

MILNTHORPE PRIMARY SCHOOL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS, CARERS AND OTHER USERS OF SCHOOL SERVICES

We very much hope that you and your child will be very happy at our school, and that any concerns that may arise are dealt with swiftly by our staff.

However, we recognise that there may be an occasion when you are not entirely happy with an aspect of the service that we provide, and that you want the school to deal with your concern through a more formal process. This leaflet sets out what the school will do if you wish to raise that concern informally, or make a formal complaint.

Who can raise a concern or make a complaint?

Anyone who uses the school, whether a pupil, a parent or carer, or a provider of a service to the school, or a visitor can use this procedure. If you wish to raise a concern or complain on someone else's behalf, the school will only deal with this if the person on whose behalf you are complaining is unable to do so for themselves (for example, who may not have English as their first language). In which case the school will need to receive written, signed and sufficient informed consent from the individual on whose behalf the third person is acting on. Cumbria County Council can provide face to face translators or over the phone interpretation services if required.

Cumbria County Council can also offer an advocacy service delivered through Cumbria Multi Cultural Service. The Dual Language Advocates will listen to your problem and will work with you to support you in the complaint process. They can also be used for support in other areas. If you require a Dual Language Advocate please contact Cumbria Multi Cultural Service 15-17 The Mall, Barrow in Furness, Cumbria LA14 1HL to arrange.

How will my concern be handled?

Our procedure has three stages:

1. Responding to concerns
2. Investigating complaints
3. Appeal to the governing body

At any point in the handling of your complaint, there is the possibility of a 'resolution' meeting.

1. Responding to concerns

If your concern is about something that a person has or has not done, for example the headteacher, another member of staff, a governor, or a volunteer, you should make an arrangement through the school office to speak to that person or their manager (and not approach them while they are 'on duty'). If your concern is about an aspect of school practice or policy, you should contact the headteacher. We want to respond to your concern as quickly as possible, but it may not be possible to

arrange an immediate meeting: an appointment within a few days may be necessary. We can reassure you that most concerns are usually resolved at this stage.

2. Investigating complaints

If you remain dissatisfied by our response to your concern, then you should make a complaint to the headteacher. The headteacher will arrange for the complaint to be investigated and respond to you within a reasonable time.

If your complaint is about the headteacher, you should contact the chair of governors who will arrange for it to be investigated by a nominated member of the governing body.

If your complaint is about the chair of governors, you should contact the clerk to the governing body, who will make the arrangement. In all cases,

- state that you are making a complaint
- give specific details
- say what you want the school to do to put things right

If you need help to set out your complaint in writing, the school will arrange for this for you. All letters should be sent to the school address, marked 'Confidential for immediate attention'.

Please be aware that if your complaint alleges misconduct by a member of staff, any investigation by the school and subsequent formal action is protected by confidentiality. You will not know the outcome and the right of appeal will not apply.

3. Appeal to the governing body

If you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation into your complaint, you may appeal to the governing body. The chair of governors (or the clerk) will arrange for a panel of governors to consider your appeal and respond to you within a set timescale. For complaints about staff (except the headteacher) or volunteers who work in school, this is the final stage of the complaints procedure and the panel's decision is final. If you are complaining about either the headteacher or a member of the governing body, and are dissatisfied with the nominated governor's response, you also have a right to appeal to the governing body.

The letter giving the school's decision following the investigation will tell you how to make an appeal; this is usually by writing to the clerk. The governing body will arrange for a panel of three governors to hear your appeal in person. After this [hearing], the panel will notify you of their decision. This will include informing you that the school's procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed. There is no further right of appeal to the school against the decision.

Unreasonably persistent, abusive or harassing complainants and vexatious complainants

The school expects anyone who wishes to raise problems with the school to:

- treat all staff with courtesy and respect;
- respect the needs of pupils and staff within the school;
- recognise the time constraints under which members of staff in schools work and allow the school a reasonable time to respond to your concern;

Whilst we recognise that some concerns may relate to serious and distressing incidents, we will not accept threatening or harassing behaviour, and will take steps supported by legal action as appropriate to ensure that the school can continue its work safely and securely.

Further Information

The governing body is not responsible for handling complaints about third party providers offering community facilities or services through our premises or using school facilities for external events. They have their own complaints procedures. However, the school will liaise with such providers as appropriate.

For any complaint about the following, contact the local authority on 0800 121 8800 for advice and information

- an appeal against a decision relating to the admission or exclusion of your child
- an appeal against a local authority decision about your child's special educational needs
- an allegation of a criminal offence