



The Axe Valley Community College Compliments, Concerns & Complaints Policy

Compliments, Concerns & Complaints Policy

**This policy was adopted by the Governing Board of
The Axe Valley Community College
on 6th May 2016**

**The policy will be reviewed every two years by the Senior
Leadership Team and Governors.**

The next review will be in May 2018

To be read in conjunction with the following policies:

Equality Policy
Behaviour Policy

The Axe Valley Community College Compliments, Concerns & Complaints Policy

1. Scope of this policy

1.1 This policy sets out the College's procedures for dealing with compliments, concerns and complaints relating to the services provided by the College.

1.2 This policy may be used by anyone who has a compliment, concern or complaint about any aspect of the College. This includes parents and carers of students, neighbours of the College or any other members of the local community.

1.3 It does not apply to concerns and complaints relating to the following, which are dealt with under separate policies:

- Staff grievances or disciplinary procedures
- Admissions
- Exclusions
- Issues related to child protection or criminal investigations
- Any community facilities or services provided by the College

1.4 There may be occasions where a concern or complaint gives rise to disciplinary procedures against a staff member which put the procedures detailed in this policy on hold. If and when this occurs, the individual who has a concern or complaint will be informed. Any non-disciplinary aspects of the concern or complaint will continue to be dealt with under this policy.

1.5 The policy will be reviewed by the College every 2 years, and any adjustments made will be advised to the Governing Board

2. Aims and objectives

2.1 The College strives to provide an outstanding education for all our children and the Headteacher and other staff work hard to build positive relationships with all children, parents/carers and the wider community.

2.2 We always welcome positive feedback about the College, its staff and its students. However, we recognise that there may be times when an individual may be unhappy with the services provided by the College, has a concern relating to the College or may want to make a suggestion about how we can improve.

2.3 The College aims to:

- Be receptive to genuine expressions of dissatisfaction

- Encourage the resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible
- Deal with complaints quickly, proportionately and fairly and within clearly defined time limits
- Take action as a result of concerns or complaints that helps to improve the quality of the education and training provided by the College
- Take account of the College's duty to promote equality and diversity
- Maintain good working relationships between all people involved with the College

3. Compliments procedure

3.1 An individual wishing to make a compliment about a student, staff member, team or the College can do so either:

- In person to administrative staff, teaching staff, senior teaching staff, Governors or the Headteacher
- By letter or email to the Headteacher or the Chair of Governors

3.2 The compliment will be passed on to the relevant individual(s) and their line manager or, in the case of a student, via their tutor.

4. Managing Concerns and Complaints

4.1 The College strives to resolve all concerns and complaints informally and all matters of concern and complaint should first be raised under Stage 1 of this policy. Only if this informal procedure fails to resolve the matter should a formal complaint be made.

4.2 Any individual with a concern or complaint may be accompanied or represented by a friend or relative at discussions and meetings about the concern or complaint and/or submit formal complaints which have been written by another individual on their behalf.

4.3 At each stage, where a concern or complaint is upheld, in part or in full, it may be appropriate for the College to offer one or more of the following:

- an apology
- an explanation
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- an assurance that the issue complained of will not recur
- an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to ensure that the issue will not happen again
- an undertaking to review the College's policies in light of the concern or complaint

4.4 At each stage, if all or part of a concern or complaint is not upheld or the matter is not resolved to an individual's satisfaction, the individual may either choose to take no further action or to take their concern or complaint to the next stage.

4.5 In general, the time limits and deadlines contained within this policy should be adhered to. If it becomes necessary to alter the time limits and deadlines set out within this policy, the individual with the concern or complaint will be told and given an explanation as to why this has been the case.

4.6 At all stages of the complaints procedure, the following information should be recorded by the College in writing:

- The name of the individual with the complaint or concern
- The date and time when the concern or complaint was raised
- The details of the complaint
- The desired outcome of the individual
- How the concern or complaint is investigated (including written records of interviews held)
- Results and conclusions of investigations
- Any action taken
- The individual's response (satisfaction or further pursuit of complaint)

4.7 Records of concerns and complaints should be retained in the administrative office of the College for the periods specified in the College's policy on record retention and be used by the College to improve the College's services.

4.8 If, at any stage, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors feels that the concern or complaint is vexatious, has insufficient grounds, has already been considered in full or has been closed, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors may write to the individual to refuse to consider their concern or complaint under this policy and the reasons why they are refusing to do so. In this eventuality, the individual with the concern or complaint may proceed directly to Stage 4 of this policy.

5. Stage 1: Informal procedure for dealing with concerns and complaints

5.1 An individual can raise informal concerns and complaints with administrative staff, teaching staff, senior teaching staff, Governors or the Headteacher. If a parent/carer has concerns relating to their child, these should, in the first instance, be discussed with their child's class teacher.

5.2 The member of staff approached about the concern or complaint may share the details of the matter with others to seek further information or to decide on the appropriate action to be taken.

5.3 The matter will be considered and dealt with as quickly and effectively as possible. If requested, the individual who raised the concern or complaint should be informed of any action to be taken to resolve the issue.

5.4 Where an individual feels that a situation has not been resolved, or their concern or complaint is of a sufficiently serious nature, they should make an appointment to discuss the matter informally with the Headteacher.

5.5 The Headteacher will meet with the individual as soon as possible to discuss their concern or complaint. If it is possible, an informal resolution should be reached and the individual who raised the issue should be informed of any action to be taken to resolve the issue.

5.6 Should an individual have a concern about the Headteacher, the steps under 5.4 and 5.5 should, instead, be dealt with by the Chair of Governors.

6. Stage 2: Formal complaint to the Headteacher

6.1 Only if Stage 1 fails to resolve the matter should a formal complaint be made to the Headteacher. The College is not obliged to consider a formal complaint if the Stage 1 informal procedure has not been followed.

6.2 The complainant must submit their complaint to the Headteacher in writing, stating the nature of the complaint and details of how the matter has been dealt with so far. The letter should enclose copies of all supporting documentation.

6.3 The Headteacher should formally acknowledge the complaint within five school days of receipt.

6.4 The Headteacher will arrange an investigation into the complaint to review any relevant documentation and information. If necessary, the Investigating Officer will interview witnesses and take written statements from those involved. When students are interviewed, another member of staff should always attend. The Headteacher may delegate the task of collating information relating to the complaint to another member of staff but not the decision on the action to be taken.

6.5 The Headteacher will provide the complainant with a full written response within ten school days of acknowledging the complaint. This response will determine whether or not the complaint has been upheld, the reasons why and what action (if any) will be taken. The letter

should state that if the complainant is dissatisfied with the response and would like to take their complaint further, they should consult this policy.

6.6 Should an individual have a concern or complaint about the Headteacher, Stage 2 should, instead, be dealt with by the Chair of Governors.

7. Stage 3: Review by the Complaints Committee

7.1 If the complainant wishes to appeal against a decision made under Stage 2, they should make a written request for a review by the Complaints Committee. This letter should be sent to the College, addressed to the Chair of Governors, within fifteen school days of receipt of the decision letter from the Headteacher under Stage 2. The letter should enclose copies of all supporting documentation and give details (including names and addresses) of any witnesses the complainant intends to call.

7.2 The review will be heard by a Complaints Committee consisting of:

- the Chair of Governors (or Vice-Chair of Governors should the Chair be unavailable) – unless they have had prior involvement in the complaint or the circumstances surrounding it.
- between one and three Governors who have had no prior involvement in the complaint or the circumstances surrounding it
- an Independent Member, being a person who is independent of the College and who does not have any connection with the College or with any person employed by the College of a kind which might reasonably be taken to raise doubts about their ability to act impartially

7.3 The Chair of Governors will acknowledge receipt of the appeal letter within five school days of receiving it. This letter will inform the complainant that their complaint will be heard by a Complaints Committee.

7.4 Within fifteen schools days of the written complaint being received, the Clerk to Governors should formally write to the complainant, the Headteacher and any other relevant staff or witnesses and inform them:

- of the date, time and venue of the review
- the aims and objectives of the review and how it will be conducted
- the names of the Complaints Committee members
- the names of any witnesses that will be attending
- that any documentation they wish the Complaints Committee to consider, including signed and dated witness statements, must be returned to the Clerk to Governors no later than five school days before the review

- that copies of any documentation, including signed and dated witness statements, will be provided to the other party no later than three school days before the review
- of the right for any party to be represented if they wish
- how and when the Complaints Committee will reach their decision

7.5 Subject to the need to deal with complaints quickly, proportionately and fairly, the Clerk to Governors will use all reasonable endeavours to ensure that the dates and times for the review are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible.

7.6 Notes will be taken of the meeting by the Clerk to the Governors or another appropriate third party who has no prior involvement in the complaint or the circumstances surrounding it.

7.7 The review should allow each party involved to explain their understanding or interpretation of events and for other parties to question them. The review will, usually operate according to the following format:

- The Chair of Governors will introduce all parties to one another and explain the principles, objectives and format of the review
- The complainant will be given the opportunity to explain their complaint
- The Headteacher and the Complaints Committee will be allowed to ask the complainant questions
- The Headteacher will be given an opportunity to explain the College's official response, interpretation or view about the complaint
- The complainant and Complaints Committee will be allowed to question the Headteacher
- Every party will be given the opportunity to call witnesses and question witnesses called by other parties
- The Headteacher and the complainant will both be given the chance to make final statements

7.8 After hearing all the evidence, the Complaints Committee will consider their decision and inform both parties of their decision in writing within five school days.

7.9 The Complaints Committee can:

- Request further information from the complainant or the Headteacher to assist them in making their decision
- Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part
- Uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- Recommend changes to the College's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not reoccur

7.10 In the event that the Independent Member disagrees with the majority decision of the Complaints Committee, this should be expressly stated in the decision letter, together with details of the Independent Member's views.

7.11 Should the complaint be about the Chair of Governors or be about the Headteacher and the Chair of Governors was involved with Stages 1 or 2 of this policy, the letter of complaint should be addressed to the Clerk to the Governors, who will arrange for another Governor to manage the complaint in the place of the Chair of Governors.

8. Stage 4: Referral to the Education Funding Agency (EFA)

8.1 The primary responsibility for resolving complaints rests with the Governing Board. The EFA role in College complaints is to provide advice to all parties

8.2 When the EFA receives a general complaint which does not come under one of the areas covered by statutory requirements, nor is obviously concerned with child abuse or staff disciplinary matters the complainant will be referred to the College's complaints procedure. The complainant will be advised to contact the Headteacher to take the matter further. If the complaint has already involved the Headteacher but has not achieved a satisfactory resolution from the perspective of the complainant, the EFA officer may seek to resolve issues between the Headteacher and the complainant. If this is not possible or successful the complainant will be referred to the Chair of Governors. In this situation the Headteacher will be notified of the referral and details of the complaint.

8.3 EFA staff will give advice to the Headteacher, Governors and parents on the use of complaints procedures. For serious or complex complaints this will be through a Senior Education Officer.

8.4 Where possible the EFA will provide advice and appropriate support to complaints panels of Boards, including attendance of an officer at meetings to hear complaints.