

Schools work hard to maintain good relationships with the communities they serve; however, sometimes people can see ways to improve things, and helpful suggestions are valuable. Sometimes people want to voice a concern or even complain formally about issues related to the school. This leaflet advises you on how to make a suggestion or to express a concern to a school, and on the procedures agreed by many Cambridgeshire schools for responding to concerns or complaints.

DO YOU WISH TO MAKE A SUGGESTION?

- You can telephone, write to or e-mail the Headteacher at the School giving your ideas.

DO YOU HAVE A CONCERN?

- You should raise this informally with your child's teacher, tutor, Head of Year or the Headteacher - whoever you feel is most appropriate. Always try to make appointments to see members of staff. Usually, your worry can be sorted out at this stage.

DO YOU WISH TO MAKE A FORMAL COMPLAINT?

- The Recommended Complaints Procedure for Schools is designed to help find ways to resolve problems. It is a positive process based on negotiation and conciliation rather than conflict.
- It is usually best to try to solve a problem first by raising a concern informally; however, if you wish to complain formally against the school, you should write to the Headteacher at the School, stating that you are making a formal complaint. If you need help or advice on doing this, you should contact either the school, or the Local Authority (LA) on the number below. You may wish to use the form overleaf. You will be asked to give permission for your complaint to be shared with any person you are complaining about.

- The Headteacher or other member of staff will acknowledge your letter in writing within 5 school days.
- If you are unhappy with the Headteacher's response, you should write to the Chair of Governors at the school within 10 working school days of receiving the Head's response. You should also do this if your complaint is against the Head. The letter should state clearly that it is a formal complaint.

- The Chair of Governors will investigate and give you a written response. You should receive a letter of acknowledgement within 5 school days.

- If you are not satisfied with the outcome you have 10 working school days to request a review of the process concerning your complaint by a panel of the school's governors. You should do this by contacting the Chair of Governors or Headteacher at the school. This panel will send you the outcome of the review and any recommendations. A complaint against a Chair of Governors also goes through this route, which is the final stage of the Recommended Complaints Procedure for Schools.

- If you remain unhappy after the governors' panel review, your final course of action available is to write to the Secretary of State for Education at Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, Westminster, London SW1P 3BT.

YOU CAN CONTACT THE LOCAL AUTHORITY on 01223 706399.

- The role of the LA is to advise parents/carers and the School, and help resolve difficulties. You will be given the name of an appropriate officer who, if unavailable, will contact you usually within 48 hours. A meeting may be arranged to discuss issues with the school.
- If your child has special educational needs you can contact the Parent Partnerships Service on 01223 699214 for further impartial advice with your issue.

- On a few occasions a complaint may lead to disciplinary action for a member of staff. In such a case you will be told that disciplinary procedures are being followed but we will not be able to tell you the outcome. Schools must work within the law about Data Protection and confidentiality.

WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT OF THE SCHOOL?

You can expect the school to consider suggestions and to:

- keep in touch in writing over how and when problems can be raised with the school
- publicise details of the Complaints Procedure
- respond within a reasonable time, with courtesy and respect
- be available for consultation within a reasonable time limit, considering the needs of pupils/ staff
- attempt to resolve problems using reasonable means in line with the School's Complaints Procedure and advice from Cambridgeshire County Council
- keep you informed of progress.

Full details of how schools will respond to complaints are explained in each school's Complaints Procedure.

WHAT CAN THE SCHOOL EXPECT OF YOU?

The LA and the School expect anyone who wishes to raise problems to:

- treat all school staff with courtesy and respect
- respect the needs of pupils and staff
- avoid the use of violence, threats of violence, abuse and aggression towards people or property
- recognise the time constraints under which members of staff in schools work and allow the School a reasonable time to respond to a complaint
- recognise that resolving a specific problem can sometimes take some time
- follow the School's complaints procedure when necessary.

Do You Have a Suggestion, Concern or Complaint?

A guide to contacting schools in Cambridgeshire

Published by
Children and Young People's Services

October 2012
01223 706399

Copies of this leaflet are available in
community language translations.

REF: AS/1012

NAME OF SCHOOL:

FORMAL COMPLAINT

COMPLAINANT'S NAME (BLOCK CAPITALS)

COMPLAINANT'S ADDRESS (BLOCK CAPITALS)

TELEPHONE:

MOBILE :

E-MAIL:

I wish to make a formal complaint. The School's complaints procedure has been explained to me.
Details of the complaint (please continue on separate sheets if necessary).

I give permission for this complaint to be shared with anyone I am complaining about.

SIGNED :

DATE:

This form should be sent to the Headteacher or Chair of Governors at the School, as appropriate (see overleaf).