

What happens if you're not happy with the outcome?

If a complaint has completed the local procedures and the person making the complaint remains dissatisfied, they have a right to refer their complaint to the Secretary of State for Education. However, the Secretary of State will only intervene where the governing body has acted unlawfully or unreasonably and where it is expedient or practical to do so.

The School Complaints Unit (SCU) considers complaints relating to maintained school on behalf of the Secretary of State. The SCU will look at whether the complaints policy and other relevant statutory policies were adhered to. However, the SCU will not normally re-investigate the complaint and will not overturn the school's decision except in exceptional circumstances.

Further information can be obtained from the SCU by calling the National Helpline on 0370 000 2288 or by writing to the:

School Complaints Unit
Piccadilly Gate
Department for Education
Store Street
Manchester, M1 2WD

The Local Authority (Essex County Council) has no powers to intervene in complaints against schools. You can complain to Ofsted if you think a school isn't run properly and needs inspecting. They won't look into problems with individual pupils, e.g. exclusions or not getting a place at the school.

**Remember: It's good to talk first –
we're here to listen!**

Dunmow St Mary's



Concerns & Complaints

What to do if you're worried about your
child's progress or wellbeing
at school

Voicing your concern

From time to time, parents and carers may have concerns about their son or daughter's education and/or wellbeing at school. Quite often this is due to a misunderstanding about school policy or practice. Sometimes a child may be behaving unusually at home or at school and/or expressing their own concerns. Whatever the situation, we would encourage you, and/or your child, to **talk to us about it at the earliest opportunity** so that we can help sort out the problem.

If it's your child's academic progress or an issue around your child's wellbeing (for example, bullying or other anxiety), that you wish to speak to us about, please make an appointment, through the School Office, *telephone number* or in person at the office, to see the appropriate **teacher** in the first instance.

Dealing with your concern or complaint

Our **full complaints policy and procedure** is set out in a separate document which you can view on the school website:

website address

or you can request a copy from the school office. The school also has a policy around Managing Serial and Persistent complaints.

This leaflet is a **summary** of how the procedure operates so that you have a quick overview of how we can help you.

The majority of concerns from parents, carers and others are managed under the following general procedure. It's in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to follow formal procedures. We take informal concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

The procedure is divided into three stages:

Stage 1 aims to resolve the concern through **informal contact** at the appropriate level in school, as described above.

Stage 2 is the first **formal stage**, when complaints are considered

by the Headteacher.

Usually, concerns and complaints are resolved either at Stage 1 or Stage 2. If following these stages, the complaint is not resolved to your satisfaction, the Governors will become involved and take your complaint to Stage 3.

Stage 3 involves a **complaints review panel** of governors, who will review how your complaint has been handled and the outcome and decisions so far.

Please note that this procedure doesn't include complaints about the **personal conduct** of members of the school staff, teaching or non-teaching, as these are handled under confidential arrangements in line with employment law. If you're concerned about the conduct of any member of staff other than the Headteacher, you should write to the Headteacher. If your concern is about the personal conduct of the Headteacher, please write to the Chair of Governors c/o the school.

If the school has completed its procedures but you remain dissatisfied with the outcome, you have a right to refer your complaint to the Secretary of State for Education.

Response times

We aim to acknowledge concerns and complaints within **three working days** of receipt and to respond fully, or with a holding reply, **within 10 working days**. It is not usually possible to deal with complaints during school holiday periods when the school is closed.

The aim throughout is to resolve any concerns, anxieties, misunderstandings or complaints as soon as possible in the interests of all concerned, but especially for the good of your son or daughter.