



Complaints Policy

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 and, in all cases, we put the interests of the child above all other issues.

From time to time parents, and others connected with the school, will become aware of matters which cause them concern. To encourage resolution of such situations the governing body has adopted a complaints procedure.

The procedure is devised with the intention that it will:

- ◆ usually be possible to resolve problems by informal means;
- ◆ be simple to use and understand;
- ◆ be non-adversarial;
- ◆ treat complaints confidentially;
- ◆ allow problems to be handled swiftly;
- ◆ address all points at issue;
- ◆ inform future practice so that the problem is unlikely to recur;
- ◆ reaffirm the partnership between parents, staff and governors as they work together for the good of the pupils in the school;
- ◆ make clear the times set aside daily/weekly when staff are available for discussion with parents;
- ◆ ensure that the school's attitude to a pupil would never be affected by a parental complaint;
- ◆ actively encourage strong home-school links;
- ◆ ensure that all staff have opportunities to discuss and understand the school's response to concerns and complaints made by parents;
- ◆ ensure that any person complained against has equal rights with the person making the complaint;
- ◆ regularly review its system for monitoring concerns and complaints received from parents.

Definition of a complaint

- A complaint is a clear expression of dissatisfaction, however made, by a person or persons with a legitimate interest in the school (but not being employed at the school or on the governing body)
- A complaint covers the following:
 - If you are not happy with the school
 - If you feel that any action by a staff member of the school e.g. headteacher, teacher, or anybody else working under the direction of the headteacher etc. has affected you child or other pupils

Complaints about persons outside of the school will initially be dealt with by the Headteacher as site manager and be referred to the appropriate authority.

Anonymous complaints:

There is no duty for Headteachers or Governors to pursue anonymous complaints because there is no named complainant to respond to. However, if such complaints allege or imply a serious matter that may be to the detriment of the school, then it will be at the Headteacher's discretion to consider whether a case needs further investigation or not. Further investigation may be carried out in exceptional circumstances such as child protection issues or bullying allegations, where the school would involve appropriate external agencies.

Vexatious complaints overview

The term 'vexatious' reaches wider than complaints.

It is not appropriate to make personal accusations or attacks on members of school staff, or to raise matters that are not about education or a child's well-being. It is also not appropriate to make unsubstantiated allegations against the school, or to behave unreasonably by not engaging with the school to attempt a joint resolution.

A good complaints procedure can help limit the number of protracted complaints. If a complainant attempts to reopen issues that have been dealt with through the complaints procedure it should be explained that the procedure has been exhausted.

If a complainant acts unreasonably by continuing to raise similar issues or raising a range of unrelated issues on a repeated basis, then the school can reserve the right not to respond.

The school may take steps to limit or in some way ration contact for example:

- directing the parent to a specific teacher or other member of staff as a contact point.
- responding to the complainant at specific intervals.
- informal or formal written warnings given as to future behaviour and the consequences of that behaviour.

In these instances however, care should be taken not to dismiss any new complaints that have been raised alongside previous complaints.

Any new issues should be addressed separately under the relevant stage of the complaints procedure and a continued dialogue with the school is seen as extremely important as part of ensuring the best possible outcomes for children and a significant benefit of doubt should be given to parents / carers.

If a complainant in this category refuses to engage in the school's formal complaints procedures, but continues to complain, then the head teacher or chair of governors will consider informing the complainant that the complaints are vexatious.

If the complainant believes that the school has acted unreasonably they may appeal to the Department for Education.

Full details of the procedure may be obtained from the school office or from the Clerk to the Governing Body.

THE COMPLAINTS PROCESS

Preliminary stage; *How to share a concern*

If a parent is concerned about anything to do with the education that we are providing at our school, they should, in the first instance, discuss the matter with their child's class teacher. Most matters of concern can be dealt with in this way. All teachers work very hard to ensure that every child is happy at school, and are making good progress; we always want to know if there is a problem, so that we can take action before the problem seriously affects the child's welfare and progress.

Please do not delay telling us of your concern. It is difficult for us to investigate properly an incident or problem which is more than a day or two old.

After hearing the concern we shall act as quickly as we can. Please allow time for any action we may take to be effective. It may be possible for parents to see the teacher straight away but usually it is better to make an appointment so that you can sit and talk things through.

Stage 1; Formal

If you are still unhappy, ask for an appointment with the Deputy/Headteacher. If you wish to do so, it is helpful if you can give a brief outline of your concern when you make the appointment. It may be useful to complete the Complaints Form at this point. After your discussion with the Deputy/Headteacher you may have to wait a short time while investigations are carried out. Every effort will be made to resolve the situation as quickly as possible; the Headteacher will send you a written response within seven working days.

Stage 2; Formal

Only if the complaint is still unresolved should a formal complaint be made to the Chair of Governors. This complaint must be made in writing, stating the nature of the complaint and how the school has handled it so far (see Complaints Form). The parent should send this written complaint to the Chair of Governors, who will investigate it or nominate a governor to do so. This will be acknowledged within 2 working days and a meeting arranged within 10 working days.

Stage 3; Formal

Complaints referred to the Chair of Governors and Governing Body

Where the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of the school's responses and wishes to pursue the complaint further, a written request stating this must be sent within 10 working days of receiving the response to the Chair of Governors for the complaint to be reviewed by the governing body.

Any such request must include a statement specifying any perceived failings in either procedure or decisions made. A request for a review that is based solely on dissatisfaction of the response/outcome decision will not normally be accepted.

An acknowledgement should be sent within 5 working days of receiving the request and should inform the complainant that a panel of three Governors (not including the Headteacher or school staff Governors) would be set up to review the complaint within 20 working days from the date of the acknowledgement.

The Chair of Governors will write and inform all appropriate parties of the date, time and place of the review meeting at least 5 working days in advance of it. Any relevant documentation relating to the complaint should also be issued to all parties at this time.

Complaints concerning Headteacher/ Governor - referred to the Chair

Where the complaint concerns a Headteacher or a Governor (including the Chair of Governors) and has been directly addressed to the Chair of Governors, the matter should be referred to the Headteacher/Governor and a written response invited. The Chair or Headteacher will then respond to the complainant who if they are still dissatisfied can request that a panel of Governors review the complaint.

At this stage the complainant may also request that the Chair of Governors arranges a conciliation meeting with the Headteacher/ Governor.

Review Process

The Review Process will be carried out by a panel of 3 members of the Governing Body. The panel will hear the complaint at a meeting attended **separately** by the complainant and the Headteacher. Written evidence is submitted in advance to all parties and verbal evidence will be given at the review meeting.

The meeting will be conducted in an informal manner with each party treating the other with respect and courtesy. The conduct of the meeting is as follows:

Part 1

1. The complainant and any representative will enter the room.
2. The Chair of the panel will welcome the complainant, introduce the members of the panel, explain the process of the hearing and confirm the complaint that is to be heard.
3. The Chair of the panel will confirm that all parties have copies of the documentation submitted by the complainant and the Headteacher, as well as the names of any witnesses the complainant has indicated s/he wishes to call.
4. The panel will hear the complaint.
5. The panel will then have the opportunity of asking the complainant questions regarding the complaint.
6. The complainant will call any witnesses.
7. After the witness(es) have given their statements the panel may then ask any questions of the witness(es) regarding their statements.
8. The complainant or their representative will then have to opportunity of summing up their complaint.

9. The Chair of the panel will explain that the panel will consider the issues and a written decision will be sent in writing within 10 working days.
10. The complainant and any representative will then withdraw.

Part 2

1. The Headteacher and any representative will enter the room.
2. The Chair of the panel will introduce the members of the panel, explain the process of the hearing and confirm the complaint that is to be heard.
3. The Chair of the panel will confirm that all parties have copies of the documentation submitted by the complainant(s) and the Headteacher, and the names of any witnesses that the Headteacher has indicated s/he wishes to call.
4. The Headteacher will respond to the complaint.
5. The panel will then have the opportunity of asking the Headteacher any questions regarding her/his response.
6. The Headteacher will call any witnesses.
7. After the witnesses have given their statements the panel may then ask any questions of the witness(es) regarding their statements.
8. The Headteacher or his/her representative will then have the opportunity of summing up their response.
9. The Chair of the panel will explain that the panel's conclusion will be sent, in writing, within 10 working days.
10. The Headteacher and her/his representative will then withdraw.

The Complaints Panel will then consider the complaint and all the evidence presented and:

- a) reach a decision on the complaint and the reasons for it
- b) decide upon the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint.
(There may be instances where this involves recommending the use of the disciplinary or capability procedures)
- c) where appropriate, suggest recommended changes to the school's systems or procedures to try to ensure that complaints of a similar nature are not made in the future and
- d) provide a written response within 10 working days.

Further Stages

Following the Governors' complaints hearing at stage three, it is open to the complainant to pursue their complaint with the Secretary of State for Education or the office of the Ombudsman. The governing body will give full consideration to any recommendations or directions the Secretary of State may make. The complainant will be advised of this course of action should they remain dissatisfied with a decision made by the Governors' committee.

Secretary of State

If any parent is still not content that the complaint has been dealt with properly, then s/he is entitled to appeal to the Secretary of State for Education.

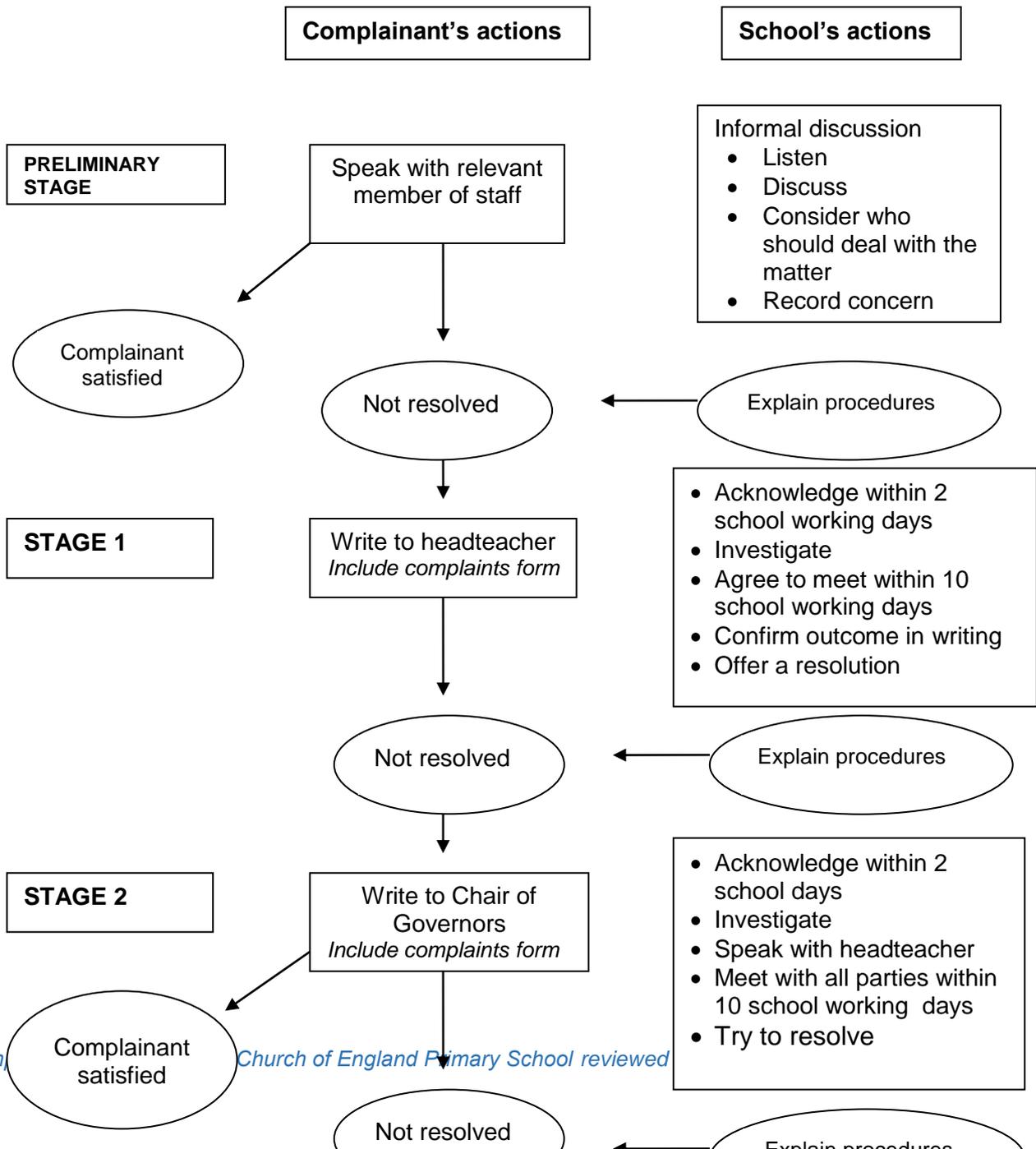
Please find attached-

Complaints Procedure Chart

Summary of Timescales

Complaints Form

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE



Summary of Timescales

Stage	Description	Response
Preliminary Stage	Discussions with relevant member of staff and/or headteacher	As soon as possible but no later than 7 school days.
Stage 1	Written complaint to Headteacher	Acknowledge within 2 school days. Response normally within 5 school days.
Stage 2	Written complaint to Chair of Governors	Acknowledge within 2 school days. Response normally within 10 school days.
Stage 3	Complaints' Committee Hearing	Hearing set up within 20 school days with 10 working days' notice of meeting. Agenda and papers sent out 7 school days in advance. Decision letter within 10 school working days.

SCHOOL COMPLAINTS FORM

Please complete this form and return it to Headteacher / Chair of Governing Body, who will acknowledge its receipt within 5 working days and inform you of the next stage in the procedure.

Your name:

Relationship with school [e.g. parent of a pupil on the schools roll]:
.....

Pupil's name [if relevant to your complaint]:
.....

Your Address:

Daytime telephone number:

Evening telephone number:

Email:.....

Please give details of your complaint, [including dates, names of witnesses etc...], to allow the matter to be fully investigated:

You may continue on separate paper, or attach additional paperwork, if you wish.

Number of additional pages attached =

What action, if any, have you already taken to try to resolve your complaint? [i.e. who have you spoken with or written to?]

What was the outcome?

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

Signature:

Date:

School use:

Date form received:

Received by:

Date acknowledgement sent:

Acknowledgement sent by:

Complaint referred to:
Date:

If you need support in completing this form please contact Lambeth Education on 020 7926 9503

