

Complaints Procedures Policy

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. Fullhurst Community College is committed to maintaining its strong and productive partnerships with parents, carers, students and other members of the local community. We believe positive relationships with our partners provide a good basis for establishing mutual understanding and finding solutions when things appear to go wrong.
- 1.2. We are open to feedback and comments about our work, both positive and negative, as these can provide us with valuable information about our effectiveness and how we can better meet our aims.

2. Scope

- 2.1. This policy describes the procedures to be followed when parents, carers, students and others have concerns and make complaints about the conduct of the college or the actions or omissions of any member of staff.
- 2.2. The procedure set out in this policy excludes complaints relating to the college's delivery of the National Curriculum.

3. What constitutes a complaint in our procedure?

- 3.1. We accept the Local Government Ombudsman's definition of a complaint about a school:

"A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions, or lack of actions, by a school or its staff affecting an individual or group."

- 3.2. Members of the public, parents, carers and students may legitimately express dissatisfaction about aspects of our work.
- 3.3. When we consider a complaint, we will follow all relevant statutory requirements, LA advice and accepted good practice. We will investigate the actions or omissions that gave rise to the complaint and try to take account of all relevant circumstances.

4. Why have we adopted a general complaints procedure?

- 4.1. We hope that the adoption of a clear complaint's procedure will help to ensure that most complaints are resolved quickly and smoothly and as close to the source of the misunderstanding or problem as possible. We hope that complainants will feel assured from the outset of a fair hearing, following a defined and clear procedure. In addition, we will ensure that lessons learned from the investigation are brought to the

attention of relevant staff so that they may be used to improve the college's policy and practice.

5. The policy's guiding principles

5.1. The guiding principles behind our Complaints Procedure are:

- **simplicity** - simple, well publicised stages.
- **access** - complainants knowing exactly where, how and to whom they should complain.
- **speed and clarity** - complaints being dealt with promptly, effectively and professionally within stated time limits and at as early a stage as possible.
- **action** - action being agreed and reviewed, with complainants kept informed of progress throughout each stage of the procedure.
- **objectivity** - beyond the first informal stage of investigation of a complaint against an individual, the subject of the complaint will not deal with it but will instead refer it to his or her manager or Chair of Governors where appropriate.
- **development** - opportunities for the college to consider changes to current practice on the basis of what complainants are saying.

6. Our procedure for handling complaints

6.1. We believe that most complaints can be resolved satisfactorily by informal discussion either over the telephone or through a meeting of the key people involved.

6.2. We aim to acknowledge complaints within five working days and give a full response to complainants within 15 working days. (Working days refer to school term time. If complaints are received during the holidays they will be acknowledged on the next day of term time.) If the complaint is judged to involve complex issues, complainants will be informed within 15 working days of when they can expect a full response. Complainants will be kept informed of progress if a lengthy investigation is involved. The main aim throughout the process is to resolve the matter as quickly and effectively as possible, to everybody's satisfaction.

7. Stage 1: Informal complaints

7.1. Parents, carers, students and others should raise informal complaints or concerns with the member of staff who is most appropriate. Parents will be encouraged to make prior appointments to discuss any issues that are not of a routine nature. Criticisms of the professional conduct or competence of a member of staff which may be brought to a teacher's attention will be referred to a member of SLT.

7.2. Students should use the same system. This should be done in consultation with their parents or carers. Students' complaints should be made outside teaching times to relevant available members of staff. Students' complaints will be dealt with in the same manner as complaints from other sources.

- 7.3. Malicious and unfounded student complaints, however, will carry relevant disciplinary consequences. The college will contact the parent or carer of any student who makes a complaint to work in partnership with the family to resolve the complaint.
- 7.4. If a parent or carer believes that a complaint or concern is sufficiently serious or sensitive she/he should talk to a member of SLT, who will investigate or arrange for the complaint to be investigated. Progress will be reported back either through a discussion with the complainant or in writing.
- 7.5. Every effort will be made to resolve the problem at this informal stage. Complainants who remain dissatisfied at this stage will be informed that they have the opportunity to make a formal complaint.
- 7.6. In some cases, matters affecting general college policy may be judged by the Headteacher, in consultation with the Chair of Governors, to be appropriate for discussion at Governing Body level. In these circumstances care will be taken to ensure that the identity of the complainant and the individual complained of are not disclosed to governors in case further, more formal procedures are involved at a later stage.
- 7.7. Although parents or carers are encouraged to raise their concerns directly with college staff, we recognise that on some occasions they may wish to inform the Local Authority. This can be done by contacting Leicester City Council Education Department who will follow procedures set out in their complaints policy in consultation with the college and the complainant.
- 7.8. Staff should raise their complaint with their Line Manager in the first instance.

8. Stage 2: Formal complaints

- 8.1. Formal complaints from either a parent/ carer or member of staff should be made in writing and will normally be investigated by a member of SLT in the first instance. If the complaint directly concerns the Headteacher complainants should contact the Chair of Governors, who will consult the Education Department over appropriate action.
- 8.2. Any other Governors in receipt of complaints will refer them to the Headteacher or the Chair of Governors, as appropriate, and will not become further involved in the investigation.
- 8.3. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the Headteachers response, they should contact the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors will determine a method of further investigation and of formal response to the complainant. The Education Department will be available to advise the Chair of Governors over the procedure.
- 8.4. In some cases, a complaint may lead to disciplinary action against an individual. There are separate procedures for disciplinary action. If this is the case the complainant will be informed that the situation will be pursued through disciplinary

action. Under the Governing Body's disciplinary procedures, the outcome of these procedures is confidential.

9. Stage 3: Appeal

- 9.1. If the complainant remains dissatisfied after Stage two investigations, complainants may appeal to a further panel from the Governing Body for a final resolution of their complaint.
- 9.2. Under this complaints procedure there is no provision for further appeal beyond a consideration by the appeals panel of the Governing Body.

10. Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

- 10.1. The Headteacher and Governing Body have a statutory responsibility for this policy. The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout the college. The policy along with other college policies will be available on the college website. The Governing Body will review the policy annually and assess its implementation and effectiveness.

We believe this school policy:

- ☐ is an essential part of the school;
- ☐ supports staff in managing certain situations;
- ☐ provides guidance, consistency, accountability, efficiency, and clarity on how the school operates;
- ☐ provides a roadmap for day-to-day operations;
- ☐ ensures compliance with laws and regulations, gives guidance for decision-making, and streamlining internal processes;
- ☐ is designed to influence and determine all major decisions, actions and all activities taking place within the boundaries set by them;
- ☐ stems from the school's vision and objectives which are formed in strategic management meetings