

Amesbury Complaints Policy



Signature
Jonathan Whybrow
Head

Date: 10 March 2021



Signature
Tarquin Henderson
Chairman
Board of Governors

Date: 10 March 2021

Complaints' procedure for parents/guardians

Rationale for the Policy:	The school seeks to clarify the ways by which a parent can raise a concern or complaint with school.
Policy aim:	To guide parents through the process if they wish to raise a concern or a complaint

Author:	Head
Agreed and Authorised by:	Governing body
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Dates of interim amendments/updates:	

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Circulation and publication:	Available to all, on school website

Complaints' procedure for parents/guardians

Amesbury values the quality of its relationships with parents and always seeks to do the right thing for every child and for the school as a whole. In the first instance, any parent or guardian is encouraged to make direct contact with the relevant member of staff whenever there is a query about which they seek clarification.

However, we recognise that, on occasion, conflicts of interest, misunderstandings and errors may occur between parents, pupils and teachers and concerns arise which lead to a complaint. This policy outlines the procedures to follow when a parent or guardian wishes to make a formal complaint. We always aim to deal with such complaints fairly, quickly and, in the first instance, informally. The following provides a statement of the clear and stepped procedures that we use in handling complaints from parents or guardians. The statement applies to parents or guardians of all pupils in Amesbury, including Early Years Foundation Stage and a simplified flow diagram that outlines these steps can be found at the end of this policy.

Stage 1 A parent or guardian is requested to put the issue in writing to confirm that it is now a complaint to be handled under this procedure and send it to any member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT, members listed at the end of this policy). Depending upon the nature of the complaint, the SLT member will either deal with it themselves or delegate it to the relevant person in the school.

The letter should include three things:

- i. details of the issue;
- ii. the parents' perspective of events;
- iii. the outcome that parents are hoping for.

The complaint will be fully investigated and a meeting will be arranged within 10 working days of receipt of the complaint in order to report and discuss the investigation's findings and proposals. At this meeting, notes will be taken by a member of the school's administration team, and a copy of these, plus the school's final findings and decision, will be communicated to parents in writing within five working days.

Stage 2 If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of Stage 1, they may, within 14 days of receipt of the decision, submit a written request to the Head to make their complaint formal.

The letter should include three things:

- i. full details of the original complaint and parental perspective;
- ii. supporting evidence to suggest that the original school decision was wrong;
- iii. the outcome that parents are hoping for.

Parents will then be invited to attend a meeting within 10 working days of receipt of the request with the Head (or such person as s/he may appoint to act in their place) together with any other relevant member of staff. The complaint will then be fully investigated and a decision will be reached and communicated in writing within five working days of the meeting.

Stage 3 If the parent is not satisfied with the outcome of Stage 2, they may within 14 days of receipt of the decision in Stage 2 submit a written request to the Chair of Governors that their complaint be considered at Stage 3. This also applies to a complaint against the Head. The email address for the Clerk to the Governing Body is listed at the end of this policy.

The Chair will convene a panel composed of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint to hear the evidence and make a final decision as to whether or not the complaint will be upheld. Typically, two members of the panel will be serving governors. One of the panel will always be independent of the management or running of the school. Parents and the school are entitled to provide evidence for their positions, in advance of the meeting, and this information will be shared with all parties.

The panel will meet within 14 days of the letter having been received in order to discuss the complaint. The parent may attend this meeting themselves, and be accompanied (but not represented), if they wish. Parents are given the opportunity to explain their position and supporting evidence in more detail (usually approx. 20 mins) and the school is given a right of reply. The panel may ask further questions. The whole meeting usually takes place within an hour.

The considered decision of the panel will be notified to parents within seven working days of the meeting and will be final and binding. A copy of the panel's findings and recommendations will also be made available to the subject of the complaint, and will be available for inspection by the Head and other governors. A written record will be maintained in school as part of the complaints' log, which details the actions taken by the school as a result of the complaint heard at a panel hearing, regardless of whether the complaint was upheld.

If the complaint relates to the Chair of the Board of Governors, or the governing body, it should still be addressed to the Clerk to the Board who will decide how best to proceed with the complaint.

Confidentiality

Complaints are handled confidentially, and the correspondence and written evidence relating to them will be kept confidentially by the school except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

Record-keeping

Formal notes will be taken in all formal complaint meetings, usually by a member of the school's administration team, and in panel hearings, by the Clerk to the Board of Governors. These should be agreed by all attendees and circulated to both parties. Audio recording is only allowed by the consent of both parties.

A log of all formal complaints is kept by the Head's PA, which includes the stage at which it has been resolved. Records of complaint are held for 7 years following the date of resolution, and then reviewed for retention in the case of continuous disputes. Where the complaint has a safeguarding angle, the records will be preserved up to a member of staff's pensionable age or for 10 years from the allegation if this is longer.

Timeframes

School holidays and COVID-19 pandemic

For any stage of a complaint, if it is being handled during a school holiday then the time frame for investigation would be extended according to the nature of the complaint and the length of that holiday period. This would be notified to the parents on receipt of their complaint. The time period would be as short as is reasonably practicable yet allow for a full and proper investigation to take place during that holiday period or immediately after it.

Further, additional flexibility may be required during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic due to the disruption caused to normal working patterns, opening hours or staff absence.

Former pupils and parents

The school reserves the right not to investigate a complaint from a former parent or pupil once they have left the school, or if more than three months have lapsed since the incident, depending on the circumstances. A complaint from a former pupil/parent will always be followed up if the complaint started while the child was still a pupil.

EYFS

Written complaints at the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) age group about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirement will be investigated by the school and notified to the parent within 28 days. The record of complaints relating to EYFS will be available to Ofsted or ISI on request. For the EYFS, a record of complaints will be kept for three years as a minimum, as required under GDPR. For this age group only, a complaint may also be made directly as follows:

- Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD, enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
Tel: 0300 123 4666
- ISI, Cap House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA. concerns@isi.net Tel: 0207 600 0100

The number of formal complaints at stages 2 or 3 in 2019-20 was 1.

Amesbury SLT members

The Head

The Bursar (and Clerk to the Governors – y.drew@amesburyschool.co.uk)

Deputy Head (Pastoral)

Deputy Head (Academic)

Head of Pre-Prep

Assistant Head (Operations)

Head of Admissions and Marketing

Appendix 1

Flow diagram outlining steps for concerns/complaints

