



Northampton Academy

The best in everyone

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Complaints Policy

2011-2012

**Complaints Officer -
Richard Scott**

Review Date: December 2012

Complaints Procedure

Informal Resolution

It is recognised that parents will, from time to time, have normal and legitimate concerns about the progress, achievement, behaviour or welfare of their son or daughter. Parents are encouraged to make those concerns known to staff so that they can be addressed in partnership with the Academy. Almost invariably, the sooner such concerns are raised the easier it is for an appropriate resolution to be found.

A concern or complaint may be raised with any member of staff. This would normally be your child's Tutor. That person will try and resolve the matter or will refer you to the appropriate person.

The member of staff will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. If the matter cannot be resolved within 3 school days or in the event that you are not satisfied, you will be advised to proceed to make a formal complaint to the Complaints Co-ordinator Mr Scott. If the complaint concerns the Principal, the Complaints Co-ordinator would normally refer you to the Chair of the Local Governing Body (LGB).

Stage One: Complaint Heard by Staff Member

If you need to make a formal complaint it should be in writing and sent to the Complaints Co-ordinator Mr Scott. If you have difficulty in putting your complaint in writing, you are asked to make an appointment with the Complaints Co-ordinator who will help you do that.

The Complaints Co-ordinator will decide the best person to hear the complaint. It would be helpful if you could indicate if there is someone with whom you might have difficulty discussing the complaint so that your views can be respected. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels too compromised to deal with the complaint, the Complaints Co-ordinator may consider referring you to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be.

In most instances, there will need to be an investigation in order to understand the circumstances surrounding the complaint. That investigation will normally be undertaken by the Complaints Co-ordinator.

If the matter cannot be resolved within 5 school days following receipt of the written complaint or in the event that you are not satisfied, you will be advised to take your complaint to the second stage of this procedure.

The Complaints Co-ordinator will make a written record of the complaint, the date on which it was received, the date on which the matter was dealt with and the outcome of the procedure. You will receive a copy of this written record within a reasonable time following this process.

Stage Two: Complaint Heard by the Principal

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of stage one, if you feel that your complaint is sufficiently serious, or if you are dissatisfied with the way in which your complaint has been handled, you may take your complaint to the second stage of this procedure.

You should put your complaint in writing to the Principal. Again, if you have difficulty in doing that, you are asked to seek assistance from the Complaints Co-ordinator.

The Principal may delegate the task of collating the information to another staff member but not the decision on the action to be taken. The Principal will decide whether it would be helpful to meet with you to discuss your complaint.

The decision in respect of this complaint will normally be made within 5 school days of the Principal receiving the complaint. If the Principal feels that it is necessary, within reason, to ask for additional time, you will be informed.

Appeals Procedure

1. The third stage of the formal complaints procedure is the LGB's Appeals Panel.
2. The appeals procedure is invoked when a complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the second stage of the procedure or with the handling of a complaint by the Principal.
3. The complainant is required to put their complaint in writing to the Chairman or to the Complaints Co-ordinator marked for the Chair. It is important that the complainant should set the matter out in sufficient detail.
4. On receiving a written complaint under the appeals procedure, a hearing by an Appeals Panel will be arranged within 10 working days.
5. The complainant may attend the hearing in person and may be accompanied if they so wish; in which case they are required to notify the clerk of the name and occupation of such a person.

The Composition of the Appeals Panel

1. Care must be taken not to involve the whole LGB as this could compromise the impartiality of any panel set up for a disciplinary hearing against a member of staff following a serious complaint.
2. The panel would normally consist of three people, at least one of whom will be independent of the academy. The panel may choose their own chair.
3. It is important that the appeal hearing is as independent and impartial as possible and that it is seen to be so. No governor may sit on the panel if they have had prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it. In deciding the composition of the panel, governors need to try and ensure that it is a cross-section of the categories of governor and sensitive to the issues of race, gender and religious affiliation.

The Role of the Appeals Panel

1. The aim of the hearing, which needs to be held in private, will always be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the academy and the complainant. However, it has to be recognised the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the hearing does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations that will satisfy the complainant that his or her complaint has been taken seriously.
2. An effective panel will acknowledge that many complainants feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting. The panel chair will ensure that the proceedings are as welcoming as possible. Care is needed to ensure the setting is informal and not adversarial. Extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child.
3. The panel may:
 - a) dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;

- b) uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
- c) decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
- d) recommend changes to the academy's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

Roles and Responsibilities

1. It is strongly recommended that a clerk be appointed who would be the contact point for the complainant and be required to:
 - a) set the date, time and venue of the hearing, ensuring that the dates are convenient or acceptable to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible;
 - b) invite both the complainant and the Principal to put their position in writing for the panel to consider;
 - c) collate any written material and send it to the parties in advance of the hearing;
 - d) record the proceedings;
 - e) notify all parties of the panel's decision.
2. The Chair of the panel has a key role, ensuring that:
 - a) the remit of the panel is explained to the parties and each party has the opportunity of putting their case without undue interruption;
 - b) written material is seen by all parties;
 - c) key findings of fact are made and each side is given the opportunity to state their case and ask questions;
 - d) the hearing is conducted in an informal manner with each party treating the other with respect and courtesy;
 - e) the panel is open minded and acting independently.

Notification of the Panel's Findings and Recommendations

1. The Chair of the panel needs to ensure that the LGB, the Principal and the complainant are notified of the panel's findings and recommendations, in writing, with the panel's response within 3 working days of the hearing.
2. The decision of the Appeals Panel is final.



Northampton Academy: Managing a Complaint Form

Please complete in BLOCK CAPITALS and return to the Vice Principal Mr Scott who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:	
Student's name	
Your relationship to the student	
Address	
Postcode	
Day time telephone number	
Evening telephone number	
Please give details of your complaint	
What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint? (To whom did you speak to and what was the response?)	
What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?	
Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.	

Signature: _____

Date: _____

For Official use only	
Date acknowledgement sent	
Acknowledgement sent by	
Complaint referred to	
Complaint referred on (date)	