

Compliments, Enquiries and Complaints Procedure

Falkirk Council Children's Services would like you to be completely satisfied with your child's education. We encourage feedback on our services from parents, pupils and members of the public. We are interested in feedback of all kinds, whether it be compliments, enquiries or complaints.

Sometimes, customers may feel that the services provided are not what they wished for and they may wish to complain. If you have a complaint about the service provided by the school, please let us know.

How do I complain?

Complaints can be made to schools in writing, by email, on the telephone, in person or by using the Falkirk Council online complaints form on the website.

Who do I complain to?

Parents must first consult the school regarding their complaint.

What happens with my complaint?

All complaints will now be logged confidentially on our Customer First online complaints handling system. They will be monitored exclusively by each school and Children's Services staff at Sealock House to ensure any response is within the timescales. This new monitoring system will enable us to learn from complaints to prevent similar issues arising in future. We will deal with your complaint confidentially and as quickly as possible. If we have made a mistake we will apologise and try to put things right.

How long will it take until I get a reply?

Our aim is to respond within 5 working days to front line complaints, although issues can sometimes be complex and the school may need time to investigate them.

What happens next?

If your complaint has not been satisfactorily resolved by the school, it may be eligible for consideration at the second, investigation stage by Children's Services headquarters at Sealock House. Complaints will not be considered by Children's Services unless they have been first reported to the school – unless there are exceptional circumstances. Our aim is to respond to second stage complaints within 20 working days.

Who else can help?

If you remain dissatisfied after the second, investigation stage, you can raise the matter with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman.

You should also be aware that you have the right to raise concerns with your local Councillor, MSP or MP.

What else do I need to know?

Please note that schools can only respond to complaints about a service that they or Falkirk Council provides or a service we have contracted from a third party. The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman defines a complaint as – *“An expression of dissatisfaction by one or more members of the public about the local authority's action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the local authority”*.

The Council's complaints handling procedure sets a time limit for making a complaint of six months from when the customer first knew of the problem.

You can find out more about the Council's Complaint Procedure from the Falkirk Council website - <http://www.falkirk.gov.uk/contact-us/complaints/>

The new Customer First system also records compliments so please pass those on to the school too.

Role of Parent Council

Parent Councils are sometimes approached by parents who wish to make a complaint about the school and want the Parent Council to represent them. Parent Councils should refer parents directly to the school for all complaints, most especially those relating to individual children, school staff or a service which the school provides (or has failed to provide). The school is responsible for investigating the complaint, protecting the confidentiality of the pupil, family or staff member, apologising if necessary and taking action to put things right. The school will also make an effort to respond within the appropriate timescale so a direct approach to the school is best to avoid any unnecessary delay.

The Parental Involvement Act says – (sections 11 to 14 of the guidance – section 8, subsections 1b, 1e, 1f & 4 of the Act) that Parent Councils can make 'representations' to schools on issues and 'collate the views of parents' largely with a view to 'improving the standards of education'.

Issues raised by the Parent Council would necessarily be of interest or concern to a group of parents – not one individual parent about their own child or a member of staff. There is no mention of complaints or responding to dissatisfaction from individual parents anywhere in the guidance for Parent Councils. The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman, should the complaint be referred to them, will only respond to complaints made by an individual – they will not deal with complaints made by an organisation such as a Parent Council on behalf of a parent.

If the complaint is about a member of staff – the staff member's right to 'dignity at work' would also mean that it should be dealt with confidentially by the Head Teacher. If the complaint is about the Head Teacher, generally that immediately becomes a second stage complaint and it is investigated by a Service Manager based in Sealock House. The right to confidentiality of the staff member would be protected.

Parent Councils should explain to parents if they are approached that they cannot take up complaints on behalf of parents. Parent Councils do have a role in challenging the school to improve but they are not expected to intervene in complaints by individuals about issues that are the responsibility of the school.