



## School Complaints Policy

### 1 Introduction

#### 1.1

We aim to provide an excellent education for all our children. In addition our Head Teacher and all school staff work very hard to build positive relationships with all pupils, parents and carers, and also to ensure that each child is happy at school, and making good progress; they naturally want to know if there is a problem, so that they can take appropriate action where necessary to put things right.

#### 1.2

We do recognise that on occasion things may sometimes go wrong, or not work well, and when this happens we ask that parents contact us right away so that we can try our best to put things right as quickly as possible. If things cannot be resolved informally by speaking with the class teacher or Head then the school has in place a formal complaints procedure that parents and others can use. The following policy sets out the procedures that the school follows in such cases.

#### 1.3

We deal with all complaints in accordance with the guidance provided to schools by the Department for Education. (Best Practice Advice for School Complaints Procedures 2016).

#### 1.4

All complainants have the right if they remain dissatisfied with the way the school has handled their complaint, and once they have completed the school complaint process, to write to the Secretary of State for Education. Information about how to do this is available on the DfE website.

### 2 Aims and objectives

#### 2.1

Our school aims to be transparent, open and honest when dealing with any complaint. We will 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 will put the interests of the child above all else. We will always try to provide for sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed, and resolved.

## 2.2

We expect that any complaint will be raised with the school within 3 months of any incident or concern arising, and any complaints raised outside of this timeframe will be assessed on a case by case basis and the school may decide it is not practical or reasonable to investigate such complaints.

## 2.3

Some complaint matters will fall outside of the remit of this procedure and these include the following:

- Complaints about any matters falling within the Legal arena or within the remit of any formal appeal process.
- Staff Grievances.
- Staff Disciplinary Matters.
- Safeguarding matters/investigations.
- Previously investigated complaints.
- Complaints deemed by the school to be of a vexatious or malicious nature.
- Historic complaints that cannot be reasonably or fairly investigated.
- Complaints where the requested outcome is not one that is considered by the school to be reasonable, or can realistically be delivered.

## **3 The complaints process**

### 3.1

Informal Resolution:

In the first instance any concerns or complaints should be discussed as soon as possible and resolved with the child's class teacher. Where a situation has not been resolved through contact with the class teacher, the complaint is about the class teacher or the concern is of a sufficiently serious nature, then an appointment should be made as soon as possible to discuss it with the Head Teacher.

### 3.2

Formal Stage 1:

Where a situation has not been resolved through contact with the class teacher, the complainant should either make an appointment to discuss their complaint with

the Head Teacher as soon as possible, or write to the Head Teacher with the details of their complaint.

NB: If the complaint is about the Head Teacher then the complaint should be put in writing to the Chair of Governors who will acknowledge receipt of the complaint, investigate matters and provide a written response within 15 working days.

### 3.3

The Head Teacher will acknowledge receipt of the complaint and will consider the complaint, and investigate thoroughly. This should usually take no longer than 15 working days. The Head Teacher may wish to meet with the complainants, either to clarify complaints and concerns or to share the outcome of her investigation. Complainants will usually at this stage in the process receive a formal written response to their complaint.

### 3.4

Formal Stage 2:

If complainants remain dissatisfied following the response from the Head Teacher, then they should write with the details of the complaint as soon as possible to the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors will acknowledge receipt of the complaint as soon as possible, and arrange to meet with the complainant. The Chair of Governors will then look into the complaint and will do all s/he can to try to work in partnership with parents and the school to resolve matters. The complainant will usually receive a written response to the complaint detailing any actions agreed to resolve the complaint within an agreed timescale.

### 3.5

If the complaint still cannot be resolved then parents may request in writing that the Chair of Governors arranges for a School Governing Body Complaint Panel to hear the complaint.

NB: Complaints about the Chair of Governors should be sent in writing to the Clerk to the Governing Body.

### 3.6

Formal Stage 3:

On receipt of the request for a Panel the Chair of Governors will make the necessary arrangements and confirm in writing to all parties the date and details of the Panel meeting.

### 3.7

The Governing Body Complaint Panel will be made up of 3 governors (one who will act as the Chair) who have not had any prior involvement in the investigation of the complaint. Both the complainant and a school representative usually the Head Teacher will be invited to attend the Panel, and both parties will be invited to submit any written information they wish to discuss at the Panel meeting, and information packs will be sent out to all parties prior to the Panel meeting taking place. The Panel meeting will be convened in accordance with guidance set out in the Department for Education School Complaints Guidance, and the meeting will be minuted.

### 3.8

The Chair of the Panel will agree in advance who should be in attendance at the panel meeting, including any witnesses, professionals or Local Authority Representatives where appropriate.

### 3.9

At the Panel Meeting all parties will be provided with opportunity to present their information/case to the Panel Members. The Chair will ensure that all parties are treated fairly and with respect and should this not be the case then where it is felt necessary the Chair may either temporarily halt the meeting, or bring the meeting to early closure. (Rearranged panel meetings will be at the discretion of the Chair).

### 3.10

It is acknowledged that the Panel may be unable in some cases to resolve matters and where this is the case the Panel will seek to ensure complainants feel their complaint has been taken seriously and any concerns listened to and will try to identify and secure agreement regarding a positive way forward which is in the best interests of any pupil involved.

### 3.11

Following the Panel meeting the Chair of the Panel will write to both the school and the complainant within 5 working days to confirm the outcome of the Panel, and provide the details of any recommendations or action plans agreed.

### 3.12

The *Governing Body Complaint Panel* is the final stage in the *School Complaints Process* and if following receipt of the Panel response letter the complainant remains dissatisfied with the way the school has dealt with their complaint then they may write to the *Secretary of State for Education* and advice for parents who wish to complain about a school matter is available from the *Department for Education*.

## **4 Vexatious complaints and unacceptable behavior**

### 4.1

If properly followed, the complaints procedure will aid the speedy resolution of most complaints, however, there may be occasions where an agreed resolution cannot be reached, and it is only possible to agree an acceptable way forward. It should be noted that once a complaint reaches the end of the school complaints procedure it cannot be reopened and reinvestigated. If the complainant tries to reopen the same issues, the chair of the *Governing Body* is able to inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

### 4.2

A complaint will be considered by the school to be vexatious when:

- Repeatedly and obsessively pursued
- An unrealistic or unreasonable outcome is sought
- Is reasonable, but is pursued in an unreasonable manner.

### 4.3

The school will not tolerate behavior from complainants that is deemed to be offensive or threatening or which is considered to pose a risk to either staff or pupils. The school will take such steps as necessary to manage behavior of this kind and may seek legal advice.

### 4.4

Where the complainants contact with the school is unreasonably demanding, or the frequency of contact is judged to impede the day to day running of the school, and hinder the consideration of their or others complaints then the complainants contact with the school may be subject to a management plan to aid in the resolution of the complaint.

## **5 Monitoring and review**

### **5.1**

The School Governing Body will regularly review and monitor the school complaints procedure, in order to ensure that all complaints are appropriately responded to, and to ensure any learning from complaints is actioned.

### **5.2**

Governors will take into account any local or national decisions that affect the operation of the school complaints process, and will review and make any modifications necessary to this policy.

### **5.3**

Parents, carers and others are made aware of this policy through the school prospectus and website, so that they can be properly informed about the complaints process and how to progress any concerns or complaints.

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## Appendix A

### **HOW TO PROGRESS A CONCERN OR COMPLAINT WITH THE SCHOOL**

In the first instance you should talk to your child's class teacher about any concerns that you have. Most concerns can be sorted out quickly and informally this way.

If your concern/complaint is about the Head Teacher you should contact the School Chair of Governors in the first instance.

#### **IF YOUR CONCERN/COMPLAINT IS NOT RESOLVED**

If you cannot resolve matters informally you can make a formal complaint in writing to the Head Teacher who will acknowledge receipt of your complaint.

The Head Teacher may ask to meet with you to discuss how things can be resolved, and will investigate as quickly as possible.

You will then receive a written response to your complaint from the Head Teacher usually within a maximum of 15 working days.

#### **IF YOUR COMPLAINT IS STILL NOT RESOLVED**

If you remain dissatisfied with the Head Teachers response to your complaint you can write to the Chair of Governors who will work with both you and the school to try to find a resolution.

If it is not possible for a resolution to be found you can ask the Chair of Governors to arrange for a Governing Body Complaint Panel to listen to your complaint.

**IF YOU REMAIN DISSATISFIED WITH THE WAY THE SCHOOL HAVE RESPONDED TO YOUR COMPLAINT YOU CAN WRITE TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EDUCATION**

**(Advice for parents regarding school complaints is available on the Department for Education Website).**