



# Arbour House School

## Grievance Policy

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| Governor policy owner | Bettina Jeppesen                      |
| Signed off by         | Arbour House School<br>Governing Body |
| Distributed to        | All Staff                             |

## **GRIEVANCE POLICY**

### **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 Effective and harmonious day to day working relationships in Arbour House School requires the commitment of everyone. The Governing Body, the Headteacher and the management team are therefore committed to the resolution of problems encountered in the workplace as promptly and informally as possible.
- 1.2 In addition to promoting a common sense approach to solving problems, however, it is accepted that in some instances more formal measures may be necessary particularly where informal resolution of issues through day to day management does not satisfactorily resolve an employee's concerns and these are set out towards the end of the procedure.
- 1.3 It is recognised that a grievance procedure is a requirement of the school, but it must be emphasised that the procedure does not seek to replace day to day exchanges and management instructions between the Headteacher and staff. Every possible effort should be made to avoid recourse to the formal Grievance Procedure.
- 1.4 The aim of the procedure is to encourage a consistent and positive approach to resolving employee grievances, with the intention of achieving a mutually acceptable outcome.
- 1.5 Every effort should be made by all parties for grievances to be resolved at the informal stage of the procedure. The formal stages should be regarded as a last resort.**

### **2 Scope**

- 2.1 This policy and procedure applies to all employees of Arbour House School.
- 2.2 An employee may raise a grievance (see definition of grievance at paragraph 3) about any matter related to their employment at Arbour House School although in the first instance the aim will be to resolve matters informally and promptly between themselves and the Headteacher or their line manager.
- 2.4 The Grievance Policy and Procedure may not apply in the first instance where the issue:
  - (a) is already the subject of a collective grievance or dispute;
  - (b) relates to pay and conditions of a teaching employee (linked to the School Teachers Pay and Conditions Document) where there is a separate appeals process set out in the School's Pay Policy.
  - (c) is in relation to a matter which is covered by another school policy which contains a resolution procedure.

Early advice should be sought from the Regional Director or other Senior Manager within the Board of Proprietors, Potens, regarding whether the grievance procedure is the most appropriate to follow.

### **3 What Constitutes a Grievance?**

- 3.1 Grievances are defined in the ACAS Code of Practice as concerns, problems or complaints that employees raise with their employers.
- 3.2 Grievances may arise from a wide variety of issues, for example:-
- Not applying school policies or procedures correctly or fairly
  - Unfair working practices
  - Unreasonable requests
  - Unfair management practices
  - Health & safety concerns
- 3.3 The following are examples of what will amount to a grievance in law:
- Complaints raised in a letter (where the sender can be identified)
  - Complaints raised in an e-mail
  - Complaints as part of a resignation letter
  - Solicitor's letter (whether or not sent 'without prejudice')
  - Other third party correspondence (where the sender can be identified)
- 3.4 Therefore if the complaint is in writing it is likely to qualify as a grievance. The word "Grievance" does not need to be used when the individual makes the complaint. If in any doubt the employee should be asked to clarify if they are raising a grievance.

### **4 Responsibilities**

- 4.1 Employees are expected to raise issues of concern as soon as possible after they arise as part of the normal day to day interactions with managers and to co-operate with the school by allowing an informal resolution where possible before initiating the formal procedure. Employees are encouraged to seek advice and guidance from trade union/professional association representatives at any stage of the procedure.
- 4.2 The Headteacher and senior leadership team should promote a culture of open communication in the school which encourages staff to raise issues at an early stage and ensure that the procedure is applied fairly and consistently throughout the school. The Governing Body will ensure that such responsibilities are fulfilled.

## **GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE**

A brief summary of the procedure can be found at [Appendix 1 - Grievance Procedure Flowchart](#).

## **5 Raising a Grievance**

- 5.1 If it has not been possible to address concerns or issues through discussion, it may be appropriate to raise a grievance in writing.
- 5.2 An employee may raise a grievance which should be as soon as possible after the event or action which led to the grievance itself. Grievances should be submitted in writing and should include as much information about the grievance as possible. Any written grievance will ideally contain the following:-
- A description of the grievance itself;
  - The cause of the grievance;
  - The duration of the problem or issue;
  - Any actions already taken to try and resolve it.
  - The outcome sought.
- 5.4 When a written grievance is received, the Headteacher should contact the Regional Director.

## **6 Investigation**

- 6.1 A grievance investigation may be carried out at any time either as part of the informal or the formal grievance procedure. When an issue has been raised, the Headteacher will consider whether an investigation needs to be conducted and by whom.
- 6.2 If it becomes clear during a formal hearing that further investigation is required, the hearing will be adjourned and once the investigation is complete the hearing will be reconvened and the findings considered.
- 6.3 An investigation is intended to be a fact finding exercise which is based on the actual grievance information provided by the employee. It can be used to establish the exact nature of the grievance or to substantiate or refute statements made by the employee. Where a grievance has identified possible witnesses, these people will need to be interviewed as part of the process.
- 6.4 Any investigation should be carried out promptly to avoid any unnecessary delay in resolving the employee's grievance.

## **7 Informal Stage**

- 7.1 Often problems can be resolved at an early stage by talking about them calmly and openly before they have had time to escalate. The hearing of a grievance under the formal procedure inevitably increases the possibility of delays, which may increase the employee's dissatisfaction. It also moves consideration of the grievance further away from the working situation in which it developed.
- 7.2 In the first instance, therefore, as soon as there is a problem, the employee should discuss it with the Headteacher, their line manager, or if the problem relates to a colleague, with the member of staff involved.

- 7.3 If the grievance is of a particularly sensitive nature, the employee may wish to present their grievance in writing prior to the informal discussion.
- 7.4 There will be some issues which will not be appropriate for any immediate line manager other than the Headteacher or a member of the Governing Body to deal with (e.g. a grievance against the line manager or a policy or action imposed directly by the Headteacher). In these cases the line manager may refer the matter directly to the Headteacher or if the complaint is against the Headteacher to the Chair of Trustees or the Regional Director as part of the Senior Leadership Team.
- 7.5 At the informal stage of the procedure it may be appropriate for the employee to seek assistance from whatever source they feel may help improve the situation. This may include a trade union/professional association representative or a work colleague, either of whom may be able to act as an intermediary.
- 7.6 The line manager should arrange to meet with the employee to consider the grievance and respond at the end of the meeting or by the end of the next working day (or within a reasonable timescale agreed with the employee but not more than 5 working days).
- 7.7 Should the line manager need to investigate the issue further, the employee should be informed and arrangements made for an appropriate time to reconvene the meeting.
- 7.8 A management note will be made of the outcome of the discussions and any resolutions to be implemented.

## **8 Formal Stage**

### **8.1 Raising a Formal Grievance**

- 8.1.1 Where informal resolution of a problem is not possible or where an employee continues to be aggrieved despite attempts to resolve the matter informally, they should submit their formal grievance, in writing, to the Headteacher. The written grievance should detail the exact nature of the grievance and if possible, what resolution the employee is seeking.
- 8.1.2 If the grievance is against the Headteacher the employee should write to the Chair of the Governing Body. In this instance the Chair will assume the role, or appropriately delegate to a Senior Manager of Potens, assigned to the Headteacher in the formal stages of the procedure. The standard procedure will apply to all other aspects of the grievance.
- 8.1.3 The Headteacher or Chair of the Governing Body will consider whether further investigation is required prior to any formal hearing taking place.

## **8.2 Grievance Hearing**

- 8.2.1 Depending on who the grievance is against, it will be heard by either the Headteacher or a member or panel of Governors. If the grievance is against another individual at the school or is in relation to something that another individual has done, it will be heard by the Headteacher. If the grievance is against the Headteacher or in relation to general school issues, it will be heard by an individual or panel of Governors, as appropriate.
- 8.2.2 If the Headteacher is responsible for hearing the formal grievance, they will be responsible for arranging the formal grievance hearing which should be heard within 10 working days of receipt of the grievance or as soon as practicable within 28 calendar days.
- 8.2.3 If an individual or panel of Governors will be hearing the formal grievance, the Chair will need to ask the clerk to the Trustees to arrange the formal grievance hearing which should be heard as soon as practicable, but certainly within 28 calendar days.
- 8.2.4 The employee may be accompanied to the hearing by a work colleague or trade union/professional association representative (practicing solicitors are excluded). The Headteacher/Governors Panel Chair may seek advice from Potens' HR Consultant.
- 8.2.5 Any relevant documentation to be referred to as evidence at the hearing will be submitted no fewer than 5 working days before the date of the hearing to the Headteacher/Governor Panel Chair, who will arrange for copies of the documents to be circulated to all parties at least 3 working days before the hearing.
- 8.2.6 At the hearing, the Headteacher/Governor Panel Chair will invite the employee to put forward their case and refer to any documentary evidence as appropriate. In the event that witnesses are providing evidence, their submissions will be included in the hearing paperwork.
- 8.2.7 Once the employee has put forward their case, the Headteacher/Governor Panel Chair and any HR Officer in attendance will question the employee, their representative and any witnesses as necessary in order to gather as much information about the case as possible.
- 8.2.8 The Headteacher/Governor Panel Chair may decide that further investigations are necessary before being able to reach a decision in which case the hearing will be adjourned and reconvened.
- 8.2.9 The Headteacher/Governor Panel Chair will normally announce their conclusions at the end of the hearing and in any case, within 5 working days of the hearing.
- 8.2.10 The outcome of the hearing will be confirmed in writing to the employee, by the Headteacher/Governor Panel Chair, within 5 working days of the date of the hearing. The letter will summarise the hearing, advise the employee of the conclusions made and advise the employee of their right of appeal.

## **9 Appeal**

- 9.1 If the employee continues to be aggrieved in respect of their complaint, they may exercise their right of appeal and write to the person named in the Hearing outcome letter (normally the Headteacher) within 10 working days of the hearing, requesting that their appeal is heard by a panel of Governors or further panel of Governors.
- 9.2 The timescales for arranging the appeal hearing will be in line with those for the grievance hearing. The employee once again has a right to be accompanied.
- 9.3 The Governing Body will nominate a panel of three Governors who will act impartially to hear the appeal. Trustees hearing appeals should not have heard any previous hearing in respect of the grievance raised.
- 9.4 The appeal hearing will follow the procedure as set out at Appendix B.
- 9.5 The decision of the appeal hearing will be final.

## **10 Handling grievances raised by the Headteacher**

### **10.1 Informal Stage**

- 10.1.1 Headteacher grievances should be resolved informally where possible by direct approach to the person(s) concerned. If it is not resolved they should discuss the matter with the Regional Director who in turn may, with agreement, discuss the grievance with the Chair of the Governing Body and conduct the investigation. The Head teacher is advised to consult with their trade union/professional association representatives as appropriate.

### **10.2 Formal Stage and Appeal**

- 10.2.1 Where the matter is not resolved by means of the informal process, the Headteacher should submit a formal written grievance to the Regional Director or the Chair of the Governing Body, as appropriate. A HR Officer may be in attendance at formal stage hearings to offer advice to the panel hearing the appeal.
- 10.2.2 Grievances against a School Governor
  - (a) A panel hearing consisting of representatives from the Board of Proprietors will be arranged within 10 working days of receipt of the formal grievance or as soon as practicable thereafter. The Headteacher and any other teacher involved will be entitled to be accompanied at the hearing by a work colleague or trade union/professional association representative. The Headteacher will be notified in writing of the outcome of the hearing within 5 working days.

- (b) If the Headteacher continues to be aggrieved they will have the right of appeal to a further (new) panel including the Chairman of the Board of Proprietors. The decision of the appeals panel is final.

#### 10.2.3 Grievances against the Chair of Trustees

- (a) A Trustee panel hearing (excluding the Chair of Trustees) will be arranged within 10 working days of receipt of the formal grievance or as soon as practicable thereafter. The Headteacher and any other teacher involved will be entitled to be accompanied at the hearing by a work colleague or trade union/professional association representative. The Headteacher will be notified in writing of the outcome of the hearing within 5 working days.
- (b) If the Headteacher continues to be aggrieved they will have the right of appeal to a further (new) panel of Trustees. The decision of the appeals panel is final.

### **11 Mediation**

- 11.1 Good practice suggests that mediation can be a helpful accompaniment to resolving employee grievances at various times throughout the process particularly where there may be relationship difficulties. Mediation is voluntary and as such should not be forced on individuals involved in any grievance. Mediation can be facilitated by an appropriate Arbour House or Potens manager.
- 11.2 Nothing in this procedure should prevent Arbour House school engaging in a mediation process to overcome any difficulties for the benefit of the school.

### **12 Handling grievances raised during the course of disciplinary action**

- 12.1 An employee may raise a grievance after disciplinary or capability procedures have begun, on the grounds that the disciplinary or capability action amounts to unlawful discrimination or that the employee believes that disciplinary or capability action has been taken for some other reason than conduct or capability or that they believe the process has been flawed.
- 12.2 If the grievance is related to the disciplinary matter, the grievance will be heard as part of the disciplinary proceedings.
- 12.3 In cases where an employee raises a grievance during the course of the disciplinary procedure that is unrelated to the disciplinary matter under investigation, the grievance will be heard in parallel with disciplinary proceedings. The raising of a grievance will normally not delay disciplinary proceedings. Advice should be sought from Potens' HR Consultant in these circumstances.

### **13 Handling collective grievances**



- 13.1 In cases where a group of employees at Arbour House School wish to make the same complaint, the grievance can be heard as a collective grievance.
- 13.2 The group may nominate an appropriate representative to make the grievance on the employees' behalf. The appropriate representative should be a member of the group of employees, nominated by the group.
- 13.3 The same procedure will apply as detailed in section 5, but it will be the responsibility of the representative to inform all employees involved of progress.
- 13.4 In any of these cases, an employee may not raise the same grievance individually.

#### **14 Record keeping / monitoring**

- 14.1 The Headteacher will maintain a summary record of any grievance raised in the school. In all cases, written records of the grievance will be kept in accordance with the current Data Protection legislation and policy. Employees have the right to request access to the records.
- 14.2 The records will include:
- The nature of the grievance;
  - A copy of the written statement made by the employee;
  - A copy of the Head teacher's response;
  - Any action(s) taken and the reason(s) for the action(s);
  - Investigation notes
  - Whether the employee exercised their right of appeal;
  - The outcome of the appeal;
  - Any subsequent developments.

#### **15 Review of Procedure**

- 15.1 This procedure will be reviewed periodically every three years to ensure that it meets with statutory requirements and best practice guidance provided by ACAS

## Appendix A      Grievance Procedure Flowchart

Employee seeks personal resolution to avoid moving to a formal grievance in first instance by directly approaching member of staff concerned, with intermediary if required. If issue not resolved move to:-

An investigation can be conducted during either the informal or formal stages of the procedure where required.

### INFORMAL STAGE

If it has not been possible to resolve the grievance, the employee should put their grievance in writing. Employee encouraged to seek advice/guidance from TU/Professional Association Rep. Mediation may be requested & provided. Meeting held to consider grievance and response made to employee within one working day of meeting. Manager makes note of outcome of informal stage. Headteacher is encouraged to seek advice from Human Resources.

Grievance resolved

Grievance unresolved

### FORMAL STAGE

Where handling issue under informal stage inappropriate or where employee's grievance unresolved, employee submits written grievance to Headteacher (or directly to Chair of Governing Body where Headteacher is involved in complaint or is complainant). Headteacher is encouraged to seek advice from HR Consultant. Hearing will take place within 28 calendar days of receipt of employee's written grievance.

Grievance resolved

At hearing conclusion or within 5 working days, Headteacher/Chair of Governor panel confirms outcome in writing, including right of appeal.

Grievance unresolved

### APPEAL STAGE

Employee writes to Headteacher stating grounds of appeal within 10 working days of receipt of formal stage confirmation letter. Hearing convened with Governing Body's Appeal Committee to take place within 28 calendar days of receipt of employee's appeal letter. At hearing conclusion or within 5 working days, Headteacher/Chair of Governor panel confirms outcome in writing.

Grievance resolved

**Decision of Appeal Committee is FINAL (no further right of appeal).**

## **Appendix B      Appeal Hearing Procedure**

The appeal hearing will follow the procedure below (unless varied by mutual consent of all parties).

- A statement will be made by or on behalf of the employee, outlining the nature of the grievance and why the resolution to the grievance has been appealed against;
- The Headteacher will present the school's management response;
- Both parties will be given the opportunity to question one another;
- Members of the Governing Body panel and any HR Officer in attendance may question either party at any stage during proceedings;
- If required, both parties will summarise their case with the employee, or their representative, having the final say;
- The hearing will adjourn whilst the Governor(s) consider their conclusions;
- Both parties may be called back if further clarification is required;
- The Governing Body panel will normally announce their conclusions at the end of the appeal hearing, but in all cases will confirm the conclusions within 5 working days of the date of the appeal hearing. A letter confirming the conclusions will be sent to both parties within 5 working days of the date of the hearing.

## POLICY REVIEW RECORD

|                        |                         |  |
|------------------------|-------------------------|--|
| <b>POLICY NAME</b>     | <b>Grievance Policy</b> |  |
| <b>COMPILED BY</b>     | Sue Hoxey               |  |
| <b>DATE</b>            | September 2017          |  |
| <b>REVIEW DUE DATE</b> | <b>REVIEWED</b>         |  |
|                        | <b>DATE</b>             | <b>BY (NAME)</b><br><b>Items updated</b>   |
| March 2022             | 1/3/22                  | B Jeppesen<br><br>Added policy review document   |
| April 2023             | 25/4/23                 | B Jeppesen<br><br>'Management' changed to 'Leadership' where appropriate.<br><br>Timescales for submission of relevant evidence reduced from 10 working days to 5 working days, prior to a hearing (8.2.5)<br><br>Hearings, including appeals where reference to Governing Body panel – added this can be an individual Governor as well as a panel.<br><br>'Trustees' changed to Governors or Governing Body. |
| March 2026             |                         |  |
|                        |                         |  |