

Myron B. Thompson Academy Complaints Procedure

Part 1: General Principles of complaints

Dealing with Complaints – Initial concerns

The Principal will determine the difference between a concern and a complaint.

Dealing with Complaints – Formal procedures

1. Formal procedures will 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.
2. School level administrators (elementary and secondary levels) will have responsibility for the operation and management of the complaints procedure. They will be known as the school's level 'complaints co-ordinator'.

Framework of Principles

3. This Complaints Procedure will:
 - encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible;
 - be easily accessible by Leadership and Governing Board;
 - 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 leadership team so that services can be improved.

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Investigating Complaints

- 4 The person investigating the complaint (the complaints co-ordinator), will make sure that they:
 - establish what has happened so far, and who has been involved;
 - clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved;
 - meet with the complainant or contact them (if unsure or 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

5. At each stage in the procedure MBTA designated staff will keep in mind ways in which a complaint can be resolved. If appropriate, the following may be offered:
 - 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 recur;
 - an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again;
 - an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint.
6. The procedure will identify areas of agreement between the parties. It will also clarify any misunderstandings that might have occurred as this will create a positive atmosphere in which to discuss any outstanding issues.

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Vexatious Complaints

7. This complaints procedure will attempt to limit the number of complaints that become protracted. However, if on occasion, despite all stages of the procedures having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied and tries to reopen the same issue, the chair of the Governing Board (GB) will inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

Time-Limits

8. Complaints will be considered, and resolved, as quickly and efficiently as possible. This complaints procedure will have realistic time limits for each action within each stage. However, where further investigations are necessary, new time limits will be set and the complainant sent details of the new deadline and an explanation for the delay.

Part 2: The Formal Complaints Procedure

The Stages of Complaints

9. A flow chart of suggested stages is found in Appendix A. At each stage there is an explanation of who will be involved, what will happen, and how long it will take. There may, on occasion, be the need for some flexibility; for example, the possibility of further meetings between the complainant and the member of staff directly involved and further investigations may be required by the principal after a meeting with the complainant. Both of these examples could be included.
9. Three school-based stages are likely to be sufficient for:
 - Stage one: complaint heard by staff member (though not the subject of the complaint);
 - Stage two: complaint heard by principal;
 - Stage three: complaint heard by GB's complaints appeal panel (led by the HR Committee).
10. An unsatisfied complainant can always take a complaint to the next stage.
11. The MBTA procedure specifies how a complaint will be dealt with if it concerns the conduct of the principal or a GB member where a principal or GB member has been involved in the issue previously.
12. MBTA complaints procedure steps will be shared with all staff at the beginning of each school year.

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Part 3: Managing and Recording Complaints

Recording Complaints

13. MBTA will record the progress of the complaint and the final outcome. A complaint may be made in person, by telephone, or in writing. At the end of a meeting or telephone call, a record of the discussion points, understanding and agreements made between the school and complainant. A brief note of meetings and telephone calls will be kept and a copy of any written response added to the record.
14. The complaints co-ordinator will be responsible for their level records and hold them centrally in the front office.

Resolution

15. A formal written response identifying the resolution will be sent to the complainant with a copy kept on file at the school.

Governing Body Review

16. The GB will monitor the level and nature of complaints and review the outcomes on a regular basis to ensure the effectiveness of the procedure and make changes where necessary. Complaints information shared with the whole GB will not name individuals except when requested during executive session.
17. As well as addressing an individual's complaints, the process of listening to, and resolving complaints will contribute to school improvement. When individual complaints are heard, MBTA may identify underlying issues that need to be addressed. The monitoring and review of complaints by the school and the GB will be a useful tool in evaluating a school's performance.

Publicizing the Procedure

18. The MBTA Complaints Procedures will be publicized on the school website, on the course LMS and upon request through email.

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Summary of Dealing with Complaints *Appendix A*

