

Golden Opportunities for
Achievement and Learning

Gwladys Street Community
Primary and Nursery School



Complaints Procedure Policy

Complaints procedure

Many concerns and minor complaints can be resolved quickly and informally. If you have a concern or complaint it is important you should try to resolve this immediately through the class teacher or another member of staff, depending upon the nature of the complaint. Every effort will be made by the school to have a full discussion before moving into the stages of this procedure.

If you are unable to resolve the concern through discussions with the class teacher, Assistant Head teacher, Deputy Headteacher or Head teacher you can follow the complaints procedure as below:

First Stage - If the complaint is not resolved through such discussion, the complainant should contact the Headteacher. The complaint should be made in writing by the complainant, or by another person on their behalf, with their consent (by letter or email). The Headteacher, or other member of staff nominated by him/her, should offer to meet with the complainant to discuss his/her concerns within ten working days of receiving the complaint, or as soon as is reasonably practicable. Where necessary the Headteacher, or other nominated member of staff, should carry out a full investigation into the issues raised. The Headteacher will give a written response to the complainant as soon as possible but, in any case, within ten working days of this meeting. Where the complainant refuses the offer of a meeting this response should be made within ten working days of the receipt of the written complaint. Where the complainant is dissatisfied with this response, the complaint should move to the first formal stage of the procedure. Where the complaint is against the Headteacher, the chair of governors, another governor or the Governing Body as a whole, the complaint will move straight to the second stage of the procedure.

Second stage - If the complaint cannot satisfactorily be resolved at the first stage of the procedure, the complainant should put their complaint in writing to the Chair of Governors (or Vice Chair), which may be by letter or email, via the school. The Chair/Vice Chair should offer to meet with the complainant to discuss his/her concerns within ten working days of receiving the complaint, or as soon as is reasonably practicable after this. The Chair/Vice Chair will review the investigation and Headteacher's decision and may confirm this decision or reach a different decision. The governor may choose to reinvestigate the complaint in whole or in part. The governor may take advice initially from the Governance and Liaison Service, which may consult other LA officers. The Chair/Vice Chair will communicate his/her response in writing to the complainant as soon as possible but, in any case, within ten working days of the meeting. Where the complainant refuses the offer of such a meeting the governor will inform the complainant of the outcome of the investigation within ten working days of receipt of the written complaint or as soon as is reasonably practicable afterwards. Where the complainant is dissatisfied with this response the complaint should move to the appeal stage of the procedure.

Appeal Stage - If the complainant wishes to appeal against the decision made at the formal stage s/he must indicate his/her intention to do so within ten working days of receipt of the outcome of the formal stage. The complainant should do this by sending a written appeal to the Chair of Governors, either by letter or email, or, where the complaint is against the Chair to the Vice Chair. This should state the original complaint and the reasons for on-going dissatisfaction. The Chair of Governors or Vice Chair may decline to accept a complaint into the Appeal Stage where s/he, acting reasonably, believes that the complaint has been upheld in full at the Formal Stage and in all the circumstances there is no merit in the matter proceeding further. A governors' panel should be convened, consisting of three governors who have had no previous involvement in consideration of the complaint. Where the complainant is a parent,

governors may wish to consider the possible advantages of this panel including a parent governor. A complaints appeal meeting will be held. The meeting of the governors' panel should take place as soon as possible, but in any case a date should be set and communicated to the complainant within twenty working days of receipt of the appeal. The governors' decision should be communicated in writing to the complainant as soon as possible but, in any case, within five working days of the meeting. The complainant will have no further right to appeal this decision within the school.

Complaining to Ofsted

Ofsted has powers to investigate certain types of complaint from parents to help them to decide whether to inspect a school. Before complaining to an external body it would usually be expected that all stages of this procedure had been exhausted. The Complaints Procedure will be reviewed regularly.

APENDIX A

Conduct of Complaints Appeal Meetings

1 Although this procedure may appear formal, the hearing should be conducted in as informal as way as possible, and the Chair of the panel should make every effort to make all parties feel comfortable.

2 A suitable venue must be provided for the meeting which includes separate waiting areas for the two parties and refreshments for all involved.

3 The date and time of the meeting must be agreed with all parties and witnesses and all relevant documentation must be circulated to all parties at least five working days in advance of the meeting.

4 Submission of additional documentation would not normally be allowed outside this timescale or at the appeal meeting, but the decision whether or not to allow this will lie with the governors' panel.

5 The meeting should be minuted.

6 The meeting may be attended by:

- the complainant, with a companion if desired (who cannot also be a witness);
- the Headteacher and/or Chair of Governors, as appropriate, with an adviser if required;
- the members of the Governors' Complaints Panel;
- a minute taker, appointed by the governors;
- an adviser to the Governors' Panel.

7 Members of staff who have been involved in the issue, or other witnesses, may be called upon by either side to attend part of the meeting to provide information to the governors.

8 Both sides must provide names of any witnesses to be called at least five days in advance of the meeting, and the nature of the evidence which they will be providing. The panel has the discretion not to admit a witness if they do not consider their evidence to be relevant to the complaint.

9 There will be no audio or visual recording of the proceedings by any party but a copy of the minutes of the meeting, once approved, will be shared with all parties.

10 The governors will select a Chair from amongst their number.

11 The Chair of the panel will introduce all the parties present and explain the procedure to be followed, and that every effort will be made to keep the process as informal as possible.

12 The complainant (or his/her companion) will outline his/her complaint and explain why s/he is dissatisfied with the school's response to date. The complainant may call any witnesses in support of his/her complaint who will attend the meeting only for the time that they are providing information, and may be questioned by all parties.

13 The Headteacher and the governors will have the opportunity to ask questions of the complainant.

14 The Headteacher and/or the Chair of Governors will explain their involvement in the complaint and the reasons for their decisions at the informal and first formal stage. The Headteacher and/or Chair of Governors may call any witnesses in support of his/her statement who will attend the meeting only for the time that they are providing information, and may be questioned by all parties.

15 The complainant and the governors will have the opportunity to ask questions of the Headteacher and/or Chair of Governors.

16 Both parties will be given the opportunity to sum up their statements, ending with the complainant. No new material may be introduced at this stage.

17 The governors may decide to adjourn the hearing pending further investigation at any stage, if this seems necessary.

18 Both parties will leave the meeting and the governors will consider the information that has been put to them. The clerk will remain for this part of the meeting in order to clarify anything if necessary, but the governors' deliberations will not be minuted.

19 The governors' panel must reach a unanimous or majority decision as to whether or not to uphold the complaint wholly or in part, and what action (if any) the school needs to take to resolve the complaint. This may include referring the matter to another formal process, whether in relation to a complaint against a governor or a member of the school staff. Normally the governors will reach a decision at this point but they may feel the need to take further advice. Where this is the case, they should endeavour to reach a decision as soon as possible.

20 The governors will communicate their response to both parties in writing as soon as possible but, in any case, within five working days of reaching their decision. The governors' response should detail whether the complaint is upheld wholly or in part and briefly summarise the basis on which governors arrived at this conclusion. The response should also include any lessons learnt and specify any action to be taken by the school as a result of the complaint and within what timescales.