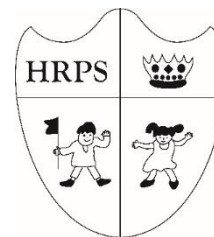


# Houghton Regis Primary School



## Complaints Policy

2018~ 19

### Introduction

At Houghton Regis Primary School we undertake to provide a friendly and safe environment in which pupils will be helped to achieve their potential, both academically and socially.

We believe that a close partnership between the school, parents and pupils is essential to ensure pupil progress and well-being. In support of this, parents/carers are invited to enter a Home-School Agreement. This agreement sets out the school's aims and values, as well as the responsibilities of the school and parents/carers, and our expectations of pupils.

Through our programme of meetings between parents/carers and teachers, as well as through informal contact, we provide opportunities for parents to raise matters of concern – about the curriculum or more general issues.

From time to time parents/carers may naturally have concerns about an aspect of their child's education. Often those concerns will resolve themselves, but on occasions parents/carers may feel that the issue will need the School's help to be resolved.

As partners in your children's education the School wishes to work with you in the resolution of problems and this policy is designed to show what steps may be taken. The resolution of a concern can take the three steps which are described in detail below.

### An Informal Concern

On most occasions these can be resolved immediately by speaking to your child's class teacher. It may be necessary for you to make an appointment at a time which is convenient to both of you. Please let the teacher know the nature of your concern when making an appointment so that they may investigate further on your behalf if necessary.

The purpose of the meeting should be to establish a solution or to agree a plan of action to resolve the concern. If the meeting fails to do so then you should make an appointment to see the Headteacher.

The Headteacher will normally make further investigations on your behalf and meet with you to suggest a workable solution. If you feel that the matter is not satisfactorily resolved, you may request a further meeting with the Headteacher or consider making the matter the subject of a formal complaint.

It is important that due procedure is followed with a view to seeking resolution to a concern or complaint. A failure to follow the procedure may result in the procedure being terminated by the Governing Board.

### A Formal Complaint

If the concern is not resolved at the informal stage it must be put in writing and passed to the Headteacher who will either investigate the matter or delegate this responsibility to a senior colleague. The complaint should include details which might assist the investigation such as names of potential witnesses, dates and times of events and copies of relevant documents.

The Headteacher may meet with the complainant to clarify the matter. On the conclusion of the investigation, the Headteacher will write to the complainant with the outcome of the investigation. If the outcome of the investigation results in the implementation of staff disciplinary procedures, such procedures will remain strictly confidential.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the manner in which the process has been followed or if the complaint is about the Headteacher then a full written complaint should be made to the Chair of Governors at the School's address.

The Chair of Governors will write to you to confirm receipt of your letter and will investigate the matter fully and reply within a further five working days. In some circumstances, the Chair may ask another governor to carry out the investigation on their behalf.

The Chair will collect such other evidence as is deemed necessary and may interview other witnesses. The Headteacher will be provided with a copy of the complaint and any additional evidence presented by the complainant or collected by the Chair.

Once there has been an opportunity for the Headteacher to consider this he/she will meet separately with the Chair to present a response. A friend or representative may accompany the Headteacher at this meeting.

On the conclusion of this meeting the complainant and Headteacher will be informed in writing of the outcome. The complainant will not be informed of any disciplinary or capability action which might ensue.

This will now bring the Chair's investigation to a close. If the complainant is not satisfied with the manner in which the complaint has been investigated, a request may be made for the Governing Board to hold a formal review of the process which will take the form of a hearing.

Any such request must be made in writing to the Chair within two weeks of receiving notice of the outcome of the Chair's investigation and must state the reasons for the implementation of the next stage. Please note, the complainant is not entitled to access any details of the investigation except for any statements that may have been provided by their child.

## **A Formal Review**

On receiving a formal request for the complaint to be taken to the next stage the Chair of Governors will write to the complainant within five working days to inform you of the date and time of the hearing and of the composition of the panel who will hear the complaint.

The hearing may take one of two forms at the discretion of the governing board. You may be invited to attend the meeting, given the opportunity to inform the Governing Board of the details of your concern.

The governors may question you to seek further clarification of the detail of your concern. You may bring a friend with you to the hearing. The governors will then ask you to leave and will then meet with the Headteacher and Chair of Governors to seek their view of the issue. The Headteacher may be accompanied by a friend or representative. Once the governors have clarified any issues, the Headteacher and Chair of Governors will be asked to leave while they consider their response to the complaint.

Alternatively, the meeting may follow the same course described above with both parties in attendance for the duration of the hearing. In this case after both parties have stated their case and responded to questions, the complainant and the Headteacher and/or Chair of Governors will be requested to sum up their positions before being asked to leave. No further questioning will be allowed at this point. The governors will then consider their response.

The Governing Board will write to the complainant and the Headteacher or Chair of Governors, as appropriate, within forty-eight hours of the hearing with their findings. The complainant will not be informed of any disciplinary or capability action which might follow. However, if the investigation does result in a change to the School's policies being implemented, the complainant will be informed of the detail of this. This will bring the involvement of the Governing Board to a close and further correspondence cannot be entered into.

If a complainant believes that the Governing Board has acted illegally or arbitrarily in handling the complaint, then the complainant may make representation to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills. Where a complaint is judged by the Governing Board to be vexatious, the complainant will be informed that their complaint will not be accepted and will not be investigated.

Please note that complaints regarding the following are not included in this document: Admissions; National Curriculum; Child Protection; School Exclusions; Special Educational Needs and complaints about governors. For further guidance on these matters parents are advised to contact the Local Education Authority.

## **Persistent or Vexatious Complaints**

Most concerns can be resolved in a reasonable manner. The school aims to uphold standards of courtesy and reasonableness that should characterise all communication between the School and persons who wish to express a concern or pursue a complaint.

We aim to support the well-being of pupils, staff and everyone else who has legitimate interest in the work of the School, including governors and parents and aim to deal fairly, honestly and properly with persistent complainants and those who harass members of staff in school while ensuring that other stakeholders suffer no detriment.

If a complainant behaves in an unreasonable manner such as; actions which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific and repetitious, with excessive e-mail, telephone or social media use such as Facebook, about a concern or complaint then we may view this as vexatious.

We will not tolerate unreasonable behaviour which is aggressive and causes ongoing distress to school staff and has a significant adverse effect on the school community. If there is evidence of any such aggression the School may;

- ban the individual from entering or contacting the school site; with immediate effect (via letter or by blocking an email or/and phone calls and request that Social Media sites remove vexatious comments
- request an Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO)
- prosecute under Anti-Harassment legislation
- call the police to remove the individual from the premises, under powers provided by the Education Act 1996.

The Chair of Governors and the Headteacher may well close a complaint if it is deemed 'vexatious'. This may happen if it is clear there is insufficient evidence to pursue the case but a complainant is persistently raising the issue. Equally this may happen if a complaint has been investigated and no justification for the complaint found.

A complainant may decide to pursue an issue with the Secretary of State at the Department for Education.

## **Arrangements for Monitoring and Evaluation**

All complaints and the action taken will be documented and a summary provided to the Governors, with advice on any implications for policies.