

**JOHN SPENDLUFFE
TECHNOLOGY COLLEGE**



**Complaints about Schools
(General)**

Complaints about Schools - Policy

Guidance for Complainants:

Introduction

All schools in England are required to have a procedure in place for dealing with complaints relating to the school and any community facilities or services that the school provide.

In this school all staff are dedicated to giving all children the best possible education and caring properly for their health, safety and welfare at all times. We are committed to working closely with parents/carers and believe that school and parents/carers must work together in partnership, each carrying out our own particular responsibilities to help pupils gain the most from their time in school. We also desire to have good relations with our neighbours and the wider community.

If you feel that something is not going quite as you would like it to, that we are doing something that you are unhappy with, or not doing something that you feel we should, please tell us about it.

Steps 1 & 2

If parents are unhappy with anything about the school, they should be encouraged to talk to the member of staff most involved, by contacting the school to make an appointment to clarify the situation. The referral routes for complaints will indicate the most appropriate person to contact and is provided as part of this policy.

Usually most concerns will be resolved in this way.

The member of staff will not only try to address the concern but will report to Curriculum Leader/Head of House so that he/she is aware of the concern and what action is being taken. There will be occasions where the Head of House or Curriculum leader will need to be directly involved and resolve the issue.

If you are not the parent/carer of a child at our school, please start at the third step and make contact with the Headteacher to discuss your concerns.

Step 3

On rare occasions, the concern cannot be resolved by the teacher or Head of House/Curriculum leader, or if the parent feels the situation has not altered, then the parent should raise the issue directly with the Assistant/Deputy Headteacher or Headteacher by making an appointment. Matters can usually be sorted out satisfactorily in this way.

Investigation and resolution: If the matter can not be resolved in the initial meeting the Headteacher or Assistant/Deputy Headteacher may deal with the matter personally or may ask a senior member of staff to act as “investigator”. The investigator may request additional information from you. Following appropriate investigation, the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher will then notify you of a decision and the reasons for it.

Outcome: The aim of the Headteacher or the Assistant/Deputy Headteacher would be to inform any complainant of the outcome of an investigation and the resolution to the complaint within one calendar month from the receipt of the complaint. Please note that any complaint received during a College vacation or within one month of the end of term or half term is likely to take longer to resolve owing to the presence of college holidays and the unavailability of personnel.

Step 4

In exceptional circumstances, a parent may feel that his/her complaint has not been resolved through the above stages, in which case he/she may wish to pursue the matter further and more formally through the Chair of the Governing Body.

The parent should be informed that they should:-

- (a) Set out their concern, in writing, and address it to the Clerk to Governors. If, for some reason, the parent does not feel able to do so, he/she should contact the clerk who will produce a typewritten statement of the complaint for the parent to sign.
- (b) The Chair of Governors would then consider the complaint.

The Chair will arrange for your complaint to be investigated following procedures equivalent to those described in Stage 2 (above). When the Chair is satisfied that they have established all the material facts and relevant policies, so far as is practicable, he/she will notify you in writing of their decision and the reasons for it. He/she will aim to provide a response within fifteen working days of receiving your letter but will inform the parents if this timescale will need to be increased. If you are not satisfied with the Chair's decision you may ask for the complaint to be referred to the Review Panel, by writing to the Clerk to the Governors.

Step 5

Only if you have been through the earlier stages of this procedure, and are dissatisfied with the decision that has been notified to you by the Chair, you may request a final hearing by a Review Panel. To request a hearing before the Review Panel, please write to the Clerk to Governors within five working days of the decision you wish to appeal. Your request will only be considered if you have completed the relevant procedures at Stages 1-3. Please ensure that copies of all relevant documents accompany your letter to the Clerk to Governors, who will acknowledge your request in writing within five working days.

Review Panel: The review will be undertaken by a panel of at least three members appointed on behalf of the Governing Body and selected by the Clerk to Governors. The Panel members will have no detailed previous knowledge of the case, will not include the Chair of Governors, and one member will be independent of the management and running of the school. Fair consideration will be given to any bona fide objection to a particular member of the Panel.

The Clerk to Governors will convene the Review Panel as soon as is reasonably practicable but the Panel will not normally sit during College holidays.

Every effort will be made to enable the Panel hearing to take place within ten working days of the receipt of your request.

Time Limits

You should make the school aware of your complaint as soon as possible after the matter or incident has occurred that you wish to complain about. Usually, we would expect you to do this within three months of the incident occurring and if you do not contact the school within that time, we will not usually consider your complaint.

If your complaint relates to a continuing act, then occurrences outside of the three month time limit will usually be considered alongside the more recent occurrence.

If you feel there are exceptional circumstances that have prevented you from meeting the time limit, you can provide an explanation of these circumstances along with your complaint so that Governors can take them into account.

The final decision rests with Governors as to whether your complaint will be considered when it is raised outside of the three month time limit.

Unreasonable Complainant Behaviour

Staff and Governors are keen to ensure that all genuine complaints are dealt with fairly and promptly and in accordance with our agreed procedures. We would again emphasise that most matters can be resolved by discussing issues with our staff at the informal stages of our procedure.

Regrettably, there are times when complainants raise issues with or about staff in ways which are unacceptable. This can cloud the concern at the heart of the complaint, which may result in the delay or hindrance of a resolution. It can also have an adverse effect on pupils, staff and the effective running of the school. Examples of behaviours that we consider to be unacceptable are as follows:

- Using abusive or threatening language and/or behaviour.
- Making excessive demands on staff time and resources in pursuit of a complaint, whether in person, by phone, email or letter.
- Harassing individual staff members in a way which appears intended to cause personal distress rather than to find a resolution.
- Refusing to cooperate with the complaints procedure as set out in this policy.
- Persisting in repetitious complaints when these have been previously determined under the school complaints procedure.
- Changing the basis of the complaint as the consideration proceeds and/or making unjustified complaints about those trying to deal with the complaint.
- Pursuing unreasonable outcomes which are disproportionate to the nature of the matters in hand.
- Electronically recording meetings, telephone calls and conversations without the prior knowledge and consent of the other persons involved.

The school expects that any person wishing to raise a concern or complaint will:

- Follow the school complaints procedure.
- Treat all members of the school community with courtesy and respect.
- Recognise the time constraints that staff operate under and allow them a reasonable amount of time in which to respond / address any issues.

Where a complainant raises a complaint in a manner which the school feels is unreasonable, actions may be taken to remedy this. The actions will be proportionate to the nature of the behaviour and may include:

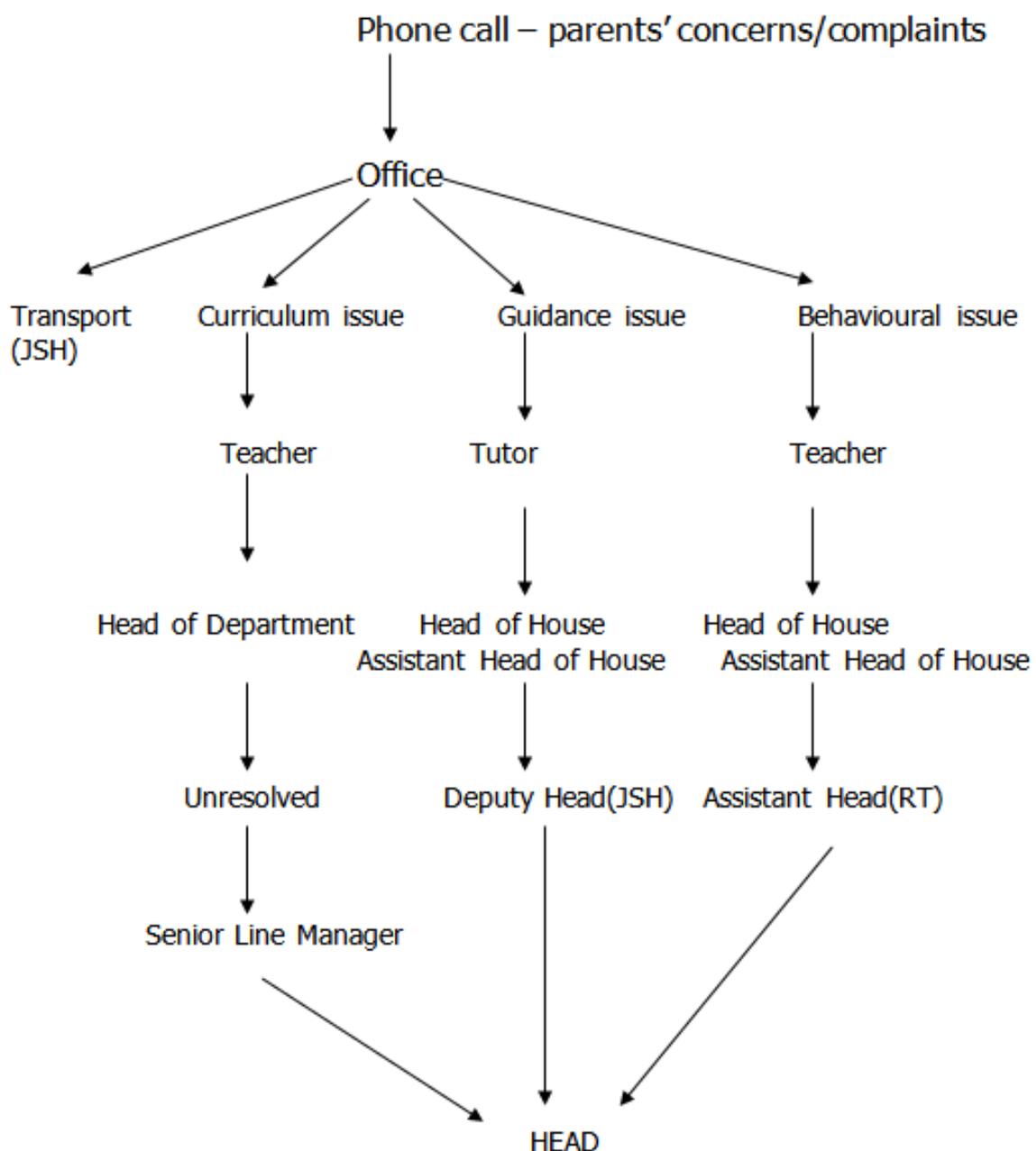
- An informal approach to inform the person that the behaviour is unacceptable and needs to be modified.
- A formal written communication advising the person that the behaviour is unacceptable and appropriate action may be taken if the behaviour is not modified.
- Setting limitations on the method and frequency of contact with staff / school personnel.
- Refusing to register and process further complaints about the same or similar subject matter where the matter has already been determined, or where complaints are vexatious, or where complaints are personally harassing and deliberately targeted at one or more members of staff without good cause.
- Setting limitations on the person's access to the school site.

It should be noted that parents/carers and members of the wider community do not have an automatic right to enter school grounds and may be banned from entering the school site with immediate effect after an incident where behaviour has been verbally and/or physically aggressive.

Any restrictions placed on a person as a result of this policy will be time limited, with a specified date as to when the restrictions will be reviewed and potentially lifted.

Again, we would emphasise that the Headteacher and Governing Body are committed to ensuring a full and fair consideration of all legitimate complaints and we recognise that the majority of parents/carers and members of the wider community will conduct themselves in accordance with this policy. However, we reserve the right to take any necessary actions under this policy in those rare cases where a person does not.

Referral routes for complaints



The following policy document was presented to the Governing Body of John Spendluffe Technology College and approved and adopted by them on the date stated.

Policy: Complaints about School (General)

Date: 4 December 2014