

Pembrokeshire County Council Cyngor Sir Penfro



Education Services

COMPLAINTS POLICY FOR SCHOOLS

Director of Education

December 2014

Equality Impact Assessment - Completed

Complaints Procedures

Sir Thomas Picton School Policy

Introduction

Sir Thomas Picton School has a clear policy for dealing with complaints. When a person raises a concern or complaint with us, we will look into it and deal with it in a fair and suitable way.

When the person making the complaint is a pupil, we have extra procedures to help them with the complaints process. These are shown in this policy.

A Complaint is when you are dissatisfied with:

- the services or facilities provided by the school
- the behaviour or actions of teachers and others working in the school
- the behaviour or actions of pupils
- the behaviour or actions of the governing body.

A Complaint is not a concern relating to:

- the curriculum
- sex education
- Special Educational Needs
- religious worship,
- admissions or exclusions.
- staff grievance, disciplinary and capability concerns
- Child Protection issues

These are all covered by separate procedures. We will give you copies of these procedures if you ask for them.

We will respond to all concerns and complaints in a consistent way. We will:

- listen to your complaint and make sure we understand the problem
- support anyone needing help with formalising any written correspondence
- investigate the complaint to find out exactly what happened
- speak to, and if necessary meet with, people involved in the complaint so that we have all the facts
- look at all the evidence and then decide on a fair and acceptable solution to the problem
- let you know how we have resolved the problem, either verbally or in writing.

Different complaints need different responses. Whenever we can, we will respond to your complaint quickly and informally and give you a verbal response. But if your complaint is more serious or complicated we will need more time to investigate it, and we will usually give you a written response. We will tell you how long we expect this process to take. If there are any delays in the process we will let you know.

We will keep a record of every complaint, our investigation and how the problem was resolved.

The Complaints Process

Our complaints process has three stages:

Stage 1 - Informal

Stage 2 - Formal Complaint to Headteacher

Stage 3 - Formal Complaint to Governing Body

You should normally start at stage 1 – we hope to resolve the majority of concerns or complaints in this informal way. But if your complaint is more serious then you can go straight to stages 2 or 3.

Stage 1 - Informal

Concerns or complaints can often be sorted out quickly by the first staff member you speak to. This might be a class, subject or form teacher, head of year or other senior person.

1. Raise your concern with a staff member, either verbally or in writing.

Parents: please follow our normal school procedures for contacting the staff member

Pupils: you can also contact our designated pupil complaints officers which are either Deputy Headteacher or Assistant Headteacher Mr J Olyott who is responsible for Restorative Practice.

2. Your complaint will be investigated and quickly resolved if possible. If your complaint is covered by any existing school policies we will try to resolve it using the solutions set out in these policies. We will tell you which policy applies. If you need a copy of any policy please ask us for one.

Pupils: if your complaint is about something that affects many pupils we might suggest taking it to the school council. Any resolution would then benefit everyone.

3. We will give you a response to your complaint, either verbal or written, within 10 school days. If there is a delay we will tell you.

4. We will keep a written record of the complaint and how it was resolved.

If we cannot resolve your complaint, or you are not happy with our response, you can progress your complaint to the next stage.

Pupils: Your complaint will only progress with your agreement. Your teacher/other/ either of the pupil complaints officer will explain what happens in the next stage to you. You can have help to present your complaint if you want it. We will tell you about the different types of help there are and you can choose which to use.

Stage 2 - Formal Complaint to Headteacher

If we fail to resolve your complaint at stage 1, or your complaint is more serious, you can make a formal complaint to the headteacher.

If you complain directly to the headteacher without raising your concern with a staff member first, the headteacher may decide that your complaint could be dealt with informally using the stage 1 process. They will refer your complaint to a suitable member of staff to deal with and tell you they have done this.

1. Raise your complaint in writing to the headteacher.

Parents: Your letter should explain what your complaint is about. Support will be provided, if required. If we could not resolve your complaint at stage 1, or you were not happy with our response, you should tell us what you are looking for as the outcome.

Pupils: You can talk to the headteacher about your complaint instead of writing it down. You can have someone with you for support at this meeting. We will write down everything you say, and you will be asked to read, agree and sign this record to make sure it correctly sets out your complaint. We will give you a copy of the record. The headteacher will ask you what you are looking for as a solution or outcome to the problem. They will also let you know how it will be investigated.

2. The headteacher will acknowledge receipt of your complaint in writing. They will let you know by when you should receive a response – usually within 10 school days.

Pupils: If you talk to the headteacher about your complaint in step 1 then we will not need to give you a written acknowledgement. The headteacher will have given you a response time at this meeting.

3. The headteacher will investigate your complaint. This may include having a meeting with those involved. If you are asked to a meeting then you can bring a relative, friend, advocate or other person with you for support. The headteacher may also choose to have another person present as a witness to what is discussed.

Pupils: The headteacher may not need to have a meeting with you if you already met in step 1.

4. The headteacher will keep a record of all meetings and discussions and the outcome of these.

5. Once the investigation is complete, the headteacher will give you a written response to your complaint.

Pupils: The headteacher will also tell you their decision verbally to make sure you fully understand it and can ask any questions if necessary.

Stage 3 - Formal Complaint to Governing Body

If we fail to resolve your complaint at stages 1 and 2, or you are not happy with the outcome, you can make a formal complaint to the governing body. You should only complain directly to the governing body when there are special reasons for not using stages 1 and 2, such as a serious complaint against the headteacher.

If the Chair of Governors receives a complaint that could have been dealt with at stages 1 and 2, and these have not been used, he may refer your complaint back to the headteacher for investigation. They will tell you if this is the case.

1. Complaint made in writing to Chair of Governors.

Parents: Your letter should explain what your complaint is about, what the school has done to investigate and resolve it, and why you are not happy with the outcome. Support will be provided if required.

Pupils: You can talk to the Chair of Governors about your complaint instead of writing it down. We will write down everything you say, and you will be asked to read, agree and sign this record to make sure it correctly sets out your complaint. We will give you a copy of the record. The Chair will ask you what you are looking for as a solution or outcome to the problem. They will also let you know how it will be investigated.

2. The Chair will acknowledge receipt of your complaint in writing within 5 school days. They will outline the timetable for investigation as far as possible, making sure there is enough time to consider all evidence.

Pupils: If you talk to the Chair about your complaint in step 1 we will not need to give you a written acknowledgement. The Chair will have given you a response time at this meeting.

3. Chair passes complaint to the Governing Body Complaints Committee.

4. Complaints Committee will meet to consider the complaint, usually within 15 school days of receipt.

They may decide that a meeting is necessary to hear the evidence. If this happens, you will be given at least 5 school days notice of the meeting with details of where it is to be held, date and time. If you are asked to a meeting then you can bring a relative, friend, advocate or other person with you for support. This meeting will be conducted in an informal way with each party treating the other with respect and courtesy.

At the meeting:

- you will be told the names and roles of the other people present;
- the purpose of the meeting will be explained;
- you will be asked to talk through your complaint. If you have witnesses they will be asked to give their evidence. The committee may ask you questions.
- the headteacher or other witnesses will explain the school's actions and response to the complaint. The committee may ask them questions.

At the end of the meeting the Chair will check:

- that you have said everything you wished to;
- that you feel the committee has listened to and understood all the points made;
- that you are clear about when you will be told the committee's decision.

- 5. Complaints Committee considers all the evidence and reaches a decision. They may ask for advice from the LEA or Diocesan Authority if appropriate.**
- 6. The Committee will give you their decision in writing, usually within 5 school days of the meeting. They will tell you the reasons for their decision and any action to be taken by the school as a result.**

Pupils: The Chair of the complaints committee will also tell you their decision verbally to make sure you fully understand it and can ask any questions if necessary.

- 7. We will keep a record of your complaint, including any evidence presented and minutes of any meetings or discussions, for three years.**

Appeals

If you are unhappy with our decision at the end of stage 3 you have the right to make an appeal.

- 1. Appeal to be made in writing, addressed to the Clerk to the Governing Body. You must submit your appeal within 15 school days from the date on our stage 3 decision letter. Your letter should explain the reasons why you are making an appeal. Support will be provided if required.**
- 2. Clerk passes appeal to the Governing Body Appeals Committee. The Appeals Committee will have different members to the Complaints Committee.**
- 3. Appeals Committee will meet to consider the appeal, usually within 15 school days of receipt.**
They may decide that a meeting is necessary to hear the evidence. If this happens, you will be given at least 5 school days notice of the meeting with details of where it is to be held, date and time. If you are asked to a meeting then you can bring a relative, friend, advocate or other person with you for support. This meeting will be conducted in an informal way with each party treating the other with respect and courtesy.
- 4. Appeals Committee considers all the evidence and reaches a decision. They may ask for advice from the LEA if appropriate.**
- 5. The Committee will give you their decision in writing, usually within 5 school days of the meeting. They will tell you the reasons for their decision and any action to be taken by the school as a result.**

Once you have been given a decision by the Appeals Committee the complaints process will end. The governing body and headteacher will not look at your complaint again, even if you are unhappy with the outcome.

Special Circumstances

In some cases, for example if your complaint is against the headteacher or a member of the governing body, we will follow slightly different procedures to the ones described above. If we need to do this, we will explain the differences to you.

Signatures

Responsible Individual

Headteacher

Governor

Pupil Representative