



## **Guidance notes for parents: How to raise concerns or to make a complaint about the school**

### **Introduction**

All schools have a duty to have a complaints procedure and to publicise it to parents and pupils.

Lamberhurst St Mary's School has adopted Kent County Council's model complaints procedure in conjunction with the Department for Education's Best Practice Advice for School Complaints Procedure, January 2016.

Complaints procedures should not be used for appeals and referrals that fall under other procedures and legislation and which are covered by other guidance, including:

- Admissions
- Exclusions
- Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs
- Staff grievances and disciplinary procedures
- Matters likely to require a Child Protection investigation
- Whistleblowing
- School re-organisation proposals
- Complaints about services provided by other providers who use school premises or facilities

### **Framework of Principles**

An effective complaints procedure will:

- encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible;
- be easily accessible and publicised;
- be simple to understand and use;
- be impartial;
- be non-adversarial;
- allow swift handling with established time-limits for action and keeping people informed of the progress;
- ensure a full and fair investigation by an independent person where necessary;

- respect people's desire for confidentiality;
- address all the points at issue and provide an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary;
- provide information to the school's senior management team so that services can be improved.

### **If you have a concern or complaint**

The school would like you to tell us about it. We welcome suggestions for improving our work in school. Be assured that no matter what the problem is, our support and respect for you and your child in school will not be affected in any way. Please tell us of your concern as soon as possible, or up to three months after the incident arises. It is difficult for us to investigate properly an incident or problem that happened some time ago. If it is not possible to lodge a complaint within three months the school will consider exceptions; it does not have a blanket policy of refusing to consider a complaint not lodged with that time period.

### **What to do first**

Most concerns and complaints can be sorted out quickly by speaking with your child's class teacher; Teaching Assistants should not be asked to deal with concerns or complaints.

If you have a complaint that you feel should be looked at by the Headteacher in the first instance you can contact them straightaway if you prefer. It is usually best to discuss the problem face to face. You will need an appointment to do this, and can make one by ringing or calling into the school office. You can take a friend or relation to the appointment with you if you would like to. The Headteacher may choose to have a second member of staff join the meeting. If the complaint cannot be resolved immediately, the Headteacher will make a record of the general nature of the complaint for further investigation.

Staff will make every effort to resolve your concern informally. They will make sure that they understand what you feel went wrong, and they will explain their own actions to you. They will ask what you would like the school to do to put things right. Of course, this does not mean that in every case they will agree with your point of view but it will help both you and the school to understand both sides of the question. It may also help to prevent a similar problem arising again.

### **What to do next**

If you are dissatisfied with the initial response, or if you do not want to discuss the matter informally, you can make a complaint to the Headteacher. In the first instance this should be in writing. However if it is not possible to make the complaint in writing you will be able to do so in person or by phone. We would ask you to use the form

attached to this guidance to give us all of the necessary details. Please contact the school office if you would like some help putting your complaint in writing.

If your complaint is about an action of the Headteacher personally, then you should refer it to the Chair of Governors. If your complaint is about an action of the Chair of Governors or member of the governing body then you should refer it the Clerk to the Governors. Contact details can be obtained from the school office.

You will be offered a meeting to discuss the problem. You may bring a friend or someone else for support. The Headteacher will conduct a full investigation of the complaint and may interview any members of staff or pupils involved. You will receive a written response to your complaint. If the complaint is about the Headteacher, the Chair of Governors will arrange for the complaint to be investigated by him/herself or by an appropriate independent investigator, and you will receive a written response to your complaint.

### **If you are still unhappy**

The problem will normally be solved at this stage. However, if you are still not satisfied you may wish to contact the Clerk to the Governing Body to ask for a referral of your complaint to a Governors' Complaints Panel. It will then be heard by a group of three governors who have no previous knowledge of the problem and so will be given a fresh assessment. You will be invited to attend and speak to the panel at a meeting that the Headteacher will also attend. The Complaints Policy and Procedure sets out in more detail how these meetings operate. A copy of the Complaints Policy and Procedure is available from the school office or the school website.

### **Further Action**

Complaints about school problems are almost always settled within schools but if they remain unresolved they can be referred to the Secretary of State for Education. The Department for Education will expect the complaint to have been considered by the school governors first. There is more detail in the full Complaints Procedure or on the Department for Education website: <https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school>

## 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

Daytime Tel Number

Evening Tel Number

Please give details of your complaint.

What actions, if any have you taken to try and resolve your complaint. (Who did you speak to and what was the response?)

**Complaint form continuation**

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.

Signature

Date

*For Office Use only*

Date acknowledgement was sent:

By Whom:

Complaint referred to:

Date: