

HARRIS MIDDLE SCHOOL

COMPLAINTS POLICY

This policy should be used in conjunction with the DCSF Guidance (School Complaints Procedure – 22 May 2003) and alongside the Harris Middle School's Home/School Agreement.

Introduction:

The majority of issues raised by parents, the community or pupils, are concerns rather than complaints. Harris Middle School is committed to taking concerns seriously, at the earliest stage, in the hope of keeping the number of formal complaints to a minimum and without needing formal procedures. However, depending on the nature of the complaint, you may wish or be asked to follow the school's formal complaints procedure.

The prime aim of Harris Middle School's policy is to resolve the complaint as fairly and speedily as possible. Formal complaints will be dealt with in a sensitive, impartial and confidential manner. Malicious complaints may incur appropriate action by the school.

Investigating complaints:

It is suggested that at each stage, the person investigating the complaint (the complaints co-ordinator), makes sure that they:

- Establish what has happened so far, and who has been involved
- Clarify 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 thing 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 schools 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

The following details outline the stages that can be used to resolve complaints.

The Harris Middle School Policy has four main stages.

In summary they are as follows: -

- Stage 1 – A concern is raised informally with a staff member.
- Stage 2 – Complaint is heard by Headteacher.
- Stage 3 – Complaint is heard by Governing Body's Complaints Appeal Panel.

Stage 1 – Raising a concern

Concerns can be raised with the school at any time and will often generate an immediate response, which will resolve the concern. The school requests that parents make their first contact to the Form Teacher or Head of Year. On some occasions the concern raised may require investigation, or discussion with others, in which case you will receive an informal but informed response within a day or two. The vast majority of concerns will be satisfactorily dealt with in this way. However, if you are not satisfied with the result at stage 1, please write to or call the school within 10 school working days and state what you would like the school to do. The school will then look at your complaint at the next stage.

Stage 2 – Complaint heard by the Headteacher

Formal complaints shall be put in writing and addressed to the Headteacher. The complaint will be logged, including the date it was received. The school will normally acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 2 school working days of receiving it. In many cases this response will also report on the action the school has taken to resolve the issue. Alternatively, a meeting may be convened to discuss the matter further. This meeting will normally take place within 10 school working days. The aim will be to resolve the matter as speedily as possible. However, if you are not satisfied with the result at stage 2 please write to or call the school within 10 school working days of getting our response. You will need to tell the school why you are still not satisfied and what you would like the school to do.

Stage 3 – Complaint heard by the Governing Body's Complaints Appeal Panel

If the matter has still not been resolved at Stage 3, then you will need to write to the Chair of Governors giving details of the complaint. The Chair or a nominated Governor will convene a complaints panel. The hearing will normally take place within 10 school working days of the receipt of the written request for Stage 3 investigation.

The aim of the Appeal panel hearing is to impartially resolve the complaint and to achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. All parties will be notified of the Panel's decision in writing within three school working days after the date of the hearing. The letter will also contain what you need to do if you wish to take the matter further.

N.B. In cases where the matter concerns the conduct of the Headteacher, the Headteacher and Chair of Governors will be informed of the complaint. The Chair of Governors will arrange for the matter to be investigated. In cases where the matter concerns the conduct of a member of the Governing Body the member will be informed of the complaint.

The Governors appeal hearing is the last school-based stage of the complaints process.

The Area Education Manager can be contacted at:

Northern Area Education Office
Adrian House
Alexandra Road
Lowestoft
NR32 1PL

Tel: 01502 405000

The Governing Body hopes that if parents do have any concerns or complaints they will discuss them in the first instance with the appropriate teacher or with the Head Teacher so that efforts can be made to resolve the matter as quickly and as informally as possible.