



Complaints

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Verified by	
Approved by	Governing Body
Last Review	July 2017
Next Review	September 2019



General Principles

This procedure is intended to allow you to raise a concern or complaint relating to the school, or the services that it provides. An anonymous concern or complaint will not be investigated under this procedure, unless there are exceptional circumstances. To allow for a proper investigation, concerns or complaints should be brought to the attention of the school as soon as possible. In general, the school will not consider any complaint that was raised more than 3 months after the event.

Rationale

At Ashchurch Primary School we work hard at developing and maintaining good relationships between home and school. Minor points can be discussed informally with staff when they accompany the children outside after school without any need to resort to the complaints procedure.

Nevertheless we recognise that sometimes things can go wrong. We believe that most complaints are the result of a misunderstanding or poor communication.

We expect all our children, staff, governors and parents to listen carefully and respectfully to each other, in which case complaints will be:-

- made politely
- received sympathetically
- dealt with speedily to the satisfaction of all.

Aims

Every attempt will be made to resolve complaints informally in the first instance.

Complaints will be handled speedily and fairly. Conciliatory language will be used throughout.

Complaints will be given serious consideration, together with other comments and observations from parents and carers.

It will not be difficult to complain. The person complaining will be given fair treatment and have a chance to state their case.

Where appropriate, decisions, and reasons for them, will be given in writing and the person complaining will be informed at the same time of any rights of appeal they have if they wish to take the matter further.

Parents or carers are assured of confidentiality and that there will be no victimisation of pupils. Independent advice will be available to parents.

This procedure will be publicised to parents. It will be simple to operate, and known and understood by parents, staff and governors.



Procedure

1. In the first instance, parents or carers should take their complaint to the Class Teacher. This could be by letter, telephone or in person. If the complaint is in relation to the wider community or general use of school facilities then the complaint should be addressed to the Headteacher in the first instance.
2. If the complaint has not been resolved by this initial discussion, or if the complaint is of a more serious nature, details of the complaint should be given to the headteacher, preferably, although not essentially, in writing.

Details that might help the investigation, such as names of potential witnesses, dates and times of events, and copies of relevant documents should be included. It is very important that you include a clear statement about what you hope might reasonably contribute to a resolution of the problem at this stage. Without this, it is much more difficult to proceed.

Where the complaint is about the headteacher, the complaint should be addressed to the Chair of the Governing Body at this stage.

3. The Headteacher (or Chair) may invite you to a meeting to discuss your complaint and to seek a resolution. If you accept that invitation, a friend may accompany you if you wish to help you in explaining the nature of your complaint. It is hoped that your complaint will be resolved through this meeting with the Headteacher.
 4. If the complaint remains unresolved at this stage, the Headteacher will refer the complaint to the Chair of the Governing Body. The Chair of Governors may invite you to a further meeting to discuss your complaint and to seek a resolution. Again, if you accept that invitation, a friend may accompany you to help you explain the nature of your complaint. You should learn in writing, usually within 5 working days of the Chair of Governors receiving your formal complaint, of the outcome.
 5. Members of the governing body who are approached informally by a parent or carer with a complaint about the school will always refer the parent back to the headteacher or an appropriate member of the school staff. Only when the steps outlined above have been followed and the parent remains dissatisfied should the complaint be taken forward to the governing body. Should any parents or carers have a complaint about the headteacher, which cannot be resolved through discussion with him/her, then it may be appropriate to contact the governing body directly.
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6. If you are not satisfied with the way in which the process has been followed, you can request that the Governing Body reviews the process followed by the school in handling the complaint. You must make this request in writing to the Clerk to the Governing Body, within 10 school days of receiving notice of the outcome, and include a statement specifying any perceived failures to follow the procedure. The procedure described below will be followed.
7. A panel of three members of the Governing Body will conduct any review of the process followed by the school. This will usually take place within 10 school days of receipt of your request. The Governors on the review panel will normally consider written submissions, but will sympathetically consider any reasonable requests to make oral representations. The panel will first receive written evidence from the complainant of perceived failures to follow the procedure. The panel will then invite representatives of the school (usually the Headteacher or the Chair of the Governing Body panel that has considered the matter), as appropriate, to make a response to the complaint. The panel may also have access to the records kept of the process followed. You, and the school representatives, will be informed in writing of the outcome, usually within 5 school days of the panel meeting. The matter will then be closed as far as the school is concerned.
8. Finally, if a complainant believes that the Governing Body has acted unreasonably, or has failed to carry out its duties properly, they may complain to the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State has a duty to consider all complaints raised but will only intervene where the governing body has acted unlawfully or unreasonably and where it is expedient or practical to do so.

The School Complaints Unit (SCU) considers complaints relating to LA maintained schools in England on behalf of the Secretary of State. The SCU will look at whether the complaints policy and any other statutory policies were adhered to. The SCU will not normally re-investigate the substance of the complaint. This remains the responsibility of schools.

The SCU will not overturn a school's decision about a complaint except in exceptional circumstances where it is clear that the school has acted unlawfully or unreasonably.

If legislative or policy breaches are found, the SCU will report them to the school and the complainant, and where necessary, ask for corrective action to be taken. The SCU normally also seeks written assurances as to future conduct.

Schools may wish to contact the SCU for advice on whether they have acted reasonably.



Further information can be obtained from the SCU by calling the National Helpline on 0370 000 2288 or going online at www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus or by writing to:

Department for Education
School Complaints Unit
2nd Floor, Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

A record of complaints and how they were resolved, together with all related correspondence, is kept in the Headteacher's correspondence file.

The Headteacher will report upon what he/she considers to be formal complaints to the Governing Body, excluding those members of the Review Panel. In order to maintain confidentiality, the names of pupils and parents or carers will be excluded from the Headteacher's report.

This procedure also applies to any complaints received from the school's neighbours or the local community.

Monitoring and Review

The 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 examine this log on an annual basis.

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 and carers, so that they can be properly informed about the complaints process.

This policy will be reviewed annually.
