



Peacehaven Community **School**

Complaints Policy

This policy has been read and adopted by the Governing Body on:

Date: _____

Signed: _____

For and on behalf of the Governing Body

Signed: _____

Helen Cryer
Headteacher

What to do if you have a concern or complaint about Peacehaven Community School (PCS)

We care about what you think.

At PCS, we make many decisions every day. We try hard to do our best for all our students. Your views help us plan. We like to know when things are going well. We also want parents to tell us about their worries, concerns or complaints as soon as possible. It is much easier for us to sort out a recent problem than something that happened some time ago.

If you are unhappy with the treatment of your child, or any of our actions or lack of action, please feel able to tell us your concern. We know it can be difficult to question what a School is doing, but if you do not tell us what is worrying you, we cannot explain our actions or put things right. Our support and respect for you and your child will not lessen in any way.

Our promise to you:

- We will deal with your concern or complaint honestly, politely and in confidence.
- It will be looked into thoroughly, fairly and as quickly as possible.
- We will keep you up to date with what we are doing.
- We will apologise if we have made a mistake.
- We will tell you what we are going to do to put things right.

This complaints procedure is for general complaints. We must follow other procedures for complaints or appeals about the curriculum; special educational needs provision, exclusions and admissions. Staff disciplinary action, child protection issues or criminal investigation are also handled differently. We shall tell you which the right process is when you discuss your concern with us. Our complaints procedure has four stages.

Stage 1 of the process is informal:

If you have a concern about the School, try to talk to someone at the School, preferably the person who is most closely involved. Your concern can usually be settled quickly and without fuss by contacting the right person in the School. See "Who to Contact at PCS Regarding Stage 1 concerns or complaints"

If your concern cannot be sorted out in this way or you are not happy with the way it has been dealt with you should take it to stage 2.

The issue is referred to the Headteacher for investigation, usually by the complainant writing to the Headteacher. If your complaint is about the Headteacher you can complain directly to the Chair of Governors (see Stage 3). Any complaint received by

the Headteacher under this process, will be acknowledged within 5 school days with a full written response within 15 school days.

If your complaint has still not been resolved to your satisfaction, you may take it to stage 3.

You can complain in writing to the Chair of Governors care of the School. You should make it clear why you are complaining, whom you have already spoken to and what you want to happen as a result of your complaint. The Chair of Governors will let you know that he or she has received your complaint within 7 School days and will then investigate it. You will be told about the outcome of the Chair of Governors' investigation in writing within 20 School days. At this stage the LEA's governor support team should be informed that the governing body is dealing with a complaint at this level.

If you are still not satisfied after receiving the Chair of Governor's report, you can ask to have your complaint referred to a complaints committee of the Governing Body at stage 4.

You can write to the Clerk of the Governors, care of the School. You should say exactly why you are unhappy with the Chair of Governors' findings and ask that a complaints committee be set up to look at the complaint.

What you can do if you are still not satisfied with the Governing Body's decision.

You may believe that your complaint was not handled fairly according to the School's own complaints procedure. In this case, you can ask the local education authority to investigate:

You can write to the Children's Services complaints officer at this address.

Children's Services,
East Sussex County Council
PO Box 4,
County Hall
St Anne's Crescent
Lewes
East Sussex
BN7 1SG

The LEA has limited powers to investigate internal school matters but it does retain a responsibility to ensure that governors have acted properly in the exercise of their functions. You should explain your complaint and say why you think PCS did not follow its complaints procedure properly. Wherever possible you should give evidence for why you think this. The Authorities complaints officer will let you know that he has received your letter within 10 working days. The complaints officer will look at your evidence and then decide if there should be an investigation. Until PCS has finished considering your complaint, nothing can be done. This stage does not

represent a general right of appeal and the LEA cannot carry out an investigation solely because the complainant disagrees with the decision of the governing body. The LEA can only investigate inappropriate procedure; it is not able to re-investigate the original complaint nor can it intervene to overturn the governing body's decision. If it is concluded that PCS did not follow its procedures properly the matter will be referred back to the chair of the governing body. The governing body should then re-investigate the complaint.

If you believe that the Children's Services Authority has acted unreasonably, you may appeal to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills;

The Secretary of State for Education and Skills
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT

The Secretary of State could step in if a Governing Body or CSA had not carried out its legal duty or had acted unreasonably. The Secretary of State would not do anything until PCS and CSA had finished looking into the complaint.

If you feel that there has been a fault in the way your complaint has been dealt with, you can take this to the Local Government Ombudsman;

The Local Government Ombudsman
21 Queens Anne's Gate
London SW1H 9BU

The Ombudsman will only investigate where there has been a fault in the way the process was handled by PCS or CSA. Complaints about how something has been done can be investigated. This could be giving the wrong information, not dealing with letters or taking too long to do something. What has been done just because someone does not agree with the result cannot be questioned. The Ombudsman cannot investigate how PCS is run. The Ombudsman could not do anything until PCS and the CSA have finished looking into your complaint.