

HOW TO COMPLAIN ABOUT A SCHOOL

Any person can complain to a school if they are not satisfied with the treatment they receive from the school or the provision of community facilities or services provided at the school.

HOW TO COMPLAIN

The vast majority of complaints and concerns can be resolved informally. It is best to see if matters can be sorted out in school, even if this may feel awkward at first. Complainants should be able to say what they feel, know they will be dealt with fairly and not worry that having a concern or making a complaint will have a bad effect on, for example, their child. It is important that you speak to the school (this can be either the class teacher or Headteacher) as soon as you have a concern so the problem can be sorted out early. A complaint can be withdrawn at any stage.

WHAT TO DO FIRST?

Take a few minutes to read this leaflet. Remember there is often more than one view about the incident or situation. For example, your child may well be telling the truth, but it may not be the whole story. It is important that the school checks all the facts so they can find the best solution.

You will need to be clear about:

- What is it you are concerned or complaining about?
- Is it having any effect on your child?
- If appropriate, when and where did the incident happen; who else was involved; did anyone see it happen; who have you spoken to already?
- What you think needs to happen to resolve your concern or complaint.

INFORMAL COMPLAINT

You should be given an opportunity to express and discuss your concerns or make an informal complaint to an appropriate member of staff. After the discussion, he or she should make sure that you are clear what action, if any, will be taken. Informal complaints should be dealt with quickly and should be concluded in writing. If you are not satisfied with the outcome you can make a formal complaint. Ask the school for a complaint form.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Any complaint or other notice that suggests that a child has been at risk of significant harm through violence, emotional abuse, sexual interference or neglect may be referred without further notice to Hackney Children's Social Care or the Children's Social Care team where the child lives. Hackney Children's Social Care can be contacted by email at fast@hackney.gov.uk or by telephone on 020 8356 5500. If a Social Care Team decides to investigate a situation this may delay or avoid the need for an investigation by the Headteacher or Governing Body.

FORMAL COMPLAINTS

After going through informal channels, if you are not satisfied, you can take your complaint further. By law, school governing bodies are required to have a procedure in place to deal with complaints and you may choose to follow this more formal process.

Most schools and academies will have a 2 stage complaint process as set out on the next page.

FORMAL COMPLAINTS

STAGE ONE

Referral to the Headteacher for investigation.

If you have been unable to resolve your complaint informally, you can refer the matter to the Headteacher to investigate. This must be made in writing, you can ask the school for a complaints form.

You should receive a full written explanation of how the matter was investigated and what action will be taken to resolve the complaint.

What can I expect to happen?

If the school agrees that your complaint is justified, they should tell you what action they will take. If the school does not think your complaint is justified, they should tell you why.

Hackney Learning Trust recommends that Stage One should be completed within 15 school days. The school may tell you if it takes longer than this.

STAGE TWO

Referral to the Governing Body of the school.

If you are not happy with the response to your complaint at Stage One you may choose to approach the Governing Body. In this case, you will need to write to the Chair of the Governing Body once you have received the response to your stage one complaint. He or she should write to you to acknowledge the complaint. The governing body may need to convene a meeting to discuss the issue.

What if my complaint is about the Headteacher?

If your complaint is partially or mainly about the Headteacher, the governing body may consider the complaint in accordance with Stage Two described above.

The Headteacher, however, may be asked to respond to the complaint in writing first and you should be given the opportunity to say whether you are satisfied with the response or not.

Hackney Learning Trust recommends that Stage Two should be completed within 15 school days. The school may tell you if it takes longer than this.

ROLE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EDUCATION.

If you are unhappy with the way in which a school has dealt with the complaint at the formal stage, you may be able to approach the Secretary of State, Department for Education to intervene.

For the Secretary of State to intervene following a complaint, he/she needs to be sure that either:

- the school has acted unlawfully or unreasonably; or
- it is expedient or practical to intervene.

The Gov.UK website has information on how to complaint about a school – go to www.gov.uk/complain-about-school

This leaflet is for parents and any persons who have been provided with a service by a Hackney School. It's a summary of Hackney Learning Trust's model school complaints procedure for maintained schools.

A copy of our full model complaint procedure for maintained schools is available at www.learningtrust.co.uk/schools/schoolsinfoPages/ComplaintsProcedure.aspx

Schools and academies are required by law to have procedures for handling complaints. You should check with your school first and request a copy of their complaints policy and any guidance they may have which may differ from the procedures outlined in this leaflet.

For some complaints this process may not be appropriate. If your complaint relates to:

- Pupil Exclusion
- School Admissions
- Special Educational Needs

These matters can be resolved through separate legal appeal processes.

Please visit www.learningtrust.co.uk or contact us on 020 8820 7402/7396 or at admissions@learningtrust.co.uk for further information on legal appeals.