

# Holtsmere End Junior School

## Complaints Policy

### HOW TO COMMENT OR COMPLAIN

#### We care about what you think

Each day this school makes many decisions and tries hard to do the best for all the children. Your comments - either positive or negative - are helpful for future planning.

You may want to talk to us about a particular aspect of this school, though not actually make a complaint - you just want to get something 'off your chest'.

If you are dissatisfied about the way your child is being treated, or any actions or lack of action by us, please feel free to contact us using the details listed above.

#### Our aims

- Your complaint will be dealt with honestly, politely and in confidence.
- Your complaint will be looked into thoroughly and fairly.
- If your complaint is urgent we will deal with it more quickly.
- We will keep you up to date with progress at each stage.
- You will get an apology if we have made a mistake.
- You will be told what we are going to do to put things right.
- You will get a full and clear written reply to formal complaints within **28 school days (5½ weeks)**.

Website: [www.holtsmerejm.herts.sch.uk](http://www.holtsmerejm.herts.sch.uk)

Email: [admin@holtsmerejm.herts.sch.uk](mailto:admin@holtsmerejm.herts.sch.uk)

Telephone: 01442 253189

## **How to make a complaint**

### **In the first instance – informal stage**

If you have a concern about anything we do, or if you wish to make a complaint, you can do this by telephone, in person or in writing (by letter or email). We hope that most complaints can be settled quickly and informally, either by putting matters right or by giving you an explanation. If there is something you are not happy about, or you don't understand why we are doing something in a particular way, please come in and discuss it with the class teacher or another appropriate member of staff, such as the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) if it is about Special Needs.

We know that it can feel uncomfortable to question or challenge something, but if you don't tell us what is worrying you we cannot explain what we are doing or try to put it right. If the member of staff you speak to in the first instance is unable to attempt to resolve the matter, you should make an appointment with the Headteacher. You should be able to sort out your worries but sometimes this is not possible. In this case there is a next step.

### **First - formal stage**

**Request a meeting with the Headteacher** who will investigate your complaint and aim to inform you of the outcome **within 10 school days (2 weeks)**.

If your first contact is with individual Governors, they will advise you to take up your concerns with the appropriate member of staff or Headteacher. A Governor should not be made aware of a potential complaint as they may be required to sit on a Panel in the event of a formal hearing (Stage Two) and should be impartial.

If your complaint is about the Headteacher, you should **write to the Chair of Governors**. If your child has a Statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) or an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) you might find it helpful to talk to our Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) or your child's named Special Needs Officer at the Local Authority. The SEND Information Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS – formerly Parent Partnership) may also be able to help you.

### **Second - formal stage**

If you remain dissatisfied following Stage 1 and wish to take your complaint further, you will be asked to complete a form or write a letter addressed to the Chair of Governors. In the letter you should:

- Make it clear why you are complaining.
- Say who you have spoken to already.
- Explain what you want to happen as a result of your complaint.

The Chair of Governors will arrange for your complaint to be considered and investigated under the arrangements approved by the Governing Body. This is likely to involve a Panel of Governors. If the Chair of Governors or another Governor has been involved in discussions to help settle the disagreement at Stage

1, s/he should arrange for another Governor to take charge of the investigation. The Governor in charge of investigating the complaint may ask to meet you to discuss your concerns.

You should make sure that the Governors' Complaint Panel is provided with any written information or evidence you intend to use in a formal hearing. You may bring a friend, representative or interpreter to any meeting if you wish. The Chair of the Panel may invite any person who may help establish the facts of the complaint. The Chair should tell you who this person is before the meeting. If any member of staff is required by the Governing Body to attend a meeting they will have the opportunity to be accompanied or represented as they wish. A member of staff named in a complaint may also choose to attend a meeting, even if not required to do so by the Governors. They may be represented. If this happens, we will inform you in advance.

When the Panel has fully investigated your complaint, the Chair of the Panel or the Governor in charge of the investigation will write to you to tell you the findings. These findings will be reported to the Governing Body. The Chair of Governors will then write to you confirming the outcome of your complaint and any agreed actions to be taken. Our Governing Body will aim to deal with your complaint **within 28 school days (5½ weeks)**.

### **Further recourse**

Most complaints are resolved by this process. Should your complaint not be resolved, your further options are as follows:

- You can complain to the Secretary of State at the Department for Education:

The Secretary of State  
Department for Education  
Sanctuary Buildings  
Great Smith Street  
London  
SW1P 3BT  
Website: [www.education.gov.uk](http://www.education.gov.uk)  
Telephone: 0370 000 2288

In the case of complaints about **Special Educational Needs provision**, you may complain further to the Local Authority. This should be done by writing to the Children's Services Complaints Manager.

It should be noted however that if you wish to pursue this route, you must do so within **20 working days (4 weeks)** of receiving the written outcome of the hearing into your complaint. After **20 working days (4 weeks)**, neither the school nor the Local Authority is under any obligation to investigate or progress your complaint any further.

## Useful contacts

### **Advisory Centre for Education**

Education Advice & Training  
72 Durnsford Road  
London  
N11 2EJ  
Web: [www.ace-ed.org.uk](http://www.ace-ed.org.uk)  
Phone: **0300 0115 142**

### **POhWER**

Hertlands House  
Primett Road  
Stevenage  
SG1 3EE  
Web: [www.pohwer.net](http://www.pohwer.net)  
Phone: **0300 456 2370**

### **Children's Legal Centre**

Riverside Office Centre  
Century House North  
North Station Road  
Colchester  
Essex  
CO1 1RE  
Web: [www.childrenslegalcentre.com](http://www.childrenslegalcentre.com)  
Phone: **0345 345 4345**

### **National Youth Advocacy Service**

(NYAS)  
Egerton House  
Tower Road  
Birkenhead  
Wirral  
CH41 1FN  
Web: [www.nyas.net](http://www.nyas.net)  
Phone: **0345 345 4345**

### **SENDIASS** (Special Educational Needs & Disability Information Advice Support Service – formerly Parent Partnership)

Registry Office Block  
CHR102  
County Hall  
Hertford  
SG13 8DF  
Web: [www.hertsdirect.org/parentpartnership](http://www.hertsdirect.org/parentpartnership)  
Email: [parent.partnership@hertfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:parent.partnership@hertfordshire.gov.uk)  
Phone: **01992 555847**

### **Family Lives**

#### **(Formerly Parentline Plus)**

15-17 The Broadway  
Hatfield  
Hertfordshire  
AL9 5HZ  
Web: [www.familylives.org.uk](http://www.familylives.org.uk)  
Phone: **0808 800 2222**

**See below for Complaints Fact Sheet**

# Complaints about schools: Fact Sheet

## Introduction

Hertfordshire County Council cannot deal with complaints about schools. School Governors are responsible in law for having a published complaints procedure and for responding to complaints.

## Stage One

Most concerns, complaints or potential complaints can be resolved by **talking to the member of school staff** concerned. The school can tell you who you should speak to first. You may wish to request a copy of the school's complaints procedure, available from the school office or website. If the concern isn't resolved by speaking to a member of staff, you should then **request a meeting with the Headteacher** who will investigate your complaint and aim to inform you of the outcome within 10 school days.

If your first contact is with individual Governors, you may be asked to take up your concerns with the Headteacher or the appropriate member of staff. A Governor should not be made aware of a potential complaint as they may be required to sit on a Panel in the event of a formal hearing (Stage Two) and should be impartial.

If your complaint is about the Headteacher, you should **write to the Chair of Governors** at the school. If your child has a Statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) or an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) you might find it helpful to talk to the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) at your child's school or your child's named Special Needs Officer. The SEND Information Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS) may also be able to help you.

If you have not yet raised your concerns with the school in question but contact the Local Authority instead, Council Officers will ask you for your written consent to share information regarding your complaint with the school. If you decline to provide your consent, the matter will not be taken any further. If you do provide consent, the Council will pass your concerns onto the school for action by either school staff or governors.

## Stage Two

If you remain dissatisfied following Stage 1 and wish to take your complaint further, the school may ask you to complete a form or write a letter addressed to the Chair of Governors. In the letter you should:

- Make it clear why you are complaining.
- Say who you have spoken to already.
- Explain what you want to happen as a result of your complaint.

The Chair of Governors will arrange for your complaint to be considered and investigated under the arrangements approved by the Governing Body. This is likely to involve a Panel of Governors. If the Chair of Governors or another Governor has been involved in discussions to help settle the disagreement at Stage 1, s/he should arrange for another Governor to take charge of the investigation. The Governor in charge of investigating the complaint may ask to meet you to discuss your concerns. The Governing Body should give you full details of how they will carry out any further investigation or formal hearing and keep you up to date with progress.

You and the school must make sure the Governors' Complaint Panel is provided with any written information or evidence you intend to use in a formal hearing. You may bring a friend, representative or interpreter to any meeting if you wish. The Chair of the Panel may invite any person who may help establish the facts of the complaint. The Chair should tell you who this person is before the meeting. If any member of staff is required by the Governing Body to attend a meeting they will have the opportunity to be accompanied or represented as they wish. A member of staff named in a complaint may also choose to attend a meeting, even if not required to do so by the Governors. They may be represented. If this happens, the school will inform you in advance.

When the Panel has fully investigated your complaint, the Chair of the Panel or the Governor in charge of the investigation will write to you to tell you the findings. These findings will be reported to the Governing Body. The Chair of Governors will then write to you confirming the outcome of your complaint and any agreed actions to be taken. The Governing Body should aim to deal with complaints within 28 school days.

For Academies, Free Schools, Studio Schools and University Technical Colleges, please seek guidance regarding Stage Two from the Education Funding Agency.

## **Stage Three**

**FOR ALMOST ALL COMPLAINTS, THE PROCEDURE ENDS WITH THE GOVERNING BODY AND THERE IS NO THIRD STAGE OF COMPLAINT TO THE LOCAL AUTHORITY**

If the school's complaints procedure has been exhausted and you remain dissatisfied, you can approach the Secretary of State (or the Education Funding Agency if the school is an Academy, Free School, Studio School or University Technical College). Further advice is available from the Children's Legal Centre, the Advisory Centre for Education (ACE) or Family Lives (formerly Parentline Plus).

**However, if your complaint is about the way that a school is providing for your child's Statement of Special Educational Needs or Education Health & Care Plan, you do have a third stage of complaint to the Local Authority (if the school is a Community, Voluntary-Controlled, Voluntary-Aided, Foundation or Trust school).**

In this case, you can write to the Complaints Manager who will acknowledge your complaint within five working days and inform the Chair of Governors and Headteacher. The Complaints Team will aim to investigate your complaint within 25 working days; however the investigation may take longer (up to 65 working days) in complex cases. When your complaint has been fully investigated the Complaints Manager will write to let you know the outcome. S/he will give the reasons for the outcome, any action or proposed action to be taken and any further avenues open to you. S/he will send a copy to the Headteacher, the Chair of Governors and anyone else concerned in the investigation. Parents who remain dissatisfied following further investigation by the Local Authority have the right to complain to the Secretary of State who may decide to conduct an additional investigation.

## Can I complain to anyone other than the County Council?

**FOR ALL OTHER TYPES OF COMPLAINT, INCLUDING THOSE REGARDING BULLYING, THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM OR COLLECTIVE WORSHIP IN A COMMUNITY, VOLUNTARY-CONTROLLED, VOLUNTARY-AIDED, FOUNDATION OR TRUST SCHOOL, THERE IS NO THIRD STAGE OF COMPLAINT TO THE LOCAL AUTHORITY**

However, you can complain to the Secretary of State at the Department for Education:

The Secretary of State  
Department for Education  
Sanctuary Buildings  
Great Smith Street  
London  
SW1P 3BT

Website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education>

## Useful contact details

Chair of Governors	The school secretary can tell you who this is and pass on any written correspondence	
Complaints Team (Children's Services)	<a href="http://www.hertsdirect.org/complaints">www.hertsdirect.org/complaints</a> Email: <a href="mailto:cs.complaints@hertfordshire.gov.uk">cs.complaints@hertfordshire.gov.uk</a>	01992 588542
SEND Information Advice & Support Service	<a href="http://www.hertsdirect.org/parentpartnership">www.hertsdirect.org/parentpartnership</a> Email: <a href="mailto:sendiass@hertfordshire.gov.uk">sendiass@hertfordshire.gov.uk</a>	01992 555847
ACE (Advisory Centre for Education)	<a href="http://www.ace-ed.org.uk">www.ace-ed.org.uk</a>	0300 0115 142
HertsHelp	<a href="http://www.hertsdirect.org/hertshelp">www.hertsdirect.org/hertshelp</a>	0300 123 4044
Family Lives	<a href="http://www.familylives.org.uk">www.familylives.org.uk</a>	0808 800 2222
Carers in Herts	<a href="http://www.carersinherts.org.uk">www.carersinherts.org.uk</a>	01992 586969

Children's Legal Centre	<a href="http://www.childrenslegalcentre.com">www.childrenslegalcentre.com</a>	0345 345 4345
Citizen's Advice Bureau	<a href="http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk">www.citizensadvice.org.uk</a>	03444 111 444

## Summary of the complaints process

