

Elmfield Rudolf Steiner School

Complaints Policy

Issued by	School Lead
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Policy Statement

This policy and procedure is for the benefit of pupils, and parents of pupils, at Elmfield School. It is made available to parents and pupils and will be applied to any complaint registered against the school except in respect of:

1. Child protection allegations where a separate policy and procedure applies
2. Expulsions where a separate policy and procedure applies
3. Appeals relating to internal assessment decisions for external qualifications where a separate procedure applies

A parent for the purposes of this policy is a parent who has a child currently at the School, to whose experience the complaint relates. It would also include a former parent, where the complaint was registered whilst their child was still at the school.

What Constitutes a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. It may be made about the school as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff, and any matter about which a parent is unhappy and seeks action by the school is within the scope of this procedure. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the School has done something wrong, failed to do something that it should have done or has acted unfairly. Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated confidentially. The School is here for your child and you can be assured that your child will not be penalised for a complaint that you (or your child) raise in good faith.

Recording of Complaints

Complaints are recorded centrally and monitored and it is noted when they are resolved. A written record is kept and serious complaints and their outcomes are regularly reviewed by the School Lead or senior member of staff and available for inspection by Council. It notes the outcome, date and stage of resolution, as well as any action taken before a formal process or following the formal procedure.

The number of formal complaints from the previous academic year is available on request from the Business Manager.

Three Stage Complaints Procedure

Timeframe

All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively. They will be acknowledged within 5 working days if received during term time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods. The school aims to complete Stage 1 within 10 working days, Stage 2 within 15 working days and Stage 3 within 30 working days, unless otherwise agreed.

Please note that for the purpose of this procedure, working days refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during Term Time, excluding bank holidays.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally. If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their child's appropriate Class Teacher/ Class Guardian. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straight away by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the member of staff is unable to resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for her/him to consult the Education Manager
- Complaints made directly to the Education Manager will usually be referred to the relevant Class Teacher/ Class Guardian unless the Education Manager deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally
- The Class Teacher/ Class Guardian will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within ten working days, or in the event that the Class Teacher/ Class Guardian and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure
- The member of staff dealing with the issue may feel that engaging with the School Lead at this stage would prevent the matter from escalating to a Formal Complaint. If this is the case, then the School Lead will be asked whether they feel it appropriate to intervene at this juncture. If the School Lead feels it is appropriate to engage with the Parents, they will make it clear that their involvement is on an informal basis
- If the complaint is against the School Lead, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chair of Council, c/o The Business Managers, Elmfield Steiner School, 14 Love Ln, Stourbridge, DY8 2DZ

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the School Lead within 10 working days of the outcome of the informal resolution. The School Lead will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take
- In most cases, the School Lead will speak to the parents concerned, normally within five working days from the date that they received the complaint. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage
- Further investigation may be deemed appropriate, in which case the School Lead will delegate this task to a senior member of staff
- Written records will be kept of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint. Once the School Lead is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing no later than ten working days from the initial conversation on receipt of the complaint. The School Lead will also give reasons for their decision
- If the complaint is against the School Lead, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chair of Council, c/o The Business Manager, Elmfield Steiner School, 14 Love Ln, Stourbridge DY8 2DZ. The Chair of Council, or their nominee will call for a full report and all the relevant documents. The Chair of Council or their nominee may also call for a briefing from members of staff, and will in most cases speak to or meet with the parents to discuss the matter further. Once the Chair of Council or their nominee is satisfied that, as far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed of the decision in writing. The Chair of Council or their nominee will give reasons for his/her decision
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they should refer their complaint, in writing, to the Chair of the Council, c/o The Business Manager, Elmfield Steiner School, 14 Love Ln, Stourbridge DY8 2DZ who will convene a Complaints Panel under the chairmanship of a nominated Council Member. This should be made within 10 working days of the outcome of the Formal Resolution

- The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school. Examples of suitable people who have held a position of responsibility and are used to scrutinising evidence are serving or retired business people, civil servants, heads or staff at other schools, those with a legal background or members of the Police Force. The Chair of Council will be asked by the Business Manager to appoint the Panel members on behalf of Council. The Panel Chair, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 20 working days of receipt of complaint
- If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than five working days prior to the hearing
- The parents may be accompanied by a friend or relation (including a lawyer if they are not acting in that capacity). However, if they are bringing formal legal representation, then the school will need five working days' notice of this by the parents
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation
- The proceedings will not be tape-recorded without the consent of both the Chair of the Panel and parent(s) and any tape-recording will be used only to assist the Panel members in reaching their decision and formulating their reasons and will belong to the School
- At the discretion and invitation of the Panel, a witness or witnesses may attend to give their evidence at the hearing. Notice of a request for a witness or witnesses to attend the hearing should be given in writing to the Chair of the Panel at least five working days prior to the hearing. The notice should where possible include a written statement by the witness or witnesses relating to the complaint. The decision of the Panel as to whether a witness' or witnesses' evidence is heard or considered is final. Written records will be kept
- Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out. After due consideration of all facts it considers relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within 10 working days of the hearing. The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and reasons for it. The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing to the parents, the School Lead, the Council and, where relevant, the subject of the complaint
- If the parents cannot, for good reason, attend the hearing, the Panel will take reasonable steps to schedule an alternative date. The Panel hearing will proceed unless the parent has indicated in writing they are now satisfied, even if the parent chooses not to attend on the scheduled date. The findings of the Panel must be available on the premises for inspection by the Council and School Lead