

The Lansdowne Turney Federation Complaints Policy

The Lansdowne Turney Federation complaints policy aims to explain the Federation's complaints procedure.

The federation recognises that:

- Concerns ought to be handled, if at all possible, without the need for formal procedures and that having a complaints procedure need not in any way undermine efforts to resolve the concern informally. In most cases the form tutor, will receive the first approach.
- The formal procedures will need to be invoked when initial attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further.

At the informal stage, the federation's complaints officers are

Jo Tovey Turney School

Jon Jukes Lansdowne School

The Federation Complaints Procedure aims to:

- encourage resolution of problems by **informal** means wherever possible;
- be easily **accessible** and **publicised**;
- be **simple** to understand and use;
- be **impartial**;
- be **non-adversarial**;
- allow **swift** handling with established **time-limits** for action and keeping people informed of the progress;
- ensure a full and **fair** investigation by an independent person where necessary;
- respect people's desire for **confidentiality**;
- address all the points at issue and provide an **effective** response and **appropriate** redress, where necessary;
- provide **information** to the school's senior management team so that services can be improved.

Investigating Complaints

At each stage, the complaints officer will make sure that she:

- establishes **what** has happened so far, and **who** has been involved;
- clarifies the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved;
- meet with the complainant or contact them (if unsure or further information is necessary);
- clarify what the complainant feels would put things right;
- interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
- conduct the interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning;
- keep notes of the interview.

Resolving Complaints

At each stage in the procedure the complaints officer will want to keep in mind ways in which a complaint can be resolved. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- an apology;
- an explanation;
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
- an assurance that the event complained of will not recur;
- an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again;
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint.

It would be useful if complainants were encouraged to state what actions they feel might resolve the problem at any stage. An admission that the school could have handled the situation better is not the same as an admission of negligence.

However, there will be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedures having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the chair of the GB is able to inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

Stages

There are three stages of the complaints procedure:

- Stage one: complaint heard by staff member (though not the subject of the complaint);
- Stage two: complaint heard by

Jo Tovey	Head of School Turney
Jon Juckes	Head of School Lansdowne
- Stage three: complaint heard by GB's complaints appeal panel.

An unsatisfied complainant can always take a complaint to the next stage.

The policy and procedures will be included in:

- any report/communication from the governors to parents;
- the information given to new parents when their children join the school;
- the information given to the children themselves;
- the school website.

Stage 1: The first contact

- Parents are always welcome to discuss any concerns with the appropriate member of staff, who will clarify with the parent the nature of the concern and reassure them that the school wants to hear about it. The complaints officer will arrange a meeting between the complainant and the member of staff. The member of staff may explain to the parent how the situation happened. It can be helpful at this point to identify what sort of outcome the parent is looking for. If the member of staff first contacted cannot immediately deal with the matter. The complaints officer will make a clear note of the date, name and contact address or phone number.
- All members of staff will know how to refer, if necessary, to the complaints officer for the particular issue raised by the parent/carer. S/ he will check later to make sure the referral has been dealt with.
- If the complaint is against the Head of School or Executive Headteacher the parent will be advised to contact the Chair of the Governing Body.
- The complaints officer will respond within three working days and make sure the parent is clear what action (if any) or monitoring of the situation has been agreed, putting this information in writing.
- Where no satisfactory solution has been found within ten days, parents/carers will be advised that if they wish their concern to be considered further they should write to the Head of School within seven days the complaints officer's response.

Stage 2: Referral to the Head of School for Investigation

- The Head of School will acknowledge the complaint in writing within three working days of receiving the written complaint. The acknowledgement will give a brief explanation of the school's complaints procedure and a target date for providing a response to the complaint. This should normally be within ten working days. If this proves impossible, a letter will be sent explaining the reason for the delay and giving a revised target date.
- The Head of School will provide an opportunity for the complainant to meet her to supplement any information provided previously. It will be made clear to the complainant that if s/he wishes s/he might be accompanied to any meeting by a friend, relative, representative or advocate who can speak on his/her behalf.

If necessary the respective Head of School will interview witnesses and take statements from those involved.

- If the complaint centres on a pupil, the pupil should also be interviewed. Pupils should normally be interviewed with parents/ carers present, but if this would seriously delay the investigation of a serious/ urgent complaint then a member of staff with whom the pupil feels comfortable should be present.
- If a member of staff is complained against then they should have the opportunity to present their case.
- The Head of School will keep written records of meetings, telephone calls and other documentation.
- When all relevant facts have been established, as far as possible, the Head of School will produce a written response to the complaint and outline the decision taken and reasons for it, together with a note of any action taken. The complainant will be advised that he/she may take the complaint to the Chair of the Governing Body within two weeks of receiving the letter.
- If the complaint is against the Head of School or Executive Headteacher, or if the Head has been closely involved in Stage 1, the Chair of Governors will carry out Stage 2 procedures.

Stage 3: Review by the Governing Body

- The Chair of the Governing Body will write to the complainant acknowledging receipt of the written complaint. The letter will indicate that the complaint will be heard by three members of the governing body within twenty working days of receiving the complaint.
- The letter will invite the complainant to submit any additional documents relevant to the complaint. These must be received in time for consideration by the three members.
- A meeting of the Governors' Complaints Panel will be convened. No governors with prior involvement will be included on the panel. If not previously involved, the Chair will chair the Panel meeting, otherwise the Vice Chair will be invited. It is not appropriate for the Executive Headteacher to sit on the Panel.

- The Chair/Vice Chair will ensure that the complaint is heard within twenty working days of receiving the letter. All members of the Panel will receive all relevant correspondence relating to the complaint.
- Notification of the date and time of the meeting, together with all relevant documentation, will be given to all relevant parties at least five working days in advance of the meeting.
- The complainant will be advised that he/she can be accompanied by a friend, advocate interpreter and explain how the meeting will be conducted.
- The respective Head of School will be asked to attend the Panel meeting and invited to prepare a written report which will be sent to all concerned at least five days prior to the meeting.
- Members of staff directly involved in the matter may also be invited to respond in writing or person, at the discretion of the Chair.

The meeting will allow for:

- The complainant to explain their complaint and the respective Head of School to respond.
- Questions and answers between the respective Head of School/and or members of staff and complainant.
- Panel members to have an opportunity to question complainant and staff.
- All parties have the right to call witnesses who may be questioned by all parties.
- Final statements by both the complainant and the respective Head of School.
- It is the responsibility of the Chair to ensure that it is properly minuted.
- The Chair of the Panel will explain to the complainant and the respective Head of School that the Panel will consider its decision and that a written decision will be sent to both parties within 15 working days. The complainant, the respective Head of School, other members of staff and witnesses will then leave.
- The Panel will then consider the complaint and all the evidence presented and
- Reach a unanimous, or at least a majority decision on the complaint;
- Decide upon the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- where appropriate, suggest recommended changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not happen again.

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

The school should ensure that a copy of all correspondence and notes are kept on file in the school's records. These records should be kept separately from the pupil's personal records.

If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the chair of the GB is able to inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

Vexatious Complaints

The school will, however, resist abuse of the complaints procedure and may reserve the right not to investigate complaints considered to be vexatious or malicious or where the respective Heads of School, Executive Headteacher or chair of governors is satisfied with the action that the school has already taken or proposes to take to resolve the complaint. You can view the Vexatious Complaints policy [over here](#).

Reviewed by the Governing Body November 2015

To be reviewed by the Governing Body November 2018

