDELINES FOR THE HEADTEACHER: DEALING WITH A FORMAL COMPLAINT IN WRITING

1. The Headteacher will acknowledge the complaint in writing.
2. The Headteacher may decide to meet with the parent. If so, the parent will be invited to bring a friend if he/she wishes. With the parent's permission, a second member of staff may be asked to attend the meeting. The strictest professional confidentiality will apply.
3. Once a decision has been made, the Headteacher will send a written response to the parents, explaining the decision and outlining any action the school is going to take.
4. Parents will be advised that if they are not satisfied with the decision/action, they can complain to the Governing Body.

GUIDELINES FOR THE GOVERNING BODY: DEALING WITH A FORMAL COMPLAINT

1. The Governing Body will have a Complaints Committee ready to convene to consider formal complaints. The committee will consist of three members of the Governing Body. The Headteacher will not be a member of this committee.
2. Upon receipt of a formal complaint in writing, the Chair of Governors will respond in writing. (See standard letter, Appendix C)
3. A copy of the complaint will be forwarded to the Headteacher who will be asked to respond in writing to the Chair of the Governing Body within 10 working days.
4. The Headteacher's response will be forwarded to the parent.
5. At this stage a meeting of the Headteacher and the parent and the Chair of the Governing Body may be suggested.
6. If the parent does not feel that the Headteacher's response and/or the meeting satisfactorily answers the complaint s/he can request that the Complaints Committee convenes to consider the complaint.
7. If a meeting of the Complaints Committee is held, the parent and the Headteacher will be invited to attend. The parent will be invited to bring a friend if he/she wishes. The aim of the meeting will be to try to resolve the complaint. The decision of the Committee will be given to the parent and the Headteacher in writing. It will uphold or not uphold all or parts of the complaint.
8. Parents will be advised that if they wish to appeal against the procedure followed by the school in considering their complaint, they can write to the Director of Children's Services, Building 4, North London Business Park, Oakleigh Road South, London, N11 1NP. The Director of Children's Services will only consider complaints about the school's procedure and not about the decision reached by the Complaints Committee.

See Appendix D for guidelines for Complaints Committee hearings.

COMPLAINTS ABOUT THE LA

There is a procedure for dealing with complaints by parents, carers and the public about LA services. Further information is available from the Central Complaints Team, Building 4, North London Business Park, Oakleigh Road South, London, N11 1NP telephone 020 8359 2000.

ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES FOR THE HEADTEACHER AND THE GOVERNING BODY: SPECIFIC TYPES OF COMPLAINT

Complaints which could result in disciplinary proceedings against a member of staff

- If it seems that the complaint could lead to disciplinary proceedings against a member of staff contact the HR Officer at the earliest opportunity.

Complaints that involve racism and other equalities issues

- Contact the Council's Equalities Team at the earliest opportunity.

Complaints that involve a statutory appeals procedure

- Complaints about decisions relating to admissions, the statutory assessment of special educational needs and permanent exclusions can be heard by the appropriate panels.
- The procedures outlined in this policy are not appropriate in the event of such complaints.

Complaints about physical/sexual/emotional abuse by an adult

- Refer to the Child Protection Procedures issued by Barnet Area Child Protection Committee.
- Do not use the procedures in this policy.
- Contact the MASH Team without delay.

Complaints about inappropriate sexual behaviour of another pupil

- Refer to the Child Protection Procedures issued by Barnet Area Child Protection Committee.
- Do not use the procedures in this policy.
- Contact The MASH Team without delay.

Complaints about the governing body

- Anyone can complain to the Secretary of State for Education - either through the Department for Education or through the House of Commons,

Anonymous Complaints

- Usually it is proper to disregard anonymous complaints but the danger is that they may relate to something serious eg discrimination/harassment
- It is at the discretion of the headteacher/governing body to decide whether the gravity of an anonymous complaint warrants an investigation.

Complaints Policy

Policy set up:

May 2004

Reviewed:

February 2008 (L Walker & Staffing committee)

Reviewed:	June 2010	(L Walker & Staffing committee)
Reviewed:	May 2013	(L Walker & Staffing committee)
Reviewed:	May 2017	(L Walker & Staffing committee)
Date of next review:	May 2020	

Courtland School
Everybody Can Be Somebody

COMPLAINT FORM (A)

It is our sincere hope that the vast majority of problems can be resolved without recourse to formal procedures.

If, however, after talking to us, you think that we have not taken action over a significant problem or that we have made the wrong decision and you wish to make a complaint, please complete this form.

Name:

Address:
.....
.....
.....

Tel.:(day)
.....(evening)

Child's Name: Year:

What is your complaint about?
What would you like the Headteacher to do about it?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

(Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary.)

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Courtland School
Everybody Can Be Somebody

COMPLAINT FORM (B)

It is our sincere hope that the vast majority of problems can be resolved without recourse to formal procedures.

If, however, after talking to the Classteacher and the Headteacher, you think that they have not taken action over a significant problem or that they have made the wrong decision and you wish to make a complaint to the *Governing Body*, please complete this form.

Name:

Address:

.....

.....

.....

Tel.:(day)

.....(evening)

Child's Name: Year:

What is your complaint about?

What would you like the *Governing Body* to do about it?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

..... (Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary.)

Signed: _____

Date: _____



COURTLAND SCHOOL

Courtland Avenue, Mill Hill. NW7 3BG

tel. 020 8959 3274

fax. 020 8959 7978

www.courtland.barnet.sch.uk

Headteacher : Miss L Walker

Dear

Thank you for your correspondence dated giving details of your complaint.

I have sent a copy of your letter to (*Headteacher*) with the request that *he/she* responds to the points you have raised. We normally request a response within 10 working days. I have asked to respond to me by

A copy of this response will then be sent to you and a meeting may be suggested. If you are then not satisfied with 's response and the outcome of any meetings, you will be able to request a meeting of the Complaints Committee to consider your complaint further.

Yours sincerely,

.....
Chair of Governing Body

Guidelines for Complaints Committee Hearings

Before the meeting:

- If possible the meeting should be held within 15 school days of the receipt by the Chair of the parental request for the complaint to be heard by the Complaints Committee.
- The parent(s) should be informed in writing how the meeting will be conducted (see below) and that the aim of the meeting will be to try and resolve the complaint.
- The parent(s) and Headteacher should be invited to attend.
- The parent(s) should be allowed to bring a friend and to submit further written evidence.
- The Headteacher should be invited to provide a written response to the complaint.
- The parental complaint and the response by the Headteacher should be circulated in advance of the meeting.
- If either the parent(s) or the Headteacher wishes to call witnesses the agreement of the Chair of the Committee is needed before the meeting is held.

The meeting

The procedure for the meeting is as follows:

- The parent(s) to speak about their complaint.
- The committee members to raise questions with the parent(s).
- The Headteacher to explain their decision(s).
- The committee members to raise questions with the Headteacher.
- In some cases it may be appropriate for the Chair to allow the parent to question the Headteacher and vice versa
- If the Chair has agreed that witnesses can be called they should give their evidence.
- The committee members can then raise questions with the witnesses.
- The Chair to state that the committee will consider the information it has gathered and will give its decision in writing to the parent and Headteacher as soon as possible. The decision will uphold or not uphold all or part of the complaint.
- The parent(s) should be advised that if they wish to appeal against the procedure followed by the school in considering their complaint, they can write to the Director of Children's Services, Building 4, North London Business Park, Oakleigh Road South, London, N11 1NP. The Director of Children's Services will only consider complaints about the school's procedure and not about the decision reached by the Complaints Committee.
- The parent(s), the Headteacher and any witnesses will then leave the meeting.
- The Committee members decide whether to uphold or not uphold the complaint and inform the parent(s) and Headteacher in writing of their decision.