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# FOREST HILL SCHOOL

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## FORMAL COMPLAINTS' POLICY

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*May 2015*

*Review: 3 years : in line with  
amendments to the LA model  
complaints' procedures*

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## **Introduction**

Forest Hill School is committed to creating an environment where all students and staff feel safe and secure, fostering a culture of mutual support and respect. The focus is to ensure that all students form positive learning and friendship groups in all areas of school life to enable students to achieve their maximum potential in a caring and secure environment.

In circumstances where parents/stakeholders feel a matter remains unresolved, the following formal complaints' procedure is undertaken. However, our initial focus is always on working collaboratively with all those involved to resolve any difficulties in an informal setting, rather than resorting prematurely to formal procedures. We recommend the first step be a written outline of the complaint direct to the Chair of Governors, with a view to an informal meeting then taking place to discuss the issues in greater depth. From experience we have found this provides a sound platform for airing views and opinions, more often than not leading to a mutually satisfactory resolution to the matter.

The formal procedures may be invoked at any time should the informal approach fail to provide resolution.

As a Local Authority maintained school, Forest Hill has accepted the Lewisham model complaints' code, a summary of which follows:

### **Formal Complaints' Procedure – Conduct of the Meeting**

- The chair of the panel will open the meeting with introductions and explain the reason for the meeting.
- The clerk to the panel, not necessarily the clerk to the governors, will take minutes of the meeting.
- The complainant/or representative will be invited to present her/his case to explain why they are dissatisfied with the process used in reaching a conclusion on the original complaint.
- The Chair of Governors or nominated governor and the panel will be given an opportunity to ask questions of the complainant.
- The Chair of Governors or nominated governor will be invited to present her/his case explaining the action taken so far and the process used in carrying out the investigation.
- The complainant or representative and members of the panel will then be given an opportunity to ask questions of the Chair or nominated governor.

## **Summing Up Stage**

The Chair of Governors or nominated governor will have the opportunity to sum up their case. The summing up may take into account statements made during the proceedings but may not introduce new evidence.

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When the governors are satisfied that both the parties have completed their cases, they should ask all parties (except the clerk) to withdraw, so that they may consider their decision.

## **After the Meeting**

The governors' decision, the reasons for it and details of any further action to be taken will be communicated to the complainant and the headteacher in writing, normally within 5 school days from the date of the meeting.

## **Reporting the Outcome**

The outcome of the meeting should be formally reported to the next full meeting of the Governing Body under the confidential section of the agenda.

Schools are asked to report the outcome of all complaints to Lewisham Education for monitoring purposes.

## **Conduct of Governors Complaints' Panel Meeting**

Governors should ensure that the arrangements they make to consider a complaint recognise the fact that many complainants are unused to dealing with groups of people in formal situations and that they may well be inhibited by speaking to a large group of people. The complainant should be told that they can bring a representative or friend, who may well act as interpreter in certain circumstances.

All relevant papers will be circulated to the complainant, the headteacher and the Governors serving on the panel, no less than five school days before the meeting. Information about the way the meeting will be conducted will be included.

Following the investigation, the decision of the Chair or nominated governor will be communicated in writing to the complainant and the headteacher within 20 school days from the date the complaint is received. The letter will include the reasons for it and details of any steps intended to resolve the complaint.

**Timescale** (in school days, showing the latest day for each stage of the complaint)

Day 1	:	Chair of Governors/nominated governor receives complaint
Day 5	:	Notification of date and time of interviews
Day 10	:	All relevant papers (if any) are sent out
Day 15	:	Investigation must be completed on or before this day
Day 20	:	The complainant is notified of result

### **Possible Outcomes**

The Chair or nominated governor may reject the complaint and inform the complainant that in their view the headteacher's original finding was valid,

**OR**

Decide that the complaint is valid, in which case the governors must decide on the appropriate action which the headteacher, within their responsibility for the overall management of the school, is required to carry out, and what redress if any is required.

### **In conclusion**

The decision of the Chair or nominated governor will be final. If the complainant feels that the process used in investigating the complaint was flawed then s/he will be able to complain to a Complaints' Panel of the Governing Body but they will not reinvestigate the original complaint. Any meeting of the Complaints' Panel should be held within 15 school days of the parent notifying their wish to appeal against the process.

Once the process has been completed, complainants do have the right to take the complaint to the Secretary of State for Education under the prevailing sections of the relevant Act in force at the time.