

Whitwick St. John the Baptist C.E. Primary School

Complaints Procedure

Agreed by Staff:

Agreed by Governors: 7th December 2023

Signed (Chair): _____ Date: _____

Policy for complaint resolution

This school is committed to working in close partnership with all members of the community. The school places great value in the role which parents and carers can play in supporting children's learning. Staff and governors actively encourage a positive relationship between the school, the families/ guardians of children who attend the school, the school community and members of the public.

If, at anytime, there is a concern about an aspect of life at the school, the concern will be dealt with by the school as quickly, sympathetically and effectively as possible. It is hoped that most concerns will be settled at an early stage.

However, if there is a continuing concern, this can be directed through the formal stages as outlined in the school's complaints procedure, detailed below.

School complaints procedure

It is in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. The experience of the first contact between the complainant and the school can be crucial in addressing any issues. In order for this to be effective, complaints should be raised as soon as possible, to enable relevant investigation whilst information is fresh in the minds of all parties.

If there is a significant delay in initial contact regarding a complaint all parties need to accept that evidence gathering may be difficult to attain. However, staff will make every effort to investigate and reach a resolution.

Complaints and investigations will, where appropriate, refer to the relevant policies and procedures.

Complaints received outside of term times will be considered to be received on the first full day of the next term.

The school operates a 4 stage complaints procedure. If the complaint concerns the conduct of the headteacher it will initially be dealt with in accordance with Stage 3.

Stage 1: Complaint to a staff member.

In the interests of early resolution it is anticipated that the complainant will seek to discuss the issue with the member of staff concerned.

The school will respect the views of a complainant who indicates that they would have difficulty discussing the complaint with a particular member of staff. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels too compromised to deal with the complaint, the complaint will be referred to another member of staff via the headteacher. In all circumstances the complaint will be considered objectively and impartially.

If the first approach is made to a governor, they will refer the issue and the complainant to the appropriate person and advise the complainant of the procedure. Governors will not act unilaterally outside the formal procedure or be involved at the early stages.

Once the complaint has been investigated and the outcome relayed to the complainant, stage one will be deemed to be concluded.

Stage 2: Complaint to the headteacher

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the way the complaint was handled at Stage 1, and wishes to pursue their initial complaint, the complainant should submit the complaint in writing to the headteacher within 10 school days of Stage 1 being concluded.

The headteacher will acknowledge receipt of the complaint, in writing, within 5 school days.

The headteacher will contact the complainant to clarify details of their concerns and the resolution that is being sought. The headteacher will investigate the complaint and every effort to resolve the issue will be made. The headteacher may appoint another member of staff to collate information concerning the complaint but will retain responsibility for the decision and any the action to be taken.

On conclusion of the investigation the headteacher will write to the complainant confirming that the complaint has been investigated in full and all policies and procedures have been followed. The headteacher will outline the process for appeal to the Chair of Governors.

Wherever possible the headteacher will conclude the investigation within 10 school days of receipt of the complaint. Where this is not possible, the headteacher will inform the complainant of the reasons for the delay and provide an alternative timescale for the outcome of the complaint.

The headteacher may invite a notetaker or observer to any meeting whilst maintaining confidentiality principles.

Once the complaint has been investigated and the outcome relayed to the complainant, stage two will be deemed to be concluded.

If the complaint is wholly or mainly about the headteacher the complaint will be considered in accordance with Stage 3 of the procedure.

Complaints made directly to governors prior to the conclusion of stages 1 or 2

Governors are the strategic part of the organisation and duties for the day-to-day running of the school are delegated to the headteacher.

Governors' involvement in complaints will happen only at the point that the initial stages (stages 1 and 2) have been worked through with unsuccessful resolution and in accordance with this policy. Governors will not engage in dialogue or seek further clarification of the details of any complaint brought directly to them but refer this to the school.

Stage 3: Complaint to the Chair of Governors

If the complaint cannot be resolved at Stage 2 or the complaint concerns the conduct of the headteacher the complainant will be referred to the Chair of Governors. The complainant will need to write to the Chair of Governors, care of the school, within 10 school days of the date of the letter notifying them of the outcome of Stage 2. The complainant should provide a copy of the written complaint, a copy of the headteacher's letter concluding Stage 2, give details of why they are not satisfied with the outcome and what redress they are seeking.

The Chair of Governors will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 5 school days. The Chair will contact the complainant to clarify any required details of the complaint, investigate the complaint and make every effort to resolve the issue.

On conclusion of the investigation the Chair of Governors will write to the complainant confirming that the complaint has been investigated in full and all policies and procedures have been followed. The headteacher will outline the process for appeal to the Governing Body Appeal Panel.

Wherever possible the Chair of Governors will conclude the investigation within 10 school days of receipt of the complaint. Where this is not possible, the Chair of Governors will inform the complainant of the reasons for the delay and provide an alternative timescale for the outcome of the complaint.

The Chair of Governors may invite a notetaker or observer to the meeting whilst maintaining confidentiality principles.

Once the complaint has been investigated and the outcome relayed to the complainant, stage three will be deemed to be concluded.

Stage 4: Complaint to the Governing Body Complaints Appeal Panel

The complainant needs to write to the Chair of Governors within 10 school days of the date of the letter notifying them of the outcome of Stage 3, notifying that they wish their complaint to be heard by the complaints appeal panel. A Governing Body Appeals Panel, of 3 nominated Governors, will be convened which will not include anyone who has any prior knowledge of the complaint. The panel will elect their own Chair.

The remit of the Complaints Appeal Panel is to :

- Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part
- Uphold the complaint in whole or part
- Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- Recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not occur.

The Governing Body Appeals Panel will review all of the information collected across Stages 1-3, including that submitted by the complainant and from the investigations already undertaken. A further meeting with the complainant may be arranged and the panel may invite a notetaker or observer to the meeting whilst maintaining confidentiality principles. The panel will meet within 10 school days of the stage 4 complaint being received. If this is not possible, the complainant will be informed of the reasons for the delay and provided an alternative timescale for the outcome of the complaint.

The complainant will be notified in writing of the panel's decision, usually within 5 school days. The letter will confirm the end of the school's and Governing Body's involvement with the complaint and explain any further rights of appeal. The complainant should be advised that the local authority has no role unless the complaint relates to a service provided by the local authority.

Serial and persistent complaints

There may be occasions when, despite all stages of the complaints procedure having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If a complainant tries to re-open the same issue the Chair of Governors may inform them that the procedure has been completed and that the matter is now closed. It is important to recognise when everything has been done in response to a complaint.

Ultimately if a complainant persists to the point that the school considers it to constitute harassment, or is deemed to be malicious, legal advice may be sought as to the next steps.

Terms of the complaints process

The school expects that a complainant will:

- Treat all members of school with courtesy and respect and be treated with courtesy and respect in return.
- Respect the needs of pupils, staff and Governors within the school.
- Avoid the use of offensive language, violence, or threats of violence towards people or property.
- Recognise the time constraints under which members of staff in schools work and allow the school a reasonable time to respond to any complaint.
- Follow the school's complaints procedure.
- Maintain discretion and confidentiality about the complaint particularly where that involves other children or staff members.

Confidentiality principles include not discussing or publishing details of an incident or allegation, including on social networking sites. If anything discussed or published could lead to the identification of a child or member of staff this could be in breach of the legal reporting restrictions (Education Act 2011). The school has a duty to safeguard and to promote the best interests of the pupils.

The Governing Body may consider legal action if an incident of misuse of social media in occurs.

Monitoring and review

Governors monitor the complaints procedure in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly and the procedure is reviewed annually. A log complaints received by the school with resolution is maintained to ensure that there is a record of lessons learnt.