



Longcroft School & Sixth Form College

Complaints Policy & Procedure

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Introduction

The Governors of Longcroft School are committed to ensuring that the highest standards are maintained at the School, both in the provision of education to pupils, and in every other aspect of the running of the school. A complaints procedure is an important part of the management of a well-run school, allowing parents of Longcroft pupils the opportunity to voice any concerns they may have through appropriate channels. This policy explains the procedure which has been adopted by the governing body to ensure a timely systematic and fair approach to the resolution of those concerns.

This policy meets the required standards as set out in Section 29 of the Education Act 2002 that all schools have procedures in place for dealing with complaints. Any person, including members of the general public may make a complaint about any provision of facilities or services that a school provides unless separate statutory procedures apply e.g. pupil exclusions.

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

It is important to be clear about the difference between a concern and a complaint. Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage reduces the numbers that develop into formal complaints. We aim to ensure that concerns are handled, if at all possible, without the need for formal procedures. Our formal complaints procedure is only necessary if all efforts to resolve the concern informally are unsuccessful.

Objectives and Aims

To be effective our complaints procedure will:

- encourage informal resolution wherever possible;
- publish the complaints procedure and ensure it is accessible, simple to use and easy to understand;
- be impartial;
- be non-adversarial;
- allow swift handling with established time-limits for action and keep the complainant informed of progress;
- ensure a full and fair investigation by an independent person where necessary;
- respect the need for confidentiality;
- address all issues raised by a complainant, providing an effective response and appropriate redress where necessary;
- provide information to the school's leadership and governance so that services can be routinely reviewed and improved.

Stages in the Procedure

There are four stages in the School's complaints procedure. See **Appendix A** for a flow chart. At each stage we will remain mindful of ways in which a complaint can be resolved. It may be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- an apology;
- an explanation;
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
- an assurance that the event that forms the basis of a complaint will not recur;
- an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to ensure that it will not happen again;
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint.

We encourage complainants to state what actions they feel might resolve the problem at any stage. An admission that the school could have handled the situation better is not the same as an admission of negligence.

At all times we will seek to identify areas of agreement between parties and to clarify any misunderstandings that might have occurred. This can create a positive atmosphere in which to discuss any outstanding issues.

A complaint should be submitted as soon as possible after the incident so that it can be investigated whilst events are still fresh in the minds of those involved, but it is recognized that this is not always possible. Complaints will therefore normally only be considered up to one year after the incident has happened. In exceptional circumstances, this can be extended.

Monitoring and Reporting

Longcroft will monitor and report all complaints received in order to learn and improve by looking at:

- Numbers of complaints;
- Number of complaints received which were upheld;
- Issues and key themes that the complaints have raised;
- Lessons learnt;
- Actions taken or being taken to improve as a result of the complaints made;
- To include reporting on praise and any other feedback and how that information is shared.

Complaints information shared with the whole Governing Body will not name individuals.

The policy will be evaluated in the light of complaints made and their resolution and changes made to the policy where necessary.

Monitoring and Reviewing Complaints

The Governing Body will regularly review and monitor all complaints received, looking at outcomes, ensuring the effectiveness of the procedure, identify any trends and make any necessary changes.

Governing Body Review

The governing body will review the complaints policy and procedure on a regular basis. The governing body will also be provided with information about complaints and actions taken. All information given to the governing body will be anonymized.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Stage 1: (Informal) Complaint considered by member of staff

Please contact your Care and Achievement Co-ordinator who work with a specific year group and who are the first point of call for parents.

Year 7 – Mrs Fox 07342 342858 . Email: vicki.fox@longcroft.eriding.net

Year 8 Mrs Thwaites 0744847881 Email: Gemma.thwaites@longcroft.eriding.net

Year 9 & 10 – Mrs Newsam 07827587483. Email: zoe.newsam@longcroft.eriding.net

Year 11 – Mrs Ellis 07900 394085. Email: annette.ellis@longcroft.eriding.net

Most concerns can be quickly resolved by the Care and Achievement Co-ordinator. Where possible, the concerns should be put in writing and provided to the member of staff so that he/she is able to look into the matter.

If the complainant does not feel able to take up the issue with the Care and Achievement Co-ordinator, the complainant can ask the Head of Lower School, Head of Upper School or Head of Sixth Form to appoint another member of staff to deal with the complaint.

If the complaint is about the Headteacher or a governor, the matter should be referred to the Chair of Governors.

The Care and Achievement Co-ordinator will contact the complainant or arrange to meet with them to ensure that the nature of the complaint is fully understood and to determine what the complainant feels needs to be done to resolve the issue.

There may be a need for the Care and Achievement Co-ordinator to undertake an investigation and interview others to establish the facts, but he/she will try to deal with the complaint and seek to resolve the issue in an informal manner.

The complaint should be resolved within ten school days. If a longer period is required, the complainant should be informed of the reasons for this and be provided with a revised timescale.

Most parents' concerns can be adequately resolved by discussion with a class teacher, Head of Year or with other members of staff. There may be no need for the complaint to be put into writing at this stage. However, if the complainant wishes to take the matter further they are requested to complete the complaints form (Appendix B) and return it to the school within ten school days.

Stage 2: (Formal) Complaint considered by Deputy Headteacher or delegated senior leader

If the concern has not been met to the complainant's satisfaction at the end of Stage 1:

- The complainant puts the complaint in writing, using the complaints form (Appendix B), addressed to the Deputy Headteacher for Care and Achievement, Mr Rogers.
- The Deputy Headteacher, or a designated senior leader will investigate the circumstances of the complaint and may find it appropriate to ask for written statements from staff, or pupils and to call for any relevant documentation

If needed, the Deputy Headteacher or delegated senior leader will contact the complainant and arrange to meet with them to ensure that the nature of the complaint is fully understood and to determine what the complainant feels needs to be done to resolve the issue.

The Deputy Headteacher or delegated senior leader will gather factual evidence and information. This may involve interviewing those involved in order to be able to fully respond to the complainant. The Deputy Headteacher or delegated senior leader will keep appropriate records and inform the complainant of the outcome of the investigation. Feedback to the complainant may be given verbally in a meeting, but a formal response in writing will also be provided.

Stage 2 should normally be concluded within ten school days of the detail of the complaint being agreed. If a longer period is required, the complainant should be informed of the reasons for this and provided with a revised timetable.

Stage 3: Complaint considered by Headteacher

In a small number of cases, the matter may not be resolved even with the involvement of the Deputy Headteacher or other senior leader. In this event, the complainant should write to the Headteacher detailing why they are not happy with the outcome of Stage 2. If a complaint is regarding the Deputy Headteacher, then the complainant should write to the Headteacher using the complaints form (Appendix B).

The Headteacher or delegated senior leader will review the evidence and information. This may involve further investigation in order to be able to fully respond to the complainant. Feedback to the complainant may be given verbally in a meeting, but a formal response in writing will also be provided.

Stage 3 should normally be concluded within fifteen school days of the detail of the complaint being agreed. If a longer period is required, the complainant should be informed of the reasons for this and provided with a revised timetable.

If at this stage the matter is not discussed with the Headteacher, it is not normally possible to proceed further with the complaints procedure. In this circumstance, the complaint should be submitted to the Chair of Governors in writing stating the reasons why it has not been discussed with the Headteacher. If the complaint is about the Headteacher, they will need to be informed of the complaint in order for the matter to be investigated.

Complaints about a Governor or Chair of Governors

If a complaint is received about a governor, it should be considered by the Chair of Governors as a stage 3 complaint.

If the complaint is about the Chair of Governors, it should be considered by the Vice Chair of Governors or another governor who has not been involved in the complaint.

If there are no independent governors, the Governing Body may ask another Governing Body or an independent person to conduct the stage 3 investigation.

Stage 4: Complaint heard by Governing Body Complaints Appeal Panel

The aim of the Complaint Review Panel meeting is to review how the school has managed the complaint, not to re-investigate the complaint itself.

This will include reviewing outcomes from Stages 1 and 2 and evaluating whether the school has followed its policies and procedures. The Panel should also work to achieve reconciliation between the School and Complainant, although this is not always possible.

The Complaints Committee will be convened and review the decision of the Chair of Governors. The panel will not include any governor, including the Chair of Governors, who has had previous involvement in the case. The Panel's decision is final.

The panel will be convened within 20 school days of receipt of notification from the complainant and at a time that is convenient to all parties. If the meeting cannot be convened in this period, the complainant should be informed of the reasons for this and provided with a revised timescale. Where appropriate, witnesses may be invited to attend the meeting but will only be present for the part of the hearing in which they give evidence. At the panel meeting, the complainant will be given the opportunity to state their case as to why he/she is not satisfied with the outcome of the complaint. The panel will be provided with all the information that has been collated as part of the investigation. The Headteacher, or Chair of Governors, as appropriate, will also be able to explain the school's actions and the reasons for the decision about the complaint.

The panel will consider the issue in private and can:

- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;
- uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
- recommend changes to the school's policies, systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

If the Complaints Committee agrees that the outcome could lead to disciplinary action being taken against an employee of the school, the matter will be passed to the Disciplinary Committee. In this case, it is not the responsibility of the Complaints Appeal Panel to make a judgment about whether the employee is culpable, only that there is a case to answer. The complainant will be informed that the matter has been passed to the Disciplinary Committee for further consideration.

At this point, the Disciplinary Procedure adopted by the Governing Body will be followed.

If it is not possible for the Governor's Complaints Committee to consider the matter e.g. because there are no governors available who are independent of the issue that is being considered, the Governing Body will consider asking another Governing Body, or appoint independent people, to hear the complaint appeal.

Notification of the panel's decision

The panel will inform the Complainant in writing of their decision, together with reasons, within five working days.

Should the complainant still not be satisfied with the outcome, he/she can refer the matter to the Secretary of State for Education at

The School Complaints Unit (SCU)
Department for Education
2nd Floor, Piccadilly Gate
Manchester
M1 2WD
or online at www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus

Further information can be obtained from the School Complaints Unit National Helpline on 0370 000 2288. The School Complaints Unit will not re-investigate the substance of the complaint but will examine if the complaints policy and other relevant policies were followed in accordance with the provisions set out and that they adhere to education legislation.

Unreasonable Complaints

Once procedures have been exhausted, if the complainant continues to contact the school on the same issue, he/she will be informed that the matter has been dealt with and that no further correspondence will be entered into on the matter. Any new complaints raised by the complainant will, however, follow the normal procedure.

The school is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with the school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will act to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

The school defines unreasonable complainants as 'those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with the school, hinder our consideration of their, or other people's complaints.

A complaint may be regarded as unreasonable when the person making the complaint: -

- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance;
- refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved;
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaints procedure;
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice;
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant expects to be taken into account and commented on, or raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales;
- makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced;
- changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds;
- repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed);

- refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education;
- seeks an unrealistic outcome;
- makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with.

A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if the person making the complaint does so either face-to-face, by telephone or in writing or electronically: -

- maliciously;
- aggressively;
- using threats, intimidation or violence;
- using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language;
- knowing it to be false;
- using falsified information;
- publishing unacceptable information in a variety of media such as in social media websites and newspapers.

Complainants should limit the numbers of communications with a school while a complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text) as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking.

If the behaviour continues the Headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and asking them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact the school causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number or mode of contact through a communication plan. This will be reviewed after a fixed period, commonly 6 months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the concerns and actions taken will be put in writing immediately and the police informed. This may include banning an individual from the school site.

Complaints made to the local authority

If the local authority receives a written complaint about a school, the Headteacher will be contacted to ensure that he/she is aware of the complaint and asked to deal with it under the school's complaints policy and procedure. **The local authority does not investigate complaints about a school, and will refer the matter back to the school to be dealt with through this policy.**

The local authority will ensure that the Headteacher and Chair of Governors receive copies of any documentation sent to it by the complainant. If the complainant requests that copies are not sent to the school, then he/she will be advised that an investigation cannot be undertaken.

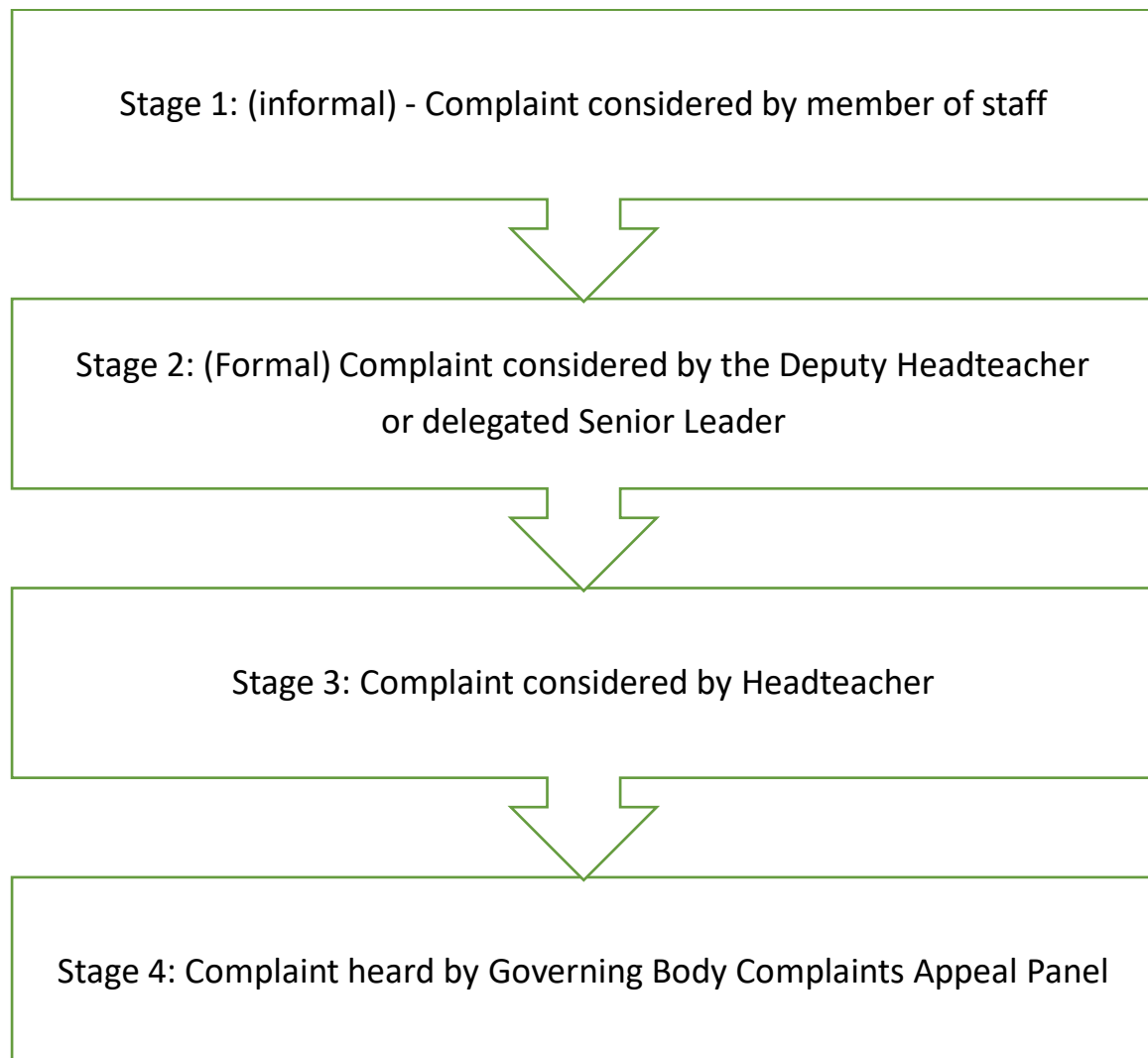
Recording Complaints

The progress of all complaints together with the final outcome will be recorded by the Deputy Head for Care and Achievement. These findings will be made available to the Complainant and where relevant the person complained about. This will be available for the Headteacher. Initially a complaint may be made in person or by telephone and if unresolved needs to be put in writing (see Appendix B). At the end of a meeting or telephone call, the member of staff will ensure that the Complainant and the school have the same understanding of what was discussed and agreed. A brief note of meetings and telephone call will be kept and a copy of any written response added to the record.

Publicising the policy and procedure

Details of Longcroft's complaints policy and procedures are published on the School website.

APPENDIX A: FLOW CHART



APPENDIX B: COMPLAINTS FORM

Please complete and return to (Care and Achievement Co-ordinator) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken

Your Name:	
Pupil Name:	
Year Group:	
Your relationship to the pupil:	
Address: (including Postcode)	
Daytime telephone number:	
Evening telephone number:	
Please give details of your complaint:	
What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint? (who did you speak to and what was the response?)	

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 Acknowledgement sent	
By Whom	
Complaint Referred to	
Date	