

Guidelines for parents

If your complaint or concern is in connection with an **individual child**:

- raise the matter with a member of the school staff in the way that is easiest for you, in person, by email, by phone, or in writing. Most concerns parents have are resolved by talking about things at the earliest possible stage. The school will want to know if you have a concern. The sooner you tell them about it the better the outcome is likely to be. In secondary schools a member of the management or pastoral care teams may have responsibility for dealing with complaints
- if your concern is urgent make sure you let school staff know this
- complaints and concerns are usually resolved by people coming together, talking and making agreements. However, there are some situations where a complaint will have to be investigated and a decision made at a later stage. If this is the case we will tell you who is investigating the complaint. If they cannot provide an answer within 10 working days they will let you know when they will reply

- if you are going to a meeting in the school you may want to take someone with you for support
- sometimes it helps to write things down in advance of a meeting or talk things through with someone else
- try to stick to facts and feelings. Expressing how you feel is very important and it will help school staff
- it can be helpful to think about what you want as a result of your complaint
- before a meeting with school staff, decide if it would be better to have your child with you, or if it is better for you and the staff to discuss your concerns first
- if you feel you are not being heard or taken seriously, you can ask to speak to another member of staff, have someone from the education authority to support you, or have an independent advocate or mediator

- you should tell the headteacher about any unresolved concerns, but if the complaint is about the headteacher and it cannot be resolved, you should contact the education and leisure services customer services officer on 0141 842 5578, els@renfrewshire.gov.uk or Renfrewshire Council, Education and Leisure Services, Renfrewshire House, Cotton Street, Paisley, PA1 1LE
- if your complaint is not resolved by the education authority you can take it forward for external review, see diagram overleaf.

If your complaint or concern is about the effectiveness and implementation of **school policies** in general, for example, those related to:

- bullying
- the curriculum
- discipline/indiscipline
- healthy eating

The same applies as in a complaint about an individual child and you should start by talking to school staff. However, you can also raise your concern with the parent council. The parent council will not deal with the details of the individual case but can address general policy issues. If after discussion with the school and education authority, the parent council is unable to reach a satisfactory outcome for these concerns, they are able to refer the issue to HMIE.

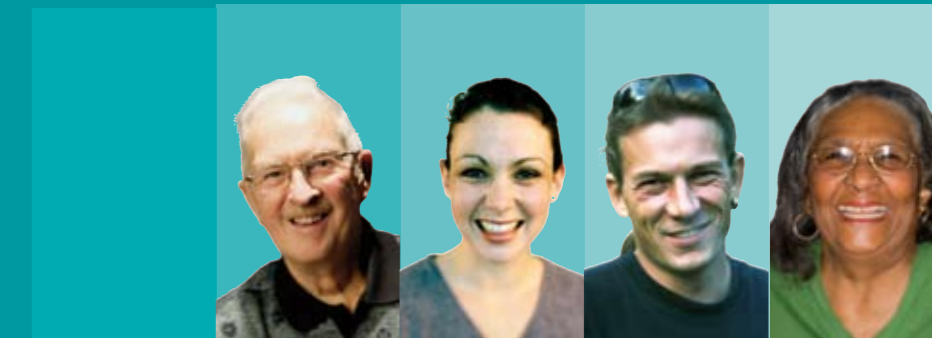
Support for parents making complaints

We will do our best to support people with difficulties in making complaints by providing support to fill in forms, providing information in Braille, large print, on computer disk or audio tape, or in other languages. It may be possible for an officer of the council to attend the school with you for example if your child is supported by the home link service. We can provide information leaflets on additional support for learning complaints which may involve mediation and dispute resolution.

For answers to any questions you have about our complaints handling please contact the customer service officer.

Phone: 0141 842 5578

Email: els@renfrewshire.gov.uk



HELP US TO HELP YOU

CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS AND COMMENTS

NOTES FOR PARENTS

Improving our Services

We are committed to providing the highest standards of service to our community. Our staff are encouraged to take a positive attitude to complaints as they are a useful tool for us to use in improving our services. We want to hear from you if you are unhappy with the way you have been treated or with a service we provide so that we can put things right. As well as any complaints you may have, we also want your comments or suggestions which could help us to improve our services. You can make a comment or complaint by:

- telling us in person;
- visiting our website at **www.renfrewshire.gov.uk**;
- sending an email to our customer service officer **els@renfrewshire.gov.uk**;
- writing to Renfrewshire Council, Education and Leisure Services, Customer Services, Renfrewshire House, Cotton Street, Paisley, PA1 1LE;
- telephoning 0141 842 5578 or the head teacher of your child's school, or
- completing the 'Help us to help you' form.

Complaints System Overview

The 'Help us to help you' form is included in the customer complaints and comments 'Help us to help you' leaflet, available in all council premises. The leaflet outlines our service pledges, how to make a comment or suggestion, when to use the complaints procedure and how to make a complaint:

- step one: make an informal complaint
- step two: make a formal complaint
- step three: make an appeal

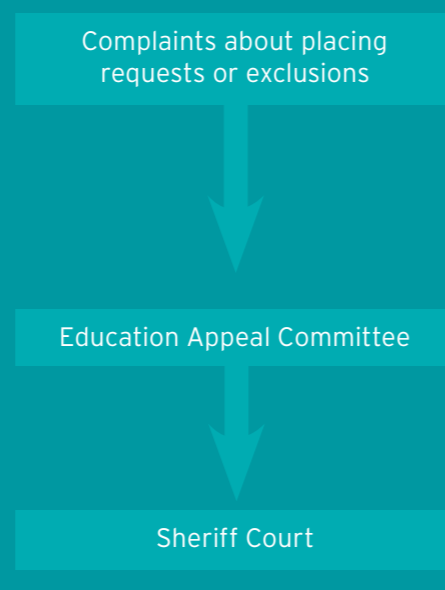
Once the three internal stages of complaint have been exhausted, complaints may be pursued for external review as outlined in the diagram below.



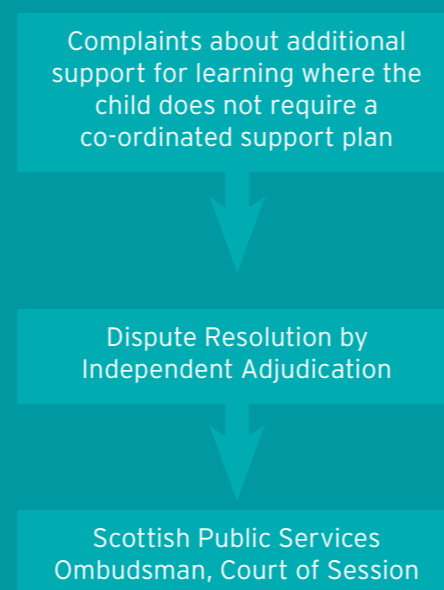
Parental Involvement

Renfrewshire Council's customer complaints and comment procedure will be used to deal with complaints in connection with how the council as education authority carries out or fails to carry out its functions under the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006. These functions include :

- providing advice and information to parents about their own child;
- promoting parental involvement; and
- supporting the setup and operation of parent councils.

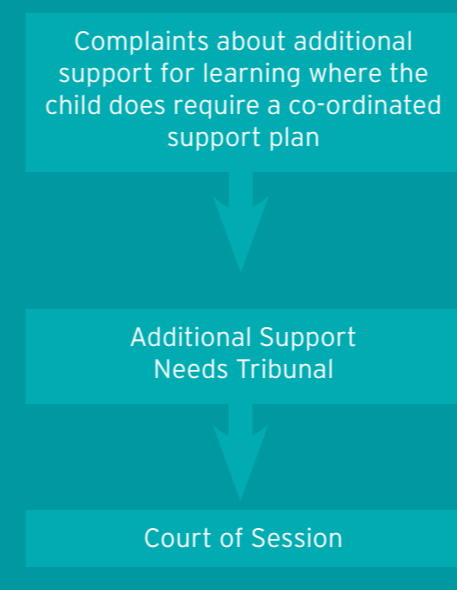


As well as parental involvement legislation, the education authority has duties under legislation on additional support needs. We will consider every complaint about an individual child's education to decide which legislation is relevant. Legislation on additional support needs imposes a duty on the education authority to provide information about mediation and dispute resolution. These procedures are also very helpful in dealing with complaints.



Complaints Procedure

Our staff will respect your privacy and keep your dealings with them confidential at all times. Our procedures enable issues to be resolved locally at as early a stage as possible by encouraging comments on issues of concern before they develop into complaints about problems. Our procedures include effective arrangements in place for head teachers and school staff to deal with parental concerns and complaints. The procedures are easy to access and well publicised through posters and leaflets in every education and leisure services establishment, and on Renfrewshire Council's website.



We have worked hard to make our procedures as simple to understand and use as possible. We have clear timescales for action.

Our staff are trained in using the procedures, an important part of which is ensuring confidentiality. You can be confident that if you make a complaint you and your children will not suffer disadvantage or discrimination. Our aim is always to be effective in providing suitable solutions. We may not be able to provide everything you want but if this is the case we will explain what we can do and work with you to find a suitable compromise.

Within three working days of receiving your complaint we will send you a letter telling you who is looking into the matter. The officer will then send you a detailed reply within ten working days of our first letter or tell you how long it will take to deal with your complaint if it is complicated and we need to investigate it further.

The investigating officer will look at any relevant documents and speak to people involved before coming to a conclusion. This may include contacting you by telephone to discuss your complaint.

At every stage of the process we will provide information about the next step to follow if you are still unsatisfied. We will always provide

feedback on complaints directly and either through newsletters, websites or posters in our establishments so parents know it is worthwhile making a complaint and that action will be taken as a result.

We understand that to make our complaints procedure effective, parents must be aware that they, or their children, will not suffer any disadvantage or discrimination as a result of making a complaint. All complaints will be dealt with courteously and our responses will be clear.

If we do not meet the high standards expected of us in relation to courtesy, clarity, confidentiality and disadvantage, please contact either the director of education and leisure services or our customer services officer to let us know. We will take the matter very seriously, investigate and report back to you.

Parent Councils

Parent councils have a role in representing the collective views of parents. They may make representations on matters arising from individual complaints where the complaint raises issues of wider policy or strategic concern. The first action for the parent council is to raise the issue with the head teacher. If the complaint or concern is not resolved at that stage, the parent council may approach the education and leisure services customer services officer. If the complaint is not resolved at education authority level then the parent council can raise its concerns with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIe). The role of the parent council is to raise concerns about issues, they have no role in resolving disputes between parents and schools. The parent council must maintain the same high standards as the school and education authority in relation to the right of confidentiality for parents making a complaint.