



The Piggott School

Procedures and Guidance

General Complaints

List of Contents	Page No
1. Complaint Procedures	3
• Stage 1 (Headteacher)	3
• Stage 2 (Chair of Governors)	3
• Stage 3 (Governing Body)	3
2. Right of Appeal	5
3. Recording of Complaints	5
4. Support	6
5. Anonymous Complaints	6
6. Vexatious Complaints	6
7. Complaints against School Staff	6
8. School contact details	6
9. Other complaints	7
10. Procedures for vexatious or habitual complainants	7

1. Complaint Procedures

Any problem or concern that a parent has should be raised promptly with the class teacher/form tutor or member of staff responsible for the area or action causing the concern. If a concern is more serious parents may prefer to make an appointment to discuss it with a more senior member of staff in the leadership structure / Headteacher. All staff will make every effort to resolve a problem promptly at this informal stage.

Complaints should be made within three months from the date of the first incident giving rise to the complaint. Complaints will not be considered if they are made more than 3 months after the incident unless there are extenuating circumstances justifying the complaint to be made out of time. The decision to consider a complaint out of time lies with the Headteacher, or if the complaint is against the Headteacher, the Chair of Governors.

Most concerns and potential complaints are best resolved through informal discussion with the Team Leader, Headteacher or relevant member of staff. If this is not the case the following stages will take place:

1.1 Stage 1 (Headteacher)

If dissatisfied with the response of the member of staff (or the Headteacher if they have been involved at the informal stage) a parent may wish to put their concerns in writing to the Headteacher as a complaint. The time limit for proceeding to Stage 1 is 15 school days after the matter has been considered informally. The Headteacher reserves the right not to consider any complaint made more than 15 school days after the matter has been considered at the informal stage unless there are extenuating circumstances justifying a delay in the complaint being made. That decision will be made by the Headteacher.

The letter should be made clear if the matter is to be dealt with as a complaint. The Headteacher will investigate the complaint further and provide a written response. This will normally be within 10 school days of receipt of the written complaint, but parents are kept informed if, for example, more time is needed to complete the investigation.

If the original concern was about an action by the Headteacher personally, and it has already been discussed at the informal stage, then a parent should put the complaint in writing to the Chair of Governors (**Stage 2**).

Complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor or the whole governing body should be addressed to [Mrs Rebecca Marr](#) (the Clerk to the Governing Body) via the school office (Stage 2). Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

1.2 Stage 2 (Chair of Governors)

If dissatisfied with the Headteacher's response, a parent may contact the Chair of Governors whose name and contact details are published on the school's website and are also available from the school office.

The time limit for proceeding to Stage 2 is 15 school days after receipt of the Headteacher's response under stage 1 of the complaint procedures, or where the complaint is made against the Headteacher 3 months after the incident giving rise to the complaint first took place. The Chair of

Governors reserves the right not to consider any complaint made outside the time limits unless there are extenuating circumstances justifying a delay in the complaint being made. That decision will be made by the Chair of Governors.

The Chair of Governors will investigate the complaint and, in most cases, seek to resolve the matter through discussion with the parent and the Headteacher. At the end of this stage a written response will be sent to the parent, normally within 10 school days of receipt of the complaint, but the parents will be kept informed if more time is needed.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire governing body or
- the majority of the governing body

Stage 2 will be considered by an independent investigator appointed by the governing body or by the Oxford Diocesan Board of Education. At the conclusion of their investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response.

1.3 Stage 3 (Governing Body)

If dissatisfied with the response at the end of Stage 2, the complaint can be referred to the Governing Body by writing to the Clerk to the Governing Body.

The time limit for proceeding to Stage 3 is 15 school days after receipt of the letter sent under Stage 2 of the complaint procedures. The Governing Body reserves the right not to consider any complaint made outside the time limit unless there are extenuating circumstances justifying a delay in the complaint being made. That decision will be made by the Chair of the Panel convened to hear the complaint.

A small panel of governors will investigate the complaint. This will normally be arranged within fifteen school days of the complaint being received, depending on the availability of all concerned

The panel will investigate the complaint and may hold oral hearings if considered appropriate. The panel will call for and consider any information it deems necessary. Where appropriate, the subject of complaint must be invited to respond in writing unless a statement has already been included in the school's submission.

If an oral hearing is held all written statements submitted to the panel will be sent to the parties at least 5 school days before the date of the hearing. All parties shall be entitled to attend the hearing and be accompanied by a friend or representative. The panel will attempt to conciliate between the parties with a view to reaching an amicable settlement.

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

In coming to a decision the panel may take advice from such bodies as it thinks fit. In particular, it must take into account, in appropriate cases, the professional judgment inherent in the school decision(s) and be aware of the facts available at the time those decisions were made. Where new facts emerge at the hearing the panel will adjourn at the request of either party.

The Clerk to the Governors will notify the complainant in writing of the decision, normally within 10 school days, giving details of any action taken or proposed. No action is to be taken to implement the decision until all the parties are notified simultaneously. For most complaints the decision of the Governors is the last step in the procedure

A complaint may be withdrawn in writing at any stage.

Where the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire governing body or
- the majority of the governing body

and the complainant remains dissatisfied with the decision of the independent investigator and/or the Oxford Diocesan Board of Education the Clerk will source any additional, independent governors through another local school or through their LA's Governor Services team, in order to make up the committee. Alternatively, an entirely independent committee may be convened to hear the complaint at Stage 3.

2. Right of Appeal

Where parents of students and students themselves have complained to the Piggott School and where such complaints have been considered in accordance with this complaints procedure but this has failed to resolve the matter, the complainant can contact the Education Funding Agency (EFA), through the Department for education's website:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/adminandfinance/financialmanagement/efafundingfinance/a00215271/academy-admissions-complaints>

<https://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/schoolperformance/school-complaints-form>

The EFA will not usually investigate complaints more than twelve months after the decision or action was taken by the academy. The EFA also reserves the right not to investigate complaints considered to be vexatious or malicious or where they are satisfied with the action that the Academy has already taken or proposes to take to resolve the complaint.

3. Recording of complaints

A written record of all complaints is kept by the school with details of whether they were resolved at Stage 1 or Stage 2. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection requests access to them.

4. Support

At any stage of this procedure, parents/carers are welcome to bring with them a supportive friend who is not involved in the matter. It is not appropriate for staff of the school to engage in meetings to which parents and carers bring legal representatives or advisors and staff will not generally enter into any correspondence with solicitors or others in place of direct communication with parents.

5. Complaint campaigns

In cases where we receive large volumes of complaints:

- all based on the same subject and/or
- from complainants unconnected with the school

We will either send a template response to all complainants and/or publish a single response on our school's website.

6. Anonymous complaints

This policy encourages complainants to put their name to any allegation whenever possible.

Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful but will be considered at the discretion of the school. In exercising its discretion the factors to be taken into account would include:

- The seriousness of the issues raised.
- The credibility of the concern.
- The likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources.

7. Vexatious complaints (see procedure detailed on page 4)

There may be occasions when the complainant is deemed to be vexatious. This could be because it is clear that the complainant has insufficient grounds for complaint and is seeking to annoy, or that the complaint has been investigated and is found not to be justified, but the complainant persistently engages in making further accusations relating to the same issue. Any such case will be dealt with on an individual basis but the Headteacher and/or the Chair of Governors reserves the right to close the complaint if the complainant is deemed to be vexatious and to determine that the matter is concluded.

8. Complaints against school staff

If a complaint amounts to or includes an allegation against a member of staff, this may need to be considered under the School's staff disciplinary procedure. Parents will be advised if these procedures are to be used in dealing with a complaint.

9. School Contact details

The Headteacher, Chair of Governors and Company Secretary can all be contacted as detailed below

The Piggott School, Twyford Road, Wargrave, RG10 8DS. Telephone 0118 940 2357

Email office@piggott.wokingham.sch.uk or the Clerk to the Governors: MarrR@piggottschool.org

10. Other Complaints

There are separate statutory procedures for complaints relating to curriculum, sex education, admissions, exclusions and SEN. Staff grievance, capability and discipline proceedings, and Child Protection investigations are also outside the scope of the procedures.

10. Procedures for vexatious or habitual complainants:

Definition:

1. Persons seeking to be disruptive by pursuing an unreasonable course of conduct and/or
2. Persons whose requests cause disproportionate and repeated demands on staff and governors

This behaviour can include repeated and unreasonable requests made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Examples:

1. A parent who persists after Stage 3 has been reached and a resolution agreed.
2. A parent who changes the substance of the complaint and continually raises new issues
3. A parent who focuses on a trivial matter out of proportion to its significance
4. A parent who makes an excessive number of contacts with the school
5. A parent who makes threats of violence towards school staff
6. A parent who is abusive or verbally aggressive

When and who should invoke?

- It will be invoked usually after Stage 3 of the complaints procedures have been exhausted, though it may be invoked prior to that stage.
- It can be invoked by either the Headteacher or the Chair of Governors
- No Governor involved with the decision regarding a previous complaint can be involved

Procedure:

1. The Clerk will contact the parent in writing, notifying them of the reasons for the classification (as habitual or vexatious) and what action will be taken
2. The Clerk will also give details of the review procedure
3. Others involved will be copied into this notification

Strategies:

1. **Withdraw contact:** one form of contact will be maintained for the purposes of parent to school contact in relation to the complainant's child(ren) at school, but other forms of contact (e.g. email, telephone, in person or mail) to be withdrawn
2. **Restricted contact:** contact limited to a single member of staff
3. All further contact will be acknowledged but further contact on this or related issues will not be answered. The parent will be informed of these strategies.
4. **Suspended contact:** all contact may be withdrawn for a specified period (but not permanently).

Review period:

- Once the above has been invoked it will be reviewed after 6 months
- At that stage it may be withdrawn or amended
- The complainant will be notified and a record kept of this decision