



COMPLAINTS POLICY

1. Introduction

We believe that our school provides a good education for all our children and that the headteacher and other staff work very hard to build positive relationships with all parents. However, the school is obliged to have procedures in place in case there are complaints by parents. The following policy sets out the procedure that the school follows in such cases.

2. Aims and objectives

Our school aims to be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaint. We give careful consideration to all complaints and deal with them as swiftly as possible. We aim to resolve any complaint through dialogue and mutual understanding and, in all cases, we put the interests of the child above all other issues. We provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed, and then resolved.

3. The complaints process

How to share a concern

If a parent is concerned about anything to do with the education that we are providing at our school, they should, in the first instance, discuss the matter with their child's class teacher. Most matters of concern can be dealt with in this way. All teachers work very hard to ensure that each child is happy at school and is making good progress; they always want to know if there is a problem, so that they can take action before the problem seriously affects the child's progress.

What to do if the matter is not resolved through informal discussion

Where a parent feels that a situation has not been resolved through contact with the class teacher, or that their concern is of a sufficiently serious nature, they should make an appointment to discuss it with the headteacher. The headteacher considers any such complaint very seriously and investigates each case thoroughly. Most complaints are normally resolved at this stage.

Sharing a concern about the headteacher

Should a parent have a complaint about the headteacher, s/he should first make an informal approach to one of the members of the governing board, who is obliged to investigate it. The governor in question will do all s/he can to resolve the issue through a dialogue with the school, but if a parent is unhappy with the outcome, s/he can make a formal complaint, as outlined below. A list of governor names is available from the school office.

How to take the matter further

Only if an informal complaint fails to resolve the matter, should a formal complaint be made to the governing board. This complaint must be made in writing, stating the nature of the complaint and how the school has handled it so far. The parent should send this written complaint to the Chair of Governors.

The governing board must consider all written complaints within three weeks of receipt. It arranges a meeting to discuss the complaint and invites the person making it to attend the meeting,

so that s/he can explain her complaint in more detail. The school gives the complainant at least three days' notice of the meeting.

After hearing all the evidence, the governors consider their decision and inform the parent about it in writing. The governors do all they can at this stage to resolve the complaint to the parent's satisfaction.

Who to appeal to next

If the complaint is not resolved, a parent may make representation to the Local Authority. Further information about this process is available from the school.

Anyone can complain to the Secretary of State for Education if s/he believes the governing board is acting "unreasonably" or is failing to carry out its statutory duties. However, intervention can only occur if the governing board or the LA has failed to carry out a legal duty or has acted "unreasonably" in the performance of a duty. Intervention would have to be expedient in the sense that there would have to be something that the Secretary of State for Education could instruct either party to do to put matters right.

Parents who remain unsatisfied with the outcome of certain complaints can refer the matter to Ofsted.

4. Monitoring and review

Governors monitor the complaints procedure in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The headteacher logs all complaints received by the school and records how they were resolved.

Governors take into account any local or national decisions that affect the complaints process, and make any modifications necessary to this policy. This policy is made available to all parents, so that they can be properly informed about the complaints process.

GENERAL POINTS:

Investigating Complaints

At each stage the person investigating the complaint will ensure that they:

- Establish what has happened so far, and who has been involved;
- Clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved;
- Meet with the complainant or contact them (if unsure or if further information is necessary);
- Clarify what the complainant feels would put things right;
- Interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
- Conduct the interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning;
- Keep notes of any interview or meeting;
- Communicate with the complainant at each stage over discussions and agreements reached.

Resolving Complaints

At each stage in the procedure, successful resolution of the complaint will take priority. If appropriate one or more of the following may be offered:

- An apology;
- An explanation;
- An admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
- An assurance that the event complained of will not recur;
- An explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again;
- An undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint.

Complainants will be encouraged to state what actions they feel might resolve the problem at any stage.

Vexatious Complaints

The decision of the governing board is final. If a complainant remains dissatisfied and wants to reopen the same issue when all stages of the procedure have been followed, the chair of the governing board will inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed. The complainant may contact the Local Authority. However, the role of the Local Authority is to satisfy itself that the due procedure has been properly followed. It has no power to alter the response of the governing board. The complainant may contact the Local Government Ombudsman if dissatisfied with the process.

Complaints will be considered and resolved as quickly and efficiently as possible. Realistic time limits will be set for each action within each stage. However, where further investigations are necessary, new time limits may need to be set and the complainant sent details of the new deadline and an explanation for the delay. Response times given refer to Monday to Friday inclusive, term time only

The Remit of the Complaints Panel and Appeals Panel

The panel will decide on the method of investigation depending on the nature of the complaint.

The panel can:

- 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 school's systems, policies or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

Panel members will be able to demonstrate impartiality, to be without any conflict of interest, and to have not been involved in preceding stages. Every attempt will be made to ensure that a representative cross-section of the categories of governor sits on the panel.

The procedure will be applied fairly and consistently to all complainants regardless of gender, race, colour, marital status, national or ethnic origin, disability, sexual orientation, age or religion.

SignedDate (Chair of Governors)

SignedDate (Headteacher)