



Ummid independent School

Complaints Policy.

1. Introduction

1.1. This policy is intended as a good practice guide, applying to most general complaints which the School is likely to receive from parents/carers or referrers. It meets the requirement to have a policy about complaints concerning SEN provision within the School.

1.2. There are separate procedures for complaints about:

- the provision of religious education and collective worship;
- the Local Authority's special needs assessments;
- allegations of child abuse;
- financial improprieties;
- other criminal activities;
- complaints about contracted staff.

2. Stage 1:

2.1. The First Contact: Guidelines for dealing with concerns and complaints informally

2.2. The vast majority of concerns and complaints can be resolved informally. There are many occasions where concerns are resolved straight away through the tutor, Manager, project worker, Reception, Principal etc.

2.3. Parents must feel able to raise concern with members of staff without any formality, either in person, by telephone or in writing. On occasion it may be appropriate for someone to act on behalf of a parent. At first it may be unclear whether a parent is asking a question or expressing an opinion rather than making a complaint. A parent may want a preliminary discussion about an issue to help decide whether he or she wishes to take it further.

3. Procedure at Stage 1

3.1. Parents have an opportunity for discussion of their concern with the appropriate member of staff (e.g. class teacher, project worker, senior staff member) who clarifies with the parent the nature of the concern, and reassures them that Himmat/Ummid wants to hear about it. The member of staff may explain to the parent how the situation happened. It can be helpful to identify at this point what sort of outcome the parent is looking for.

3.2. If the member of staff first contacted cannot immediately deal with the matter, s/he should make a clear note of the date, name, contact address of phone number.

3.3. Any member of staff will know how to refer, if necessary, to the person with responsibility for the particular issue raised by the parent. S/he will check later to make sure the referral has been successful.

3.4. On certain major issues, the Manager may decide to deal with concerns directly at this stage.

3.5. If the concern relates to the Manager, the parent is advised to contact the Director of Himmat/Ummid

3.6. The staff member dealing with the concern makes sure that the parent is clear what action (if any) or monitoring of the situation has been agreed, putting this in writing only if this seems the best way of making things clear.

3.7. Where no satisfactory solution has been found within 10 school days, parents are asked if they wish their concern to be considered further. If so they are given clear information, both orally and in writing, about how to proceed and about any independent advice available to them.

4. Stage 2:

4.1. Referral to the SVP (or other member of SLT) for investigation

4.2. At this stage it has become clear that the concern is a definite complaint. In some cases the Manager has already been involved in looking at the matter; in others it is his/her first involvement. In either case, it is helpful for the Manager (or the person designated to investigate) to use guidelines to ensure consistency among cases, and to make sure that nothing happens at this stage which could make it difficult for later stages to proceed smoothly.

4.3. As Managers have responsibility for the day-to-day running of their schools, they have responsibility for the implementation of a complaints system, including the decisions about their own involvement at various stages. One of the reasons for having various “stages” in a complaints procedure is to reassure complainants that their grievance is being heard by more than one person. The Manager will make arrangements to ensure that his/her involvement will not predominate at every stage of a particular complaint. For example, it is considered good practice for arrangements to be made for other staff to deal with parents’ concerns at stage 1 while the Manager has contact with parents at stage 2. Even at that stage the Manager may designate another member of staff to collect some of the information from various parties involved. In some cases, the manager may be so involved at stage 1 that stage 2 has to be carried out by a designated officer.

5. Procedure at Stage 2

5.1. The Senior Project worker (or other) acknowledges the complaint orally or in writing within 3 school days of receiving confirmation that the complaint is now to be dealt with at stage 2. The acknowledgement gives a brief explanation of the school’s complaint procedure and a target date for providing a response to the complaint. This should normally be within 10 school days; if this proves impossible, a letter is sent explaining the reason for the delay and giving a revised target date.

5.2. The Senior project worker provides an opportunity for the complainant to meet him/her to supplement information provided previously. It is made clear to the complainant that if s/he wishes, s/he may be accompanied to any meeting by a friend, relative, representative, or advocate who can speak on his or her behalf; and that interpreting facilities are available if needed.

5.3. If necessary, the Senior project worker should interview witnesses and take statements from those involved. If the complaint centres on a student, the student should also be interviewed. Students would normally be interviewed with parents/guardians present. In some situations circumstances may prevent this e.g. where this would seriously delay the investigation of a serious/urgent complaint or where particular circumstances mean that a student has specifically said s/he would prefer that parent/guardians were not involved. In such circumstances another member of staff with whom the student feels comfortable may be asked to attend. If a member of staff is complained against, the needs of that person should be borne in mind.

5.4. The Senior project worker (or other) keeps written records of meetings, telephone conversations, and other documentation.

5.5. Once all the relevant facts have been established, the Senior project worker (or other) should then produce a written response to the complainant to discuss/resolve the matter.

5.6. A written response includes a full explanation of the decision and the reasons for it. Where appropriate, this includes what action Himmat will take to resolve the complaint. The complainant is advised that should s/he wish to take the complaint further s/he should notify the Director within two weeks of receiving the outcome letter.

5.7. If a complaint is against the action of the senior project worker, the Manager will designate another member of the Senior Leadership Team to investigate.

5.8. If a complaint is against the action of a Manager the Director should carry out the Stage 2 procedures. If a complaint is against the action of the Director stage 2 procedures should be carried out by the Chair of Governors.

6. Stage 2a: Review by the Chair of the Governing Body (or Designated Officer) and the Manager (or Designated Officer)

6.1. At this stage the complainant has the opportunity to seek resolution of their complaint with the Chair of the Governing Body and the Manager. The complainant will be reassured that the school is taking the complaint seriously.

7. Procedure at Stage 2a

7.1. The Chair of the Governing Body (or designated Governor) acknowledges the complaint, orally or in writing within 3 school days and invites the complainant to meet with him/her and the Principal to find a way to move forward.

7.2. Any relevant documentation, including the senior project worker's report on the investigation to date should be provided for the Chair of the Governing Body prior to the meeting.

7.3. The Chair of the Governing Body keeps written records of meetings, telephone conversations, and other documentation relating to the complaint.

7.4. Once all the relevant facts have been established, from the original investigation and this further meeting the Chair of the Governing Body should then adjourn the meeting and produce a written response to the complainant to discuss/resolve the matter directly.

7.5. A written response includes a full explanation of the decision and the reasons for it. Where appropriate, this includes what action the school will take to resolve the complaint. The complainant is advised that should s/he wish to take the complaint further s/he should notify the Chair of the Governing Body within two weeks of receiving the outcome letter.

8. Stage 3:

Review by the Governing Body

8.1. It is important that this review not only be independent and impartial but that it is seen to be so. [Therefore at least one person who is independent of the Governing body and the school and not related to any member of staff should be part of the Review panel.](#) The review is the last stage of the complaints process and is not there to merely rubber stamp previous decisions. Therefore, individual complaints should not be considered by the full governing body as serious conflicts of interest can arise; for example in exceptional circumstances a complaint may result in disciplinary action against a member of staff, and governors may be required to give an unprejudiced hearing to an appeal by the member of staff concerned. Similarly some governors might have knowledge of the problem which led to the complaint and would be unable to give unbiased consideration to the issue.

8.2. Many complaints are inevitably seen by parents as being "against" a particular member of staff and their actions. However, all complaints which reach this stage will have done so because the complainant has not been satisfied by the Manager's and/or the Chair of the Governing Body's response at the earlier stages of the procedure, and it may be appropriate for the Governing Body to consider the complaint is against the school rather than against the member of staff whose actions led to the original complaint.

9. Procedure for review by the Governing Body

9.1. Upon receipt of a written request by the complainant for the complaint to proceed to stage 3, the procedures outlined below should be followed.

9.2. The Clerk to the Governing Body should write to the complainant within 3 school days to acknowledge receipt of the written request. The acknowledgement should inform the complainant that the complaint is to be heard by three members of the school's Governing Body within 20 school days of receiving the complaint. The letter should also explain that the complainant has the right to submit any further documents relevant to the complaint. These must be received in time for the documents to be sent to the three members of the panel.

9.3. The Clerk to the Governing Body should arrange to convene a Governors' Complaints Panel elected from members of the Governing Body.

9.4. The Panel members should be governors who have had no prior involvement with the complaint. If s/he has not previously been involved, the Vice-Chair of the Governing Body should chair the Panel. If not, a Chair must be elected for this purpose. It is not appropriate for the Manager to have a place on the Panel. Governors will want to bear in mind the advantages of having a parent (who is also a Governor) on the Panel. Governors will also want to be sensitive to issues of race, gender and religious affiliation.

9.5. The Chair of the Panel will ensure that the complaint is heard by the Panel within 20 school days of receiving the letter. All relevant correspondence regarding the complaint should be given to each Panel member when the composition of the Panel is confirmed.

9.6. The Chair of the Panel will write and inform the complainant, Manager, any relevant witnesses and members of the Panel at least 5 school days in advance, of the date, time and place of the meeting. The notification to the complainant should also inform him/her of the right to be accompanied to the meeting by a friend/advocate/interpreter. The letter will also explain how the meeting will be conducted.

9.7. The Chair of the Panel should invite the manager to attend the Panel meeting and prepare a written report for the Panel in response to the complaint. The Manager may also invite members of staff directly involved in matters raised by the complainant to respond in writing or in person to the complaint. Any relevant documents including the manager's report should be received by all concerned, including the complainant, at least 5 school days prior to the meeting.

9.8. The involvement of staff other than the Manager is subject to the discretion of the Chair of the Panel.

9.9. It is the responsibility of the Chair of the Panel to ensure that the meeting is properly minuted.

9.10. The aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between Himmat/Ummid and the complainant. However, it has to be recognised that sometimes it may only be possible to establish facts and make recommendations which will satisfy the complainant that his or her complaint has at least been taken seriously.

9.11. The Panel should remember that many parents are unused to dealing with groups of people in formal situations and may feel inhibited when speaking to the Panel. It is therefore recommended that the Chair of the Panel ensures the proceedings are as informal as possible.

9.12. If either party wishes to introduce previously undisclosed evidence or witnesses, it is in the interests of natural justice to adjourn the meeting so that the other side has time to consider and respond to the new evidence.

9.13. The meeting should allow for:

At this stage it is generally more acceptable to see the Manager and complainant separately

- the complainant to explain their complaint
- the Panel to question the complainant
- the Manager to explain the School's response
- the Panel to question the Manager and/or other
- members of staff about the school's response
- any party to have the right to call witnesses (subject to the approval of the Chair)
- final statements by both the complainant and the Principal.

9.14. The Chair of the Panel will explain to all concerned that the Panel will now consider its decision, and a written decision will be sent to both parties within 15 school days.

9.15. The Panel will then consider the complaint and all the evidence presented and (a) reach a unanimous, or at least a majority, decision on the complaint and (b) decide upon the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint and (c) where appropriate, suggest recommended changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not happen again.

9.16. The written statement outlining the decision of the Panel must be sent to the complainant and Manager. The letter to the complainant should explain whether a further appeal can be made, and if so, to whom.

9.17. The School should ensure that a copy of all correspondence and notes are kept. [These records should be kept separately from the student's personal records and marked and kept Confidential.](#)

10. Monitoring Complaints

10.1. The Governing Body can monitor the level and nature of complaints and review the outcomes on a regular basis to ensure the effectiveness of the procedure and make changes where necessary. Preferably, complaints information shared with the whole Governing Body will not name individuals. As well as addressing an individual's complaints, the process of listening to and resolving complaints will contribute to school improvement. When individual complaints are heard, the school may identify underlying issues that need to be addressed. The monitoring and review of complaints by the Academy and the Governing Body can be a useful tool in evaluating the Academy's performance. Stage 1: Expression of concern to relevant member of staff

INFORMAL ▼

Satisfactory outcome reached?

No Yes ► No further action



Stage 2 : Complainant makes a complaint to the Principal/ Designated Teacher

MANAGER'S INVESTIGATION ▼

Investigation conducted and reported to the complainant



Satisfactory outcome reached?



No Yes ► No further action



Stage 2a : Complainant meets with the Principal and Chair of the GB

MANAGER AND CHAIR OF THE ▼

GOVERNING BODY'S Investigation conducted and reported to the complainant

INVESTIGATION ▼

Satisfactory outcome reached?



No Yes ► No further action



Stage 3 : Complainant makes formal complaint to the Governing Body Complaints Panel

GOVERNORS ▼

REVIEW Panel meeting of Governors, Complainant and Manager Satisfactory outcome reached?



No Yes ► No further action



HIMMAT INDEPENDENT SCHOOL.

Complaints policy.

Joanne watts, Rahat Khan 12/01/2017

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