

# NEWHAVEN SCHOOL

## Complaints Leaflet for Parents

### Introduction

Newhaven PRU aims 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 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 try to sort things out. She/he will discuss your complaint with you and seek to resolve the matter. You may need to make an appointment to see the appropriate teacher. 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 you have a right to make representation to the Management Committee and/or the local authority (details are in the exclusion letter). 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 her/his 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 Needs.

### What do I do if I feel my complaint has not been sorted out?

You may contact the school office and ask for an appointment to see the headteacher or other senior teacher who handles complaints. The headteacher or senior leader will listen carefully and ask you any questions to help them understand the situation fully. They will probably then have to talk to other people, but will get in touch with you as soon as they are able to respond fully. This is referred to as the **informal stage** of the complaints procedure.

### If I feel unhappy with what the headteacher says, what can I do then?

You may then write to the Chair of Newhaven PRU's Management Committee, at the school's address, setting out your complaint and why you are unhappy with the school's response. Please write within 14 days of receiving the headteacher's response.

The Chair 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 will then write again once she 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 the Management Committee's response?**

You are entitled to ask a panel of members to meet to consider your complaint. If you want to do this, write to the Chair of the Management Committee within 14 days of receiving the Chair's response. Say that you have a formal complaint and that you remain unhappy with the way the school and Chair of the Management Committee has responded, and that you would like a panel of members 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 Chair 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?**

One of the 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 headteacher, who will also be present, may ask you questions. The headteacher will then explain how the school has responded to the complaint and then you and the panel may ask the headteacher 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 write to you within a few days setting out the panel's findings. They will also write to the headteacher and Chair of the Management Committee. Their findings are binding upon the school.

**The panel's findings are the school's final response to you about your complaint. School are responsible for their own activities and the Local Authority cannot get involved. The Local Authority cannot tell a school what to do. If you are still unhappy you could write to the Secretary of State for Education at the DCFS, but again there is no power to intervene unless the Management Committee has acted unreasonably or has failed to fulfil its statutory responsibilities. A final recourse might be to apply to the High Court for judicial review or to contact the Local Government Ombudsman.**

### **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 you child
- absence (authorised/unauthorised)