



COMPLAINTS POLICY

1. Statement of intent

Our school believes that children and parents are entitled to expect courtesy and prompt, careful attention to their needs and wishes. We welcome suggestions on how to improve our school and will give prompt and serious attention to any concerns about the running of the school. We anticipate that most concerns will be resolved quickly by an informal approach to the appropriate member of staff. If this does not achieve the desired result, we have a set of procedures for dealing with concerns.

2. Introduction

- We strive to provide a good education for all our children. The Headteacher and staff work very hard to build positive relationships with all our parents. However, the school is obliged to have procedures in place in case there are complaints by parents or guardians. The following policy sets out the procedures that the school follows in such cases.
- If any parents are unhappy with the education that their child is receiving, or have any concerns relating to the school, we encourage them to talk to the child's class teacher immediately.
- We aim to create an atmosphere in school where families feel comfortable approaching members of staff to voice any concerns they may have.
- We have a clear graded procedure of registering complaints that encourages all complaints, wherever possible to be considered and hopefully resolved informally.

3. 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. In all cases, we put the interests of the child above all else. We provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed, and then resolved.

4. The complaints process

- We aim to bring all concerns about the running of our setting to a satisfactory conclusion for all of the parties involved.
- To achieve this, we operate the following complaints procedure. We keep confidential written records of any complaints received detailing the stage and details of resolution.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

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

- If the class teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult the Head of Key Stage / Deputy Head (when these positions are in the school).
- If a complaint is initially directed to the Headteacher / Deputy Head / Head of Key Stage, we will usually refer the complaint to the relevant class teacher / Head of Key Stage for initial investigation, unless the Headteacher / Deputy Head / Head of Key Stage deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally at this stage.
- The class teacher / Head of Key Stage / Deputy Head (ie whoever deals with the initial complaint at this informal stage) makes a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within 10 working days or in the event that the class teacher / Head of Key Stage / Deputy Head and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Procedure.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution (When parents are not satisfied with the response to the complaint at Stage 1)

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head. The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- The Headteacher should ensure to get back to the parent as soon as possible; even if just to say that s/he is investigating the issue and will return with more information at a later date.
- In most cases, the Head will meet the parents concerned, normally within 5 working days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter.
- The Headteacher will consider any such complaint very seriously, and will investigate each case thoroughly. This meeting is not necessarily to resolve the complaint at this stage as it may be necessary for the Headteacher to make some further investigations. The Headteacher may also choose for another staff member, who is not involved in the complaint, to also attend the meeting.
- The Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Head is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and the Headteacher will provide the parent(s) who made the complaint with an account of the findings and of any action taken as a result within 28 days of the meeting. The Head will also give reasons for his/her decision.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing (All duties stated here as being carried out by the Chair of Governors can be, in his/her absence, performed by another Governor appointed for this purpose by the Chair.)

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to the Chair of Governors who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel.
- 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 matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of *at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint*, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 10 working days.
- The Chair of Governors will liaise with the Headteacher and have access to any written records regarding the complaint to date.
- If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than 7 working days prior to the hearing.
- The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation. The Governors do all they can at this stage to resolve the complaint to the parent's satisfaction.
- Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out. After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which is shall complete within 10 working days of the Hearing. The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing to the parents, the Head, the Governors and, where relevant, the individual complained about.
- Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except in so far as is required of the school by paragraph 6(2)(j) of the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2003; where disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection; or where any other legal obligations prevails.

5. Monitoring and review

- The Governors monitor the complaints procedure, in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly.
- 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.
- This policy will be reviewed every two years, or before if necessary.

Signed: Sara J. Harris (Headteacher) Eddy Breuer-Weil (Chair of Governors)

Date: June 2007