



Leigh and Bransford Primary School

Complaints Policy

Reviewed: March 2020

Date of next review: March 2021

Complaints Policy

A General Principles. This procedure contains advice for resolving complaints; flowcharts to indicate time limits; and advice on the conduct of meetings.

Every attempt will be made to adhere to the time limits specified in the flow charts and detailed procedures which follow, but these may in exceptional circumstances be exceeded. In such cases the School/ Governors will advise the reasons and set a new time-scale.

A complaint will usually be considered as 'out-of-time' if it is raised more than 3 months after the matter is known to the complainant.

Anonymous complaints will not be investigated, except in exceptional circumstances - such as child protection issues.

The aim of this policy is to resolve concerns at the earliest opportunity, and effect reconciliation if there has been friction. If the complaint needs to be formalised, the complainant will be asked to write down the substance of the complaint on a form, an example of which is found in Annex C. This form will also invite a view about what actions might be felt to resolve the problem.

B. Possible resolutions. Many concerns may be resolved by explanations, others by a simple apology. Other complaints may result from a school procedure which could have been handled differently. Such an acknowledgement would be an appropriate resolution, as would assurances that events complained about, (if justified) will not recur. Others may be resolved by an undertaking to review school policies in the light of a complaint.

C. Later Stages. Where concerns are not resolved on an early timescale, the procedure allows for formal consideration by the Headteacher, and later still, by a Governors' Complaints Panel.

D. Unresolved Complaints. Occasionally, a complainant may remain dissatisfied, even though this procedure has been used through all its stages. However, it will not normally be possible to re-open the same issue. In such circumstances, the Chair of Governors will inform the complainant that the procedures have been exhausted and that the matter is closed.

E. School Complaints Stages in Detail

This school will monitor and record parents/carers compliments, concerns and complaints. This will endorse and ensure the continuation of our good practice .

It is acknowledged that, where concerns are raised, they are more often than not raised with a more senior person, for example, a Key Stage Co-ordinator or Deputy Head, or the Headteacher in a small school, rather than a more junior teacher. The first stage, therefore, could if appropriate be dealt with informally by one of a number of possible people. 2

Stage 1 (Informal)

Where any member of staff becomes aware of a voiced concern, they should deal with it themselves if it is appropriate, and they feel comfortable in doing so. Many concerns can be resolved by simple clarification or the provision of information. It is anticipated that most concerns can be readily resolved at this informal stage. Where the person approached feels uncomfortable with dealing with the matter directly, they should involve, for example, their line manager.

In the case of serious concerns (or where the school deems it more appropriate to do so) it may be necessary to refer these matters directly to the Headteacher.

Where the complaint is specifically about the Headteacher, similarly the parent/carer should discuss this with him/her at this stage first.

It is not appropriate for a complaint to be directed through a Governor. Any Governor receiving a complaint will give advice that there is an established procedure, and refer the complainant to the appropriate person. (This is because a Governor acting unilaterally could prejudice the involvement of Governors at a later stage)

The concern will be noted (including the outcome) and copied to the Headteacher (or appropriate person in charge of records in larger establishments). Where the subject of the complaint is the Headteacher, he/she will copy the record to the Chair of Governors.

Where informal attempts by the school have failed to bring about a satisfactory resolution for the parent/carer, the parent/carer is entitled to request that the complaint be treated more formally. Unless the complaint directly concerns the Headteacher, it will be him/her who deals with this next stage (Stage Two).

If the complaint is specifically about the Headteacher, and s/he has had the opportunity in Stage one to discuss the matter, the parent/carer can then directly contact the Chair of Governors about Stage 2.

Stage 2 (Formal) Dealt with by Headteacher

[If the complaint concerns the Headteacher, the Chairman of Governors is personally responsible for following the procedures in Stage 2. Otherwise, the Headteacher deals with this Stage].

This stage can be initiated if/ when dissatisfaction with the outcome of stage one is received by the school. At this point, a copy of these Procedures and Policy will be sent to the complainant within 3 school days, together with the formal complaint form (Annex C).

The form is structured so that each party has a common understanding about the complaint. As the main purpose of the process is to achieve reconciliation, parents/ carers are also asked what actions might resolve the problem. 3

After the formal complaint form is returned, it will be acknowledged within 3 school days and the investigation will commence.

This is the first stage of the formal complaints process and as a result, all communications between parties will be recorded.

Before proceeding with a formal investigation, the Headteacher may wish to meet with the individual and discuss his/her concerns and wishes. It may still be appropriate and satisfactory to reach an informal resolution at this point. If not, the Headteacher will decide whether the individual's complaint will be dealt with by this policy or another statutory procedure. In the latter case, the Headteacher will advise the complainant on what will need to be done.

The head may delegate the task of collating the information to another staff member, but not the decision on the action to be taken. The investigation should involve the review of any relevant documentation and information. If necessary, witnesses will need to be interviewed and statements taken from those involved. If the complaint centres around a pupil, the pupil will also usually be interviewed.

The outcome of the investigation should be communicated to parents/carers, either at a meeting (followed up in writing) or as a written response. This response should explain the outcome and should be supported by reasons for reaching this decision and what action, if any, will be taken. (If management action is subsequently required against an employee of the school, the parents/carers will not have access to this information). This response should be provided within 10 school days of acknowledging the complaint.

If the complainant is still dissatisfied with the response given and would like to take the complaint further, they should make this clear in writing to the Headteacher. On receipt, s/he will send on the complaint form and all associated information to the Chair of Governors. [In the case of the Headteacher, if the complainant is still dissatisfied, and wishes to take it further, the Chair should be so advised, and Stage 3 initiated]

Stage 3 (Formal) Dealt with by Governors' Panel

On receipt of the information from the Headteacher, the Chair of Governors will verify that the parent/carer has properly exhausted all stage 2 procedures. If not satisfied, the Chair will refer the matter back to the Headteacher. When satisfied, the Chair will contact the Clerk and liaise with him or her to make preparatory arrangements for the Governors' Complaints Panel Meeting.

The Clerk may be the Clerk to the Governing Body, or, in exceptional circumstances, another Governor acting as Clerk, (over and above those selected for the Panel).

The Chair of Governors will identify three governors chosen from an agreed pool of governors to form the Complaints Panel, and the Panel will appoint its own chair. 4

The Chair of Governors or Clerk to the Governors' Complaints Panel will acknowledge (to the complainant) receipt of the information from the Headteacher within 5 school days.

This letter will inform the parent/carer that the complaint will be heard by the Complaints Panel within 15 school days. In exceptional circumstances, the parent/carer will be notified where this timed period will need to be extended and the reasons for this.

The Clerk of the Panel will convene a meeting of the Complaints Panel, (as identified by the Chair of Governors), and arrange a time and date for the meeting. All relevant documentation from the Headteacher and the parent/carer will be distributed to all parties, (including the Panel members) in advance of the meeting.

The Panel has discretion as to how it will carry out its duties, some of which are

itemised in Annex B. As part of this, parents /carers will be asked to attend a meeting of the Panel (with accompanying relative or friend if desired).

The Chair of the Panel needs to ensure that the parent/carer is notified of the Panel's decision in writing within 5 school days of the meeting. The response will include action (if any) that needs to be taken and where appropriate, suggest changes to, or review of, the school's systems or procedures to ensure that similar problems do not happen again.

If the parent/carer is dissatisfied with the response they have been given, and would like to take the complaint further, they should be referred to stage four of this procedure.

Equally, if the Headteacher perceives due process has not been followed, s/he may wish to refer the matter to Stage 4 for adjudication.

Stage 4 (Formal) The Role of Worcestershire Children's Services.

The remit of Worcestershire Children's Services is only to review due process. Parents/carers are entitled to complain in writing to Worcestershire Children's Services if they believe that their complaint was not handled fairly and in accordance with the school's complaints procedures. This involvement of Worcestershire Children's Services will only commence once the parent/carer has exhausted all of the school-based stages (up to, and including, a Governors' Complaints Panel, Stage 3 of the Complaints Procedures).

Complaints must be submitted in writing to:-

The Social Inclusion Manager

Children's Services

County Hall

Spetchley Road

Worcester

WR5 2YA 5

The written complaint must include the following information:-

- details of the original complaint
- the decision and recommendations/ action (if any) of the *Governors' Complaints Panel*
- reason for believing the original complaint was not dealt with fairly and in accordance with the school's complaints procedures
- the expected desired outcome.

Worcestershire Children's Services will acknowledge the parent/carer's complaint within 5 working days.

Worcestershire Children's Services will advise the Diocese of Worcester (Church of England) for Voluntary Aided Schools of the receipt of a complaint at Stage 4 for their joint consideration and review.

Worcestershire Children's Services will request and examine all relevant paperwork, (including the school's complaint policy) from both parties and will collate additional information if required. This may necessitate a meeting with the Headteacher, Chair of *Governors*, or the parent/carer. This review will cover records and correspondence produced at each school stage.

Worcestershire Children's Services will communicate their findings within 20 working days of receipt of the complaint in writing to all parties and if appropriate, will make recommendations for future action by the school. Copies of this letter will be sent to the Chair of Governors.

Any recommendations made by Worcestershire Children's Services as a result of its review can only be advisory, and as such, is not binding on any of the parties. However, it is anticipated that Governing Bodies would consider any such recommendations as a genuine means of securing fair and reasonable practice in the best interest of the school.