



Great Torrington School

COMPLAINTS POLICY

Approving Committee: **Personnel Committee**

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Complaints Procedure

Introduction

All Academies must have a complaints procedure. This must meet the standards set out in the Education (Independent Schools Standards (England) Regulations) 2014 schedule 1 part 7. This does not limit complainants to parents or carers of pupils registered at Great Torrington School. A complainant could be a member of the wider community or representing a former pupil.

Should I tell the school of my concerns?

Yes – all members of staff want to know as soon as possible if something concerns you or your child. They can then investigate the matter and give you a response. If need be they can also take steps to remedy a situation, misunderstandings can be cleared up and an apology given if something is found to be wrong. Everyone benefits from the speedy resolution of difficulties and from suggestions for improvement.

What about making a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of serious dissatisfaction. This could be about an event that has happened, or failed to happen, or the way in which something was handled. Information on how to state a complaint is provided below.

Should I tell the school of my concerns?

Yes - you are also encouraged to make a complaint if you believe that something is seriously wrong. Writing down your complaint helps to clarify exactly what you are complaining about.

All members of our staff want to know as soon as possible if you have any concerns involving your child, or yourself. The matter can then be investigated and you can be provided with a response. If need be the investigator(s) can also take steps to remedy a situation; misunderstandings can be corrected and an apology can be given if something is found to be wrong. Everyone benefits from the speedy resolution of difficulties and from suggestions for improvement.

The school's response will be based on the Governing Body's agreed policy and will seek to be fair to all concerned.

Whom do I contact?

Stage 1 (informal): complaint heard by a staff member (The response should be provided within a maximum of 10 school days from the date of receipt)

Often a teacher or tutor is able to deal with the matter, or if you have difficulty in dealing with a particular member of staff, you may require the complaints co-ordinator to refer your complaint to another staff member such as a Head of Learning, Head of Department or member of the Senior Leadership Team, in order to achieve a resolution.

Mutual courtesy is expected in order to ensure that the procedure runs smoothly. In the first instance there should always be discussion in the hope of solving difficulties informally. Indeed, most problems are resolved in this way.

Similarly, if there is a member of staff directly involved with your complaint, and who feels too compromised to deal with it directly, the complaints co-ordinator may consider

referring you to another staff member. That member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The crucial requirement is that person's ability to consider your complaint objectively and impartially.

If you wish to make a complaint about the Headteacher then you should do so to the Chair of Governors.

If you wish to make a complaint against the Chair of Governors this will be dealt with under Stage 4.

Certain specific complaints (e.g. about admissions to school) are dealt with separately. In this case staff at the school can advise you where to direct your complaint.

Stage 2 (formal): complaint heard by the Headteacher (The response should be provided within a maximum of 10 days from the date of receipt)

If you are dissatisfied with the manner in which your complaint is being handled, or if the school staff member considers the matter serious enough to warrant a more senior arbitrator, the Headteacher may deem it appropriate to deal with the matter personally. Your complaint should be recorded on the form attached and sent to the Headteacher's PA.

Stage 3 (formal): complaint heard by the Chair of Governors, or Governor nominated by the Chair (The response should be provided within a maximum of 10 days from the date of receipt)

If you are not satisfied with the response of the Headteacher or the complaint is about the Headteacher, then you should write to the Chair of Governors to request that your complaint is considered further. Your complaint should be recorded on the form attached and sent to the Chair of Governors c/o Great Torrington School.

Stage 4 (panel hearing): complaint heard by the Governing Body's Complaints Appeal Panel

If your complaint gets to this level then you will be required to write to the Clerk to the Governing Body, giving details of your complaint and asking that it be put before the Governing Body's Complaints Appeal Panel. You cannot introduce new or different complaints at this stage. You will receive an acknowledgement within five school days of the receipt of your complaint. It will also confirm that the complaint is to be heard by the panel within 20 school days of receiving the complaint.

The Chair, or if the Chair has been involved at any previous stage in the process a nominated Governor, will convene a Governing Body's Complaints Appeal Panel. At least one member of the panel is to be independent of the management and running of the academy.

A meeting will follow, with all the relevant paperwork having been circulated in advance to everyone involved. If you wish you may bring a friend with you; this could be someone you think will be able to represent you and speak on your behalf. If the complaint is against a staff member s/he may also be accompanied by a friend or professional representative. You will be invited to speak to the panel, which will be comprised of at least three panel members, and to ask and answer questions. The panel normally allows witnesses to attend part of the meeting.

The Governing Body may decide not to consider a complaint about something that has occurred more than three months before the complaint was received.

The Governors' appeal hearing is the last school-based stage of the complaints process and is not convened merely to rubber-stamp previous decisions.

Individual complaints will not be heard by the whole Governing Body at any stage, as this would compromise the impartiality of any panel that may subsequently be required to hear a disciplinary case against a member of staff.

The remit of The Complaints Appeal Panel

The panel can:

- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;
- uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
- recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

What happens next?

You will be informed in writing of the panel's decision as soon as possible but within a maximum of 15 school days from the date of the panel meeting. If you are not satisfied with the handling of the complaint you can contact the EFA at www.gov.uk/complain-about-school. On receipt of a complaint they will check whether the complaint has been dealt with properly by the academy. They will consider complaints about academies that fall into any of the following 3 areas.

1. Where there is undue delay or the academy did not comply with its own complaints procedure when considering a complaint;
2. Where the academy is in breach of its funding agreement with the Secretary of State;
3. Where an academy has failed to comply with any other legal obligation

The EFA will not overturn an academy's decision about a complaint. However, if they find an academy did not deal with a complaint properly they will request the complaint is looked at again and procedures meet the requirements set out in the Regulations.

If the academy's complaints procedure does not meet the Regulations, the EFA will ask the academy to put this right. They may seek to enforce the decision under the terms of the funding agreement on behalf of the Secretary of State, if appropriate.

Remember

This whole process exists so that your views, and the views of others, can be heard. You have rights. Pupils have rights. Staff and Governors have rights. The aim is that a complaint should be properly and fairly dealt with.

Communications with the school are frequent and welcome and are encouraged because services are improved by a positive response to compliments, concerns and complaints.

Unreasonable Complaints

If properly followed, a good complaints procedure will limit the number of complaints that become protracted. However, there will be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedures having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the chair of the GB is able to inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed. If the complainant writes again on the same issue, then the correspondence may be recognised as unreasonable and there will be no obligation on the part of the school to respond.

If the complainant persists then the school will evoke its Managing Unreasonable Behaviour (Adults) Policy.

It is important to note however that, should a complainant raise an entirely new, separate complainant, it must be responded to in accordance with the complaints procedure.

Complaint Form Stage Two/Three

Great Torrington School

Please complete and return to the PA to the Headteacher, Jo Pateman (complaints co-ordinator) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:

Pupil's name (if relevant):

Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):

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 do you think might resolve the complaint?

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Date of receipt of complaint: _____