



## **GUIDELINES FOR HANDLING COMPLAINTS**

Fernhill School aims to establish relationships of trust between staff, pupils and parents. Pupils and parents should therefore feel able to make the School aware of any concerns they may have in the certain knowledge that such information will be dealt with sensitively. It is important that pupils and parents who have a complaint or concern should be able to express their views and feelings and obtain a fair hearing and a prompt response to any complaint which they make. It is hoped that most concerns can be sorted out quickly and informally by speaking to the appropriate member of staff.

It is also important that Fernhill School should have due regard for the rights of all who work there and that any complaints against members of staff should be handled quickly, professionally and confidentially. When an issue has been identified following a complaint, the School will take appropriate action to address the issue.

### **Complaints**

A Complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real perceived problem and requires a response. It may be made about the School's procedures or methods of operating or about a specific member of staff. It may be made if it is thought that the School or a member of its community has, for example:

- done something wrong
- failed to do something that should have been done
- acted unfairly

A complaint will be handled seriously and sensitively and will be recorded in the appropriate log by the recipient. The procedures will be flexible enough to handle both formal complaints and the informal raising of issues.

### **Procedures**

The basic guidelines for handling complaints, verbal or written, are that they should be dealt with promptly, thoroughly and professionally. Some issues raised may involve ongoing discussions and may require some time to investigate for a resolution to be sought.

### **Informal Concerns/Complaints**

- It is recommended that where a verbal concern is being raised it should be done so in a confidential manner either by telephone or by arranging a meeting with the appropriate member of staff. Concerns should never be discussed in a public place, e.g. school playground or communal area of the school.
- Written concerns/complaints will be acknowledged, if possible, within 24 hours of receipt, with the promise of effective enquiry. When concerns are first raised, they should be referred to the member of staff most directly involved with the subject of the concern. In most instances, the member of staff will be able to resolve the matter.

### **Appropriate Staff contact**

Nursery Manager – Mrs Sheldon  
Head of Early Years – Mrs Gallacher



FERNHILL SCHOOL

## **GUIDELINES FOR HANDLING COMPLAINTS**

If you are unsure of the person responsible for a year group, please contact the school office for clarification.

- If staff are approached about a matter which lies outside their remit, they should refer it to the appropriate person and advise the parents of this referral or of appropriate channels for them to use. (The appropriate member of staff may contact the parents to inform them that the matter has been passed on to them.)
- It may be that the concern can be easily resolved by the relevant member of staff and, depending on the circumstances, the member of staff may telephone with the outcome, reply in writing or, if the matter is of a more serious nature, invite the complainant to a meeting to discuss the matter more fully.
- The complaint should be logged and the recipient should record the action taken. The appropriate member of the School's leadership team should be informed and all correspondence centrally filed.

All allegations of behavior which might be categorised as 'child abuse' should be reported immediately to the Child Protection Officer in accordance with the School's Child Protection Guidelines.

### **Formal Complaint**

In the unlikely event that a concern/complaint cannot be resolved at DHT level, a formal written complaint may be raised and referred to the Head Teacher. In these instances, the complaint will be logged by the Head Teacher and appropriate action take.

In these cases, the Head Teacher will convey to the complainant, as fully as is appropriate, the outcome of the investigation of the complaint and any measures being taken to address the issue.

In the case of a serious issue, where a meeting has taken place to outline concerns, the Head Teacher will seek to give any indications at the meeting regarding interim measures being put into effect, providing they do not prejudice the investigation. Every effort will be made to reassure the complainant that, while a full investigation may take some weeks, whatever short-term action that can be effected will be put in place immediately, where possible and appropriate.

If the complainant alleges professional incompetence or neglect against a member of staff, the Head Teacher will take steps to ensure that the allegation is fully and properly investigated, according to the principles of natural justice, with regard always to the best interest of the person(s) involved and the member of staff will be informed immediately, unless there are compelling reasons not to do so.



## GUIDELINES FOR HANDLING COMPLAINTS

### **Referral to the Chairman of Governors**

- If the complainant remains dissatisfied, he/she may appeal to the Chairman of Governors.
- On occasion, where a complaint has not been resolved, the Head Teacher will refer the matter, on a confidential basis, to the Chairman of Governors and advise the parents that this stage has been reached.
- Should a complaint in writing be raised against the Head Teacher, the complainant should express the complaint in writing to the Chairman of Governors, who will investigate appropriately.

### **Confidentiality**

Confidentiality is important for pupils, parents and staff. It is essential that any complaint is treated in a professional and sensitive manner and with respect to the complainant and to any persons against whom the complaint is made.

It is School policy that complaints made by parents should not rebound adversely on any pupil and, similarly, complaints raised by pupils should not rebound on themselves or on others.

The question of confidentiality should be discussed sensitively with parents who voice concerns/complaints, and the School's policy should be carefully explained. The school should explain to complainants that it may be possible to deal with a problem without naming individuals, but that, even if no names are given, the source of the complaint may be clear. The nature and circumstances of the complaint might make it impractical to investigate without identifying the member of staff or the child.

Staff members will be informed of any complaints made about them. Such complaints will be known only to themselves and to those who have to be consulted.

Parents should be assured that knowledge of their complaint will be limited to the Head Teacher and to those directly involved if at all possible, however in some instances, the Chairman of Governors may need to be informed. It may also be necessary on occasion to make third parties outside of the school aware of the complaint. This would happen where, for example, a child's safety was at risk or it became necessary to refer matters to the police. If there is a question of the child's safety or a possible situation involving the police, the guidance on confidentiality in the Child Protection Guidelines should be followed.

Formal Complaints should be sent in writing to:

Head Teacher  
Fernhill School  
Fernbrae Avenue  
Rutherglen  
G73 4SG