



Complaints Policy

Introduction

Our school believes that it is important for all staff to build strong positive relationships with pupils and their parents. We feel that pupils, parents, carers, or other adults who have concerns or complaints should feel that they can be voiced, and will be considered seriously.

General Principles

- Parents and pupils should be encouraged to express their views on what goes on in schools, so that staff can receive an early warning of potential difficulties, and many problems can be prevented from arising.
- Parents and others should always know how they can raise concerns or lodge a formal complaint. Complaint procedures should be easily accessible and well publicised.
- Procedures should be as speedy as possible.
- Complaints should be supported and referred to independent individuals and organisations that may be able to assist them.
- Support should also be offered for a person complained against.
- All complaints should be treated as confidential.
- If the outcome of a complaint is valid, then there should be some form of redress. Any redress will be recorded and associated with the original complaint form, signed and dated by the responsible officer.
- Staff and governors should be made aware of the Complaints Procedure and training made available where appropriate.
- Details of any complaint, formal or informal, should be fully recorded.
- We will strive to resolve the majority of complaints informally.
- It is important for staff to record details of any complaint, but complainants must feel able to raise concerns without any formality, either in person, in writing or by telephone.
- A formal complaint about a serving governor should be referred to the Chair of governors initially.
- A formal complaint by a serving governor, must be considered by a meeting of the full Governing body.
- A formal complaint by a registered pupil will be addressed by teaching staff. Pupils will have the right of appeal to the Head teacher.

There are three stages to this procedure:

- **Stage 1** is informal
- **Stages 2 and 3** are formal

Any person expressing continued dissatisfaction should be advised of the next stage in the procedure.

Stage One: Discuss concerns informally with the relevant teacher.

- Complainants are advised to speak to the teacher concerned so everyone has a clear picture of the situation from all points of view. Most problems can be resolved at this informal stage.
- If the complainant indicates he/she would have difficulty in discussing a complaint with a particular member of staff the complaint may be referred to another member of staff. This member of staff may not necessarily be more senior.
- The member of staff who is dealing with the complaint should ensure that the complainant is reassured that the matter will be investigated and is clear what action has been agreed. All staff should be aware of the need for confidentiality.

If the complaint made is a Safeguarding issue, the nominated person for Safeguarding will be informed, and procedures will be followed as written in our Safeguarding policy.

- A brief record of any telephone calls, meetings and agreed actions should always be kept although it is not always necessary to provide the complainant with a written record at this stage. The Complaints co-ordinator/ Senior Teacher should monitor these records.
- If either the complainant or staff member feels the matter needs to be taken further, the Head teacher or a senior member of staff should be contacted.

Stage Two: Discuss concerns formally with the head teacher or a senior member of staff.

- More serious concerns which remain unresolved at the end of Stage 1 should be referred to the head teacher or a senior member of staff. He / she will then investigate the matter further. Any meetings that are held with the complainant in relation to the complaint should be arranged within 10 school days. However, more complex complaints may require an extension to this time limit.
- A log of all contacts relating to the complaint should be kept.
- The Head teacher or Senior Teacher should communicate the outcome to the complainant either verbally or in writing. Any agreed actions should be put in writing.
- If, as a result of the investigation, issues arise relating to staff discipline or capability, **details should remain confidential to the head teacher.** However, the complainant should be informed that the school has taken appropriate follow-up action.

Stage Three: Make a formal complaint in writing to the Chair of Governors (or a nominated governor) who will then convene a Complaints Panel.

- Governors should only proceed with this formal stage of the Complaint Procedure if they have received a complaint in Writing addressed to the Chair of Governors and **all previous stages have been exhausted.**
- Acknowledgement of the written complaint should normally be sent by the clerk to the governing body within 3 school days.
- It is essential that this process is fair and objective. **To avoid a conflict of interest, it is vital that the full governing body does not hear the complaint at this stage.** Any governor who has been involved with the complaint at an earlier stage would be unable to give objective consideration to the issue.
- It is for the governing body to agree upon the procedures for the Complaint panel meeting. However, the governing body will usually convene a small panel of 3 or 5 governors who have not previously been involved in the complaint. The panel will usually meet within 15 school days of receiving the complaint.
- The Chair of the panel should notify the head teacher and the complainant as to whether they will be invited to attend the panel meeting. Alternatively, the panel may decide to consider written material only. Both parties must be treated equally. For example, if the head teacher is invited to the meeting, so must the complainant.
- If the complaint relates to a staff disciplinary or capability matter about which the head teacher has already taken action, the governors should focus on how the original complaint was managed to avoid prejudicing any ongoing disciplinary or capability procedures.
- The head teacher and complainant should be informed of the Panel's decision in writing within 10 days.
- This is the final stage of the schools Complaints Procedure.

If the complainant is still not satisfied with the outcome of Stages 1 – 3 , then they have the right to refer matters to North Somerset Council's Director of Children's and Young Peoples Services, who will then appoint an independent panel to investigate how the Governing Body handled the complaint. If the Complainant is still not satisfied with the outcome, then they have the right to refer matters to the Secretary of State for Education and / or the Local Government Ombudsman.

- Appeals to the Secretary of State may be made under either Section 496 of the Education Act 1996 (unreasonable action) or Section 497 (failure to discharge duties) at the following address:
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
Westminster
London
SW1P 3BT

- The local Government Act 1974 says that the Ombudsman cannot investigate complaints about the internal management of a school. The address is as follows:
Local Government Ombudsman
The Oaks No 2
Westwood Way
Westwood Business Park
Coventry CV4 8JB
- Both the Secretary of State and Local Government Ombudsman will normally expect all other avenues open to a complainant to have been exhausted.

Review

<p>Reviewed by Performance Cttee 6th March and final approval given via-email from each member. Endorsed by FGB 13th March 2012</p>	<p>6 monthly review by Performance Cttee 26th September 2012.</p>			
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Complaints Form

Please complete and return to the Headteacher who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your Name: _____

Pupil's Name: _____

Your relationship to the pupil: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Day time telephone number: _____

Evening telephone number: _____

Please give details 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 Official Use

Date acknowledgement sent: _____

By whom? _____

Complaint referred to: _____

Date: _____



Record of Complaint – Follow Up

This form is to be used by a :- Staff member/ Head teacher/ Complaints Officer / Chair of Governors, to record any Outcome or Actions taken from a Complaint.

Please fill in all parts of this form.

Where any Actions are taken, please record in this section the person who is responsible for making sure these actions are put in place. If there is a need for a review record the time frame for this.

Date: _____

Name of Person who dealt with complaint:

Your role in school:

Details of Complaint:

What was the outcome of the complaint:

Actions taken from the complaint:

Review if needed:
