



Complaints Guidance

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Summary

Occasionally parents have concerns about their child's school but are unsure what to do. This factsheet will help you to decide the best course of action. If you feel you need further support after reading this factsheet, please call the SEND Information, Advice & Support Service Worcestershire on 01905 768153 or Herefordshire 01432 260955.

Telling the school your concerns

Schools recognise that parents and carers are important partners in providing a happy, safe environment in which children learn. All members of staff want to know as soon as possible if you have worries about your child because everyone benefits from a quick solution to problems and concerns. Once they are aware of your concern, the school can let you know what they can do, and you will be able to work together to find a solution.

How complaints are dealt with

Schools have a duty to make all parents and carers aware of how they can raise concerns. The complaints procedures may be included in any of the following:

- the school prospectus
- the Governor's reports to parents/carers
- the information given to new parents/carers when they join the school
- the home-school agreement
- the home-school newsletter



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- a specific complaints leaflet
 - the school website

If you are unsure about where the procedures can be found, the school secretary or your child's class teacher will be able to tell you where to find them.

Can the Complaints Procedure be used for any school-related issue?

The Complaints Procedure will be appropriate for most of the more serious concerns that parents/carers have but there are some specific concerns that are dealt with separately. These include complaints about:

- the National Curriculum
- religious education
- collective worship
- admissions to school
- pupil exclusions
- special educational needs
- child protection

If you are uncertain about the way in which your concerns should be raised, the staff at the school or the SEND Information, Advice & Support Service can provide information and guidance.

Who should I contact at the school?

That depends on the particular concern. The class teacher/form tutor will usually be able to deal with the matter, but more serious problems may require the input of a senior member of staff or the Head Teacher.

In all cases the school will take your concerns seriously and it will be particularly helpful to them if you present concerns in a logical order. It is always best to try to make an appointment so you can sit and talk things through calmly and without interruption. However, sometimes this is just not possible or you might want to tell the school how you feel in a different way, for example by writing to them.

What specific procedures should a school follow when a concern has been raised?

Worcestershire Local Authority (the LA) provides schools with a model procedure, that they can choose to adapt for dealing with complaints, which is designed to ensure that the complaints process is consistent and fair to all parents and carers. Where a school has adopted their own procedures you should refer to their documentation.

Stage 1 - It is expected that most complaints will be resolved quickly and informally at this stage of the complaints procedure usually through the child's class teacher/form tutor who will record your concerns and inform the Head Teacher or, in a larger school, the nominated Deputy Head Teacher.



However, if the issue cannot be resolved informally there is a formal complaints procedure that can be followed.

Stage 2 - is the first step in the **formal** procedure for dealing with complaints. If you decide to make a formal complaint you should write to the Head Teacher explaining your concerns in as much detail as possible. **If your complaint involves the Head Teacher** you should write to the Chair of Governors (Head of Academy Trust if your child's school is an Academy) instead of the Head Teacher.

The Head Teacher should let you know within three school days that s/he has received your letter. In some cases it may still be possible to reach an informal resolution and the Head Teacher may arrange to meet with you to discuss your concerns. If not, s/he will decide whether it is appropriate to deal with your concerns using the general school complaints procedure or via another route. If another complaints route is more appropriate, for example in the case of an admissions issue, the Head Teacher will advise you on what you need to do.

Where the Head Teacher carries out the investigation of your concerns s/he will examine the notes taken by your child's class teacher, your written comments and any other relevant information that is available. If necessary s/he may also interview the people involved and take statements from them. When s/he has completed the investigation s/he will write and tell you what her/his decision is and what action (if any) will be taken. You should receive this response within ten school days of the school acknowledging your written complaint.

Stage 3 - of the procedure entails the parent completing a Complaint Form which is available from your child's school. This form should be sent to the Chair of Governors of the school (Head of Academy Trust if your child's school is an Academy) together with any relevant documents and information. You should receive acknowledgement of the receipt of your complaint within five school days.

The Chair of Governors will make arrangements for a Complaints Panel Hearing. This Panel will consist of three to five Governors, one of whom will be elected to chair the Panel.

The Clerk of the Complaints Panel will act as your contact point and will ensure that all the Panel members receive the relevant documents relating to your complaint and set a date for the hearing. Within five school days of the hearing the Clerk will let you know, in writing, of the Panel's decision and what action (if any) needs to be taken.

Stage 4 - If you feel that the Governors Complaints Panel did not handle your complaint fairly and in accordance with the school's complaints procedures, you are entitled to go to stage 4 of the Complaints Procedure. This is different for different types of school:

- If your child attends a **Faith / Voluntary Aided** School your child's school will tell you whom you should contact next
- If your child attends a **LA maintained** school your complaint should be directed to the Secretary of State for Education, Sanctuary Building, Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BT



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- If your child attends an **Academy** your complaint should be directed to Academies Central Unit (Academy Complaints), Education Funding Agency, Earlsdon Park, 53-55 Butts Road, Coventry, CV1 3BH or emailed to **academyquestion@efa.education.gov.uk**

Time limits for dealing with my complaint

At all stages of the complaints process those dealing with your concerns should keep within the set time limits and aim to consider and resolve your concerns as quickly as possible. However, on rare occasions there may be exceptional circumstances that result in the time limits not being met. If this should happen, new time limits should be set, and you should be given details of this together with an explanation of why the delay has occurred.

Time limit for making a complaint

You should always try to deal with any issues that cause concern as quickly as possible. If you raise a complaint more than three months after the issue is known to be a concern, it will normally be considered to be 'out of time'.

If you would like more information or details on any of the stages of the complaints procedure you can contact the SEND Information, Advice & Support Service Worcestershire on 01905 768153 or Herefordshire 01432 260955.

Useful Contacts

SEND Information, Advice & Support Service

Worcestershire:

Tel: 01905 768153

Email: sendiass@worcestershire.gov.uk

Herefordshire:

Tel: 01432 260955

Email: sendias@herefordshire.gov.uk

Children's Legal Centre (Coram)

0300 330 5485

www.childlawadvice.org.uk

Department for Education

Secretary of State for Education

Sanctuary Buildings

20 Great Smith Street

London, SW1P 3BT

www.gov.uk/complain-about-school

Academies Central Unit (Academy Complaints)

Education Funding Agency

Earlsdon Park,

53-55 Butts Road, Coventry, CV1 3BH

www.gov.uk/government/publications/complain-about-an-academy

Ofsted

0300 1234 234

Worcestershire:

Tel: 01905 768153

Email: sendiass@worcestershire.gov.uk

www.hwsendiass.co.uk

Herefordshire:

Tel: 01432 260955

Email: sendias@herefordshire.gov.uk



Information, Advice
and Support Service
**Herefordshire &
Worcestershire**

<https://contact.ofsted.gov.uk/online-complaints?q=onlinecomplaints>

Freedom of Information and data protection

<https://ico.org.uk/for-the-public/>

Special Educational Needs & Disability (SEND) Tribunal

www.justice.gov.uk/tribunals/send/appeals

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**Model procedure for dealing
with parent/carer concerns**

Stage 1
(informal)

Discuss your concerns with your child's class/form teacher
They will note your concern and inform the Head Teacher or, in a larger school, the nominated Deputy Head Teacher

The matter is dealt with and
no further action is required

The issue is not resolved

Stage 2
(formal)

Write to the Head Teacher detailing your concerns
The Head Teacher will:

- Acknowledge the receipt of your letter within 3 school days
- Write to you within 10 school days to tell you the outcome of their investigation of your concerns

The matter is dealt with and
no further action is required

The issue is not resolved

Stage 3
(formal)

Fill in a Complaint Form (or write to)
The Chair of Governors / Head of Academy Trust, who will

- Acknowledge receipt of the form within 5 school days
- Invite you to a meeting within 15 school days
- Write to you within 5 schools days confirming the panel's decision

The matter is dealt with and
no further action is required

The issue is not resolved

Stage 4
(formal)

Parents/carers are directed to refer their complaint to:
Maintained schools ~ Secretary of State for Education
Academy schools ~ Academies Central Unit (Academy Complaints)
Faith Schools ~ check with the school for contact details for this stage of complaint



Information, Advice
and Support Service
Herefordshire &
Worcestershire
