

Dealing with Complaints in schools

What is a complaint?

The law

What does a good complaints procedure look like?

- framework of principles

Other points to consider

The role of the Local Authority

The Ombudsman

Q&As

What is a complaint?

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction

The Law

s29 of the Education Act 2002 requires all governing bodies to have a procedure to deal with complaints relating to aspects of the school and to any community facilities or services that the school provides.

The law also requires that the procedure must be publicised.

What does an effective complaints procedure look like?

Usually a 3 stage process that is clearly set out with specified time frames

Framework of principles:

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.

Other points to consider

Always, always follow your own complaints procedure

Put yourself in their shoes - how would you feel?

Unreasonably persistent complainants

What if the parent is still unhappy after following the school's complaint procedure?

Complainants where mental health is a factor

The Local Authority response to complaints about schools

The council will always refer parents back to the school to follow the school's complaint procedure

The Ombudsman

The Ombudsman will not investigate complaints about schools, but will consider the following in relations to schools:

transport services

special educational needs

school admissions

permanent exclusions from a school

children who are out of school

Any Questions?