

# Northamptonshire County Council

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## Schools: concerns and problems

- Three stages involved in raising concerns or making a complaint.
  - Timescales for dealing with your complaint
  - The role of Schools Service
  - Other types of complaints
  - Useful telephone numbers
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Headteachers, School Staff and Governors in Northamptonshire are committed to maintaining a positive partnership with parents. Sometimes things happen which make children or parents unhappy. It is important that parents and carers feel able to raise concerns and do this in the best way.

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In most cases, concerns and complaints can be resolved by talking to staff at the school. Sometimes parents may wish to raise a more formal complaint.

Schools are responsible for establishing their own complaints procedures. Many will use this approach - but you do need to obtain the school's published procedures and follow the guidance they provide.

You may wish to ask your school for a copy of their particular complaints procedures.

Typically there are three main stages involved in raising concerns or making a complaint.

### **Stage 1 - Initial approach**

It is important that parents contact the school first with their concerns and talk to a teacher or the headteacher. Most problems can be sorted out in this way easily and informally.

### **Stage 2 - raise a formal complaint**

If you are still unhappy the next stage is to raise a formal complaint by writing to the headteacher, (or chair of the Governing Body if you have already spoken to the headteacher). the headteacher (or nominated member of staff), or the Chair of Governors will investigate your complaint.

After they have looked into the issue, you may be asked to meet with the headteacher or chair of governors or you may get a letter explaining the school's response.

### **Stage 3 - Appeal to Governors**

If you are still unhappy after raising the complaint in Stage 2, you would need to inform the Chair of Governors in writing and request a hearing. The school's complaints procedures may offer the opportunity for your complaint to be heard by a panel of the governing body.

You will be asked to meet with the panel and explain your case. The panel will listen to you and the headteacher, and will inform you in writing of their decision.

### **Timescales for dealing with your complaint**

Ideally, complaints should be dealt with quickly, but if your complaint is complicated or requires detailed investigation, it may take a longer time to sort out. The school should let you know how a complaint is being addressed and when you can expect to hear from them.

### **The role of Schools Service**

Schools Service can provide information on schools' and parents' responsibilities and give advice to you on how best to resolve the complaint. We will expect that you have raised the issues first of all with the school.

### **Other types of complaints**

The following types of complaints about education are dealt with in different ways. There are special arrangements under the Education Acts if you want to appeal or complain about:

- admission to schools
- exclusion from school
- school re-organisation proposals
- special education provision
- religious education and collective worship
- national curriculum issues

You can ask your school or Schools Service for guidance on the issues above, or one of the organisations listed below.

### **Useful telephone numbers**

Advisory centre for education	0808 800 5793
Children's Legal Centre	01206 873820
Department for Education and Skills	020 7925 5000
Kidscape	0845 1205204
Local support for Racial Equality/Incidents Senior Education Officer	01604 237464/587442
NSPCC Child protection (including bullying)	0808 800 5000
Parent Partnership Service (PIP)	01604 671888
Special Needs Involving Parents (SNIP)	01604 636111

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Content from Northamptonshire County Council:  
<http://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/Learning/Parents/problems.htm>

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