

# Hessle Mount School

Jenny Brough Lane  
Hessle  
East Yorkshire  
HU13 0JZ  
Tel: 01482 643371

## Hessle Mount School Complaints Procedure

### Dealing with a complaints – Initial Complaint

The school takes all complaints seriously and is aware of the differences between a concern and a complaint. Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage will reduce the number that develops into formal complaints.

The informal procedure will need to be invoked when initial attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further. There is a member of staff who has responsibility for the school complaints procedure. Miss Cutting.

### Framework of Principles

The complaints procedure will:

- Encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible
- Be easily accessible and publicised, available on request to parents of pupils and prospective pupils
- Be simple to understand and use
- Be impartial
- Be non-adversarial
- Have a clear timescale for the management of complaints and keep people informed of any progress
- Respect people's desire for confidentiality.
- Address all points and issues and provide an effective response and appropriate redress where necessary
- Allows a formal complaint to be made in writing if parents are not satisfied with the response to an informal complaint

### Investigating Complaints

- Establish what has happened so far and who has been involved
- Clarify the nature of the event and what remains unsolved

- Meet with the necessary complainant or contact them (if unsure or if further information is necessary)
- Clarify what the complainant feels would put things right
- Interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
- Conduct the interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning
- Keep notes of the interview

## Resolving Complaints

The person investigating the complaint will offer where appropriate

- An apology
- An explanation
- An admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- An assurance that the event complained of will not re-occur
- An explanation of steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again
- An undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint

It may be useful for the complainant to state what actions they feel might resolve the problem at any stage. An admission that the school could have handled it better is not the same as an admission of negligence.

The procedure should identify areas of agreement between parties. It is also of equal importance to clarify any misunderstandings that might have occurred as this will create a positive atmosphere in which to discuss outstanding issues.

## Vexatious Complaints

There will be occasions when despite all stages of the procedure being followed, the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the Principal will inform them in writing that the matter is now closed.

## Stages of Complaint

- Initial complaint received, usually by teacher and dealt with if possible informing the Principal and making notes of the complaint
- If necessary the Principal will make contact with the complainant within 24 hours
- A meeting will be set up with all concerned within the next 48 hours (notes to be kept by all concerned)
- If the matter remains unresolved, the Principal will organise a hearing which will be held with the complainant and a panel of 3 people who have not been directly involved in the matter detailed in the complaint – one person on the panel will be

independent of the management and running of the school – parents may be accompanied if they wish

- The panel will make findings and recommendations and a copy of the findings and recommendations will:
  1. be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and where relevant the person complained about
  2. made available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the head teacher

### Checklist for the Arbitrator

- The hearing is as informal as possible
- The complainant may be accompanied by a companion
- Witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing in which they give their evidence
- After the introductions, the complainant is invited to explain their complaint and be followed by their witnesses
- The Principal may question the complainant and their witnesses after each has spoken
- The Principal is then invited to explain the school's action and be followed by the school's witnesses
- The complainant may question both the Principal and the school's witnesses
- The arbitrator may ask questions at any point
- The complainant is then invited to sum up their complaint
- The Principal is invited to sum up the school's actions and responses to the complaint
- Both parties leave together while the arbitrator decides on the issues
- The arbitrator explains that both parties will hear within 48 hours

### Recording Complaints

A complaint may be made in person, by telephone or in writing. At the end of a meeting or telephone call a written record must be made. Written records will be kept of all complaints indicating whether they were resolved at the preliminary stage or whether they proceeded to the panel hearing. Confidentiality will be guaranteed.

### Publicising the Procedure

Procedures will be available on request to parents of pupils and prospective parents and pupils.

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