



Woolwich Polytechnic School

PolyMAT

COMPLAINTS POLICY

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Woolwich Polytechnics' Policy Document

- The school aims to be a caring, positive and supportive place where young people can learn and receive education in an appropriate manner.
- We want to listen to parents' views about their children's education and well-being at school.
- We will try to resolve parents' concerns and complaints as informally and quickly as possible.
- We will take any complaints seriously and provide a thorough and appropriate response.
- No pupil will be penalised or intimidated as a result of his/her parent making a complaint.
- We aim to learn from any mistakes or weaknesses, in order to improve further the standards of education offered at the school.
- There is a set of clear and detailed procedures for handling complaints that is available to parents who wish to pursue a complaint beyond the initial informal stage.
- There is a parents' leaflet which is provided to all parents, outlining how they should pursue any concern or complaint that they may have.
- The school will ensure that all complaints are logged.
- The governing body as a whole will not discuss individual complaints, and any governor receiving such a complaint will direct the parent to the school's complaints leaflet and procedures.
- The governing body will monitor and review the effectiveness of the policy and procedures annually by receiving a summary report of numbers and types of formal complaints together with outcomes. Individual details will not be included.
- Complaints or appeals relating to admissions, exclusions or Special Educational Needs provision will normally be handled by separate statutory mechanisms, and we will ensure that parents are informed of how such complaints can be pursued.

Complaints Leaflet for Parents

Introduction

We aim to provide your child with the best possible education and meet his or her needs as well as we can. However, in any school, parents may occasionally feel concerned about something or have a complaint. If this is the case we want to hear from you. This leaflet explains how you can voice a concern or complaint, and how we will respond.

What is a complaint?

It can be a concern or problem or feeling of dissatisfaction that you have about an aspect of our work.

What do I do if I have a complaint about the school?

Tell a member of staff. Preferably speak with the member of staff most knowledgeable of the facts of the matter. He or she will talk it over with you and try to sort things out. She/he will discuss your complaint with you and seek to resolve the matter. You will need to make an appointment to see the appropriate teacher, and possibly your child's form tutor, together. Your child will not be penalised or treated less favourably as a result of your making a complaint.

There are certain specific complaints that are handled differently.

- If your child is refused admission to the school you have a statutory right to appeal to an independent appeals panel. The school will be able to give you details.
- If your child has been excluded for between 5 and 15 school days, you have a right to make representation to the governing body. If your child has been permanently excluded you have the right to an independent appeal.
- If your child has Special Educational Needs (SEN) and you have a complaint about his/her SEN provision, the school will be able to give you details of the Local Authority's dispute resolution arrangements, the Parent Partnership service, and the SEN Tribunal for disputes about a Statement of Special Educational Need.

What do I do if I feel my complaint hasn't been sorted out?

You may contact the school office and ask for an appointment to see the Head teacher or Deputy Head teacher who handles complaints. The member of staff will listen carefully and ask you any questions to help him/her understand the situation fully. She/he will probably then have to talk to other people, but will get in touch with you as soon as s/he is able to respond fully. This is referred to as the **informal stage** of the complaints procedure

If I feel unhappy with what the Head Teacher says, what can I do then?

You may then write to the Chair of the school's governors (or designated governor), at the school address, setting out your complaint and why you are unhappy with the school's response. Please write within 14 days of receiving the school response. The Chair (or designated governor) will write acknowledging your letter within a few days and may invite you for an informal meeting to discuss your complaint. If not, the Chair (or designated governor) will then write again once s/he has investigated more fully. You should receive a full response within 14 days. This is still referred to as the **informal stage** of the complaints procedure.

What happens if I am unhappy about the Chair of Governors' response?

You are entitled to ask a panel of governors to meet to consider your complaint. If you want to do this, you should submit a formal complaint to the Clerk to the governing body within 14 days of receiving the Chair's response to:

The Clerk to the Governors, PolyMAT, The Woolwich Centre, 1st Floor, 35 Wellington Street, Woolwich, SE18 6HQ

You should state that you have a formal complaint and that you remain unhappy with the way the school and Chair of governors have responded, and that you would like a panel of governors to consider your complaint. There is no need to write all the details of the complaint in this letter but you will be required to explain clearly what you are complaining about. The Clerk will contact you about the panel and explain what will happen. You may bring someone with you if you wish. This part of the procedure is referred to as the **formal stage** of the complaints procedure

What happens at the Panel meeting?

Upon receipt of a formal complaint, the Chair of Governors or a nominated Governor, will arrange for all information on the complaint to be collated and will convene a Governing Body Complaints Panel within 20 working days. None of the members of the Complaints Panel will have been directly involved in any previous consideration of the complaint. One of the members of the Complaints Panel will be independent of the management of the running of the School. This independent member will be drawn from a local school where a local collaboration already exists.

Governors sitting on the Complaints Panel must be fully aware of this complaints procedure.

One of the panel members will chair the meeting, and s/he will explain what will happen. You may be asked to outline your complaint. Panel members and/or the Head Teacher, who will also be present, may ask you questions. The Head Teacher will then explain how the school has responded to the complaint, and then you and the panel may ask the Head Teacher questions. You may also ask other people (witnesses) to speak about what happened.

After this, everyone except the panel and the person taking minutes will leave, so that the panel can consider its findings. The Chair of the panel will notify you, via the clerk to the Governors of the Panel's decision and any recommendations in writing, within 20 working days. They will also write to the Head Teacher and Chair of governors. Their findings are binding upon the school.

The panel's findings are the school's final response to you about your complaint. If you are still unsatisfied about the handling of your complaint you can contact the EFA at:

https://form.education.gov.uk/submitform.php?self=1&form_id=cCCNJ1xSfBE&type=form&ShowMsg=1&form_name=Contact+the+Department+for+Education&noRegister=false&ret=%2Fmodule%2Fservices&noLoginPrompt=1

WHAT MIGHT A COMPLAINT BE ABOUT?

- your child's academic/social progress
- bullying by other pupils
- your child's relationship with teachers or other staff
- homework, too much or too little of it
- unfair treatment of your child as you or your child perceive it
- issues on the Health and Safety of your child
- absence (authorised/unauthorised)
- missing property
- detentions and other sanctions
- Parents' Evenings
- any situation which causes you or your child concern

How To Complain – A Summary

1. Talk to the staff member concerned or other appropriate staff member
2. Talk to the Head Teacher
3. Write to the Chair of Governors
4. Write to ask for a Complaints Panel

FINALLY...

Please be assured that we will take your complaint seriously and treat you fairly. If something has gone wrong we want to put it right, and if you are not happy with the result, then neither are we!

Woolwich Polytechnic's School Complaints Process

There are four stages available to parents seeking to address concerns or complaints relating to their child's education at the school.

1. In most cases the parent should approach the member of staff concerned, to discuss the matter informally.
2. If the parent feels that the matter is not resolved or feels unable to discuss it with the staff member, s/he should then discuss it with the Head Teacher or other designated senior leader.
3. If the matter remains unresolved, or if the complaint is about the Head Teacher, the parent should write to the Chair of governors (or designated governor) care of the school, setting out the complaint and the attempts made to resolve it. The Chair (or designated governor) will then investigate the matter and respond to the parent in writing.
4. If the parent remains dissatisfied, s/he should write to the Clerk to the governing body requesting that a Complaints Panel is convened to hear the complaint. The panel will make a definitive and final response on behalf of the school that is binding upon the Chair of governors and Head Teacher.

Should this full procedure fail to lead to a resolution of the issues in the parent's view, s/he can write to the Secretary of State for Education at the DfE. The only situation where the DfE is likely to become involved however is where the governing body is judged to have acted unreasonably or has failed to fulfil its statutory responsibilities. Internal school matters are not in the Secretary of State's remit.

Procedural Guidelines For Each Stage

1. Informal Discussion With Staff Member

The staff member will give the parent her/his undivided attention for a reasonable time in order to listen and respond to the concern. If the staff member is unable to do so immediately, s/he will offer the parent an appointment as soon as possible within 3 working days. If the staff member subsequently needs to investigate the issue before responding, s/he will inform the parent and state when a response should be available, within 3 working days. If it proves impossible to meet this deadline the staff member will contact the parent and explain the reasons for the delay and give a further time limit for their response. The staff member should consider the advisability of asking a third person to be present, and is encouraged to speak with the line manager.

If, after doing this, the complainant does not feel that their concern has been properly addressed or remains dissatisfied and wishes their complaint to be considered further it will escalate to Stage 2.

2. Meeting With The Head Teacher Or Other Senior Staff

Upon receiving the parent's request for a meeting, the Head Teacher will offer an appointment within 5 working days. If the Head Teacher subsequently needs to investigate the issue before responding, s/he will inform the parent and state when a response should be available, within 5 working days. If it proves impossible to meet this deadline the Head Teacher will contact the parent and explain the reasons for the delay and give a further time limit for their response. The Head Teacher may delegate the task of collating the information to another member of staff, but may not delegate the decision on the action to be taken.

A response will be sent to the complainant within 10 working days; this may invite the complainant to a meeting to discuss the matter further with a view to achieving a satisfactory resolution.

The Head Teacher will inform the parent that should s/he remain dissatisfied, she/he have recourse to the governing body and should write to the Chair of governors within 2 weeks.

3. Referral To Chair Of Governors (or designated governor)

Upon receipt of a parent's letter of complaint, the Chair of governors will write to the parent within 3 days acknowledging the letter and stating that the matter will be investigated.

Chair of Governors will arrange for a separate investigation into the circumstances of the complaint

The Chair will inform the parent that a full response will be made in writing within 14 days. If it proves impossible to meet this deadline the Chair will write to the parent and explain the reasons for the delay and give a further time limit for the full response.

4. Referral To the Governing Body's Complaints Appeal Panel

If still dissatisfied after Stage Three, the complainant will be advised of their right to make a formal complaint by writing to the Chair of Governors, via the Clerk to the Governing body, at Stage Four, within 14 days. The letter to the Chair of Governors should set out details of the complaint, together with the reasons for the complaint's continued dissatisfaction. The letter should be acknowledged within 3 days, and the panel convened to hear the complaint within a further three weeks. The Clerk should liaise with the parent to agree mutually convenient times.

Constitution of Panel

The panel will consist of three members, none of whom has detailed knowledge of the complaint or is involved personally in any way. One of the members of the Complaints Panel will be independent of the management of the running of the School. In the first instance, this independent member will be drawn from a local school – Linton Mead Primary School; where a collaboration agreement exists. This agreement allows a governor from that school to serve on this panel as an independent member.

Panel Procedure

The hearing will be minuted by someone other than a panel member. A panel member will be appointed Chair. The parent may be accompanied by someone of their choosing. The format of the hearing should be as follows:

- Parent outlines complaint
- Head Teacher and panel are given opportunity to question parent
- Head Teacher outlines school's response to complaint
- Parent and panel are given opportunity to question Head Teacher
- Each side may ask witnesses to speak as appropriate
- Everyone except panel and clerk withdraw
- Panel considers its findings
- Panel writes to parent, Chair and Head Teacher setting out findings, within 2 days.
- Draft Minutes of meeting are sent to parent, Head Teacher, Chair of governors and panel members within 7 days.
- Anyone objecting to anything in the Minutes may write their comments to the Clerk within 7 days of receiving them, and their letter will be appended to the Minutes.