



Complaints Procedure

2	25/05/2016	Reformatted after finance committee policy review
1	01/01/2014	Initial version

Parent procedure

The school will aim to solve all complaints swiftly and informally so any issues can be resolved. The needs of all the children will be taken into account.

Please talk to the class teacher about the nature of your concern/complaint.

If the issue is not resolved then make an appointment to see the phase leader:

- for EYFS, Mrs Millward
- for Key Stage 1, Mrs Finch
- for Upper Key Stage 2, Mrs Whittaker

If you feel this issue is not resolved then please make an appointment to see one of the assistant head teachers:

- Mrs Millward
- Mrs Finch

If you continue to feel this issue is not resolved then please see the head teacher, Mrs Fosker either by making an appointment or by writing a letter, sent to the school office.

If you then feel the issue is not resolved then please seek advice from the governing body, who will initially try to resolve the issue informally.

A formal procedure will then take place (see stage 3 of this policy). The decision of the governing body is final.

Stage one: complaint heard by staff member

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 determining whether the complaint will escalate.

In cases where the complainant indicates that he/she would have difficulty discussing a complaint with a particular member of staff, the head teacher can refer the complainant to another staff member. Where the complaint concerns the head teacher, the complaint can be referred to the chair of governors.

Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels too compromised to deal with a complaint, the head teacher may consider referring the complainant to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the complaint objectively and impartially is crucial.

Where the first approach is made to a governor, the next step would be to refer the complainant to the appropriate person and advise them about the procedure. Governors must not act unilaterally on an individual complaint outside the formal procedure or be involved at the early stages in case they are needed to sit on a panel at a later stage of the procedure.

Stage two: complaint heard by head teacher

The head teacher's influence will already have shaped the way complaints are handled in the school. At this point, the complainant may be dissatisfied with the way the complaint was handled at stage one as well as pursuing their initial complaint. The head may delegate the task of collating the information to another staff member but not the decision on the action to be taken.

Stage three: complaint heard by governing body's complaints appeal panel

The complainant needs to write to the chair of governors giving details of the complaint. The chair, or a nominated governor, will convene a governing body complaints panel.

The governors' appeal hearing is the last school-based stage of the complaints process, and is not convened to merely rubber-stamp previous decisions.

Individual complaints will not be heard by the whole governing body at any stage, as this could compromise the impartiality of any panel set up for a disciplinary hearing against a member of staff following a serious complaint. The governing body will nominate a number of members with delegated powers to hear complaints at this stage.

The remit of the complaints appeal panel

The panel can:

- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part
- uphold the complaint in whole or in 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 recur.

There are several points which any governor sitting on a complaints panel needs to remember.

It is important that the appeal hearing is independent and impartial and that it is seen to be so. No governor may sit on the panel if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it. In deciding the makeup of the panel, governors need to try and ensure that it is a cross-section of the categories of governor and sensitive to the issues of race, gender and religious affiliation, in line with the school's **equality policy**.

The aim of the hearing, which needs to be held in private, will always be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. However, it has to be recognised the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the hearing does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations which will satisfy the complainant that his or her complaint has been taken seriously.

An effective panel will acknowledge that many complainants feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting. Parents often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child. The panel chair will ensure that the proceedings are as welcoming as possible. The layout of the room will set the tone and care is needed to ensure the setting is informal and not adversarial.

Extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child. Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings will ensure that the child does not feel intimidated. The panel needs to be aware of the views of the child and give them equal consideration to those of adults. Where the child's parent is the complainant, it would be helpful to give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the hearing, if any, the child needs to attend.

The governors sitting on the panel need to be aware of the complaints procedure.

Roles and responsibilities

The role of the clerk

The panel or group of governors considering complaints will be clerked. The clerk would be the contact point for the complainant and be required to:

- set the date, time and venue of the hearing, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- collate any written material and send it to the parties in advance of the hearing
- meet and welcome the parties as they arrive at the hearing

- record the proceedings
- notify all parties of the panel's decision.

The role of the chair of the governing body or the nominated governor

The nominated governor role:

- checks that the correct procedure has been followed
- if a hearing is appropriate, notifies the clerk to arrange the panel.

The role of the chair of the panel

The chair of the panel has a key role, ensuring that:

- the remit of the panel is explained to the parties and each party has the opportunity of putting their case without undue interruption
- the issues are addressed
- key findings of fact are made
- parents and others who may not be used to speaking at such a hearing are put at ease
- the hearing is conducted in an informal manner with each party treating the other with respect and courtesy
- the panel is open minded and acting independently
- no member of the panel has a vested interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure
- each side is given the opportunity to state their case and ask questions
- written material is seen by all parties. If a new issue arises it would be useful to give all parties the opportunity to consider and comment on it.

Notification of the panel's decision

The chair of the panel needs to ensure that the complainant is notified of the panel's decision, in writing, with the panel's response; this is usually within a set deadline which is publicised in the procedure. The letter needs to explain if there are any further rights of appeal and, if so, to whom they need to be addressed.

Checklist for a panel hearing

The panel needs to take the following points into account.

	✓
The hearing is as informal as possible	
Witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing in which they give their evidence	
After introductions, the complainant is invited to explain their complaint, and be followed by their witnesses	
The head teacher may question both the complainant and the witnesses after each has spoken	
The head teacher is then invited to explain the school's actions and be followed by the school's witnesses	
The complainant may question both the head teacher and the witnesses after each has spoken	
The panel may ask questions at any point	
The complainant is then invited to sum up their complaint	
The head teacher is then invited to sum up the school's actions and response to the complaint	
Both parties leave together while the panel decides on the issues	
The chair explains that both parties will hear from the panel within a set time scale	

Worple Primary School

COMPLAINT FORM

Your name	
Pupil's name	
Your relationship to the pupil	
Address	
Postcode	
Daytime telephone number	
Evening telephone number	

Please describe the nature of your complaint

--

What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint. (Who did you speak to and what was the response?)

--

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

--

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.

--

Signature	
Date	

FOR OFFICE USE	
Acknowledged on:	Complaint referred on:
Acknowledged by:	Complaint referred to: