



Complaints Procedure

Ratified Autumn 15

Middleton School Complaints Procedure

Introduction

Hertfordshire County Council cannot deal with complaints about schools. The School Governing Body are responsible in law for having a published complaints procedure and for responding to complaints.

At Middleton School we want a community who can support one another and work together to solve problems. However things may not always go as we would like them to and it is important that if there are concerns that they are highlighted to the appropriate member of staff as soon as possible. In this way we hope that we can work together to solve difficulties before they become a complaint. No reprisals will be made against individuals or groups who complain.

If a more formal complaint needs to be made then there is a system in place to deal with that situation. This system is in three stages outlined below.

Stage One:

Most concerns, complaints or potential complaints can be resolved by talking to the member of school staff concerned. School staff can tell you who you should speak to first. You may wish to request a copy of the school's complaints procedure, available from the school office. If the concern isn't resolved by speaking to a member of staff, you should then request a meeting with the Headteacher who will investigate your complaint and aim to inform you of the outcome within 10 school days.

If your first contact is with individual Governors, you may be asked to take up your concerns with the Headteacher or the appropriate member of staff. A Governor should not be made aware of a potential complaint as they may be required to sit on a panel in the event of a formal hearing (2nd stage) and should be impartial.

If your complaint is about the Headteacher, you should **write to the Chair of Governors** at the school.

If your child has a Statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) or an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) you might find it helpful to talk to the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) at your child's school or your child's named Special Needs Officer. The SEND Information Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS) may also be able to help you.

If you have not yet raised your concerns with the school in question but contact the Local Authority instead, Council Officers will ask you for your written consent to share information regarding your complaint with the school. If you decline to provide your consent, the matter will not be taken any further. If you do provide consent, the Council will pass your concerns onto the school for action by either school staff or governors.

Stage Two:

The school will ask you to complete a form (see appendix) or write a letter addressed to the Chair of Governors. In the letter you should:

- make it clear why you are complaining
- say who you have spoken to already
- explain what you want to happen as a result of your complaint.

The Chair of Governors will arrange for your complaint to be considered and investigated under the arrangements approved by the Governing Body. This is likely to involve a Panel of Governors. If the Chair of Governors or another Governor has been involved in discussions to help settle the disagreement at Stage 1, s/he should arrange for another Governor to take charge of the investigation. The Governor in charge of investigating the complaint may ask to meet you to

discuss your concerns. The Governing Body should give you full details of how they will carry out any further investigation or formal hearing and keep you up-to-date with progress.

You and the school must make sure the Governors' Complaint Panel is provided with any written information or evidence you intend to use in a formal hearing. You may bring a friend, representative or interpreter to any meeting if you wish. The Chair of the Panel may invite any person who may help establish the facts of the complaint. The Chair should tell you who this person is before the meeting.

If any member of staff is required by the Governing Body to attend a meeting they will have the opportunity to be accompanied or represented as they wish. A member of staff named by parents in the complaint may also choose to attend a meeting, even if not required to do so by the Governors. They may be represented. If this happens, the school will inform you before the meeting.

When the panel has fully investigated your complaint, the Chair of the Panel or the Governor in charge of the investigation will write to you to tell you the findings. These findings will be reported to the Governing Body. The Chair of Governors will then write to you confirming the outcome of your complaint and any agreed actions to be taken. The Governing Body should aim to deal with complaints within 28 school days.

Is there a third stage of complaint?

FOR ALMOST ALL COMPLAINTS, THE PROCEDURE ENDS WITH THE GOVERNING BODY AND THERE IS NO THIRD STAGE OF COMPLAINT TO THE LOCAL AUTHORITY

If the school's complaints procedure has been exhausted and you remain dissatisfied, you can approach the Secretary of State. Further advice is available from the Children's Legal Centre, the Advisory Centre for Education (ACE) or Family Lives (formerly Parentline Plus).

However, if your complaint is about the way that a school is providing for your child's Statement of Special Educational Needs or Education Health & Care Plan, you do have a third stage of complaint to the Local Authority

In this case, you can write to the Complaints Manager who will acknowledge your complaint within five working days and then inform the Chair of Governors and Headteacher. The Complaints Team will aim to investigate your complaint within 25 working days, however the investigation may take longer (up to 65 working days) in complex situations. When your complaint has been fully investigated the Complaints Manager will write to let you know the decision. S/he will give the reasons for the decision, any action or proposed action to be taken and any further avenues open to you. S/he will send a copy to the Headteacher, the Chair of Governors and anyone else concerned in the investigation.

Parents who remain dissatisfied following further investigation by the Local Authority have the right to complain to the Secretary of State who may decide to conduct an additional investigation.

Can I complain to anyone other than the County Council?

FOR ALL OTHER TYPES OF COMPLAINT, INCLUDING THOSE REGARDING BULLYING, THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM OR COLLECTIVE WORSHIP IN A COMMUNITY, VOLUNTARY-CONTROLLED, VOLUNTARY-AIDED, FOUNDATION OR TRUST SCHOOL, THERE IS NO THIRD STAGE OF COMPLAINT TO THE LOCAL AUTHORITY

However, you can complain to the Secretary of State at the Department for Education. The contact details for the Secretary of State are as follows:

The Secretary of State, Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BT,

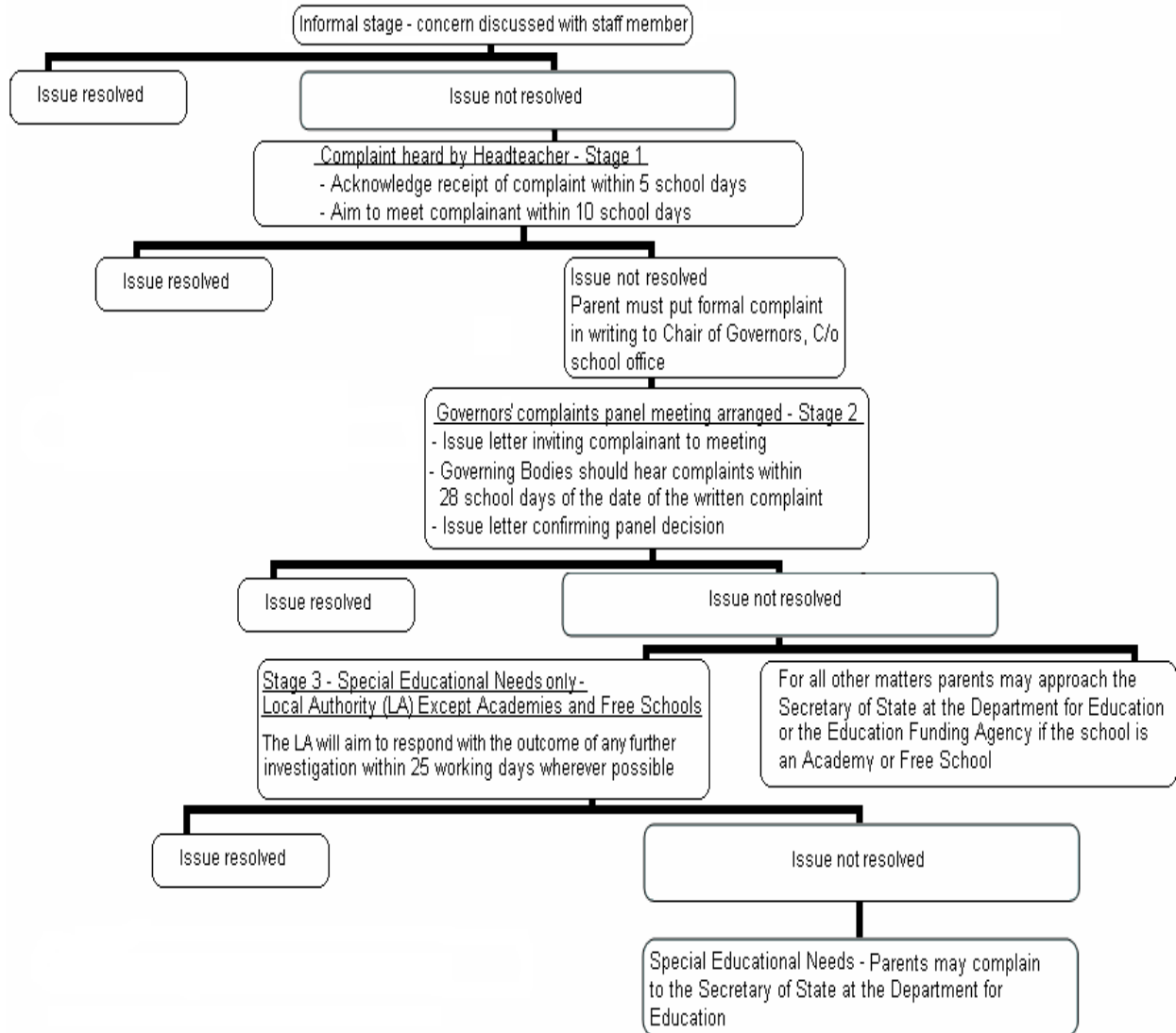
Website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education>

Useful contact details

Chair of Governors	The school secretary can tell you who this is and pass on any written correspondence	
Complaints Team (Children's Services)	www.hertsdirect.org/your-council/hcc/childserv/comments/ Email: cs.complaints@hertfordshire.gov.uk	01992 588542
Parent Partnership Service (SEN)	www.hertsdirect.org/parentpartnership Email: parent.partnership@hertfordshire.gov.uk	01992 555847
ACE (Advisory Centre for Education)	www.ace-ed.org.uk	0300 0115 142
HertsHelp	www.hertsdirect.org/hertshelp	0300 123 4044
Family Lives	www.familylives.org.uk	0808 800 2222
Carers in Herts	www.carersinherts.org.uk	01992 586969
Children's Legal Centre	www.childrenslegalcentre.com	0345 345 4345
Citizen's Advice Bureau	www.citizensadvice.org.uk	03444 111 444

If you are not satisfied at any stage you may request a paper copy of the 56 page Hertfordshire Model complaints policy which the governors of Middleton School have adopted.

Middleton School Complaints Flow Chart





Complaint form

Please complete and return to the Headteacher who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:

Pupil's name:

Your relationship to the pupil:

Address:

Postcode:

Day time 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 who:

Complaint referred to:

Date: